

Travel phenomenon and Lifestyle of Retired Individuals in China: A Deep Interview Analysis

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Date: 04/06/2024

Abstract

The aim of this research was to identify how do lifestyle commonalities of elderly travelers influence the tourism phenomenon in China. To do so, this research used in-depth interviews with seven elderly tourists aged 55 to 65. By examining their lifestyle commonalities and travel behaviors, this study identified several key findings: Elderly travelers engaging primarily in informal social activities showed distinct preferences for independent or group travel, with those frequently involved in formal activities leaning more towards independent travel. Additionally, individuals with busy and energetic lifestyles preferred fast-paced travel, integrating their dynamic daily habits into their travel experiences, reflecting their active and vigorous lifestyles. This research highlights the intricate interplay between the lifestyles and travel behaviors of elderly individuals. It underscores the necessity for further studies to comprehensively explore these dynamics. Understanding these relationships can provide valuable insights for developing tailored travel interventions and programs that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of elderly travelers.

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Introduction

Due to the limited proficiency of elderly individuals in using the internet, the presence of them is seldom acknowledged online, causing this group seemingly overlooked in societal discourse. Meanwhile, the elderly historically have often been perceived as homogeneous, ailing, and aging market segment with low purchasing power (González, Rodríguez, Miranda, & Cervantes, 2009; Metz & Underwood, 2005), making this group less attractive to the tourism industry. Patterson (2006) emphasizes that both print and television advertisements for tourism seldom cater to or acknowledge the elderly. Furthermore, despite efforts by the hotel industry to adapt to demographic shifts (Sund, 2013), it still falls short of fully meeting the needs of the elderly as a distinct market segment (Chen et al., 2013). Many industries do not pay attention to the elderly and do not study them as a market segment.

However, the elderly population is becoming an increasingly large group that cannot be ignored. In China, according to the 7th China national census in November 2020, the ageing population over 60 years old reached 264 million, accounting for 18.70 percent, compared to 13.26 percent in 2010, marking the country's official entry into an aging society (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2021). According to the "World Population Prospects 2019" prediction, by 2035, China's population aged 65 and above is expected to exceed 300 million, constituting 20.68% of the total population, ushering the country into the super-aged society phase (United Nations, 2019). At the same time, the modern elderly population is healthier, has better retirement savings, and has a higher desire for an active cultural life than previous generations of elderly people (Knickman and Snell, 2002; Longino, 1994; Wijaya et al., 2018; Kim & Kim, 2020a). The size of the elderly and their changing attitudes towards cultural life indicate that tourism for the elderly will become a huge market.

Elderly tourism has attracted some scholars to conduct research on it. In terms of travel motivation, one of the most commonly used theories is the push-pull theory, which explains why tourists are attracted to a destination (pull) and away from their home (push) (Otoo & Kim, 2020a). Some scholars have also studied the relationship between demographic factors and travel motivations

(Alén et al., 2017; Moniz et al., 2020). However, few studies have distinguished the travel motivations of elderly tourists from the perspective of lifestyle, and it is even less known how the lifestyles of Chinese elderly tourists affect travel motivations. The main objective of lifestyle market segmentation approach is to classify different consumer based on lifestyle and personality (Akkaya, 2021), in order to understand the underlying travel motivations of older adults from the outset.

Recent research has clarified the significant role of senior tourism in global economic development. It suggests that retired seniors, who now have the freedom to travel year-round, could offer a solution to the challenge of peak and off-season tourist demands. By using this demographic, destinations and tourism providers could achieve a more balanced flow of visitors throughout the year, ultimately fostering economic stability in the tourism sector. (Hunter-Jones & Blackburn, 2007).

Therefore, the following problem statements has been developed:

How do lifestyle commonalities influence the tourism phenomenon of elderly travelers?

To further guide this research, the following objectives are created:

1. To identify lifestyle segmentations of the elderly tourists
2. To identify travel phenomenon of the elderly tourists
3. To explore are there any relations between lifestyle segmentations and travel phenomenon of the elderly tourists

Literature review

Market of elderly tourism

Most studies use 55 years of age as the criterion for classifying the elderly (Otoo and Kim, 2020). This age is considered as the dividing line for elderly individuals because, apart from being the statutory retirement age in most countries, it is characterized by significant changes in cognitive, functional, and physiological abilities, as well as legal or statutory recognition (Hsu et al., 2007; Tiago et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2017). In China, the legal retirement age is 55 for women and 60 for men.

Elderly travelers are becoming a very profitable market, due to their level of wealth and health, higher levels of discretionary income, lower consumer debt, more free time to travel, and tendency to travel longer distances and for greater lengths of time (Horneman, Carter, Wei, & Ruys, 2002; Shoemaker, 2000). Kim (2020) found that the prevailing consensus from past research is that elderly travelers exhibit significant differences from individuals in other age groups across various variables. Consequently, categorizing elderly consumers solely based on age might lead tourism destination marketers to overlook crucial aspects of this lucrative market.

Motivation of elderly travel

Travel motivations based on the push and pull factors has been widely discussed (Jang & Wu, 2006). Push factors refer to the internal motivations and needs of the individual that drive them to travel. These factors are usually related to the individual's internal needs, interests and desires. Pull factors refer to the various attractions and features offered by the destination itself or the tourism product that attract tourists to travel to that place, push factors and pull factors work together in the choice of a trip. Regarding push features, Sie et al. (2016) identified six broad experiences of older adults can be motivation of travel: refreshment, socialization, bonding time, intellectual experiences and self-fulfillment, nostalgia, and health and physical fitness. More researches consider both push and pull factors. In study by Patuelli and Nijkamp (2016), culture/nature, experience/adventure, relaxation/well-being/escape, socialization, and self-esteem/ego-enhancement were postulated to be the key motives of travel among seniors. Otoo and Kim (2020) analysed researches from 1980 to 2017, listed the top reported motives for the pursuit

of leisure among seniors were ‘family and friends’, ‘cultural attractiveness’, ‘pride of visit/telling others’, ‘escape stress/boredom/hustle’, ‘seek or escape weather’, ‘rest and relaxation’, and ‘sports/physical invigoration’.

Hsu et al. (2007) conducted in-depth interviews with 27 elderly Chinese individuals in Beijing and Shanghai, proposing a model of elderly tourism motivation based on the social and cultural background of China. The study suggests that the travel motivations of elderly Chinese individuals are determined by internal desires and external conditions. Internal desires encompass aspects such as enhancing wellbeing, breaking away from routines, socializing, acquiring knowledge, fostering pride and patriotism, seeking personal gratification, and experiencing nostalgia. External conditions include factors like social advancement, personal finances, time availability, and health status.

Many researchers agree that unearthing the travel motivations of the senior population is a dynamic process that requires a thorough understanding of the intricacies of the senior traveller (Otoo & Kim, 2020). One of the purposes of this research is to analyze whether the lifestyle of elderly tourists have an impact on travel motivation.

Socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, health status, family, education, marital status and economic status play a crucial role in the vacation behavior of the elderly (Romsa & Blenman, 1989). These variables have long been identified in the tourism literature to provide causal insights into tourism phenomena (Kim and Kim, 2018; Kim and Qu, 2002). Baloglu and Shoemaker (2001) found that income distinguishes senior travelers who engage in motor coach tours, while age lacks significance at the 0.5 significance level. Likewise, Jang and Wu (2006) observed that among senior tourists, motivational factors are influenced by income and health status but not by age or gender.

Lifestyle segmentation

Segmentation is the key to any brand's success in the market. Because the consumer groups in the market are so diverse, companies need to focus on more homogeneous subgroups to better meet their needs and provide effective marketing strategies (Akkaya, 2021). Early market segmentation research focused on macro-based fundamentals such as economic, demographic, and geographic (Hassan & Craft, 2005). But concerns have gradually arisen among scholars as they find that segmenting markets based on macro-level foundations may not be as effective as anticipated. This is because the differences between various groups are not always apparent; individuals sharing similar demographic variables may exhibit vastly different attitudes and behaviors (Akkaya, 2021). At the same time, relying solely on demographic or geographical dimensions is insufficient to manage market complexity (Green & Boshoff, 2002). Therefore, there has been a trend of integrating psychology with marketing, with research on the relationship between lifestyle patterns and consumer behavior dating back to the 1960s (Akkaya, 2021a). Based on the integration of psychographics and market segmentation literature, Wells & Tigert (1971) developed a model called the AIO scale to measure consumer activities, interests, and opinions. This scale focuses on how consumers spend their leisure time, what interests them, and their views on various lifestyle patterns. However, the AIO scale is typically lengthy, involving hundreds of questions, which imposes significant time costs on researchers. Kamakura & Wedel (1995) found that surveying a subset of individuals and categorizing them into different lifestyle segments, and then conducting interviews with others in the study to classify them into similar lifestyle groups can achieve consistent results with the AIO scale for all individuals. This approach significantly reduces the cost for researchers.

The research on elderly tourism lags behind. It wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s, following the introduction of lifestyle segmentation into marketing, that research on elderly tourism gained popularity (Akkaya, 2021b). Initially, the elderly traveler market was considered a large, homogeneous group defined solely by age. Such criteria may lead to misconceptions and stereotypes (Schewe, 1990). Different personalities, life experiences, and perceptions can result in varying age cognitions (Kim & Kim, 2020b).

In 1988, Day, Davis, Dove, and French (Day et al., 1987) studied the elderly market through lifestyle variables. They examined whether distinct segments existed within the elderly market and determined whether these segments could be reached effectively and efficiently through different media and messages. They used data collected from elderly women (aged 65 and above) and categorized them into 4 groups: active integrated, disengaged integrated, passive dependent, and defended constricted. They concluded that media habits varied considerably among the groups, suggesting that a lifestyle-segmentation approach to advertising is not only appropriate but crucial.

Małgorzata Dzięgielewska (2006) divided activities of the elderly into three types: formal – regarding participation in social organizations, in politics, in the works; informal – consisting of contact with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours; and solitary – which includes watching TV, reading, and developing one’s own interests and hobbies.

Grażyna Orzechowska (1999) categorizes elderly people’s activities by areas of interest: Home/family activities – which refers to running a household and participating in immediate family life; Cultural activities – which include reading, watching TV, listening to the radio and participating in cultural institutions and senior citizens’ clubs; Professional activities – which fulfill the need for recognition, usefulness and suitability; Social activities – which involve participation in various organizations; Educational activities – which help older individuals in continuous self-improvement; Religious activities; Recreational activities – such as working on the field, relaxation, physical exercise and favourite activities done for pleasure (Orzechowska 1999).

Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and techniques employed to address the research question. Additionally, it outlines the procedures for data collection and analysis, along with a discussion of the ethical consideration.

In order to explore the connection between elderly tourism behavior and their lifestyles, qualitative research was employed. This study falls within the interpretive paradigm as it aims to examine people's cognition and motivations, determining why individuals make certain choices (Hay, 2016). According to Hay (2021), when the aim is to investigate people's behaviors and motivations and collect diverse opinions, interviews are an appropriate method. As this study focuses on understanding the lifestyles and travel experiences of elderly tourists, semi-structured interviews are highly suitable. A semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions (Clifford et al., 2016). Compared to questionnaire surveys, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows researchers to ask follow-up questions based on the important aspects mentioned by the participants (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Study area

Taking into account that the focus of the study is on elderly tourists, we have chosen Nanjing as the area for recruiting participants. Nanjing, the capital city of Jiangsu Province, is characterized by its high level of economic development, with a per capita GDP ranking among the top three in China (Tencent News, 2023). Zhang and Feng (2018), referencing data from households in mainland China, discovered that families with urban household registration (known as "hukou") tend to have higher expenditures related to travel compared to households in other regions. Alegre, Mateo, and Pou (2009) used data from the Spanish Household Expenditure Survey from 1987 to 1996 and found that households living in large cities are generally more likely than other households to engage in travel and tourism. According to the survey data from the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2019), the elderly population aged 60 and above in Nanjing accounts for 21% of the total population, indicating that Nanjing has entered a stage of deep aging, which aligns with our target group for research. Additionally, according to the data from the Seventh National Census of Nanjing City (2021), the educational attainment level of the city's permanent residents is relatively high, with the rate of holding a university degree ranking first in the province and among the top three nationwide. Research by Hawes (1988) confirms that people with a propensity to travel have some predictable general characteristics, such as higher

educational levels, higher income levels, smaller family sizes, proactiveness, and the ability to embrace uncertainty during travel. Therefore, Nanjing is highly suitable as a research pilot site, providing us with a rich and representative sample.

Data collection

The target population of this study includes individuals aged 55 and above, which has been commonly used as the criterion for defining elderly individuals in previous research (Otoo et al., 2020). However, after interviewing two tourism professionals, we found that the primary determinant for elderly individuals deciding whether to participate in tourism activities is whether they have grandchildren who require care. Therefore, in order to control for variables and solely explore the relationship between lifestyle and travel motivations, individuals were selected based on the following criteria: (i) they are elderly individuals who are retired and have no grandchildren to care for, indicating that they are not constrained by time; (ii) they have a stable pension and perceive their economic status positively, indicating that finances will not be a limiting factor; and (iii) they have traveled in the past 12 months to ensure that they can recall their travel experiences. Participants will be recruited online using a snowball sampling method. The researcher contacted two tourism professionals in the Nanjing hoping they can introduce one eligible participant. After conducting interviews with these participants, they will be asked to provide contact information for other individuals who might meet the research criteria.

To explore the motivations of tourists, we contacted two professionals in the tourism industry based in Nanjing. One is a client manager at an insurance company. Her work involves organizing travel activities for her clients, as a way of rewarding them while also introducing insurance products. Her primary clients consist of retired older adults with sufficient financial resources to purchase investment-linked insurance products. The client manager introduced us a 57-year-old retired woman, who served as the starting point for our snowball sampling. The other professional is an owner of a private travel agency. He expressed his willingness to be interviewed but mentioned that he would not be able to introduce participants to us. He provided extensive insights

into senior travelers.

Coincidentally, seven eligible participants were recruited. The interview with the travel agency has been recorded as well and included as part of the background information. Five out of seven participants were women, aged between 55 and 65. Most of them were married, with the exception of one divorced participant, and all had at least an undergraduate education.

We conducted 30 to 60-minute telephone interviews with the seven participants. Most of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin, with some parts in the Nanjing dialect. The researcher was familiar with both and had no problem in understanding the meanings of the conversations. A pre-designed interview record sheet was used, featuring both semi-structured and open-ended to encourage interviewees to express thoughts and feelings freely. The interviewer used probing and paraphrasing to facilitate recalls and allow delayed responses. A set of open-ended questions included:

1. What are your hobbies and interests, and how do you plan your time on weekends?
2. Are you a member of any organization and will you participate in social or volunteer services?
3. Have you participated in local community, sporting or cultural events?
4. Do you have a reading habit? If so, what kind of books do you like to read?
5. Do you exercise regularly?
6. What is your media preference?
7. Who do you usually travel with?
8. Do you prefer independent travel, all-inclusive guided tours, or something in between?
9. Where do you find tourism information?
10. Can you recall the destinations of your recent trips and briefly describe it?

11. When selecting a travel destination, which factors are most important to you?

12. What is your travel motivation?

The findings of the study will not be used for generalizations or predictions, as it focusses on individual opinions and experience that do not adequately represent broader perspectives. Instead, the results will be used to explain current market trends and will serve as a comparative reference with previous studies to develop a theoretical proposition.

Research ethics

Its important to be aware of ethical consideration within all researches. all individuals will receive a detailed explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and they will sign a consent form indicating their voluntary agreement to participate. Participants' rights will be emphasized, including ensuring anonymity, secure storage of their information, and their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. The study will ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all personal information and interview data, with participants assigned unique identifiers to protect their identities. Data will be securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. The research will be designed to avoid causing any harm or distress to participants, and sensitive topics will be approached with care, allowing participants to skip any uncomfortable questions. Prior to the interview, participants will also be asked for consent regarding audio recording.

Results

Profile of respondents

Among the interviewees, 5 were women and only 2 were men. Due to the statutory retirement age in China being 55 for women and 60 for men, all interviewees meet the criteria. The age of the

interviewees ranged from 55 to 65, with 4 of them being under 60. All interviewees had an associate degree or higher, and three of them had postgraduate degrees. In terms of household income, the interviewer did not specifically ask their earnings, but during the interviews, all respondents expressed satisfaction with their social status. When it comes to travel, they valued having a satisfying experience over the cost. This indicates that the respondents have a high self-assessment of their economic status. The detailed information of the respondents is shown in the table below:

Respondents	Age	Gender	Occupation
1 QH	57	Female	Researcher
2 QLQ	62	Female	Bank employee
3 ZCL	56	Female	Researcher
4 LB	59	Female	Company manager
5 YLH	58	Female	Prof
6 ZBT	61	Male	Researcher
7 CG	64	Male	Prof

Personal and historical background

The interviewees experienced different periods of contemporary Chinese history. They were born between 1955 and 1969, with some having lived through the Great Chinese Famine and all having experienced the Cultural Revolution, the restoration of the college entrance examination, and the era of economic reform and opening-up. During their childhood, they experienced poverty to varying degrees, and these early experiences continue to influence their consumption views and life perspectives. These habits remain deeply ingrained as part of their lifestyle into adulthood. They follow frugality and pragmatism; even though they are relatively affluent and have achieved financial freedom, they still do not pursue a luxurious lifestyle and strive to avoid extravagance.

When asked about their preferences for hotels during travel, one respondent said,

"I don't have any specific requirements for hotel brands; as long as it's clean and comfortable, it's fine. Although I am financially well-off, I believe the focus of travel is on the experience and exploration, not on staying in a luxurious hotel. For me, having a quiet, tidy place to rest that

allows me to have the energy to appreciate the local culture and scenery is satisfactory." (QH, 57 years old, female, researcher)

They feel a sense of undeservingness towards hedonistic travel. One participant noted,

"If it's just lying on an island for one or two weeks, it seems a bit too relaxed, but I know some Veteran Cadres who vacation on islands in winter and go to the north to escape the summer heat. They even have dedicated summer resorts; such people do exist." (YLH, 58 years old, female, prof)

Compared to demonstrating social prestige and enjoying material comforts, the interviewees place more importance on the enrichment of their spiritual world.

This generation appears to be more fortunate compared to those before them. Although they experienced poverty in their youth, they benefited from the restoration of the college entrance examination¹, making them typical examples of changing their destiny through education. Due to the job assignment system for graduates², college graduates were assigned to various state-owned enterprises, government agencies, and public institutions. These jobs were very stable, and their pensions were more generous compared to those in the private sector. One interviewee said,

"I feel like I benefited from the system's advantages; my pension is much higher than others. Some retirees from private companies only get four to five thousand yuan a month, which is not enough, and they have to find another job to make ends meet." (ZCL, 56years old, female, researcher)

As witnesses to China's economic development and beneficiaries of its political system, they possess a strong sense of national pride and patriotism.

¹ China's college entrance examination system was established in 1952 as a national unified college entrance examination. It was abolished during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In 1977, with the end of the Cultural Revolution, the college entrance examination system was restored, providing millions of young people with the opportunity to receive higher education.

² Before 1980, China implemented a planned economy system, and the government implemented a policy of assigning jobs to college graduates. After the reform and opening up, this policy gradually gave way to a market-oriented employment mechanism. In 1993, the policy of job assignment was formally abolished, and college graduates began to enter the job market and seek employment on their own.

Lifestyle segmentation and Travel behavior

The analysis of the transcription of the interview about elderly tourists' lifestyle and travel behavior resulted in the identification of three sub-themes under the lifestyle segmentation category: online content preference, hobbies and interests, and social contact. Under the travel behavior category, six themes were identified: travel companions, independent/group travel, travel pace, activity preference, travel motivation and tourism information sources.

Online content preference

Regarding online content preference, respondents are able to clearly state their preferences, such as entertainment, gardening, literature, film and television appreciation, health, and political commentary. They demonstrate strong subjectivity in selecting online content. However, there are clearly divided attitudes towards short videos. Some respondents completely reject short videos, believing that this unconscious information absorption can lead to loss of critical thinking, conformity, and judgment errors. As QH stated, *"I never watch TikTok. I feel that too much fragmented, fast-paced, highly stimulating information will make me restless and unable to focus. I prefer to search for answers myself when I have questions."* YLH's reason is: *"I don't watch short videos. In fact, I don't like watching this kind of Algorithm-Driven Platform at all. I feel like I'm living in an information bubble and losing the real perception of the world. I find this terrifying."* On the other hand, another group of people have an accepting attitude towards short videos. These respondents believe that short videos can serve as a way to relax and quickly understand current trends and news events. The two groups of people show significant differences in obtaining travel advice, which will be mentioned in the following text.

Interests and hobbies

Respondents' interests and hobbies can be categorized into three major categories: performing arts,

sports, and knowledge acquisition. Performing arts include piano, vocal music, and dance; sports include swimming, hiking, and fitness; knowledge acquisition includes reading, attending lectures, and visiting exhibitions. Respondents are not limited to one interest category but span across two or more major categories. These three major categories are further divided into regular and irregular interests. Individuals with regular interests, such as QH, exhibit the most energetic demeanor during travel.

Social contact

Social contact refers to social participation. The researcher asked the respondents whether they had joined any fixed external group outside of their interactions with family members. Lemon, Bengtson, & Peterson (1972) classified activities into informal, formal, and solitary types. Social activities can be divided into formal and informal according to the degree and intensity of intimacy (Lemon et al., 1972). Formal activities refer to activities conducted through formal organizations that are based on specific goals and focused on achieving a goal. In contrast, informal activities include interactions with family, friends, and neighbors. It has universality of purpose and focuses on emotional functions (Kim, 2009). The four female participants tended to be consistent in terms of social activities. Formal activities and solitude dominated their lives. They said they had their own social circles outside the family, participated frequently in social activities, and played an active role in social participation. QH is one of the most fulfilling participants in social life. She describes her retirement life like this: *"I basically go to the gym every day, take online piano lessons on Wednesday nights, and go to the teacher's house to learn drama on Thursdays. Sometimes the community If there are handicraft classes, I will go there, and if I can get tickets for a lecture held by the Nanjing Museum, I will go too..."* These four female participants participated in at least one formal social activity every week, including senior universities, community choirs, outdoor hiking activities and more.

The only exception among female participants is ZCL, whose social life is mainly informal activities. She said: *"I hang out with my college friends every day now, play mahjong, go shopping, and nothing else. We are friends, and my colleagues are not here now..."* Male

interviewees surprisingly do not have the habit of participating in regular formal activities. Their social activities are limited to informal activities, only among friends, colleagues, and family members. The differences between their social activities are also evident in travel behavior.

Travel behavior and its connection with lifestyle

This category explores the participants' preferences in terms of travel arrangements, including how they choose travel companions and whether they prefer independent travel or group tours. It is noteworthy that all seven participants, regardless of whether they opt for independent travel or group tours, rely on online platforms. Even if they do not book travel products through these platforms, they still consult them for information.

1.Travel companions

Two different perspectives on travel companionship have emerged among the participants. One group insists on having a travel companion, as described by ZCL: *"I believe that having a companion is essential for traveling. After all, humans are social animals. Traveling alone is not enjoyable, and my personality is not suited for spontaneous solo trips..."*

On the other hand, for another group of participants, the presence or absence of a travel companion is not their primary consideration. LB expressed this viewpoint: *"Most of the time, I travel alone. I don't actively seek out companions because traveling has become so convenient nowadays. For short trips, I just hop in my car and go, and for longer journeys, I take a flight. Finding a travel companion is actually quite challenging. You need to have similar interests and values for it to work out..."*

It is worth noting that among our study participants, those who prefer traveling with companions tend to have informal activities dominating their social interactions, whereas those who do not prioritize having companions tend to have formal social activities as their main social engagements.

2. Independent travel and group tours

Regarding independent travel and group tours, participants have varied perspectives on this issue, with different emphases. Some believe that group tours are more convenient as they don't require the effort of planning and organizing, while independent travel necessitates preparation and decision-making. Others' concerns are not about the intellectual aspect but rather about the need to coordinate with others' itineraries in group tours, restricting the freedom to arrange their own schedules, whereas independent travel offers more freedom.

QH, who prefers independent travel, believes it requires more mental effort than group tours and chooses it for this reason. She explained her rationale: *"The advantage of independent travel is that it requires using your brain, such as figuring out how to buy tickets, arrange transportation, and plan itineraries. Completing these tasks gives me a sense of accomplishment and a deeper impression of the trip. Through independent travel, I can have a more comprehensive understanding of a city, including its layout, the lives of local people. I can even visit local markets, universities, and factories to learn about their culture. I enjoy interacting with strangers, and chance encounters and conversations during independent travel are something I really like, from which I can gain a lot of information. In contrast, group tours feel like blindly following a guide, and I can't acquire the same level of information and knowledge."*

Other participants' responses were not as definitive as QH's. For example, CG stated, *"I prefer group tours, but for short trips of two or three days, I might choose to travel independently, or find a local travel agency."* ZCL's response also depends on the situation: *"I can go either way. Last year, I traveled independently to Hainan because I went with friends. But Xinjiang is different; it's too vast and is more suitable for group tours."*

3. Travel pace

Regarding the pace of travel, the majority of participants expressed a preference for leisurely travel. ZCL stated, *"I like to take it easy; I don't enjoy rushing to hit the road early in the morning, and I don't want to be too tired."* However, she also pointed out, *"But people who are working*

definitely want to see everything in the limited time they have, so I think everyone's travel style is closely related to their own circumstances. Now that I'm retired and have sufficient pension, I can afford to travel like this. Even if I can't finish everything, I can always come back next time."

Only QH among the participants expressed a preference for arranging compact and fulfilling itineraries, displaying confidence in her own energy and physical capabilities.

4. Tourism Information Sources

The differences in online content preferences are most prominently reflected in obtaining travel information. As mentioned earlier, respondents who do not use algorithm-driven platforms tend to prefer obtaining travel information through their familiar online or offline travel agencies, or by directly interacting with people, rather than relying on content recommended by algorithms or short videos. On the other hand, those who accept algorithm-driven platforms are more inclined to choose popular tourist destinations that are often widely recommended and promoted on short video platforms.

5.Travel motivation and 6. travel activity

The range of travel motivations exhibited by participants was relatively narrow compared to previous research, indicating less diversity in motivational types. This could be understood due to the small sample size and the similar socio-demographic backgrounds of the seven participants, leading to a convergence of travel motivations. When asked about the specific motivations for their most recent trip, two types of responses emerged. One was proactive and subjective, such as deciding to visit a destination of interest (LB, YLH, QH, ZCL). The other was passive, mainly driven by invitations from friends or family (CG, QLQ, ZBT). When asked about what would motivate them to travel, cultural allure and novelty were identified as the primary factors. ZCL stated, *"I want to understand the local customs and culture, and I want to visit places I've never been to before. When I was working, I didn't have the opportunity to travel to many places I longed to visit for a long time. Now that I can move around and don't have grandchildren to take care of, I want to go and see them all."*

Although previous research has shown that pursuing self-esteem is a major travel motivator, all participants in this particular group unanimously stated that this was not a motivation for them. As ZCL said, *"I think we've passed the age of showing off. When we were young, we might have liked to brag to others, but now we are more practical and care more about our own experiences and feelings."* ZBT also expressed, *"I don't have the idea of feeling proud to tell others about my travels. I travel for my own pleasure, not for others. However, if I visit a place that is worth recommending, I will suggest it to others."*

When discussing travel activities, no significant differences in expectations emerged. Everyone showed interest in both cultural and natural tourist destinations, expressing a desire to experience any place they had not visited before, given the opportunity.

Discussion

This chapter delves into the research findings, establishes connections with existing literature, contextualizes the research results within the real-world background, and outlines the limitations and recommendations of the study. The study explored the potential relationship between the lifestyle of older adults and a range of travel behaviors, providing empirical evidence and interpretations.

The research identified associations between travel behavior and lifestyle, yet in practical terms, travel behavior is often more constrained by objective conditions. During the interviews, phrases like "I don't have grandchildren to take care of now" or "My retirement savings are sufficient" frequently emerged, indicating that even with strong preferences, individuals may need to adapt to external limitations. Insights from travel industry professionals further supplemented this understanding, as they prioritize age when recommending travel plans. For instance, they might suggest activities like river rafting, mountain climbing, or visiting the Great Wall to recently retired seniors, recognizing that their physical abilities may decline with age, rendering such

activities unfeasible in later years.

This study focused only on a small portion of older adults, making it challenging to generalize findings to the entire elderly population. It may require an intermediary variable to comprehensively consider individual experiences, external constraints, and other factors to better understand people's travel behavior.

Regarding travel motivations, nostalgia was not mentioned by any participant, likely because the sample consisted of younger seniors who had just retired and were entering a new phase of life, characterized by excitement and a desire to experience everything. However, nostalgia may become more prevalent as individuals become more aware of the imminence of death and the challenges associated with aging. Overall, nostalgia can provide a sense of continuity and help individuals maintain their sense of self. (Hajra, V., & Aggarwal, A, 2022)

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the complex interplay between lifestyle and travel behavior among older adults, highlighting the need for further research to explore these dynamics comprehensively. Understanding these relationships can inform the development of tailored travel interventions and programs that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of older adults.

Conclusion

In summary, the researchers discussed the respondents' lifestyle through online content preferences, interests and hobbies and social interactions, combined with travel companions, independent/group travel, travel pace, activity preference, travel motivation and tourism information sources respondents' travel behavior and looked for aspects that might influence each other.

For participants who accept algorithm-oriented platforms, they tend to search for travel information on these platforms, and the travel destinations they choose are often popular scenic

spots. Participants who do not accept such platforms are more accustomed to obtaining travel information through traditional methods, such as online or offline travel agencies, or communicating directly with others.

People with different social contacts show obvious differences in Travel companions. People who dominate informal social activities tend to travel with their companions. These interviewees are relatively extroverted and like to interact with others to gain energy. They pay more attention to group belonging and identity, and tend to maintain and enhance these feelings through informal social activities.

Participants who are more involved in formal social activities tend to prefer traveling alone, without necessarily requiring companions, as their social needs are lower. Formal activities are themed social events where these individuals can gain knowledge and experience without needing to establish deep emotional connections.

Regarding the choice between independent and group travel, the participant who is most involved in formal activities demonstrates the strongest inclination towards independent travel. Her rationale is that independent travel allows her to gain a sense of achievement and acquire more information, thereby gaining a better understanding of the city. This aligns with the concept of formal activities, as they provide a platform for participants to showcase themselves, acquire resources, and establish valuable connections. Generally, individuals who participate more in formal activities tend to prioritize personal achievement and professional development.

Regarding travel pace, individuals with busy and energetic lifestyles tend to incorporate their lifestyle habits into their travels. A fast-paced travel style is an extension of their vibrant and challenging lifestyle.

Cultural allure and novelty are the primary travel motivations for participants, with no mention of pursuing self-esteem or nostalgia.

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