

# Research on the Influencing Factors of Tourism Happiness of the Silver-haired Group in Xichang City from the Perspective of PERMA Theory

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**Abstract:** With the deepening of aging in China, the silver-haired tourism market is emerging. This study aims to explore the influencing factors of tourism happiness among the silver-haired group in Xichang City from the perspective of PERMA theory. The study collected relevant data on silver-haired tourists in Xichang City using a combination of questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews. The results show that the happiness of silver-haired tourists in Xichang City is mainly influenced by five dimensions: Positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment, as well as factors such as tourism service quality, the degree of improvement of tourism infrastructure, and the diversification of tourism products. The findings of this study will help tourism management departments and enterprises in Xichang City better understand the needs of silver-haired tourists, formulate targeted tourism development strategies, enhance the tourism experience and happiness of elderly tourists, and promote the healthy development of the silver-haired tourism market in Xichang City.

**Keywords:** Silver-haired group; Tourism happiness; PERMA theory; Influencing factors

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## 1. Introduction

The PERMA theory, proposed by positive psychologist Martin Seligman, emphasizes five core elements of individual happiness: Positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment. This theory provides a new perspective for studying individual happiness and has been widely applied in fields such as education and management. In recent years, scholars have begun to introduce PERMA theory into tourism research to explore the influencing factors and improvement paths of tourist happiness. This article intends to explore the key influencing factors of tourism happiness among the silver-haired population in Xichang City from five dimensions: Positive emotions, engagement, interpersonal relationships, sense of meaning, and sense of accomplishment. On the one hand, this study helps to improve the application of PERMA theory in the field of tourism and expand the research on the influence mechanism of tourism happiness among the silver-haired group; on the other hand, the research results can provide decision-making reference for the optimization of the

silver-haired tourism market and the improvement of the well-being of the silver-haired group in Xichang City and other regions.

## **2. Literature review**

Research on silver-haired group tourism has shown that tourism happiness is influenced by factors such as natural environment, service quality, socioeconomic status, and social relationships. Foreign studies have focused earlier on the motivations, limitations, and impacts of silver-haired group tourism, while domestic research has been conducted from perspectives such as consumer psychology and tourism modes. Tourism motivations include pursuit, indulgence, transcendental, and identity motivations, and limiting factors involve economics, psychology, and the suitability of tourism products. Tourism has a positive impact on the quality of life, social participation, and mental health of the silver-haired group, and mechanisms such as traveling with companions and experiencing value can significantly enhance happiness. Although existing research covers a wide range of topics, there are issues such as insufficient depth, a singular methodology, and limited perspectives. In the future, it is necessary to further explore specific influencing factors, strengthen cross-cultural research, expand research on the happiness of destination residents and service personnel, improve measurement methods, and develop targeted tourism products to support the development of silver-haired group tourism and improve their quality of life.

## **3. Data sources and research methods**

### **3.1. Research case**

Xichang City is located in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province, with rich natural landscapes and ethnic cultural resources. It is an important tourist city in Sichuan Province. In recent years, with the deepening of aging, the silver-haired tourism market has gradually emerged, and Xichang City has also attracted a large number of elderly tourists. This study selects Xichang City as a case study to explore the influencing factors of tourism happiness among the silver-haired group in Xichang City from the perspective of PERMA theory.

### **3.2. Research methods**

This study uses a questionnaire survey to obtain data on tourism happiness among the silver-haired group in Xichang City. The questionnaire design covers basic information about the silver-haired group (such as age, gender, education level, pre-retirement occupation, etc.), evaluation of tourism happiness, and factors that affect tourism happiness. The questionnaire content is based on the PERMA theoretical framework and designs questions from five dimensions: Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, to comprehensively evaluate the tourism happiness of the silver-haired group. Additionally, this study uses in-depth interviews to complement the results of the questionnaire survey. Through deep dialogue and communication, we can better understand the silver-haired group's feelings about tourism happiness and their views on influencing factors. The interviewees include silver-haired individuals of different ages, genders, educational backgrounds, and pre-retirement occupations to obtain comprehensive and diversified data. The interview content focuses on tourism experience, social interaction, emotional experience, self-value realization, etc., to further explore the deep-level information behind the questionnaire data. Besides questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, this study also collects Xichang City's tourism development planning documents, relevant statistical data on silver-haired group tourism, and domestic and foreign research literature on silver-

haired tourism and happiness, which are used to assist in analyzing and verifying the results of the primary data.

### **3.3. Data sources**

During the research process, a field survey was conducted among the silver-haired population in Xichang City, using a combination of questionnaire surveys as the primary method and semi-structured interviews as a complementary approach. Firstly, the questionnaire survey was administered, which included basic information about the respondents (such as age, gender, education level, pre-retirement occupation, etc.), tourism participation, evaluation of tourism happiness, and factors influencing tourism happiness. The questionnaire design was based on the PERMA theoretical framework, covering five dimensions: Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, to comprehensively evaluate the tourism happiness of the silver-haired population. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted, selecting silver-haired individuals from different communities and backgrounds in Xichang City, including retired teachers, retired enterprise employees, freelancers, etc., as a complement to the questionnaire survey. The interview content focused on the tourism experience, tourism motivation, emotional experience during travel, social interaction, self-value realization, and other aspects of the silver-haired population, exploring the specific impact of tourism on their happiness. Additionally, the interviews covered various dimensions such as the silver-haired population's views on Xichang's tourism resources, satisfaction with tourism services, tourism consumption capacity, changes in social relationships, and expectations for future tourism activities.

## **4. Empirical research on factors influencing tourism happiness of silver-haired population in Xichang City**

### **4.1. Natural environment and tourism resources**

Xichang City is located in the southwest of Sichuan Province, at the junction of Sichuan and Yunnan, boasting a unique natural environment and abundant tourism resources. Xichang attracts a large number of tourists, especially the silver-haired population, with its spring-like climate all year round, beautiful Qionghai-Lushan scenic area, and unique Yi culture. As the second largest freshwater lake in Sichuan Province, Qionghai has become an ideal destination for elderly people to relax and vacation, thanks to its clear lake water and surrounding wetland landscapes. Lushan, with its dense forests and fresh air, provides an excellent place for elderly people to hike, enjoy scenic views, and maintain their health. Additionally, Xichang is a famous aerospace city in China, and its aerospace-themed tourism projects offer a unique cultural experience for the silver-haired population.

The tourism resources in Xichang City not only provide diversified tourism options for the silver-haired population but also enhance their tourism happiness through the healing effects of the natural environment and the richness of cultural experiences. For example, the wetland parks around Qionghai offer opportunities for elderly people to take walks, bird watching, and photography, helping them relax and unwind. The hiking trails and observation decks on Lushan cater to the pursuit of healthy living among the elderly. Meanwhile, cultural festivals such as the Torch Festival and Yi New Year provide opportunities for the silver-haired population to participate in cultural interactions and experience ethnic customs, enhancing their sense of social participation and cultural identity.

Despite the abundance of tourism resources in Xichang City, there is still room for improvement in developing tourism products and supporting services specifically tailored to the silver-haired population. For instance, accessibility facilities in some scenic areas are not yet perfect, which may cause inconvenience for elderly tourists during their visits. Furthermore, health management services and personalized travel route

design for the silver-haired population also need to be further strengthened. By optimizing tourism resources and improving service quality, the needs of the silver-haired population can be better met, further enhancing their tourism happiness.

#### **4.2. Socioeconomic factors: Income, employment, and education**

The rapid development of the tourism industry in Xichang City has created more economic opportunities for the local silver-haired population, indirectly improving their income level and quality of life. Many silver-haired individuals have obtained additional economic income by participating in tourism-related activities such as operating homestays, providing tour guide services, or selling handicrafts. This increase in income not only improves their material living conditions but also enhances their sense of economic security and self-esteem, significantly boosting their happiness. Furthermore, the prosperity of the tourism industry has provided opportunities for some silver-haired individuals to rejoin the workforce, enabling them to achieve personal value through social participation and further enhancing their life satisfaction and happiness.

Education level is also an important factor influencing the tourism happiness of the silver-haired population in Xichang City. Silver-haired individuals who have received good education usually have stronger learning and adaptability skills, enabling them to better participate in tourism activities and derive satisfaction from them. For example, educated elderly people are more likely to master tourism-related knowledge and skills, such as using smart devices to book tourism services or understanding the cultural background of tourism destinations, thereby improving the quality of their tourism experience. Additionally, education enhances the silver-haired population's awareness and ability to participate in society, allowing them to more actively engage in social interactions during tourism activities and further increasing their happiness.

To further enhance the tourism happiness of the silver-haired population in Xichang City, local governments and various sectors of society should increase their support for this group. For instance, vocational skills training and tourism-related knowledge popularization courses can be provided to help the silver-haired population better adapt to the development needs of the tourism industry. Simultaneously, the government should encourage tourism enterprises to develop employment positions suitable for the silver-haired population, such as tourism advisors and cultural interpreters, providing them with more economic opportunities and channels for social participation. Furthermore, improving community education facilities and resources to offer lifelong learning opportunities for the silver-haired population is also an important way to enhance their happiness.

#### **4.3. Social relationships and social capital**

Social relationships refer to the interactions and connections between individuals, including relatives, friends, neighbors, and community organizations. Social capital, on the other hand, denotes the resources and support that individuals gain through their social relationships, such as trust, cooperation, a sense of belonging, and social support.

In Xichang City, the silver-haired population has strengthened their emotional connections with each other through interactions with family, friends, and companions during tourism activities. For instance, many silver-haired groups choose to travel with family or friends, and this shared experience not only deepens their emotional bonds but also provides them with emotional support and a sense of security. Additionally, social interactions in tourism activities, such as participating in collective activities, cultural exchanges, and volunteer services, offer opportunities for the silver-haired population to expand their social networks and enhance their sense of social belonging.



However, the social relationships and social capital of the silver-haired population in Xichang also face some challenges. Some elderly people lack stable social support in their daily lives due to their children working or living away, leading to increased loneliness. Furthermore, physical limitations or economic constraints can hinder some silver-haired individuals from fully engaging in social interactions during tourism activities, affecting their travel experience and sense of happiness.

To enhance the social relationships and social capital of the silver-haired population in Xichang, several measures are suggested. Firstly, communities and tourism organizations can organize more social activities tailored to the silver-haired group, such as cultural lectures, health talks, and interest groups, providing platforms for interaction and exchange. Secondly, encouraging family members to accompany the elderly in tourism activities can strengthen family cohesion. Additionally, the government and social organizations can establish volunteer service teams for the elderly, promoting mutual assistance and support among the silver-haired population and enhancing their sense of social belonging and self-worth. By strengthening social relationships and building social capital, Xichang can create a warmer and more supportive social environment for the silver-haired population, significantly improving their travel happiness and quality of life. Such efforts not only contribute to the physical and mental health of the silver-haired group but also provide crucial support for building harmonious communities and promoting sustainable tourism development.

## **5. Strategies to improve tourism happiness for the silver-haired population in Xichang City**

### **5.1. Strengthening natural environment and tourism resource protection**

Xichang City's natural resources, such as Qionghai Lake and Lu Mountain, and the Yi culture landscape are key to enhancing tourism happiness for the silver-haired population. To address environmental pressures and the risk of overexploitation due to rapid tourism development, resource protection is crucial. The government should develop scientific plans, establish ecological protection zones, limit tourist numbers, and increase investment in environmental protection infrastructure. Tourism management agencies should promote green tourism concepts, protect intangible cultural heritage, and enhance the silver-haired population's sense of participation. Simultaneously, raising environmental awareness among residents and tourists through educational campaigns and volunteer activities is essential. Through collaboration, Xichang can achieve sustainable resource utilization, providing a high-quality tourism experience for the silver-haired population, enhancing their happiness, and supporting sustainable tourism development and harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

### **5.2. Promoting comprehensive socioeconomic development**

Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in influencing tourism happiness for the silver-haired population. Xichang needs to focus on economic development, improving income levels, employment opportunities, and education for the silver-haired group to enhance their living conditions and happiness.

#### **5.2.1. Promoting industrial diversification and innovation**

By leveraging Xichang's unique natural resources and cultural heritage, tourism development can be optimized to promote industrial diversification. For instance, combining the natural beauty of Qionghai Lake and Lu Mountain with the cultural characteristics of the Yi people, health and wellness tourism, cultural experience tourism, and eco-tourism products suitable for the silver-haired population can be developed. Innovating tourism service models, such as offering customized travel routes and health management services, can cater

to the diverse needs of the silver-haired group. Additionally, integrating tourism with other industries, like promoting local specialty agricultural products and handicrafts, can increase the silver-haired population's economic income and provide more employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, enhancing their economic security and happiness.

### **5.2.2. Strengthening educational resource investment and development**

Emphasis should be placed on lifelong education for the silver-haired population in Xichang, improving and expanding the coverage and quality of educational resources. For example, community education centers and universities for the elderly can provide health knowledge, tourism skills, and cultural literacy training to help the silver-haired population better adapt to tourism activities and social life. By improving education levels, the silver-haired group can acquire more knowledge and skills, enhancing their social participation and self-worth, further boosting their happiness. Additionally, focusing on the inheritance and development of Yi traditional culture through cultural education activities can strengthen the silver-haired population's cultural identity and sense of belonging.

### **5.2.3. Enhancing the construction of the social security system**

Improving Xichang's social security system is crucial to ensure that the silver-haired population enjoys basic social security and welfare benefits. Providing services like healthcare, pension insurance, and travel accident insurance can address practical issues faced by the silver-haired population during travel and daily life, increasing their sense of security and happiness. Furthermore, the government and social organizations can support the silver-haired population's participation in tourism activities through special funds or subsidy policies, alleviating their economic burden.

Promoting comprehensive socioeconomic development in Xichang is a vital strategy to enhance tourism happiness for the silver-haired population. Through industrial diversification, strengthening educational resource investment, and developing the social security system, the economic situation and living conditions of the silver-haired group can be significantly improved, boosting their happiness. While implementing these strategies, emphasis should be placed on fairness and sustainable development to ensure long-term stability in Xichang's tourism industry and sustainable happiness for the silver-haired population. This comprehensive approach not only contributes to the personal development of the silver-haired group but also lays a solid foundation for the sustainable development of Xichang's tourism industry.

## **6. Conclusion and suggestions**

### **6.1. Conclusion**

Through the theoretical lens of PERMA, this study analyzed the five core influencing factors of tourism happiness for the silver-haired population in Xichang City: Positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The research findings indicate that these factors play a significant role in the silver tourism market of Xichang. Specifically, the experience of positive emotions is enhanced through the design of age-friendly tourism products and the provision of a safe and comfortable tourism environment. The sense of engagement is strengthened by organizing cultural theme tourism projects and setting staged goals. Relationships are improved by promoting interaction among elderly tourists and encouraging family participation. The sense of meaning is reflected through the deep exploration of Xichang's cultural elements and community involvement. Finally, a sense of accomplishment is achieved by offering personalized services and souvenirs.

## **6.2. Suggestions**

### **6.2.1. Optimizing tourism products and services**

Designing age-friendly tourism products, such as the “Slow Travel in Xichang” series, focusing on a relaxed pace, safety, and comfort. Develop customized products themed around health and wellness, cultural exploration, and other topics to meet diverse needs. Simultaneously, strengthen the construction of age-friendly facilities in scenic areas, provide voice guides, health consultations, and other age-friendly services to enhance the sense of safety and convenience for elderly tourists.

### **6.2.2. Emphasizing emotional care and social interaction**

Communication and interaction among elderly tourists should be promoted by organizing activities such as senior tourism festivals and cultural salons, enhancing their sense of belonging and happiness. Encourage family participation in silver tourism to provide companionship and emotional support for the elderly.

#### **(1) Exploring cultural elements and community involvement**

Based on Xichang’s natural resources and cultural landscapes, create integrated tourism products that combine culture and tourism, such as the “Aerospace Culture and Health Maintenance” package. Set staged goals and achievement points to allow elderly tourists to gain a sense of accomplishment after completing each goal.

#### **(2) Promoting the integrated development of silver tourism and local economy**

Foster the integration of culture and tourism to attract more silver-haired tourists. Develop the silver economy industrial chain, forming diversified development models such as “tourism and elderly care” and “tourism and medical care.” Establish a silver tourism service standard system, standardize the service behavior of tourism enterprises, improve overall service quality, and promote the sustainable development of Xichang’s silver tourism market.

### **6.2.3. Research limitations and future research directions**

This study focused on the silver-haired population in Xichang City and has limitations. Firstly, regionality and group specificity limit the generalizability of the results. Future research can expand to silver-haired groups in different regions and cultural backgrounds. Secondly, data collection primarily relied on questionnaires, which may introduce subjective biases. Future studies can combine methods such as in-depth interviews and observations to obtain more comprehensive and accurate data. Thirdly, potential factors such as cultural heritage and community involvement were not fully explored. Future research can delve into their impact mechanisms. Additionally, the implementation of happiness enhancement strategies may be constrained by resources, policies, and cultural factors. Future studies can analyze their feasibility through practical case studies. The study also did not incorporate perspectives from stakeholders such as governments and businesses. Future research can provide more systematic solutions through multi-party comparisons. Finally, future research can explore innovations in Xichang’s tourism model, such as health and wellness tourism and cultural experiences, integrate services like health management and accommodation, create multi-functional experience zones, and improve strategic suggestions by comparing different stakeholder viewpoints to promote sustainable tourism development and enhance the happiness of the silver-haired population.

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