

Research on the Influencing Factors of Local Leisure Tourism Well-Being among the Silver-Haired Population in Xichang City from the Perspective of Positive Psychology

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Abstract: Against the dual backdrop of the in-depth implementation of the proactive aging strategy and the continuous intensification of population aging, local leisure tourism within city limits has emerged as a crucial avenue for enhancing the health, social integration, and subjective well-being of the silver-haired population. This paper employs Seligman's PERMA well-being theory as an analytical framework, focusing on five key factors: health support, digital inclusion, community embeddedness, safety perception, and cultural identity. It utilizes a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews to conduct empirical research on the silver-haired population in Xichang City. The findings reveal that the five intrinsic dimensions of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment significantly and positively influence the well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired group. Core external influencing factors include health support and travel convenience, digital inclusion and service accessibility, community embeddedness and public leisure provision, safety perception and risk protection, as well as cultural identity and local emotional connections. The interplay between intrinsic psychological dimensions and external environmental factors collectively determines the generation and intensity of well-being. The research conclusions enrich the cross-disciplinary research outcomes on tourism well-being and proactive aging, providing theoretical references and practical bases for local governments to construct a silver-haired-friendly leisure tourism environment, optimize age-appropriate service provision, and promote the high-quality development of the silver economy.

Keywords: Silver-haired population; Local leisure tourism; Well-being; Factor research

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1. Introduction

With the accelerating process of population aging in China, the health, leisure, and spiritual and cultural

needs of the silver-haired population have rapidly increased. Local leisure tourism, characterized by short travel distances, low safety risks, and high daily accessibility, has become the primary leisure mode for this demographic. Well-being serves as a core indicator for measuring the quality of life of the silver-haired population and is an important orientation for proactive aging policies. The PERMA theory, proposed by positive psychologist Martin Seligman, decomposes well-being into five dimensions: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, providing a classic analytical framework for understanding the intrinsic structure of individual happiness^[1]. In recent years, this theory has gradually been applied to tourism research, but existing studies have predominantly focused on ordinary tourists or elderly tourists from different regions, lacking integrated empirical research that specifically targets the silver-haired population in Xichang City and closely addresses practical pain points such as health, digitalization, community, safety, and culture.

Xichang City, with its excellent ecological endowments, rich ethnic culture, and diverse leisure scenes, is a highly concentrated area for leisure activities among the silver-haired population in southwestern Sichuan. As the local silver-haired population expands, their demands for age-appropriate, health-oriented, convenient, and emotionally fulfilling leisure tourism have become increasingly prominent. However, issues such as insufficient health support, a significant digital divide, uneven community facilities, weak safety guarantees, and a lack of cultural experiences remain prominent^[2]. Based on this context, this paper examines, from the PERMA theory perspective, the impact mechanisms and pathways of health support, digital inclusion, community embeddedness, safety perception, and cultural identity on the well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population in Xichang City. It aims to reveal the key influencing factors of well-being in local tourism for this demographic and propose precise improvement strategies. This study contributes to expanding the scenarios and subjects of tourism well-being research and provides decision-making support for local governments to promote the construction of an elderly-friendly society and achieve proactive aging.

2. Literature review

Research on tourism and well-being among the silver-haired population indicates that leisure tourism can effectively improve their physical and mental health, expand social interactions, enhance life meaning, and thereby boost subjective well-being^[3]. Existing studies have predominantly explored tourism motivation, participation constraints, health effects, and social support, identifying physical condition, economic status, information access, and service adaptability as the main factors influencing tourism participation among the silver-haired population^[4]. However, most studies have focused on tourism in different regions, neglecting local, community-based, and high-frequency leisure tourism within city limits. In particular, systematic discussions on key practical factors such as health support, digital usage, community facilities, safety guarantees, and cultural identity are lacking^[5].

The PERMA theory provides a structured and operational analytical framework for well-being research and has been widely applied in fields such as education, management, and health^[6]. In tourism research, scholars have begun to use this theory to explain tourist experiences, satisfaction, and well-being generation mechanisms^[7,8]. Nevertheless, relevant research still exhibits significant shortcomings as follows:

- (1) It primarily focuses on ordinary tourists, with few specialized studies on the silver-haired population;
- (2) It is predominantly theoretical, with weak localized empirical research;

(3) It rarely incorporates scenario-based factors such as health, digitalization, safety, community, and culture into a unified analytical framework.

Therefore, conducting research on the well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population in Xichang City based on the PERMA theory holds significant theoretical value.

Overall, existing research has three main limitations as outlined:

- (1) It inadequately reveals the formation mechanisms of well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population;
- (2) It lacks integrated analysis of the five core practical factors: health, digitalization, community, safety, and culture;
- (3) Empirical research and countermeasure design based on the PERMA theory lack specificity.

Accordingly, this paper, grounded in the PERMA theory, incorporates health support, digital inclusion, community embeddedness, safety perception, and cultural identity into its analytical framework and conducts empirical research on the silver-haired population in Xichang City to more precisely explain the impact mechanisms of well-being derived from local leisure tourism and propose actionable optimization pathways.

3. Research design and data sources

3.1. Research framework

This paper uses the PERMA theory (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment) as the intrinsic core dimensions of well-being and health support and travel convenience, digital inclusion and service accessibility, community embeddedness and public leisure provision, safety perception and risk protection, and cultural identity and local emotional connections as external key influencing factors. It constructs an integrated analytical framework of “intrinsic psychological dimensions, external environmental factors, well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population” to systematically examine the direction and intensity of the impact of various factors on well-being.

3.2. Research methods

3.2.1. Questionnaire survey method

The questionnaire consists of three parts: the demographic characteristics of the respondents; their participation behavior and frequency in local leisure tourism; and a well-being scale based on the five dimensions of PERMA, as well as scales for influencing factors such as health support, digital inclusion, community embeddedness, safety perception, and cultural identity. All scales use a 5-point Likert scale and undergo reliability and validity tests before being used in the formal survey, targeting the silver-haired population in Xichang City.

3.2.2. Semis-structured interview method

In-depth interviews are conducted with silver-haired individuals of different ages, health conditions, residential communities, education levels, and participation frequencies, focusing on issues such as travel difficulties, digital usage barriers, community leisure participation, safety concerns, and cultural experience preferences. This method supplements quantitative data and uncovers the deep experiences and real needs of the silver-haired population.

3.3. Research area and data sources

Xichang City, with its superior ecological environment and rich leisure resources, exhibits high frequency and diverse scenarios of local leisure activities among the silver-haired population, holding typical research value. The research conducts field surveys in the main urban area of Xichang City, the Qionghai-Lushan Scenic Area, and key communities, with questionnaires and interviews carried out simultaneously. The survey objects cover silver-haired individuals with different characteristics in Xichang City, ultimately obtaining valid samples and interview materials. The sample structure is reasonable, and the data are representative and reliable.

4. Empirical analysis of influencing factors of well-being derived from local leisure tourism

4.1. Health support and travel convenience

Physical function, chronic disease status, and travel convenience are prerequisites for the silver-haired population to participate in local leisure tourism. In Xichang City, some scenic areas have steep trails, insufficient rest facilities, and emergency points, and public transportation is less friendly to the silver-haired population, significantly reducing the participation willingness and engagement of those with average health conditions. Short-distance, low-intensity, and health-oriented leisure scenes can effectively enhance the positive emotions and sustained participation of the silver-haired population.

4.2. Digital inclusion and service accessibility

The rapid digitalization of tourism scenes has exposed the silver-haired population to a significant digital divide: online reservations, intelligent navigation, and mobile payments have high operational thresholds, and insufficient manual fallback services significantly reduce service accessibility and experience efficiency, weakening their interpersonal interactions and sense of meaning. Leisure venues that provide digital assistance, retain offline channels, and simplify operational procedures result in significantly higher well-being among the silver-haired population.

4.3. Community embeddedness and public leisure provision

The silver-haired population highly prefers leisure spaces near their communities, where acquaintances gather, costs are low, and participation is frequent. In Xichang City, the provision of community-level leisure facilities is uneven, with insufficient pocket parks, fitness paths, and cultural activity venues in old communities, and incomplete coverage of 15-minute leisure life circles, reducing participation convenience for the silver-haired population. Community-organized collective leisure activities can effectively strengthen their social capital and sense of belonging, playing a key role in enhancing their engagement and accomplishment.

4.4. Safety perception and risk protection

Safety is the bottom-line need for the silver-haired population in leisure tourism, covering dimensions such as personal safety, medical emergencies, consumption norms, and crowd control. Insufficient safety facilities, delayed emergency responses, and opaque consumption significantly reduce their positive emotions and travel willingness. Improving medical green channels, leisure accident insurance for the silver-haired population, emergency contact mechanisms, and crowd control measures can stabilize their safety expectations and enhance overall well-being.

4.5. Cultural identity and local emotional connections

Local elements such as Yi ethnic culture, aerospace culture, and Qionghai-Lushan ecological culture can stimulate the cultural identity and local emotional connections of the silver-haired population. Participating in folk experiences, local festivals, and nostalgic leisure activities can significantly strengthen their sense of meaning and value realization. Homogenized products and a lack of cultural symbols fail to form emotional resonances and have limited effects on enhancing the well-being of the silver-haired population.

5. Pathways to enhance the well-being of the silver-haired population in local leisure tourism

5.1. Establish a health-friendly, low-threshold travel system

To enhance accessibility and safety for the aging population, scenic areas should prioritize the optimization of elderly-friendly infrastructure, including barrier-free trails, ramps, rest seating, and dedicated health and wellness service points. Emergency response facilities and health monitoring services should be strengthened to better address the chronic disease management needs of older visitors. In addition, the development of low-intensity, short-distance, and slow-paced health and wellness leisure products is recommended to align with their physical capabilities. To further improve accessibility and overall travel convenience, dedicated shuttle services connecting residential communities with scenic destinations should be introduced, thereby ensuring both mobility and health security for elderly users.

5.2. Promote digital inclusion and universal service adaptation

A dual-track service model integrating both online and offline channels should be implemented to accommodate the preferences of the silver-haired population. Traditional service options, such as manual service counters and cash payment methods, should be retained to align with established usage habits. At the same time, digital assistance stations should be set up in key areas, accompanied by targeted training programs to improve older adults' proficiency in using smart devices. Furthermore, user interfaces should be optimized through the provision of large-print displays and voice-guided navigation, while reservation procedures should be simplified to reduce complexity. These measures collectively aim to eliminate digital access barriers and promote inclusive service delivery for the elderly population.

5.3. Improve the supply of community-embedded leisure spaces

Efforts should be made to promote the development of accessible community-based facilities, including pocket parks, fitness trails, and cultural activity corners, in order to establish a "15-minute leisure life circle" tailored to the needs of the silver-haired population. At the same time, community platforms should be leveraged to regularly organize group-based leisure activities, interest clubs, and collective outings. Such initiatives can enhance social interaction, increase participation frequency, and foster sustained engagement among older adults.

5.4. Strengthen safety guarantees and risk prevention mechanisms

A comprehensive safety management framework tailored to the silver-haired population should be established, including the development of elderly-friendly crowd control measures and early warning systems. Tourism consumption pricing and service standards should be standardized and strictly regulated to prevent exploitative

practices targeting older individuals. In addition, the promotion of leisure accident insurance and the implementation of emergency contact card systems are recommended to enhance individual risk preparedness. Furthermore, a coordinated emergency response mechanism involving scenic areas, local communities, and healthcare institutions should be strengthened to ensure timely and effective intervention, thereby improving the overall sense of safety among elderly participants.

5.5. Activate local culture and emotional experience design

Local cultural resources should be deeply integrated by incorporating Yi ethnic traditions, aerospace heritage, and ecological elements into the design of tourism products. This integration can support the development of culturally immersive experiences, interactive folk activities, and nostalgia-oriented participation programs tailored to the preferences of the silver-haired population. In addition, themed cultural festivals and distinctive leisure routes should be created to enhance emotional engagement and reinforce cultural identity. Such initiatives can foster a stronger sense of meaning, belonging, and personal fulfillment among elderly participants.

5.6. Establish a multi-party collaborative governance mechanism

A collaborative promotion model should be established, engaging multiple stakeholders including government agencies, local communities, scenic areas, social organizations, and families. Within this framework, standardized service guidelines for leisure tourism targeting the silver-haired population in Xichang City should be formulated to ensure consistency and quality of service delivery. Additionally, mechanisms such as volunteer companionship programs and family-supported participation systems should be encouraged to strengthen social support networks. Through these coordinated efforts, a comprehensive leisure service ecosystem can be developed, characterized by community-based support, adaptive scenic area services, active social involvement, and meaningful family participation.

6. Conclusion and prospects

6.1. Research conclusions

Based on the PERMA theoretical framework, this paper empirically examines the influencing mechanisms of well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population in Xichang City, with the following main conclusions:

- (1) The five dimensions of the PERMA theory (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment) have a significant positive impact on the well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population, serving as the intrinsic psychological foundation for the generation of well-being;
- (2) Five external factors, health support and travel convenience, digital inclusion and service accessibility, community embeddedness and public leisure provision, safety perception and risk protection, and cultural identity and local emotional connections, are key constraints affecting the well-being of the silver-haired population: health and travel determine the possibility of tourism participation for the silver-haired population, digital inclusion affects their experience efficiency, community embeddedness enhances their sustained participation, safety guarantees stabilize their psychological expectations, and cultural identity strengthens their deep value perception;

- (3) The intrinsic psychological dimensions and external environmental factors interact and synergize to jointly constitute the generation mechanism of well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population. By optimizing external supply, strengthening age-appropriate adaptation, and emphasizing health and cultural orientation, the levels of various PERMA dimensions can be effectively enhanced, thereby significantly improving the well-being of the silver-haired population.

6.2. Research limitations and future prospects

This study has certain limitations as outlined:

- (1) It only conducts cross-sectional research in a single case area, and the generalizability of the conclusions to the silver-haired population in different regions requires comparison and verification through multiple case studies;
- (2) It does not incorporate moderating variables such as family structure, social support, and living arrangements, and the boundary conditions of the influencing mechanisms of well-being among the silver-haired population need to be further explored;
- (3) The long-term implementation effects of the countermeasures have not been empirically evaluated.

Future research can be expanded in three following aspects:

- (1) Conduct comparative studies across multiple cities and ethnic regions to reveal the differential and common mechanisms of well-being derived from local leisure tourism among the silver-haired population in different regions;
- (2) Use longitudinal tracking data to examine the dynamic changes in well-being among the silver-haired population;
- (3) Focus on key directions such as digital age-appropriateness, community health and wellness, and cultural elderly care to conduct policy simulations and evaluate implementation effects, providing more systematic and precise theoretical support and practical solutions for the implementation of China's proactive aging strategy and the construction of a silver-haired-friendly society.

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