Academic Education
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The Influence of Psychological Factors and Travel Motivation on the Booking Intention of Wellness Resorts among Senior Citizens in Shanghai, China

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of psychological factors and travel motivations on the booking intentions of elderly tourists in Shanghai, China, towards holiday resorts. Employing a quantitative research methodology, this study utilised SPSS and AMOS to conduct reliability testing, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and regression analysis. Findings indicate that health needs, social needs, and facility needs constitute the primary factors positively influencing booking intentions, whereas cost considerations exert a lesser influence. Furthermore, psychological factors such as aesthetic preferences and relaxation needs also demonstrate significant positive correlations with booking intention

Keywords: Senior Tourism, Wellness Resorts; Psychological Needs; Social Needs; Decision-Making

1. Background

Amidst the global trend of ageing populations, China's ageing rate has risen annually, with those aged 65 and above now constituting 13.5% of the population. This indicates China has entered a stage of profound ageing (Mao et al.). Data from the United Nations (2022) reveals nations worldwide are exploring how to address this challenge through elderly care services and health management. Emphasise that elderly consumers' expenditure on health and wellness services has surged significantly, injecting fresh vitality into the silver economy. Zhang et al. (2023) employ dynamic analysis to argue that ageing profoundly impacts China's sustainable economic development.

1.1 Problem Statement

The motivations of elderly travellers within the health and wellness tourism sector (social needs, cost considerations, facility requirements) remain unclear. Whether seniors are willing to pay more for premium wellness services, and whether resorts can meet their needs by offering psychological relaxation and stress-relief programmes, warrant further investigation.

1.2 Research Objectives

Based on the research findings, recommendations are provided to wellness retreat operators for optimising their products and services.

1.3 Research Questions

1:What are the key motivations influencing elderly tourists' choice of holiday destinations (e.g., social needs, facility requirements, cost considerations)?

2:Which significant psychological needs (e.g., health requirements, aesthetic preferences, relaxation demands) influence elderly travellers' willingness to book health resorts?

1.4 Research Significance

This study fills a gap in the existing academic literature by conducting an in-depth analysis of the psychological factors and tourism motivations influencing accommodation behaviour in wellness tourism among the elderly. It provides valuable market insights for managers of health resorts in Shanghai.

2. Literature Review

With the accelerating aging of Chinese society, the quality of life and mental health of the elderly population are receiving increasing attention. After retirement, the elderly face loneliness, anxiety, and reduced social connections. Against this backdrop, wellness tourism has become an important way to meet their health, social, and emotional needs. Research (Kan et al. 2023) shows that wellness tourism can effectively improve the life satisfaction and overall well-being of the elderly.

2.1 Psychological Factors

With the acceleration of population ageing and heightened health awareness, wellness tourism has become a favoured travel option among the elderly. (Patterson & Balderas-Cejudo, 2023) Wellness factors manifest at the motivational level of individuals pursuing healthy lifestyles. (Nielsen et al., 2022) For instance, providing tranquil environments helps older adults alleviate stress and enhance mental wellbeing. Aesthetic preferences significantly influence booking intentions, with experienced travellers tending to embrace more innovative designs. The need for relaxation refers to individuals' requirement for psychological and physiological recovery by reducing tension and alleviating stress. The stress recovery theory (Ulrich, R. S. 2023) posits that natural environments promote physical and mental restoration by diminishing psychological stress and emotional fatigue. Self-determination theory (Gagné et al., 2022) posits that relaxation needs are intrinsically linked to fundamental psychological requirements.

2.2 Booking Motivations of Elderly Tourists

The conceptual foundation and theoretical framework of motivation stems from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, comprising physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualisation needs (Bandhu et al., 2024). Tourists' booking intentions constitute a concrete manifestation of travel motivation, signifying dual drivers from both social environments and individual psychological needs (Chi & Phuong, 2022). Recent years have witnessed sustained growth in demand for health tourism, ecotourism, and personalised experiential travel (Wong & Sa'aid Hazley, 2021).

(1) Social Needs

Theconceptual foundation and theoretical framework of motivation are rooted in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which encompasses physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualisation needs (Bandhu et al., 2024). Booking intention represents a behavioural manifestation of travel motivation, reflecting the combined influence of social context and individual psychological needs (Chi & Phuong, 2022). For many older travellers, social needs extend beyond leisure consumption and instead constitute a meaningful opportunity for social engagement and interpersonal connection (Przybysz & Stanimir, 2022). As a result, travel has increasingly become a primary channel through which older adults alleviate feelings of loneliness and maintain social participation (Zhang, 2023). Correspondingly, social-oriented travel demand within the tourism market continues to grow.

In addition, hospitality providers across various regions worldwide have proactively incorporated wellness-oriented features into their service offerings, such as establishing dedicated health centres, providing nutritious dining options, and introducing professional health management services, in order to better address travellers' physical and psychological wellbeing needs (Liao et al., 2023).

2.3 Booking Intentions of Elderly Customers Selecting Resorts

Booking intentions are influenced by the moderating role of habit in the relationship between commitment, attitude, and intention. Key factors influencing elderly travellers' booking intentions primarily encompass two dimensions: demand and travel motivation.

2.4 Wellness Tourism in Shanghai

As one of China's most internationalised cities, Shanghai has achieved significant development in wellness tourism in recent years (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2020). The Shanghai Municipal Government has introduced a series of policies supporting the health industry and elderly tourism, providing a favourable policy environment for the growth of wellness tourism (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2020).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and theoretical analyses, a theoretical model of the direct influence relationship is constructed (see Fig. 1) to clarify the path of the independent variables (psychological needs, travel motivation) on the dependent variable (booking intention).

H2 Preference for aesthetics in psychological factors is influencing booking intention.

H3 The need for relaxation among psychological factors is significantly positively influencing booking intention.

H4 Social needs in tourism motivation is positively influencing the booking intention of older customers towards the resort.

H5 Facility needs in tourism motivation is influencing the booking intention of elderly customers towards the resort.
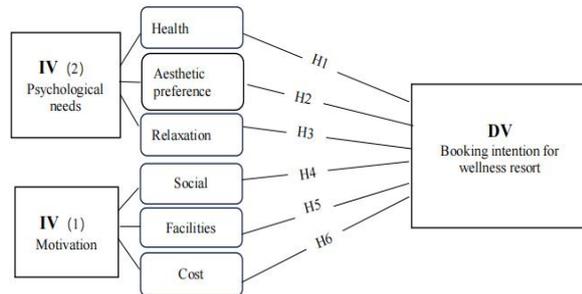
Figure 1. Psychological Factors of Health Needs Are Positively Influencing the Booking Intention of the Older Client Group.

H6 Cost sensitivity in tourism motivation may have a significant positive or negative effect on booking intention.

3. Research Methodology

Quantitative data will be employed to evaluate relationships between distinct variables, with statistical analysis methods used to validate hypotheses. The study will investigate whether and how elderly tourists' social needs, facility requirements, price sensitivity, health needs, aesthetic preferences, and relaxation demands influence their booking intentions for health resorts. The sample size for this research has been determined as 300 participants.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Table1. Model Fit Metrics

NORM	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	GFI	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	IFI
Desirable value	-	-	<3	>0.9	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Compliance value	-	-	<5	>0.8	<0.10	>0.8	>0.8	>0.8
Fitted value	396.352	329	1.205	0.916	0.026	0.984	0.914	0.984

The above table shows each fitting index of the model, and the results show that: the model CMIN is 396.352, DF is 329, and CMIN/DF is 1.205<3, which is better.RMSEA is 0.026<0.08, and the indexes of GFI, CFI, NFI, and IFI are all greater than 0.9.In summary, all the indexes meet the standard requirements, which indicates that the model has good fit.

Table2. Linear Regression Analysis Results

	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	p	VIF
	B	Standard error	Beta			
(Constants)	1.249	0.290		4.308	0.000**	
Facility needs	0.169	0.054	0.164	3.150	0.002**	1.539
Social needs	0.165	0.057	0.167	2.921	0.004**	1.842
Cost considerations	-0.156	0.041	-0.175	-3.811	0.000**	1.191
Health needs	0.125	0.056	0.124	2.217	0.027*	1.767
Aesthetic preferences	0.182	0.052	0.181	3.505	0.001**	1.509
Relaxation needs	0.176	0.057	0.163	3.086	0.002**	1.578
R^2	0.481					
Adjusted R^2	0.470					
F	F=45.245 p=0.000					

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$ Dependent variable: booking intention

The linear regression results indicate that facility requirements, social needs, health considerations, aesthetic preferences, and relaxation demands all exert a significant positive influence on booking intentions, whereas cost considerations exert a significant negative influence on booking intentions. The model exhibits satisfactory overall fit (R^2 = 0.481), indicating these factors account for approximately 48.1% of variation in booking intention. The F-test is significant, confirming the model's validity. Variate Inflation Factors (VIFs) for all variables remain below 10, ruling out multicollinearity. Among the positive factors, aesthetic preferences, relaxation needs, and facility requirements exert relatively stronger influence, whereas cost considerations demonstrably inhibit booking intention.

5. Research Findings

Based on data analysis from 300 valid questionnaires, health needs emerged as the strongest predictive factor, exerting greater influence than traditional motivations such as cost and social interaction. This indicates that elderly tourism consumption is shifting from a

'price/pleasure-oriented' approach towards a 'health and purpose-driven' orientation. While cost factors remain influential, sensitivity to them is lower than anticipated, reflecting this demographic's robust purchasing power and willingness to invest in health. Concurrently, aesthetic preferences and relaxation needs play a prominent role, indicating retired senior travellers prioritise environmental beauty, cultural resonance, and emotional healing experiences. Visual and spatial design thus presents a significant competitive advantage for resorts. The study further highlights that current wellness holiday offerings remain insufficiently systematic and inadequate in age-friendly design. Moreover, senior travellers increasingly seek social connection and identity through 'shared wellness experiences' rather than conventional group activities.

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