



# Middle-aged and older adults' preferences for long-stay tourism in rural China

Jiaying Lyu<sup>a</sup>, Huan Huang<sup>a,\*</sup>, Zhenxing Mao<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, School of Management, Zhejiang University, 310058, Hangzhou, PR China

<sup>b</sup> The Collins College of Hospitality Management, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA, 91768, USA

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Rural  
Long-stay tourism  
Sojourn  
Tourist choice  
Mobility  
China

## ABSTRACT

Long-stay tourism is a diverse and lesser-known form of tourism that, despite its increasing scale and impact, has only recently become a focus of research. Long-stay destination attributes have typically been examined in the context of international retirement migration; however, little is known about long-stay tourist behavior in domestic rural destinations. Over the past decade, long-stay tourism has been increasingly considered a potential tool for rural communities seeking social and economic revitalization. Drawing upon the stimulus–organism–response model and residential mobility theory, this paper proposes and tests a model to understand the psychological needs of long-stay tourists and the relationships of these needs with visitors' destination attributes and preferences. Using data collected from residents of three first-tier cities in China (Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou), results reveal five destination selection themes: *familiarity*, *comfort*, *rurality*, *wellness*, and *publicity*. The findings also unveil the salience of each dimension through conjoint analysis. This study enriches and extends the literature on long-stay tourism and tourists, especially within Chinese rural destinations.

## 1. Introduction

With increased mobility, flexibility, life expectancy, and personal wealth to search for a better life, a growing number of tourists prefer to stay in tourism destinations for extended periods to immerse themselves in the environment (Ono, 2015; Xu & Wu, 2016). Long-stay tourism is a diverse and less widely known form of tourism that, despite its increasing scale and impact, has only recently become a research focus. The long-stay tourism market developed from seasonal tourism, wherein people travel to a warmer climate during the winter and a cooler climate during the summer (Smith & House, 2006). Long-stay tourism has been conceptualized as temporary or seasonal settlement in pursuit of a certain lifestyle, self-actualization, nature, culture, or health (Anantamongkolkul, Butcher, & Wang, 2019; Hongsranagon, 2006). Although the actual duration of long-stay tourism remains ambiguous, most scholars consider a long-stay holiday to be more than 10 days (Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, & Beaumont, 2010). Most long-stay tourists are retirees over the age of 60 who have ample time for relaxation and often prioritize “life” (i.e. everyday experiences) over travel (i.e. extraordinary experiences). Some long-stay travelers purchase a second home to have a relatively stable alternate destination; others do not purchase a

dwelling and can therefore choose their destinations more freely.

In the last decade, long-stay tourism has risen to prominence as a potential tool for rural communities seeking revitalization (Hedberg & Haandrikman, 2014). Relatively affluent or retired populations in urban areas may engage in long-stay tourism on their quest for a slower, more fulfilling life; through such tourism, these visitors often seek opportunities to enjoy an idyllic life in rural areas (Carson & Carson, 2018). Long-stay tourism in rural areas is particularly intertwined with a search for idyllic locations, modern communities, and tranquil settings (Han, 2019). The metropolitan–rural mobility associated with long-stay tourism can also enhance the connections between rural communities and major population, service, and political centers, thus facilitating development in rural regions (Woods, Flemmen, & Wollan, 2014). Many rural areas have launched long-stay tourism development projects in response to this growing market. Rural destination options for long-stay travelers have also expanded rapidly, rendering intense competition in the market. It is therefore necessary to investigate the attributes of long-stay destinations that most strongly attract tourists. Relevant findings can help these destinations maintain a competitive advantage.

China provides an appropriate case for studying long-stay tourism in rural areas. Over the last few decades, rural tourism has experienced

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [huanghuan@zju.edu.cn](mailto:huanghuan@zju.edu.cn) (H. Huang).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100552>

Received 24 December 2019; Received in revised form 28 December 2020; Accepted 29 December 2020

Available online 9 January 2021

2212-571X/© 2021 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

robust growth in this country (Guo & Han, 2010). Such tourism has hence become an effective catalyst for promoting industrial restructuring, agricultural development, and the revitalization of rural areas. Rural tourism in China has undergone four stages of development since the 1990s. As an early iteration, Nongjiale (Happy Farmer House) simply provided homemade food and home-stay accommodation services (Su, 2011). Later, Nongjiale evolved into a site for rural leisure tourism and began to offer experiential programs. Rural vacations have since emerged as an important rural tourism product (Han, 2019). To meet urban retirees' needs, rural tourism complexes and long-stay holiday products represent promising avenues. However, because the development of long-stay tourism in China has only recently attracted researchers' attention (Kou, Xu, & Hannam, 2017; Xu & Wu, 2016), a systematic understanding of middle-aged and older adults' preferences and associated backgrounds is lacking. To ensure the sustainable development of long-stay tourism in rural areas, scholars and practitioners urgently need a tool to analyze the attributes used to select a destination from urban residents' perspectives.

Long-stay destination attributes have typically been examined in the context of international retirement migration. With a few exceptions, the tourism and migration literature focusing on long-stay tourists in domestic rural destinations remains thin. As such, this research set out to identify attributes that may compel visitors to stay in rural areas for extended periods. Based on the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), this paper endeavors to situate long-stay tourism within the wider context of residential mobility and to explore the psychological needs of long-stay tourists and the relationships of these needs with travelers' destination attributes and preferences. Furthermore, this paper employed conjoint analysis to systematically evaluate how tourists value the features characterizing long-stay products. Then the effects of these destination features on visitors' stay intentions were assessed. Findings from this study contribute to an understanding of the nuances of the psychology and behavior of long-stay tourists. Practically, the results can help rural policymakers and rural entrepreneurs determine the current appeal of traditional rural villages to these tourists. This study could also prove useful for planning long-stay destinations and designing long-stay products.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Long-stay tourism

Long-stay tourism is a discretionary form of mobility that is between temporary and permanent in which tourists pursue relaxation, learning and experiential opportunities, a particular climate and/or lifestyle, natural beauty, culture, and better life conditions (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Hongsranagon, 2006). Situated in the grey area between short-term tourism and permanent migration, long-stay tourism has been referred to as “residential tourism” (Alarcón, González, & Pérez, 2010), “second-home tourism” (Wong & Musa, 2015), “seasonal mobility/migration” (Kou et al., 2017), and “lifestyle migration” (Cohen, Duncan, & Thulemark, 2015) in related literature. Thus, long-stay tourism blurs the boundaries between everyday life and travel or “home” and “away” with a shifted focus from movement to lifestyle choices (Cohen et al., 2015).

Long-stay tourists tend to be open, flexible, and tolerant (O'Reilly, 2006). Different from short-stay travelers and migrants, long-stay tourists possess distinct characteristics due to their extended lengths of stay and associated travel purposes. First, long-stay tourists generally undergo some degree of adjustment and adaptation to the host destinations through one or more of the following processes: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019; Berry, 1997). Although some visitors are inclined to adopt local norms to a certain extent (Gudykunst, 1998), others prefer a familiar lifestyle and attitude (Juan-Vigaray & Sarabia-Sánchez, 2013). Still

others may choose to eschew their home and host cultures while on holiday (Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019). Second, some long-stay tourists might develop a sense of belonging to host destinations during their visit and decide to immigrate later (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). Long-stay tourists' behaviors can even closely resemble those of local residents, although these tourists may express a limited sense of responsibility toward tourism development in the host destination (Salazar & Zhang, 2013). Third, long-term tourists are known for seeking pleasure and self-exploration to develop a stronger sense of self (O'Reilly, 2006). They may undertake a journey of self-discovery by abandoning their daily routine to develop resourcefulness and establish new self-understanding (Brown, 2009; Milstein, 2005). Most long-stay tourism studies have been conducted in developed countries and focused on long-haul international travel. Focal groups have included retirees from Nordic countries who migrated to Mediterranean areas (Casado-Díaz, 2006); British immigrants in rural France (Benson, 2010); “snowbirds” who moved from cold regions of North America to stay in the sunbelt zone of the southern U.S. (Smith & House, 2006); and “grey nomads”, who sojourned in suburbs or travel by caravan in Australia (Hillman, 2013). A few studies have considered Japanese retirees who moved to Southeast Asia (Miyashita, Akaleephan, Asgari-Jirhandeh, & Sungyuth, 2017; Ono, 2015). Overall, however, insufficient attention has been paid to developing countries, such as China.

Broadly, the research on long-stay tourism can be classified into two main groups: that on long-stay tourists, which specifically pertains to their motivations, perceptions, expectations, decision making, and behavior (Alarcón et al., 2010; Garau-Vadell & De-Juan-Vigaray, 2017); and that on host destinations, which includes various impact studies of long-stay tourism on host destinations' economic, social, and environmental statuses (Gascón, 2016). Despite the abundance of research on long-stay tourism, the extant literature is dominated by Western destinations in cross-border contexts (Cohen & Cohen, 2015).

Scholars have also explored the appealing attributes of long-stay destinations. As shown in Table 1, attractive features include a location's climate, slow pace of life, affordable cost of living, strong tourism infrastructure and services, health care facilities, access to markets and stores, friendly local people, and having family and friends in the destination. Two studies focusing on rural areas highlighted a rural lifestyle, local culture, and low costs as major components of destination attractiveness. Although long-stay travel is an important issue in tourism, the research to date has been mostly narrative with a focus on attributes; systematic studies that compare and summarize data on long-stay tourism remain limited. In addition, the trade-offs between attributes and dimensions in tourists' decision-making processes have been largely neglected.

### 2.2. Rural tourism

Tourism has been widely considered a viable economic option to promote the revitalization and rejuvenation of rural areas (Gao & Wu, 2017). Rural areas do more than merely produce agricultural commodities; they also serve as sites for nature, scenery, culture, and activities that draw tourists and urban inhabitants (Oh & Schuett, 2010). Rural tourism encompasses tourist activities based in rural areas, where tourists generally enjoy a rural way of life and/or nature (Hernández, Muñoz, & Santos, 2007). Rural tourism can be developed with less expense and damage than other rural economic development strategies, such as manufacturing (Edgell & Harbaugh, 1993). Moreover, this form of tourism can improve the local standard of living by creating more employment opportunities and better infrastructure and facilities, which further facilitate rural development (Lo, Chin, & Law, 2019).

Scholars have long recognized that visitors to rural destinations are seeking various characteristics. Examples include a sense of rurality (Hernández et al., 2007; Horton, 2008), namely, a “green and pleasant land” (Newby, 1985), idyllic areas, a leisurely daily rhythm, a sense of freedom and space, a state of peace and tranquility, experiences with

**Table 1**  
Latest empirical research on long-stay destination attributes.

Author(s)	Perspective	Research design	Attributes
Montezuma and McGarrigle (2019)	Lifestyle migration	Interview	Climate, quality of life, culture, amenities
Miyashita et al. (2017)	Retirement migration	Survey (N = 237)	Low cost of living, short flight time, warm weather, availability of long-term visa
Wong, Musa, and Taha (2017)	Second-home tourism	Survey (N = 504)	Amenities and facilities, easy pace of life, cost, climate, environment, friendly local people
Mussalam and Tajeddini (2016)	Long-term holiday	Mixed methods	Tourism services; tourism infrastructure (access to destination, sports facilities, efficiency of transportation); tourism attractions (architecture, natural resources, culture, entertainment events & festivals); destination brand/reputation; past experience
Wong and Musa (2015)	Second-home retirement	Interview	Climate, healthcare facilities, good amenities and residential areas
Abdul-Aziz, Loh, & Jaafer (2014)	Retirement migration	Mixed methods	Climate, living environment, cost of living, pace of life, access to medical care, access to markets and stores, direct flights home, compatriots from same country in destination, friends and family in destination
Salazar and Zhang (2013)	Seasonal lifestyle tourism	Ethnographic fieldwork	Rural setting, local culture

traditions and culture, and an idealized pre-industrial era of innocence (Han, 2019; Jepson & Sharpley, 2015). The demand for rural tourism is therefore a function of rural areas' features (Sharpley & Roberts, 2004), namely, tangible attributes, how tourists interact with those attributes, and the cultural meaning of an area (Jepson & Sharpley, 2015). Table 2 summarizes recent empirical studies regarding pertinent factors in the selection of rural tourism destinations. To date, studies have focused on the push-pull theory, destination competitiveness theory, social differentiation theory, and benefit-based motivation theory in explaining rural tourists' choices. Although rurality is widely acknowledged as the essence of rural tourism, researchers have identified several other driving factors, such as outdoor activities, tranquility, local cultural heritage, and natural landscape.

Research on rural tourists has featured consumerist approaches, whereby tourists consume places and material commodities (Oh & Schuett, 2010; Urry, 1995); existential approaches, whereby tourists seek tranquility and simplicity in everyday life (Dubois, Cawley, & Schmitz, 2017; Zhou, 2014); and community-focused approaches, whereby tourists intentionally pursue authenticity and sustainable development (Lo et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2019). Each of these perspectives provides an important view of rural tourism for tourists whose stays typically last from one to several days. However, much less is known about the perceptions of long-stay tourists, who search for better lives and subjective well-being in rural destinations as semi-residents or immigrants.

### 2.3. Rural tourism in China

Over the past four decades, the rural economy of China has witnessed

**Table 2**  
Latest empirical research on rural tourism destination attributes.

Author(s)	Theoretical foundation	Research design	Attributes
Han (2019)	Push-pull theory	On-site survey at a rural destination in China (N = 465)	Environmental quality, tranquil amenities, rural lifestyle
Lo et al. (2019)	Destination competitiveness	Survey (N = 314)	Tourism infrastructure, accommodation quality, range of activities, special events
Hewlett and Brown (2018)	Tourism planning	Mixed methods	Natural environment, pastoral landscape
Chin and Lo (2017)	Service quality	Survey (N = 400)	Climate, carrying capacity, relaxation environment, community support
Silva and Prista (2016)	Social differentiation	Mixed methods	Rural landscape, rustic architecture, rural way of life
Hernández, Suarez-Vega, & Santana-Jimenez (2016)	Hedonic price model	Secondary data	Structural factors (e. g. climate, facility amenities); low population density; coastal attractions; natural and cultural attractions
Gao, Barbieri, and Valdivia (2014)	Consumer preference	Survey (N = 741)	Natural environment and wildlife; agricultural landscape (e.g. crop farms, grassland, and pastures); cultural and historical elements
Molera and Pilar Albaladejo (2007)	Benefit segmentation	Survey (N = 335)	Natural environment, peacefulness, outdoor and cultural activities, rural life

a profound transformation from an agriculture-driven to a service-led economy (Liu & Wong, 2019). Tourism has repackaged suburban and rural areas into new spaces of leisure consumption, investment and employment, which has facilitated harmonious urban-rural integration (Li, Zhang, Zhang, & Abrahams, 2019). The cultural impacts of rural tourism development in China have also been well acknowledged, such as changing rural identity, preserving traditional culture, providing nostalgic sentiments and collective memory (Xue, Kerstetter, & Hunt, 2017). At the top policy level, tourism development is strongly encouraged in rural areas to mitigate poverty and transform the local economy as China advances its rural revitalization strategy and green development strategy (Gao & Wu, 2017). Rural areas attracted 3.3 billion tourists in 2019, generating spending of nearly one trillion yuan (China State Council, 2020).

The evolution of rural tourism products has experienced four stages: (1) Exploratory stage: The dominant form of rural tourism during this stage was Nongjiale (Happy Farm House), rural residents simply provided homemade food and home-stay accommodation services (Su, 2011); (2) Transformation stage: This was the stage in which rural destinations started to develop rural tourism attractions and explored leisure programs (e.g. farm tours, parks, breweries); (3) Development stage: During this stage, rural vacations, which expanded the size and scope of rural leisure tourism, emerged as an important rural tourism product (Han, 2019); (4) Advancement stage: Rural shifted during this stage from short-stay vacations to long-stay tourism. Rural tourism complexes and long-stay holiday products that met the growing demand

of urban retirees were aggressively promoted (Kou et al., 2017; Xu & Wu, 2016).

The main ways rural tourism in China differs from that in the West are as follows: the socioeconomic gap between rural and urban populations is larger; tourism development relies more on government support (infrastructure construction, land circulation, financial subsidies and capital investment); the sustainable use of resources is weaker; and service standards are lower (Su, 2011; Xue et al., 2017).

#### 2.4. Theoretical foundation

The SOR model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) was taken as the theoretical foundation of this study. This model suggests that a change in the environment is a stimulus (S) containing cues that combine to affect a living organism's internal evaluation (O), which elicits a reaction to the stimulus (e.g. approach or avoidance responses) (R) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the consumer behavior field, scholars have applied the S-O-R paradigm to explain how diverse environmental cues influence consumer decision making (Chang, Eckman, & Yan, 2011; Peng & Kim, 2014).

To analyze tourists' chosen long-stay destinations, it is critical to understand how moving affects tourists (Oishi, 2010). Prior research has shown that a mobile lifestyle evokes immediate psychological responses, such as anxiety, anticipated loneliness, uncertainty, excitement, conservative ideology, and conditional identification (Oishi & Talhelm, 2012). For instance, people contemplating a mobile lifestyle tend to use more anxiety-related words in their report compared to people who are considering a stable lifestyle (Oishi, Miao, Koo, Kisling, & Ratliff, 2012). Residential moves also alter people's social landscape (Eidse & Sichel, 2004). Given that it takes time to develop stable friendships, long-stay tourism can induce anxiety around concerns about social network disruption (Lun, Roth, Oishi, & Kesebir, 2013). Conversely, moving to a brand-new environment may enrich people's lives; excitement and curiosity can be generated through aspects of long-stay trips such as a novel environment, family reunions, and new work and leisure opportunities (Abdul-Aziz, Loh, & Jaafar, 2014).

More importantly, researchers have revealed that these psychological reactions have important implications for individuals and the destination communities. For example, the anxiety associated with relocating breeds familiarity-seeking behaviors, which leads to preferences for national chain stores (Oishi et al., 2012). A mobile life can also trigger a sense of uncertainty in terms of personal safety, daily inconveniences, and unclear regulations, which results in a conservative ideology (Wong & Musa, 2015). In response to the anticipated loneliness evoked by relocation, people engaged in a mobile lifestyle tend to be more proactive in expanding their social network, meeting new people, and establishing new relationships to minimize loneliness despite the expected short duration of their stay (Oishi et al., 2012). Moving to new places also brings its own sources of excitement, such as an increased desire to visit new places or try new things, thus evoking new demands for leisure-oriented amenities (Hongsranagon, 2006).

Scholars have mainly assumed a residential mobility perspective in studies related to individuals' permanent moves within urban environments in developed countries (Oishi, 2010; Scanlon & Devine, 2001). This study extended the approach to long-stay tourists in rural destinations in China, an emerging nation poised to become a developed society. Residential mobility was thus applied in a temporally, spatially, and culturally unique context in this study. Research has also suggested that the psychological consequences of residential mobility are subject to a contextual configuration of motivation, conditions, temporality, and culture (Oishi & Talhelm, 2012); that is, the effects of residential mobility vary based on factors such as one's experience with a previous move, the timing of the move, motivation, distance, and new inhabitation. Mobility ultimately comprises a set of social and psychological experiences that holistically result in favorable or unfavorable adjustment to a new place (Scanlon & Devine, 2001).

Based on the literature, this research proposes the following model of long-stay destination preferences based on the psychological consequences of residential mobility under the SOR framework (Fig. 1).

#### 2.5. Conjoint analysis

Tourists do not evaluate each attribute of a destination independently when making decisions. Instead, they consider the whole range of destination attributes. Conjoint analysis is a multivariate technique that can help reveal the trade-offs that tourists usually encounter when making decisions (Green & Srinivasan, 1990). By engaging respondents in a more realistic judgment scenario than the traditional item-based research method, conjoint analysis can better predict the combined effects of destination attributes on the preferences for a destination. The key to using this analysis is the selection of appropriate attributes and their levels (Hensher, 1994). Over the last few decades, a number of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of conjoint analysis for evaluating the preferences of destination choices in different contexts, such as selecting areas with restaurants, hotels, packaged tours, and luxury shopping (Hung, Guillet, & Zhang, 2018; Pai & Ananthakumar, 2017). For example, Hung et al. (2018) explored the destination preferences of mainland Chinese tourists within the context of luxury shopping using both conjoint analysis and traditional item-based methods. The different results from the two approaches suggested that conjoint analysis could be a more effective tool for understanding tourist preferences. To date, only a few studies have examined rural destination preference using conjoint analysis. For example, Yun (2009) examined Korean city dwellers' preferences for rural tourism sites. The most important attributes were experience programs and facility convenience. Jin and Park (2019) used IPA and conjoint analysis to identify the critical satisfaction factors of rural tourists in China. The findings indicated that two attributes, including the rurality activity experiences and rural tourism services, should be improved. Although these studies shed some light on rural tourist behavior, the trade-offs in destination choice for long-stay tourism have not yet been investigated in rural destinations.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. First-round survey

Two rounds of surveys were conducted to collect data. The first-round survey was intended to generate traits and identify attributes related to rural long-stay destinations. The questionnaire design process consisted of three steps: a critical review of the literature, an expert panel, and a pilot study. Based on the literature review and our theoretical framework, the initial domain dimensions and 49 measurement items of rural long-stay tourism were generated. To refine our measurement scales, an expert panel was held with five tourism scholars and a managerial-level practitioner in the rural tourism industry. These experts were asked to remove unnecessary items, refine ambiguous items, and suggest additional items if necessary. Thirty-one items were produced from the panel review. Then, a pilot test ( $N = 61$ ) was conducted to verify the utility of the measurement scales and modify the item descriptions.

The questionnaire for the first-round survey included three parts. The first part contained questions designed to gather information about the degree of importance tourists attached to the 31 items related to rural long-stay destinations (Table 3). The responses were based on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = not important at all, 7 = very important). The second section was used to collect respondents' demographic information (e.g. gender, age, educational level, monthly income, and job status). The last section included questions regarding past experiences in rural destinations for long-stay tourism, history of rural residency and visit intention to rural long-stay destinations in one year.

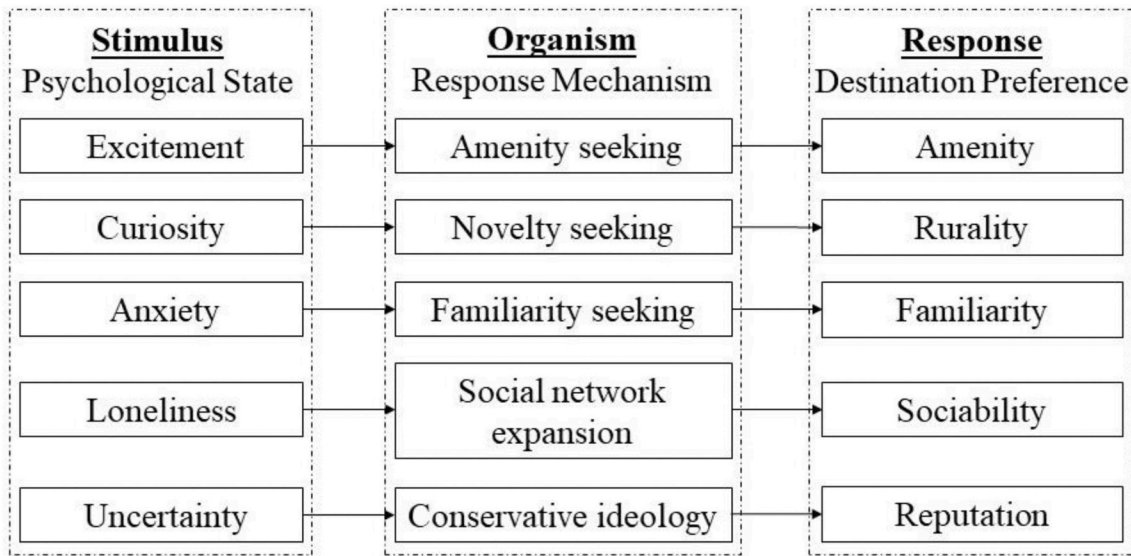


Fig. 1. Proposed theoretical framework.

Participants of this study were recruited from a Chinese online panel (KuRunData.com) that is similar to MTurk Prime. Online surveys are frequently adopted to collect data in extant research thanks to its reliable data quality and huge accessibility advantages. For example, respondents are more comfortable with giving an honest response as it offers a high level of confidentiality in online survey (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Lefever, Dal, & Matthíasdóttir, 2007). After comparing several online panels, KuRunData was finally chosen because it has a large pool of seniors. KuRunData has over 200,000 middle-aged and senior members, taking up around 9% of the sample pool. Several sampling criteria were used to recruit survey participants: (1) participant resides in one of the first-tier cities in mainland China (Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou); (2) participant is above 40 years old; and (3) participant’s monthly disposable income exceeds 5000 RMB (5000 RMB is the average income level calculated by the municipal statistics departments of the three chosen cities). The questionnaire was sent to 36,257 registered members from the subject pool of KuRunData who met the screening criteria. A total 721 of responses were collected with 600 valid responses remained for the study.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis with the varimax rotation method was employed to determine the underlying dimensions of the attributes pertaining to rural long-stay destinations. The factor extraction process was based on the following criteria: (1) items with factor loadings lower than 0.4 were removed; (2) judging by the “Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  if item was deleted” values, the items were removed to simplify the scale without reducing the internal reliability; and (3) each factor consisted of three or more items as observed variables. Twenty-five items were retained after subsequent refinement, and five underlying factors were generated. A stepwise regression was performed next to evaluate the contributions of the identified attributes to the respondents’ decision-making processes relative to the other potential factors included.

### 3.2. Second-round survey

The second-round survey involved a conjoint experimental survey to reveal respondents’ stated preferences for different destinations within the context of rural long-stay behavior. The conceptual model of conjoint analysis postulates that the utility of a product/service can be decomposed as a bundle of levels of a set of attributes. It can establish the relative values of each attribute and thus identified the trade-offs that customers usually make in choosing a product/service by producing two results: the part-worth utility (PU) of each attribute and the

relative importance of the attributes. Analytically, it is represented as follows:

$$U = U_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^{m_i} a_{ij} \tag{1}$$

$$C_i = \{ \max(a_{ij}) - \min(a_{ij}) \} \tag{2}$$

$$W_i = \frac{C_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n I_i} \tag{3}$$

where U is the total value; n = number of attributes;  $m_i$  = number of levels for attribute i;  $i = 1, \dots, n$ ;  $j = 1, \dots, m_i$ ;  $U_0$  is a constant;  $a_{ij}$  is the part-worth for attribute i and level j;  $C_i$  is the importance of attribute i; and  $W_i$  is the relative importance of i among the other attributes.

The conjoint analysis method has different analysis approaches, such as the full-profile approach, self-explication approach, hybrid approach and adaptive approach (Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Rao, 2014). The traditional approach, which is known as the full-profile approach, collects the stated preference ratings from the respondents using a series of hypothetical alternatives that are described with the set of attributes selected for the conjoint study. The self-explication method elicits attribute desirability and attribute importance directly from the respondents. The hybrid method involves a combination of several tasks to manage a large number of attributes in a conjoint study. The adaptive method first requires the respondents to complete a self-explication process and then rate the preferences for a set of paired partial profiles designed by the interactive computer software using the information collected in the first process. Although the latter three approaches have emerged in response to information overload issues for a large number of hypothetical profiles, they also reduce the validity and reliability of the results, as respondents are exposed to less detailed descriptions of different profiles that are similar to real choice situations (Gustafsson, Herrmann, & Huber, 2013; Hung et al., 2018). Thus, traditional conjoint analysis was adopted in this study.

Conjoint questions were designed using the SPSS conjoint module. First, a bipolar setting (high versus low) was applied for the five attributes derived from first-round survey data analysis. Then, 32 combinations ( $2^5$ ) of levels for each attribute were produced via the full-profile approach. Then, an orthogonal design generated 12 profiles consisting of 8 estimations and 4 holdouts, which made it possible to assess the relative importance of the selected attributes of the rural long-stay destination through a reduced sampling of the profiles (Box, Hunter,

**Table 3**  
Initial measurement scale for rural long-stay destination attributes.

Destination attributes	Destination traits	References
Amenity	Environmental quality (fresh air and clean water)	e.g. Lo et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2017; expert panel
	Weather	
	Tourism resources (e.g. natural and cultural scenic spots)	
	Special events and festivals	
	Entertainment activities	
Rurality	Wellness services (e.g. sport facilities, elderly nursing facilities)	e.g. Han, 2019; Silva & Prista, 2016; Wong et al., 2017; expert panel
	Natural pastoral view	
	Nostalgic rustic setting	
	Farm work participation	
	Slow lifestyle	
Familiarity	Unique folk culture	e.g. Abdul-Aziz et al., 2014; Lo et al., 2019; expert panel
	Fresh organic gastronomy	
	Visited destination before	
	Quality of accommodations	
	Wi-Fi availability	
	Overall hygiene and cleanliness	
	Off-site medical treatment	
	billing services	
	Treatment of medical conditions	
	Chain stores (e.g. restaurants, shopping malls)	
Sociability	Friends and relatives in destination	e.g. Hongsranagon, 2006; Wong et al., 2017; expert panel
	Long-stayers from same region in destination	
	Public transportation information	
	Distance from destination to city center	
	Mandarin Chinese use	
Reputation	Friendliness of locals	e.g. Abdul-Aziz et al., 2014; Mussalam & Tajeddini, 2016; expert panel
	Interaction with locals	
	Interaction with other long-stayers	
	Reputation of the destination	
	Renowned for long-stay tourism development	
	Renowned for safe environment	
	Comprehensive destination information	

& Hunter, 1978). Each profile was described as a hypothetical rural long-stay destination.

The questionnaire included three parts. The first part consisted of two items regarding the respondents' past experience in rural areas and five rating tasks on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = not important at all, 7 = very important) indicating the "absolute" importance of the five attributes identified before respondents were required to consider their "relative" importance involved in the conjoint experiment. These tasks were aimed at better familiarizing the respondents with the five attributes. In the second part, the respondents were expected to rate the presented destinations from 1 to 12, with 1 indicating their least likely choice and 12 indicating the most likely (see Appendix I). Each point could not be repeated, as outlined in the online survey design, so the rating number was utilized to quantify the preferences. In the last part, respondents' demographic information and other questions were requested. The results of the conjoint experiments were further considered with reference to these factors. The survey was administered through an online self-completion questionnaire by the same survey company, following the same criteria as the first-round survey. The questionnaire was sent to 34,183 registered members from the subject

pool of KuRunData who met the screening criteria. From July 6–20, 2019, a total of 653 responses were collected, with 600 valid responses remained for further analysis.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Respondent profile

Table 4 presents the profiles of the respondents from both survey rounds. The two rounds showed an average or near-average distribution in terms of the age group, gender, residential city, and educational level. Most respondents were employed (Round 1: 66.7%; Round 2: 64.2%) and earned a monthly disposable income above 8000 RMB but not more than 20,000 RMB (Round 1: 77%; Round 2: 68.2%). The majority of respondents had spent long-stay vacation in rural destinations (Round 1: 84.0%; Round 2: 86.8%). In the first round, 12.5% of respondents had ever lived in rural areas, while nearly half of the respondents in the second round had such experience.

### 4.2. Measurement refinement based on EFA

The EFA results revealed five factors consisting of 25 items (Table 5) with eigenvalues higher than 1.0. These five factors explained 54.764% of the total variance, exceeding the minimum threshold of 50% (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). All factors had Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values higher than 0.6. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p < 0.000$ ), and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value was 0.934, indicating sufficient construct reliability (Hair et al., 2009).

The first factor explained 13.590% of the variance with high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.805$ ), comprising 5 items related to familiarity-seeking behavior; this factor was labeled "familiarity". Factor 2 explained 11.433% of the variance and had high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.737$ ); this factor, named "comfort", consisted of 5 items related to

**Table 4**  
Sample profile.

Variable	Percentage (%)	
	First-round survey	Second-round survey
Age		
40–49	34	34
50–59	33	33
60 and above	33	33
Gender		
Male	50	50
Female	50	50
Residential city		
Beijing	33.3	33.3
Shanghai	33.3	33.3
Guangzhou	33.3	33.3
Educational level		
High school and below	30.2	28.5
Diploma	25.8	26.8
Bachelor's degree	23.3	26.0
Master's degree and above	20.7	18.7
Monthly income (RMB)		
5001–8000	16.7	28.8
8001–12,000	26.0	34.7
12,001–16,000	30.8	22.5
16,001–20,000	20.2	11.0
20,001 and above	6.3	3.0
Current job status		
Employed	66.7	64.2
Retired	33.3	35.8
Past experience of long-stay in rural destination		
Yes	84.0	86.8
No	16.0	13.2
Past experience of living in rural area for over six months		
Yes	12.5	47.5
No	87.5	52.5

**Table 5**  
EFA results of rural long-stay destination choice preferences.

Destination trails and attributes	Mean	SD	Factor loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$
<b>Familiarity</b>	5.04	1.100		0.805
Friends and relatives in destination	4.89	1.585	0.771	
Long-stayers from same region in destination	4.94	1.541	0.770	
Visited destination before	4.95	1.516	0.768	
Travel distance to destination	5.13	1.381	0.652	
Chain stores (e.g. restaurants, shopping malls)	5.31	1.291	0.510	
<b>Comfort</b>	5.92	0.793		0.737
Overall hygiene and cleanliness	6.09	1.112	0.647	
Wi-Fi availability	5.76	1.178	0.638	
Quality of accommodations	5.99	1.093	0.626	
Mandarin Chinese use	5.78	1.145	0.575	
Friendliness of locals	5.99	1.155	0.508	
<b>Rurality</b>	5.69	0.754		0.793
Nostalgic rustic setting	5.78	1.069	0.680	
Special events and festivals	5.39	1.186	0.636	
Entertainment activities	5.44	1.211	0.564	
Slow lifestyle	5.81	1.102	0.495	
Tourism attractions (e.g. nature & scenery, cultural amenities)	5.91	1.117	0.478	
Long-stay tourism development in destination	5.55	1.137	0.502	
Natural pastoral view	5.97	1.068	0.451	
<b>Wellness</b>	5.78	0.836		0.758
Treatment of medical conditions	5.65	1.178	0.655	
Wellness services (e.g. sport facilities, elderly nursing facilities)	5.63	1.190	0.650	
Weather	5.85	1.147	0.561	
Fresh organic gastronomy	6.19	1.030	0.539	
Off-site medical treatment billing services	5.60	1.235	0.529	
<b>Publicity</b>	5.89	0.776		0.630
Comprehensive destination information	5.86	1.008	0.685	
Public transportation information	5.92	1.072	0.663	
Destination reputation	5.88	0.989	0.466	

city-life living standards. Factor 3, called “rurality”, comprised 7 items that explained 10.745% of the total variance with high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.793$ ). Factor 4, “wellness”, which was related to the amenity environment, consisted of 5 health-related items and explained 10.722% of the variance (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.758$ ). Three items loaded on Factor 5, which explained 8.274% of the variance and demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.630$ ); this factor was labeled “publicity”, referring to tourists' information about destinations.

4.3. Preference identification based on conjoint analysis

The results of the conjoint analysis are illustrated in Table 6. Our findings were considered reliable according to the Pearson's R value (0.983,  $p < 0.001$ ). Kendall's Tau for the estimation (0.929,  $p < 0.05$ ) and holdout profiles (0.667,  $p < 0.1$ ) was computed to verify the

**Table 6**  
Part-worth of attributes.

Theme	Level	Utility Estimate	Importance Value
Comfort	High	0.786	32.749
	Low	-0.786	
Wellness	High	0.574	23.915
	Low	-0.574	
Rurality	High	0.447	18.622
	Low	-0.447	
Publicity	High	0.418	17.425
	Low	-0.418	
Familiarity	High	0.175	7.289
	Low	-0.175	

utilities' internal reliability and validity. These results indicated that the data exhibited acceptable internal validity and that the respondents answered consistently throughout the rating process.

With regard to the PU, each attribute had a positive and negative number, as attributes included only two levels. A positive PU suggested that the level was favorable, and a negative PU implied the opposite. Overall, older mainland Chinese tourists prefer to visit rural destinations characterized by high levels of comfort, wellness, rurality, publicity and familiarity. Older mainland Chinese tourists greatly preferred a “high level of comfort” (PU = 0.786) in a destination, indicating that comfort in rural destinations could largely affect older Chinese tourists' choices. A “high level of wellness” (PU = 0.574) was preferred as well, meaning that a destination with a high-quality environment and medical facilities and services would draw greater attention from older Chinese tourists. A “high level of rurality” (PU = 0.447) and a “high level of publicity” (PU = 0.418) shared a similar position, suggesting that older Chinese tourists would prefer destinations that could provide exciting tourism experiences and minimize concerns related to information uncertainty. In comparison, respondents recorded the lowest utility for a “high level of familiarity” (PU = 0.175); compared to the other four attributes, this factor was thus not crucial to their preferences when choosing a rural destination for a long-stay vacation.

In terms of the importance values, clearer differences emerged between the five attributes. Table 6 also shows the proportions of importance values for each attribute. “Comfort” (32.749%) was the most important, followed by “wellness” (23.915%). “Rurality” (18.622) and “publicity” (17.425%) demonstrated similar importance values (i.e., moderate). The “familiarity” attribute (7.289%) was evaluated as least important.

4.4. Subgroup preference for the destination attributes

A summary of the ANOVA tests and t-tests performed for two rounds of surveys is presented in Table 7. In terms of the importance of the five attributes examined in the first-round survey, several significant differences between the groups of different demographics and previous experience were revealed. Specifically, respondents between the ages of 40 and 49 placed lower importance on “comfort” than other age groups and higher importance on “comfort” and “publicity” than the 60-or-older group. Male respondents rated “rurality” as more important than female counterparts. “Wellness” was scored significantly higher by those who had a bachelor's degree than those with a high school diploma. Those who had a middle level of income (12,001 RMB-20,000 RMB) attached greater importance to “familiarity”, while the respondents with lower income (5000 RMB-12,000 RMB) rated “rurality” as significantly more important. While the respondents with previous experience on rural long-stay destinations stated “familiarity” as less important, “comfort” was considered more important by those who had lived in rural areas.

Regarding the relative importance of these attributes that was indicated in the second-round survey, some significant differences were also found. The importance value of “familiarity” was evaluated as significantly more important for the 60-or-older age group (20.17%) than for the 50–56 age group (17.15%) and 40–49 age group (15.88%). The same importance value was also found to be significantly higher for retired respondents (19.61%) in comparison to the value for those who were currently employed (16.66%). Male respondents considered the attribute “publicity” (13.92%) as significantly less important than their female counterparts (16.13%). The respondents who ever lived in rural areas evaluated the attribute “comfort” (33.11%) as significantly more important than those who did not (29.90%).

5. Discussions and conclusion

Individuals' movement based on the appeal of rurality has resulted in considerable changes in the composition and socioeconomic dynamics

**Table 7**  
Sub-group analysis results.

	Familiarity		Comfort		Rurality		Wellness		Publicity	
	R1	R2	R1	R2	R1	R2	R1	R2	R1	R2
Age	5.718 (.003)	6.748 (.001)	6.620 (.001)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	3.430 (.033)	ns
Gender	ns	ns	ns	ns	3.450 (.001)	ns	ns	ns	ns	-2.064 (0.039)
Residential city	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Education	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	4.056 (.007)	ns	ns	ns
Income	9.472 (.000)	ns	ns	ns	4.776 (.001)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Job status	ns	-2.575 (.010)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Rural long-stay	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Rural living	ns	ns	2.905 (.004)	2.013 (.045)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Note: <sup>a</sup>R1 and R2 refers to first-round survey and second-round survey data respectively; <sup>b</sup>Number in cells represents *F* value or *t*-value (two-tailed) with *p*-value in the parenthesis; <sup>c</sup> ns means not significant.

of rural communities (Gosnell & Abrams, 2011). Given the importance of long-stay tourism to China’s rural revitalization and the paucity of research on this topic, we sought to delineate factors that could persuade tourists to stay in rural areas for longer periods by referring to the literature on residential mobility, long-stay tourism, and rural tourism. This study represents the first research effort to systematically unearth rural destination selection attributes and their relative importance among long-stay tourists in China. This research thus makes a timely contribution to the tourism literature. Based on literature search, proposed framework, expert opinion, pilot study, and online survey, five themes (*familiarity*, *comfort*, *rurality*, *wellness*, and *publicity*) were identified through EFA, and 25 related items were retained. Empirical results were consistent with most dimensions proposed in our theoretical framework; the only exception was the newly identified dimension of *wellness* in lieu of the proposed dimension of *sociality*. These five dimensions were further evaluated for their relative importance using a different online sample through conjoint analysis.

Of the five identified dimensions, *comfort* was the most important according to the importance value in the conjoint analysis. Long-stay tourists appeared to focus on holistic living conditions in destinations, such as the quality of accommodations and amenities. Similar to local residents, long-stay tourists wished to live a comfortable life and enjoy themselves in rural areas. They also preferred to maintain their basic city-life living standards with Wi-Fi availability and overall hygiene and cleanliness. This finding is supportive of the needs for amenity seeking (Hongsrangon, 2006). *Wellness* was identified as the second most important dimension, which was not initially proposed in our model. Chinese long-stay tourists reported caring about their overall wellness, such as food, exercise facilities, and medical services. This dimension highlights the importance of physical facilities along with necessary services and procedures that these tourists associated with wellness. Essentially, respondents were unwilling to sacrifice their living standards in rural destinations. These two most important dimensions imply that long-term tourists are similar to locals in their pursuit of favorable living conditions, confirming prior studies of long-term tourism’s characteristics (Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019; Benson & O’Reilly, 2009). These findings can be interpreted from multiple perspectives. First, all respondents were from first-tier cities in China, earned a median monthly income of at least 5000 RMB, and were at least 40 years old. Contemporary Chinese society is characterized by polarized wealth inequality between metropolitan and rural areas, with the former being affluent while the latter is extremely poor (Xie, 2016). This division results in highly disparate living standards, such as accommodation quality, welfare systems (i.e. medical services), and social connections (i.e. interactions). It is therefore reasonable that these respondents were actively seeking comfortable living conditions and environments with a high degree of wellness given their age group, income, and city dwelling status. Second, the importance of comfort and wellness to long-stay tourists reflect their demands for personally beneficial services and amenities from host destinations (Berry, 1997). Long-stay tourists would like to enjoy the advantages of living in desirable rural communities,

including pleasant weather and fresh organic gastronomy. They would also like to continue enjoying the privileges they have at home, such as medical treatment and bill-handling procedures. Third, the findings are consistent with rural tourism studies identifying tangible amenities and local culture as attractions that convince city tourists to visit rural destinations (Jepson & Sharpley, 2015; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004).

*Rurality* was also found to be an important dimension. The main difference in long-stay tourists’ decisions to patronize rural areas compared to non-rural ones was, indeed, rurality. It is therefore unsurprising that rurality was especially important; this construct includes rural tourist attractions, special events and festivals, and entertainment activities along with a rustic setting, natural pastoral view, and slow lifestyle. Our study accords with the research in residential mobility indicating that curiosity drives such mobility (Oishi & Talhelm, 2012): people move to new places to seek novelty. Additionally, the long-stay nature of this type of tourism makes curiosity less salient for long-stay tourists compared to their short-break counterparts due to reduced utility. These tourists visit rural communities for self-development in addition to seeking curiosity and pleasure (Brown, 2009). Excitement for rurality was thus found to represent a significant dimension for Chinese long-stay tourists, but it was not the most prominent one.

*Publicity* was of nearly equally importance as rurality in Chinese long-stay tourists’ rural destination selection. This finding confirms that more transparent, accessible information can reduce individuals’ uncertainty (Wong & Musa, 2015), a phenomenon which can be further explained by contemporary rural tourism development in China. China recently adopted a national strategic plan to alleviate rural poverty through tourism (Qian, Sasaki, Jourdain, Kim, & Shivakoti, 2017). Only rural destinations offering rich information, a high reputation, and convenient public transportation will attract Chinese long-stay tourists. More transparent publicity can also help mitigate tourists’ uncertainty associated with moving through the perspective of residential mobility (Oishi & Talhelm, 2012).

*Familiarity* was identified as the final important dimension, confirming the need for anxiety reduction (Oishi et al., 2012). In light of rapidly evolving purchasing power and personal wealth, transportation, holidays, and paid vacations, Chinese tourists are becoming less concerned about expenses, time, and travel distance when choosing destinations (Yang, Liu, Li, & Harrill, 2018). In fact, travelers are pursuing greater leisure and happiness. Chinese tourists know what rural destinations are, what rurality represents, and what is expected in China thanks to the wealth of information available through the internet, word-of-mouth, and previous personal experiences. According to the long-stay tourism literature, long-stay tourists are interested in mindfulness and self-discovery as ways to escape their daily routine (Milstein, 2005). Familiarity, including travel distance, known chain stores, friends and relatives as companions, destination community activities, and whether tourists have visited a given destination in the past, appeared to be a secondary concern for Chinese long-stay tourists visiting rural destinations.

Surprisingly, sociability was not identified as a destination selection



attribute among Chinese middle-aged and older adults when choosing long-stay destinations in rural areas. This finding does not support our proposed model and counters most literature on residential mobility suggesting that people become lonely and strive to increase their social circles in a new place (Oishi et al., 2012). This seemingly controversial finding could be understood from the following two perspectives among others. First, research on residential mobility has mainly involved Western or developed nations. This study was performed in China, a nation with notable differences in culture, society, and population compared to other focal regions. Due to vast disparities in wealth and lifestyle, Chinese city dwellers may exhibit certain social biases towards residents in rural areas. Accordingly, sociability may not be an expectation for city travelers. Second, technology has been a large driver of individuals' mobility in the last two decades, especially within the past 10 years as smartphones and social apps have proliferated worldwide. The widespread use of these social apps could bond families and colleagues and enable them to remain connected through virtual contact (Chen, Huang, Gao, & Petrick, 2018). Such interactivity may reduce one's need to expand their social network in a new place. Accordingly, Chinese middle-aged and older individuals may not seek sociability during long stays in rural areas.

This study also sought to understand middle-aged and older adults' preferences in mainland China when choosing rural long-stay destinations. Theoretically, it uncovered through EFA five destination selection attributes important to long-stay Chinese tourists in rural destinations. The results address a research lacuna and indicate that Chinese long-stay tourists' choices feature intertwined attributes of three components drawn from the literature. In addition, this study unveiled the salience of each dimension via conjoint analysis; the findings therefore extend prior studies on long-stay tourism and tourists, especially within the context of Chinese rural destinations.

This research offers several key implications for long-stay tourism development in Chinese rural areas. First, local governments, communities, enterprises, and residents should collaborate to provide more comfortable living environments, better amenities, and more convenient services to meet long-stay tourists' needs and attract more of these visitors. Long-stay tourists typically spend more money and time in their chosen destinations, becoming increasingly important stakeholders in local rural areas. Enhanced rural community environments will improve the wellness of current and future tourists in general while reinvigorating local life. Second, rural destinations must preserve rurality or authenticity as long-stay tourists seek urban-like comfort and rurality. All local stakeholders should make a concerted effort to maintain local rural settings, cultural amenities, special events and festivals, entertainment activities, and a slow lifestyle, which long-stay tourists expect. Third, local government and enterprises should work together to publicize rural destinations by offering more information and promotions through various media channels. By doing so, rural destinations can increase their visibility and solicit more long-stay tourists. Finally, local government should cooperate with other governments at different levels to advocate for the benefits of long-stay tourism on rural revitalization.

**Appendix I**

Imagine that you are planning for a long-stay vacation in rural areas. There are 12 rural destinations, which contain different characteristics for your choice. Please rate all the 12 destinations based on your preference and likelihood to choose them (1 = you are least likely to choose the destination, 12 = you are most likely to choose the destination). No duplicate numbers are allowed.

	Familiarity	Rurality	Comfort	Wellness	Publicity	Rate here
Village A	low	low	low	low	high	
Village B	high	high	low	low	low	
Village C	high	low	low	high	low	

(continued on next page)

Such efforts could include removing potential barriers to long-stay tourism by establishing a national medical system and developing a better local transportation system in rural areas. When cultivating destination brands, long-stay destination marketers could combine the five key factors identified in this study and work with new media and e-commerce platforms (e.g. Weibo, WeChat, Live Stream Commerce, Little Red Book, etc) to launch elaborated user generated contents which reflect the retirement life that the urban elderly yearn for.

The coronavirus outbreak has endangered tremendous changes to people's travel behavior. Even after China managed to flatten the COVID-19 curve and resumed businesses nationwide, the travel industry was unable to quickly rebound to the previous level. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the recovery of rural tourism exceeded expectations during the eight-day National Day holiday in 2020. Besides factors identified in this study, safety related issues (e.g. lower population density and plenty of open space) may emerge as key factors why city dwellers opt for rural tourism experience. Rural tourism combining weekend and long-stay holidays will take the lead in driving the Chinese domestic tourism recovery.

**6. Limitations and future research**

As with any research of this nature, this study is subject to limitations that illuminate future research directions. First, this research focused on middle-aged and older respondents from three major cities in mainland China. The results of this study may be inappropriate for generalization to other samples. Future studies could extend the proposed model to different profiles, such as younger travelers and cross-national respondents. Second, the main data were collected using online surveys in a cross-sectional manner, which may have introduced bias due to potential lack of representativeness and common method variance. Subsequent studies could apply other approaches, such as a longitudinal design, to confirm the findings. Third, the results revealed respondents' anticipated selections per se, but not their actual behavior. A comprehensive understanding of tourists' preferences for rural long-stay destinations may require further investigation. For example, a qualitative approach is recommended to understand why long-stay tourists are indifferent to interacting with locals in rural destinations. As this research examined the attributes that may pull tourists to stay in rural areas for extended periods, follow-up studies could expand this research stream to explore how these elements influence tourists' actual destination experiences and relevant attributes' effects on local societies.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the National Natural Science Foundation of China (grant number 71974173), Zhejiang Province Soft Sciences Research Projects (grant number 2019C35030), National Social Science Foundation of China (grant number 16CGL09), and Foundation of Zhejiang Educational Committee (grant number Y202045588) for their funding support.

(continued)

	Familiarity	Rurality	Comfort	Wellness	Publicity	Rate here
Village D	high	high	high	high	high	
Village E	low	low	high	high	low	
Village F	low	high	low	high	high	
Village G	high	low	high	low	high	
Village H	low	high	high	low	low	
Village I	high	low	low	low	high	
Village J	low	high	high	low	high	
Village K	high	low	low	high	high	
Village L	high	low	high	high	high	

### Author statement

**Jiaying Lyu:** Conceptualization, Writing – Original draft, Writing - Review & Editing, **Huan Huang:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - Review & Editing, **Zhenxing Mao:** Writing - Review & Editing.

### References

- Abdul-Aziz, A. R., Loh, C. L., & Jaafar, M. (2014). Malaysia's My Second Home (MM2H) Programme: An examination of Malaysia as a destination for international retirees. *Tourism Management*, 40, 203–212.
- Alarcón, P., González, E. M., & Pérez, J. R. (2010). Residential tourism in the south of Spain: An approach towards consumption. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 6, 36–48.
- Anantamongkolkul, C., Butcher, K., & Wang, Y. (2019). Long-stay tourists: Developing a theory of intercultural integration into the destination neighborhood. *Tourism Management*, 74, 144–154.
- Benson, M. (2010). The context and trajectory of lifestyle migration. *European Societies*, 12(1), 45–64.
- Benson, M., & O'Reilly, K. (2009). Migration and the search for a better way of life: A critical exploration of lifestyle migration. *Sociological Review*, 57(4), 608–625.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5–34.
- Box, G. E. P., Hunter, W. G., & Hunter, J. S. (1978). *Statistics for experimenters: An introduction to design, data analysis, and model building*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Brown, L. (2009). The transformative power of the international sojourn: An ethnographic study of the international student experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(3), 502–521.
- Carson, D. A., & Carson, D. B. (2018). International lifestyle immigrants and their contributions to rural tourism innovation: Experiences from Sweden's far north. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 64, 230–240.
- Casado-Díaz, M. A. (2006). Retiring to Spain: An analysis of differences among north European nationals. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(8), 1321–1339.
- Chang, H. J., Eckman, M., & Yan, R. N. (2011). Application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response model to the retail environment: The role of hedonic motivation in impulse buying behavior. *International Review of Retail Distribution & Consumer Research*, 21(3), 233–249.
- Chen, C., Huang, W., Gao, J., & Petrick, J. F. (2018). Antecedents and consequences of work-related smartphone use on vacation: An exploratory study of Taiwanese tourists. *Journal of Travel Research*, 57(6), 743–756.
- China State Council. (2020). *China's rural tourism revenue tops 850b yuan in 2019*. Retrieved 21.12.2020. from: <[http://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil/ministries/202012/06/content\\_WS5fcc0f3c6d0f725769416cc.html/](http://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil/ministries/202012/06/content_WS5fcc0f3c6d0f725769416cc.html/)>.
- Chin, C. H., & Lo, M. C. (2017). Rural tourism quality of services: Fundamental contributive factors from tourists' perceptions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 22(4), 465–479.
- Cohen, E., & Cohen, S. A. (2015). A mobilities approach to tourism from emerging world regions. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 18(1), 11–43.
- Cohen, S. A., Duncan, T., & Thulemark, M. (2015). Lifestyle mobilities: The crossroads of travel, leisure and migration. *Mobilities*, 10(1), 155–172.
- Dubois, C., Cawley, M., & Schmitz, S. (2017). The tourist on the farm: A 'muddled' image. *Tourism Management*, 59, 298–311.
- Edgell, D. L., & Harbaugh, L. (1993). Tourism development: An economic stimulus in the heart of America. *Business America*, 114(2), 17–18.
- Eidse, F., & Sichel, N. (2004). *Unrooted childhoods: Memoirs of growing up global*. Boston, MA: Intercultural Press.
- Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2005). The value of online surveys. *Internet Research*, 15(2), 195–219.
- Gao, J., Barbieri, C., & Valdivia, C. (2014). Agricultural landscape preferences: Implications for agritourism development. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(3), 366–379.
- Gao, J., & Wu, B. (2017). Revitalizing traditional villages through rural tourism: A case study of Yuanjia village, shaanxi province, China. *Tourism Management*, 63, 223–233.
- Garau-Vadell, J. B., & De-Juan-Vigaray, M. D. (2017). International residential tourist shopping styles: A study of British and German citizens in Spain. *Tourism Economics*, 23(3), 485–505.
- Gascón, J. (2016). Residential tourism and depeasantisation in the Ecuadorian Andes. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 43(4), 868–885.
- Gosnell, H., & Abrams, J. (2011). Amenity migration: Diverse conceptualizations of drivers, socioeconomic dimensions, and emerging challenges. *Geojournal*, 76(4), 303–322.
- Green, P. E., & Srinivasan, V. (1990). Conjoint analysis in marketing: New developments with implications for research and practice. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(4), 3–19.
- Gudykunst, W. (1998). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication*. London: Sage.
- Guo, H., & Han, F. (2010). Review on the development of rural tourism in China. *Progress in Geography*, 12, 1597–1605 (in Chinese).
- Gustafsson, A., Herrmann, A., & Huber, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Conjoint measurement: Methods and applications*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2009). *Multivariate data analysis* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
- Han, J. (2019). Vacationers in the countryside: Traveling for tranquility? *Tourism Management*, 70, 299–310.
- Hedberg, C., & Haandrikman, K. (2014). Repopulation of the Swedish countryside: Globalisation by international migration. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 34, 128–138.
- Hensher, D. A. (1994). Stated preference analysis of travel choices: The state of practice. *Transportation*, 21(2), 107–133.
- Hernández, R. M., Muñoz, P. A., & Santos, L. (2007). The moderating role of familiarity in rural tourism in Spain. *Tourism Management*, 28(4), 951–964.
- Hernández, J. M., Suárez-Vega, R., & Santana-Jiménez, Y. (2016). The inter-relationship between rural and mass tourism: The case of Catalonia, Spain. *Tourism Management*, 54, 43–57.
- Hewlett, D., & Brown, L. (2018). Planning for tranquil spaces in rural destinations through mixed methods research. *Tourism Management*, 67, 237–247.
- Hillman, W. (2013). Grey nomads travelling in Queensland, Australia: Social and health needs. *Ageing and Society*, 33(4), 579–597.
- Hongsranagon, P. (2006). Needs of, and readiness to respond to the needs of Japanese pensioners in long-stay tourism in Chiangmai province, Thailand. *Tourism Economics*, 12(3), 475–485.
- Horton, J. (2008). Producing Postman Pat: The popular cultural construction of idyllic rurality. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 24(4), 389–398.
- Hung, K., Guillet, B. D., & Zhang, H. Q. (2018). Understanding luxury shopping destination preference using conjoint analysis and traditional item-based measurement. *Journal of Travel Research*, Article 004728751876025.
- Jepson, D., & Sharpley, R. (2015). More than sense of place? Exploring the emotion dimension of rural tourism experiences. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 23(8/9), 1157–1178.
- Jin, Y., & Park, Y. (2019). An integrated approach to determining rural tourist satisfaction factors using the IPA and conjoint analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(20), 38–48.
- Juan-Vigaray, M. D., & Sarabia-Sánchez, F. J. (2013). The acculturation of international residential tourists and their shopping behaviors. *Tourism Management*, 36, 115–118.
- Kou, L., Xu, H., & Hannam, K. (2017). Understanding seasonal mobilities, health and wellbeing to Sanya, China. *Social Science & Medicine*, 177, 87–99.
- Lefever, S., Dal, M., & Matthíasdóttir, Á. (2007). Online data collection in academic research: Advantages and limitations. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 38(4), 574–582.
- Liu, R., & Wong, T. C. (2019). Rural tourism in globalizing Beijing: Reproduction of the mountainous suburbs into a new space of leisure consumption. *Sustainability*, 11(6), 1719.
- Li, Y., Zhang, H., Zhang, D., & Abrahams, R. (2019). Mediating urban transition through rural tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 75, 152–164.
- Lo, M., Chin, C., & Law, F. (2019). Tourists' perspectives on hard and soft services towards rural tourism destination competitiveness: Community support as a moderator. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 19(2), 139–157.
- Lun, J., Roth, D., Oishi, S., & Kesebir, S. (2013). Residential mobility, social support concerns, and friendship strategy. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 4, 332–339.
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). The basic emotional impact of environments. *Perceptual & Motor Skills*, 38, 283–301.

- Milstein, T. (2005). Transformation abroad: Sojourning and the perceived enhancement of self-efficacy. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(2), 217–238.
- Miyashita, Y., Akaleephan, C., Asgari-Jirhandeh, N., & Sungyuth, C. (2017). Cross-border movement of older patients: A descriptive study on health service use of Japanese retirees in Thailand. *Globalization and Health*, 13(1), 14.
- Molera, L., & Pilar Albaladejo, I. (2007). Profiling segments of tourists in rural areas of south-eastern Spain. *Tourism Management*, 28(3), 757–767.
- Montezuma, J., & McGarrigle, J. (2019). What motivates international homebuyers? Investor to lifestyle ‘migrants’ in a tourist city. *Tourism Geographies*, 21(2), 214–234.
- Mussalam, G. Q., & Tajeddini, K. (2016). Tourism in Switzerland: How perceptions of place attributes for short and long holiday can influence destination choice. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 26, 18–26.
- Newby, H. (1985). *Green and pleasant land? Social change in rural England*. London: Wildwood House.
- Oh, J., & Schuett, M. A. (2010). Exploring expenditure-based segmentation for rural tourism: Overnight stay visitors vs. excursionists to fee-fishing sites. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 27(1), 31–50.
- Oishi, S. (2010). The psychology of residential mobility: Implications for the self, social relationships, and well-being. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(1), 5–21.
- Oishi, S., Miao, F., Koo, M., Kisling, J., & Ratliff, K. A. (2012). Residential mobility breeds familiarity-seeking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102, 149–162.
- Oishi, S., & Talhelm, T. (2012). Residential mobility: What psychological research reveals. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21(6), 425–430.
- Ono, M. (2015). Commoditization of lifestyle migration: Japanese retirees in Malaysia. *Mobilities*, 10(4), 609–627.
- O’Reilly, C. C. (2006). From drifter to gap year tourist: Mainstreaming backpacker travel. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(4), 998–1017.
- Paï, S., & Ananthakumar, U. (2017). Understanding tourist preferences for travel packages: A conjoint analysis approach. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 22(12), 1238–1249.
- Peng, C., & Kim, Y. G. (2014). Application of the stimuli-organism-response (SOR) framework to online shopping behavior. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 13(3–4), 159–176.
- Qian, C., Sasaki, N., Jourdain, D., Kim, S. M., & Shivakoti, P. G. (2017). Local livelihood under different governances of tourism development in China: A case study of Huangshan mountain area. *Tourism Management*, 61, 221–233.
- Qiu, S., Cai, L., Lehto, X., Huang, Z., Gordon, S., & Gartner, W. (2019). Reliving self-presentational concerns in rural tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 74, 56–67.
- Rao, V. R. (2014). *Applied conjoint analysis*. New York: Springer.
- Salazar, N., & Zhang, Y. (2013). Seasonal lifestyle tourism: The case of Chinese elites. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 43, 81–99.
- Scanlon, E., & Devine, K. (2001). Residential mobility and youth well-being: Research, policy, and practice issues. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 28(1), 119–138.
- Sharpley, R., & Roberts, L. (2004). Rural tourism: 10 years on. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 6, 119–124.
- Silva, L., & Prista, M. (2016). Social differentiation in the consumption of a pastoral idyll through tourist accommodation: Two Portuguese cases. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 43, 183–192.
- Smith, S. K., & House, M. (2006). Snowbirds, sunbirds, and stayers: Seasonal migration of elderly adults in Florida. *Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 61(5), S232–S239.
- Su, B. (2011). Rural tourism in China. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1438–1441.
- Tkaczynski, A., Rundle-Thiele, S., & Beaumont, N. (2010). Destination segmentation: A recommended two-step approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49(2), 139–152.
- Urry, J. (1995). *Consuming places*. London: Routledge.
- Wong, K. M., & Musa, G. (2015). International second home retirement motives in Malaysia: Comparing British and Japanese retirees. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(9), 1041–1062.
- Wong, K. M., Musa, G., & Taha, A. Z. (2017). Malaysia my second home: The influence of push and pull motivations on satisfaction. *Tourism Management*, 61, 394–410.
- Woods, M., Flemmen, A. B., & Wollan, G. (2014). Beyond the idyll: Contested spaces of rural tourism. *Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 68(3), 202–204.
- Xie, Y. (2016). Understanding inequity in China. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 2(3), 327–347.
- Xue, L., Kerstetter, D., & Hunt, C. (2017). Tourism development and changing rural identity in China. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 66, 170–182.
- Xu, H., & Wu, Y. (2016). Lifestyle mobility in China: Context, perspective and prospects. *Mobilities*, 11(4), 509–520.
- Yang, Y., Liu, H., Li, X., & Harrill, R. (2018). A shrinking world for tourists? Examining the changing role of distance factors in understanding destination choices. *Journal of Business Research*, 92, 350–359.
- Yun, H. J. (2009). Conjoint analysis of choice attributes and market segmentation of rural tourists in Korea. *Journal of Rural Development*, 32, 89–109.
- Zhou, L. (2014). Online rural destination images: Tourism and rurality. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 3, 227–240.