

Article

Development Drivers of Rural Summer Health Tourism for the Urban Elderly: A Demand- and Supply-Based Framework

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Abstract: In China, rural summer health tourism for the urban elderly (RSHTUE) is growing rapidly, but the drivers of RSHTUE development have not been systematically explored. First, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with operators, village leaders, local government staff, and elderly tourists in Zhongyuan Township, Jiangxi Province, China: a typical township for developing RSHTUE. Second, interview data were thematically coded to extract the preliminary drivers. Third, the preliminary drivers supported by the literature or original interview quotes were considered the final drivers. Lastly, subcategories and categories were extracted from the final drivers by thematic coding to form a framework of drivers for RSHTUE development. The results show that the framework driving RSHTUE development includes two categories: demand and supply. Nine demand drivers were clustered into four subcategories: economic, social, cultural, and natural. A total of 21 supply drivers were clustered into five subcategories: economic, social, political, cultural, and natural. This study enriches the knowledge of RSHTUE development drivers. The literature supporting each driver was systematically reviewed. RSHTUE-relevant participants can use these drivers to identify villages' suitability for developing RSHTUE and to explore countermeasures for the sustainable development of RSHTUE. The literature on each driver can provide support for subsequent studies.

Keywords: demand drivers; supply drivers; tourism industry development; rural tourism; elderly tourism; summer tourism; health tourism; long-stay tourism; thematic coding; explanatory framework



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1. Introduction

Tourism is a critical industry for sustainable rural development [1], and it promotes coordinated urban–rural economic growth [2]. Tourism promotes economic growth and also enhances local leisure infrastructure, and activates place identity, thereby triggering related development dynamics [3]. Tourism development has been a means of economic and social development in many rural regions [4] and a strategy for poverty reduction in developing countries [5]. On the basis of the motivation of tourists, rural tourists can be classified as authenticity-learners, involving visiting farms and nature seeking, relaxing with friends and relatives, multi-experiences, and casual segments [6]. Tourists with different motivations have different needs. Each village has its own distinctive resources. The requirement for sustainable development in rural tourism is that the type of rural tourism segment developed should match the unique resources and market demand [1].

Rural tourism in China has been the extensive focus of researchers, and many research findings on rural tourism have been published by Chinese scholars [7]. Recently, rural summer health tourism for the urban elderly (RSHTUE) has been developing rapidly in China as a new type of rural tourism. Examples are Guzhu Village in Zhejiang Province [8], Zhongyuan Township in Jiangxi Province [9], and Jiuba Township in Guizhou Province [10].

RSHTUE has the following main characteristics [11]. (1) In the summer, temperatures in the destination village are comfortable but extremely hot in tourist-origin areas. (2) The tourist source is close to the destination: typically no more than a three-hour drive away. (3) Operators are mainly destination villagers. (4) The tourists are mainly urban retirees. (5) Tourists often stay in the destination for one to three months. (6) Lastly, escaping the summer heat and keeping healthy are the main purposes of tourists. The drivers of RSHTUE development have not been systematically studied.

The proportion of China's population aged 65 and above increased from 4.90% in 1982 to 14.2% in 2021 [12]. That is, China entered a period of deep aging. In the summer, 26 °C to 28 °C is a comfortable temperature for the elderly [13]. Meteorological data recorded by the NCEI [14] indicate that in July and August 2020–2022, 179 cities at the prefecture level and above in China had over 43 days with daily maximum temperatures above 30 °C. The population of those aged 60 and above in these 179 cities was 112,538,656 [15]. Evidently, retired seniors in the 179 cities who need to escape to a comfortable climate are potential RSHTUE tourists. In addition, China has many large mountainous regions that cover about 2/3 of the land area [16]. Numerous mountainous areas with high vegetation cover, good air quality, and comfortable summer temperatures could develop RSHTUE.

Mountainous villages lag behind other areas because of their poor access to transportation [17]. In China, most poor villages are located in mountainous areas. China began implementing a rural revitalization strategy in 2017 that aimed to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas in economic and social development and promote the coordinated development of these two areas [18]. Industrial revitalization is the first goal of rural revitalization. Tourism has become an important industry for achieving rural revitalization [19]. In the context of aging, there is immense potential to develop RSHTUE in mountainous villages.

The two most fundamental subsystems of the tourism system are “supply” and “demand” [20]. Adapting to changing tourism demands is essential for developing tourism [21], and changes in supply and demand can contribute to identifying new development factors [22]. Demand and supply are the most important factors when stimulating the market [23,24], and they are also vital driving factors in promoting industrial development. Hence, the drivers of RSHTUE development based on the supply and demand system should be explored to develop sustainable and high-quality RSHTUE.

This study aimed to identify the drivers' framework of RSHTUE development, explaining the rapid development of RSHTUE in China and providing guidance for the sustainable development of RSHTUE. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the related literature. Section 3 describes the research methods. Section 4 presents a demand and supply-based framework for drivers. Section 5 discusses the results and summarizes their implications and limitations. Section 6 concludes the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Characteristics and Developments of RSHTUE in China

RSHTUE is the intersection of senior, long-stay, summer, health, and rural tourism. RSHTUE tourists are primarily urban retirees [11], which belong to senior tourism [25]. RSHTUE tourists typically stay at destinations for over one month, which is identified as long-stay tourism [26]. RSHTUE tourists' purpose is to escape the heat, which is defined as summer tourism [27]. RSHTUE tourists maintain their physical health through the comfortable temperature, high-quality air, and carefree lifestyle of destinations [28] that belong to health tourism [29]. RSHTUE destinations are mountainous villages, which have the characteristics of rurality defined by Lane [30] as “remote”, “sparsely populated”, and having a “rural function”. Thus, RSHTUE is considered rural tourism [31].

Since the 1990s, some urban retirees in China have spontaneously traveled to villages with comfortable temperatures to escape the summer heat. Therefore, some villages in China are developing RSHTUE. For example, RSHTUE has been developed in Guzhu Village, Zhejiang Province, since 1999. The village has about 480 villager households

operating nongjiale (Farmhouse Joy) with 20,000 beds for receiving tourists. In 2017, Guzhu Village received 2.01 million elderly tourists, mainly from Shanghai [8,32]. In Zhongyuan Township, Jiangxi Province, over 380 villager households operated nongjiale, with over 18,000 beds for tourists. In 2019, it received 1.1 million tourists, mainly from Nanchang [9]. In 2021, Shanbao Village in Guizhou Province had 485 nongjiales, with 30,800 beds for tourists, and it received about 2.1 million tourists, mainly from Chongqing [33].

To improve rural infrastructure, the Chinese government has issued many policy documents. To achieve the goal of connecting administrative villages with asphalt or cement roads by 2020, *the Rural Road Construction Plan* specified that over RMB 20 billion yuan will be spent on rural road construction each year from 2005 [34]. In response to the difficulties of fragile rural infrastructure and the growing wealth disparity between urban and rural inhabitants, The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The State Council of China [35] published *the Opinions on Promoting the Construction of a New Socialist Countryside*. By innovating the institutional mechanism for the investment and financing of rural infrastructure [36], the infrastructure and habitat of villages have been significantly improved. The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China [37] issued *the Implementation Plan for Rural Building Action* to enhance the construction of rural infrastructure and public service systems. As a result of these policies, rural infrastructure has been improved, laying the groundwork for the development of rural tourism.

Industrial prosperity is an essential foundation for rural revitalization [38]. *The Guidance Opinions on Promoting the Revitalization of Rural Industries*, issued by the State Council of the People's Republic of China [38], clearly identifies rural leisure tourism as one of the most important industries for the revitalization of rural industries. This idea requires the implementation of rural tourism boutique projects, the construction of well-equipped and versatile nongjiale, recreation bases, and the cultivation of beautiful leisure and key villages. RSHTUE, as a specific type of rural tourism, is the leading industry to achieve rural revitalization in mountainous areas.

2.2. Research Lineage of Tourism Development Drivers

The study of tourism development's driving forces can date back to the introduction of the push-pull theory. Dann [39] introduced the push-pull theory to the tourism field, arguing that "anomie" and "ego-enhancement" are the push factors for tourists and destination attractions are the pull factors for them. Since then, this theory has become the basic analytical framework for tourism development driving forces. The existing literature has studied push factors mainly in terms of tourism motivation. For example, motivations for senior tourism include socialization, rest and comfort, hedonism, mental and physical well-being, escape, ego or esteem, actualization, and novelty [40]. Meanwhile, the motivations for rural tourism include relaxation, socialization, learning, novelty, and entertainment [41,42]. Research on pull factors has extensively included the uniqueness of tourism attractions [43], destination image [44–46], and destination competitiveness [47,48].

Gazoni and da Silva [49] proposed a causal cycle diagram, including natural and cultural assets, tourists, attractions, infrastructure and superstructure, tourism services and facilities, tourism demand, and competitors. Leiper [50] first applied the systems theory to tourism research, arguing that tourism consists of tourists, a tourist industry, a transit route, a producing region, and a destination area. Romero-Garcia et al. [51] argued that understanding and studying complex tourism systems requires systematic methods and tools.

Tourism development driving forces have been systematically studied in the literature based on system theory. Li et al. [52] identified the population, consumption, transportation, resources, and economy as the driving factors of the synergistic development of culture, sports, and tourism industries. Dwyer et al. [53] identified politics, technology, economy, society, demographics, and environment as the main external drivers of tourism development. Li [54] argued that the drivers of rural tourism development have five sub-

systems: supply, demand, decision, media, and support. Xiao [55] suggested that the core drivers of rural tourism development are demand, supply, marketing, and support forces. Wang et al. [56] divided the tourism drivers for rural revitalization into endogenous and exogenous drivers. Ullah et al. [57] argued that the drivers of health and wellness in the tourism industry development have four categories: external environment, industry supply, infrastructure, and market demand. In summary, demand and supply are the fundamental driving systems of tourism development.

2.3. Demand- and Supply-Based Drivers of Tourism Development

The literature has examined the demand and supply drivers of tourism segments associated with RSHTUE. For senior tourism, Hsu et al. [58] divided the demand factors of tourists into external conditions such as time, social progress, personal finances, and health; intrinsic desires, such as nostalgia, socialization, escape from routine, and knowledge seeking. Tuo et al. [59] identified the demand factors as expenses, length, distance, physical condition, and cultural influences. Alen et al. [60] showed that the main demand factors are vacation, visiting relatives or friends, health, and work, and the main supply factors are climate, natural beauty, cleanliness, health, safety, travel costs, health insurance, transportation, and distance. Pestana et al. [61] defined leisure, knowledge seeking, and socialization as the demand factors; and facilities and core attractions as supply factors. Sangpikul [62] concluded that the demand factors for Japanese elderly tourists traveling to Thailand are self-improvement, relaxation, rest, novelty, and knowledge acquisition, and the supply factors are facilities, attractions, activities, cleanliness, arrangements, and safety.

For long-stay tourism, Lyu et al. [63] identified the main supply factors for long-stay tourism in China as environmental familiarity, environmental comfort, pristine countryside, healthy living, and public information. Cheng et al. [64] identified the main demand factors for long-stay tourism in China as physical and mental health, interactions with friends and family, a suitable price, a comfortable environment, leisure life, experiencing new things, and escape from the daily grind. Ozyurt [65] argued that the main demand factor for long-stay tourism in the Mediterranean is the pursuit of ultimate well-being, which consists of autonomy, a sense of control, self-improvement, positive life goals, good relationships with others, and positive self-esteem. Wong and Musa [66] identified the main demand factors for retired seniors in Malaysia as improved health, enhanced relationships with family and friends, and self-fulfillment, and the main supply factors as a suitable climate, peaceful living, affordable costs, good infrastructure, political stability, food diversity, and friendly residents. Savas et al. [67] showed that the main supply factors for international retirement migration were the climate, lower costs of living, and the lifestyle of destinations.

For summer and health tourism, Konstantakopoulou [68] showed that the quality of health in tourist destinations is an important supply factor. Needham et al. [69] showed that the main supply factors influencing summer tourists to alpine ski resorts are the facilities, landscape, reputation, and transportation infrastructure. Juschten et al. [70] identified the demand factors for summer tourists as heat avoidance, recreation, nature, and spiritual enrichment. Singh [71] identified the major demand factors for medical tourists as high treatment costs and long waiting times in the source countries, relatively affordable international air travel, and favorable economic exchange rates; qualified doctors and medical personnel in the destination countries are major supply factors. Kim et al. [72] argued that luxury experience, novelty and knowledge, self-development, relaxation, and escape are the main demand factors for wellness tourists. Lee and Kim [73] identified prestige, relaxation, therapy, health improvement, novelty, and social relationship improvement as the main demand factors for wellness tourists.

For rural tourism, Lewis and D'Alessandro [74] found that the main drivers of rural tourism among the Australian elderly were adventure, relaxation, novelty, escape, and romantic trips; however, focusing on health, experiencing nature, and socializing were not the main demand factors. Bel et al. [75] showed that the main demand factors for rural tourism in Aquitaine, Auvergne, and Rhône-Alpes were outdoor activities, experiencing

nature, discovering nature and heritage, water activities, and gastronomy. Chen et al. [76] indicated that the main demand factors for rural tourism in Taiwan were to socialize, learn, relax, be convenient, and be novel. Kumar et al. [77] showed that the main supply factors influencing rural tourism development in India were government funding availability, infrastructure development, local government and community support, environmental awareness, and private sector participation. Lun et al. [78] indicated that the main supply factors affecting rural tourism development in mountainous areas were product and service characteristics, participatory approaches, organization or financing, network creation, visionary thinking, and communication. Ghadban et al. [79] concluded that the main supply factors for rural tourism in Lebanon included nature and biodiversity, culture and tradition, climate, landscape, and local cuisine.

In summary, the demand and supply drivers of senior tourism, long-stay tourism, summer, and health tourism, and rural tourism development are simultaneously similar and different. RSHTUE has unique characteristics, as well as the demand and supply drivers of its development. To the best of our knowledge, no systematic and in-depth study has been conducted on the demand and supply factors for RSHTUE development in the existing literature. Hence, further research is necessary to better understand the demand and supply drivers of RSHTUE development.

3. Research Methods

This study constructed an explanatory framework to explore the causes of RSHTUE, following a “semi-structured interview”, “thematic coding”, and “evidence-based literature” approach. The research process was as follows: semi-structured interviews were undertaken to obtain primary data, followed by the thematic coding of primary data, the distillation and classification of RSHTUE development drivers, the retrieval of the literature related to the driver themes, and the validation of the coding results. Figure 1 shows the research process.

3.1. Data Collection

To obtain extensive data and information and to ensure that these data and information are from a triangulation of corroboration, this study collected information through semi-structured interviews and also gathered data from the literature and academic journal databases. This study chose to conduct semi-structured interviews in Zhongyuan Township, Jing'an County, Jiangxi Province, China, which is approximately 120 km from Nanchang City, the capital of Jiangxi Province. The summer temperature in Zhongyuan Township is 6–10 °C lower than that in Nanchang City. Zhongyuan Township has been developing RSHTUE since 2000, and tourists are mainly the retired elderly from Nanchang City. Zhongyuan Township currently has over 640 nongjiales, over 18,000 reception beds, over 2000 employees, and a comprehensive income of RMB 120 million yuan from RSHTUE. Zhongyuan Township provided easy access and an observation site for this study.

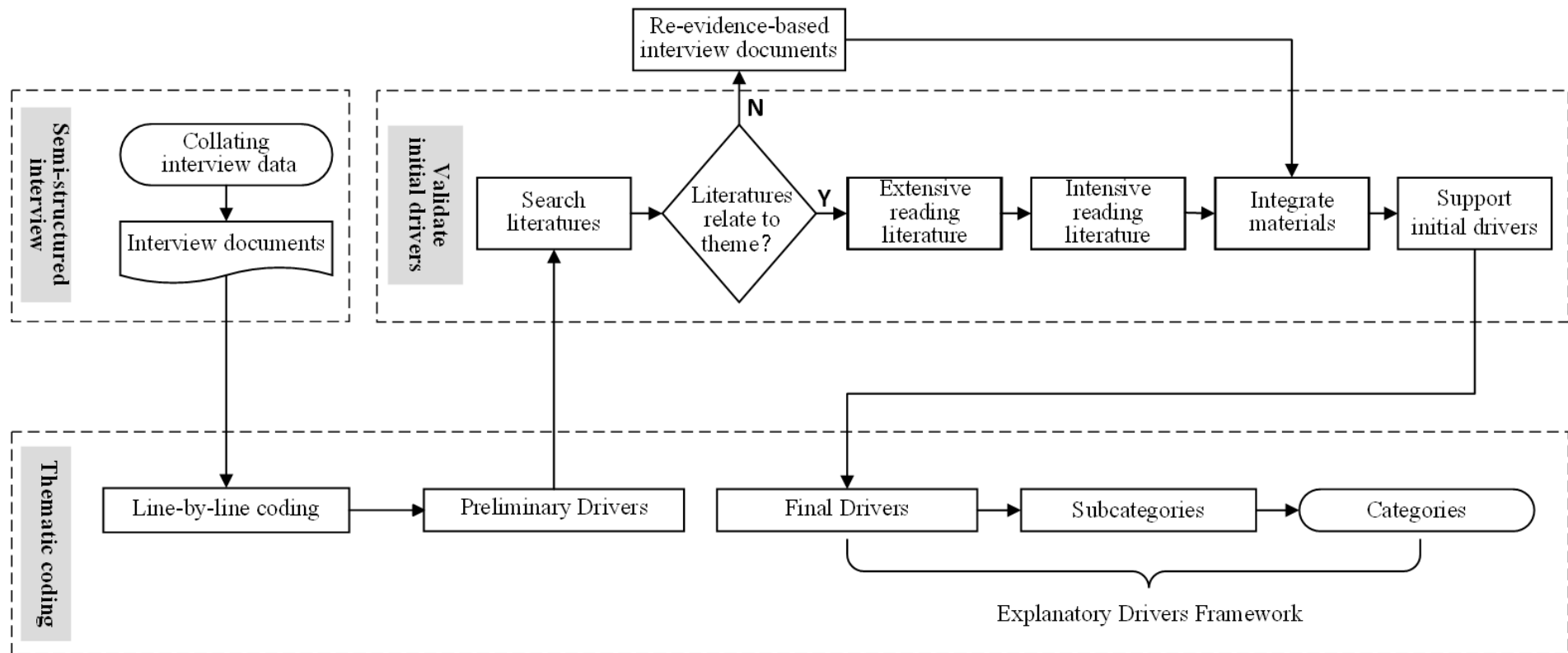


Figure 1. Flow chart of the research design.

Interviewees were selected following theoretical sampling [80]. First, two government staff with an in-depth understanding of Zhongyuan Township were selected as the interviewees; one was the director of the comprehensive management office in charge of tourism in Zhongyuan Township, and the other was a member of the Party Committee of Zhongyuan Township who worked part-time in Hegang Village, which was better developed for RSHTUE. Second, the village leaders of Sanping, Hegang, Naoshang, and Chuanwan villages, which are the most mature in Zhongyuan Township, considering developing RSHTUE, were selected as interviewees. Lastly, four nongjiales and 18 tourists were randomly selected as interviewees. Specifically, the list of nongjiales in Zhongyuan Township was numbered numerically, and the nongjiale operators corresponding to the 4 numbers were randomly selected as interviewees. At the same time, among the tourists staying in each of the randomly selected nongjiale, 4–5 tourists were randomly selected as interviewees. Moreover, the interviewer followed the principle of open-ended questions and a broad interview outline (see Appendix A). The interviewees were allowed to express their perceptions freely. Simultaneous recordings were made with the permission of the interviewees, who included RSHTUE operators, village chiefs, local government staff, and elderly tourists. Adding new interviewees was determined by content saturation. If the information they provided has already been covered by previous interviewees, then the content was considered saturated. Once the content had been saturated, there was no need to add new interviewees. On the basis of the preceding principles, the first semi-structured interviews were conducted in Zhongyuan Township from 1 to 4 May 2021. The first group of interviewees was mainly RSHTUE operators, village chiefs, and local government staff. The second semi-structured interview was conducted in Zhongyuan Township from 8–16 July 2022, and the interviewees were mainly elderly tourists. Table 1 shows the basic information of the interviewees.

Table 1. Basic information of the interviewees.

Number	Gender	Age	Identity
F1	Male	45	Local government staff
F2	Female	38	Local government staff
F3	Male	43	Village leader
F4	Male	42	Village leader
F5	Male	49	Village leader
F6	Male	49	Village leader
F7	Female	40	Operator
F8	Male	44	Operator
F9	Female	40	Operator
F10	Male	48	Operator
F11	Male	65	Tourist
F12	Male	62	Tourist
F13	Female	70	Tourist
F14	Female	76	Tourist
F15	Female	66	Tourist
F16	Female	72	Tourist
F17	Female	65	Tourist
F18	Male	63	Tourist
F19	Female	65	Tourist
F20	Male	70	Tourist
F21	Female	75	Tourist
F22	Male	72	Tourist
F23	Male	68	Tourist
F24	Male	78	Tourist
F25	Female	77	Tourist
F26	Male	69	Tourist
F27	Female	76	Tourist
F28	Female	66	Tourist

To verify the validity of the preliminary drivers, this study searched and reviewed articles based on the subject terms of the preliminary drivers from the SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, and AHCI databases in the Web of Science.

3.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis included the thematic coding of the interview data and reviewing the journal literature. For the thematic coding, interview recordings were transcribed into text data. To ensure the validity and reliability of thematic coding, this study referred to the method of Zhang et al. [24] to code the interview data. The specific coding procedure was as follows: two authors were independently coded line by line before they checked whether the coding results were consistent at the end of coding, and then sought the third author for evaluation and consultation if they were not consistent to determine the final coding. Table 2 shows the thematic coding process.

Table 2. Example of thematic coding.

Coding Process	Data Codes
Interview documents	F1. Because Jing'an did not have an expressway in the past, coming here from Nanchang took a lot of time. Now that there is a superhighway, coming here may be accomplished in as little as three hours aa1, which is much more convenient aa2. . . F2. Villagers believe that operating nongjiale has improved their living standards, and they are working to enhance the facilities of their own lodges aa30 to attract more tourists. . . F3. The government has allocated special funds aa41 for us to improve the infrastructure, which can better help us develop tourism. . .
Coding labels	aa1 Less than 3 h away; aa2 Much more convenient; . . . ; aa30 Operators enhance the facilities; . . . ; aa41 Dedicated government funding support; . . .
Drivers	a1 Convenient visit of tourists' children (aa1, aa2, aa11. . .); a2 Villagers' additional investments (aa30, aa39, aa89. . .); a3 Dedicated financial funds for infrastructure (aa41, aa48, aa52. . .); . . .
Subcategories	A1 Economic drivers of demand (a1, a4); A2 Political drivers of supply (a3, a8, a9. . .); A3 Cultural drivers of demand (a11, a5); A4 Social drivers of demand (a10, a21, a13. . .); A5 Economic drivers of supply (a2, a7, a14); A6 Social drivers of supply (a15, a20); A7 Cultural drivers of supply (a17, a24, a28. . .); A8 Natural driver of demand (a12); A9 Natural drivers of supply (a6, a16, a25. . .)
Categories	Demand drivers (A1, A3, A4, A8); Supply drivers (A2, A5, A6, A7, A9)

Step 1. Line-by-line coding of the text. This study coded the interview documents line by line to extract sentences representing the drivers of RSHTUE development. Thereafter, the sentences were labeled.

Step 2. Driver extraction. This study collated the sentences labeled in Step 1 and grouped the labels with similar meanings to form the preliminary drivers. To arrive at the final drivers, the preliminary drivers were further substantiated using the literature or interview evidence.

Step 3. Subcategory extraction. This study further refined the final drivers extracted in step 2 and categorized the drivers based on attributes to form subcategories.

Step 4. Category extraction. This study further summarized the subcategories in step 3 to form categories.

The evidence-based steps for the preliminary drivers were as follows. First, the relevant literature was searched in the journal literature database described in Section 3.1 based on the extracted preliminary drivers. Second, if the literature on the relevant topic was retrieved, then the materials relating to the preliminary drivers were obtained through cursory and intensive reading. If the literature on the relevant topic was not retrieved, then the original interview quotes in relation to the preliminary drivers were obtained from the interview documents. Third, the preliminary drivers supported by the literature or original interview quotes were considered the final drivers.

4. Research Results

On the basis of the research method in Section 3, 30 economic, social, political, cultural, and natural factors driving the development of RSHTUE were extracted from the demand and supply, as shown in Figure 2.

4.1. Demand Drivers

4.1.1. Economic Drivers of Demand

(1) Increased disposable income

The annual per capita disposable income of urban residents in China increased from RMB 343 yuan in 1978 and 6256 yuan in 2000 to 47,412 yuan in 2021 [81]. Accordingly, increasing disposable income is the material basis for the elderly to improve their physical and mental health through tourism [58]; it is also the main driving factor for the emergence of senior leisure tourism [82,83]. Pak [84] argued that an increase in pension income could raise the frequency of the elderly traveling. As a tourist (F11) said, “I am retired and have enough free time and pensions. In addition, our children give us regular living expenses... This income is enough to support our vacation here”.

(2) Lower destination consumer prices

Research on elderly migration has indicated that the low cost of living in migration destinations is a major driving factor. For example, the retired elderly can migrate from Germany to Turkey, where the cost of living is lower [85]. Retired American elderly people can migrate from high-cost states to low-cost states [86]. RSHTUE is between short-term tourism and permanent migration [64], with tourists generally staying in destination villages for one to three months [11]. RSHTUE tourists likewise choose destinations with low consumer prices. Elderly tourists choose their destinations mainly based on the value for money or the price of services [40]. As a tourist (F12) said, “The consumer price of Lushan (another summer vacation destination in Jiangxi Province, China) is over 10 times that of Zhongyuan Township. Daily board and lodging just need below RMB 70 yuan in Zhongyuan Township, which is acceptable to us. We would rather come to Zhongyuan Township for our summer vacation...”.

4.1.2. Social Drivers of Demand

(1) Increased demand of improving life quality

With China’s aging population, the elderly are markedly eager to have a healthy and high-quality life [87]. Tourism is beneficial for the elderly to improve their physical health [88] and achieve self-worth [89], thereby enhancing their sense of well-being [90]. In particular, seasonal long-stay tourism, which is characterized by a favorable climate, is significantly conducive to improving retirees’ physical and mental health [91]. RSHTUE is seasonal long-stay tourism. The urban retired elderly’s pursuit of a high-quality life could increase the demand for RSHTUE development. As a village leader (F6) said, “The lifestyle here is walking, dancing, talking with other tourists, and playing puzzle games... Life is pretty regular and relaxed; everyone enjoys themselves”.

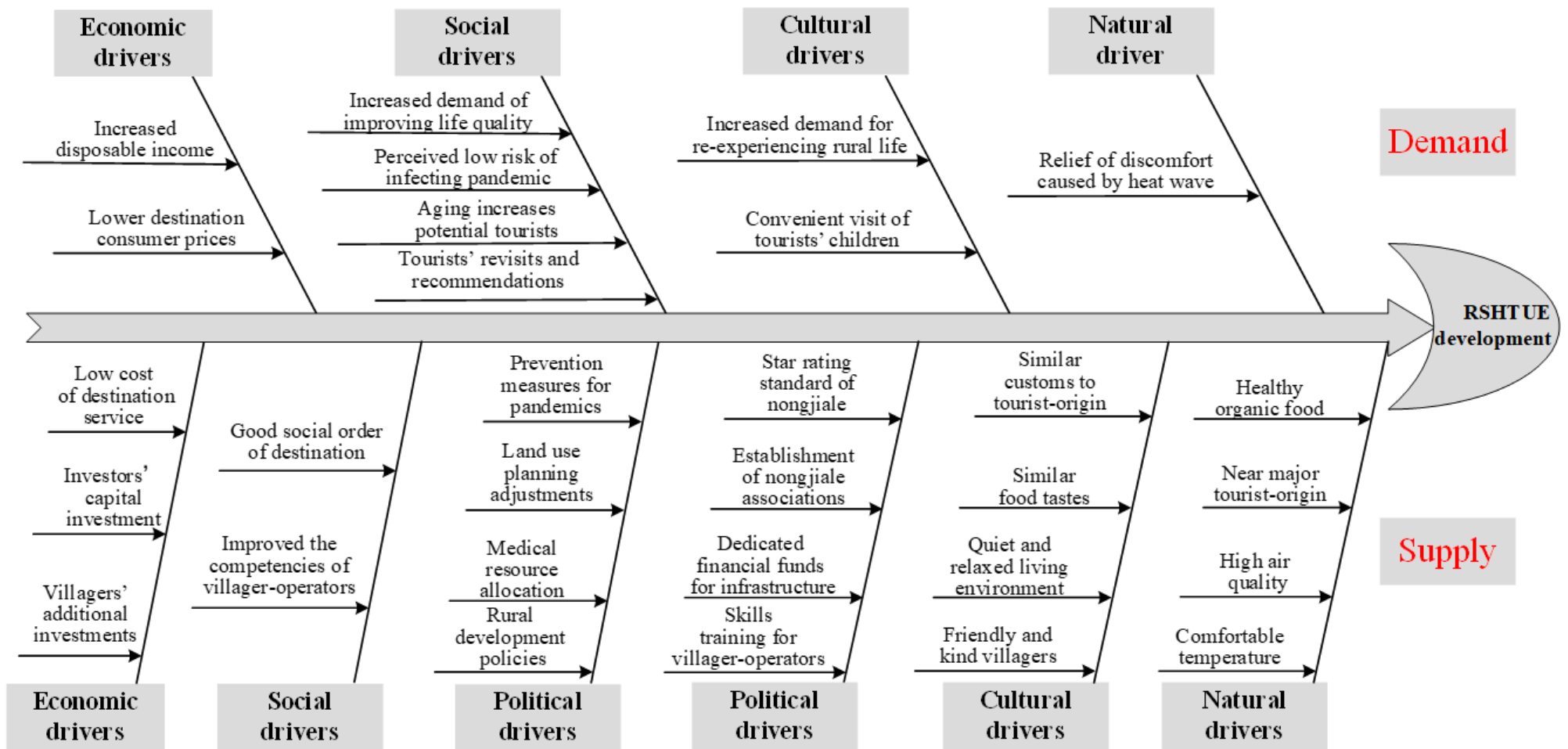


Figure 2. Framework of drivers for RSHTUE development.

(2) Perceived low risk of infecting pandemic

An empirical study has shown that perceived risk moderates the relationship among travel motivation, destination images, and travel intention [92] and also has a direct negative effect on travel intention and attitude [93]. The perceived risks and attitudes of tourists toward the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a choice to travel closer [94,95]. The comparatively low risk of COVID-19 infection is one reason that tourists prefer agritourism [96]. The China Tourism Academy [97] reported that 81.24% of China's domestic tourists in 2022 chose to travel to proximity, which is an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. The distance between RSHTUE destinations and RSHTUE tourists' origin areas is usually within a three-hour drive, and their patterns for controlling COVID-19 are similar. Consequently, RSHTUE tourists perceive a considerably low risk of being infected, increasing the demand for RSHTUE during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a tourist (F13) said, "We do not dare to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Zhongyuan Township is near Nanchang, and the epidemic prevention measures have been well done. Periodic testing for COVID-19 infection... I am more at ease".

(3) Aging increases potential tourists

The proportion of China's population aged 65 and above has increased from 4.90% in 1982 to 14.2% in 2021 [12], entering a deep aging stage. Elderly tourists account for 36.81% of China's domestic tourism market [97]. With the aging process, the elderly desire healthy and quality lives [87]. Health tourism contributes to active aging [98]. Meanwhile, the elderly's demand for health tourism is increasing [60]. The increasing number of urban retirees reserves potential tourists for RSHTUE. As a local government staff (F1) said, "Nearly 10,000 tourists come to Zhongyuan Township for their summer vacation every year... Most of the retirees are from Nanchang, and they enjoy the leisure and healthy lifestyle here".

(4) Tourists' revisits and recommendations

Factors influencing tourists' revisits and recommendation behavior include tourists' satisfaction [99], memorable travel experiences [100], and trust [101]. As a tourist (F15) said, "I have been coming to Zhongyuan Township every year from July to September for over 10 years. Every year, I cannot wait to come here with my husband for a vacation and to visit old friends. I appreciate chatting, walking, and dancing with my friends... Our children are at ease knowing that we are vacationing here because it is safe. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'Weekend Stage' competition was held here every year. My friends and I formed a team to participate in the competition, and we won the third prize... Before I leave, I always book a room in advance for the next year, and the luggage is placed here. I will still come here for vacation next July...".

4.1.3. Cultural Drivers of Demand

(1) Increased demand for re-experiencing rural life

Most Chinese elderly lived from 1968–1980 "Up to the mountains, down to the villages" [102]. Rural tourism enables the elderly to relive past lives [58]. The rural lifestyle can arouse tourists' nostalgia [103], and rural scenes and objects can attract nostalgic elderly [104]. The RSHTUE destination lifestyle attracts the nostalgic elderly, whose arrival raises the RSHTUE demand. As a tourist (F16) said, "The natural environment and living atmosphere of Zhongyuan Township are similar to my previous rural life. I always think of myself when I was young, and I like this feeling...".

(2) Convenient visit of tourists' children

Similar to Confucius and his disciples [105], the sages of the Spring and Autumn period in China said, "Children do not travel long distances while their parents are alive." In the Chinese cultural context, a family reunion is the most valuable sense of well-being [106]. Influenced by filial piety, the Chinese believe that children have to visit their parents

regularly. They always have their parents in mind [107]. The elderly, therefore, chose closer destinations where their children could easily visit them. Visits from children meet the emotional needs of the elderly [108]. Most RSHTUE tourists are urban retirees who expect to receive constant care from their children while on vacation. As a tourist (F17) said, “My child works in a state-owned enterprise, and they sometimes have to work overtime on weekends, so they do not have much time to visit us... He was supportive of our vacation to Zhongyuan Township, which is only a three-hour drive from where we live... I am happiest when he visits me with my grandchildren”.

4.1.4. Natural Driver of Demand

Relief of discomfort caused by heat waves.

Persistent high temperatures in the summer can increase morbidity and exacerbate diseases in the elderly [109]. Tourists are likely to travel to nearby mountainous areas to escape the discomfort caused by the constant summer heat [110]. Summer heat in cities where RSHTUE tourists live can be uncomfortable, necessitating travel to cooler regions. As a tourist (F18) said, “The maximum temperature in the summer in Nanchang is over 40 °C. Therefore, having air conditioning at home is indispensable. However, I would have a difficult time staying in an air-conditioned room for a long time... It’s cozy here in the summer, and I do not need an air conditioner, which is soothing”.

4.2. Supply Drivers

4.2.1. Economic Drivers of Supply

(1) Villagers’ additional investments

Villagers operating nongjiale can lift them out of poverty [111]. Well-established facilities in tourism destinations can increase their attractiveness [112] and boost the economy [113]. Long-staying seniors are concerned with the comfort of their destination lodgings [63]. Operators of RSHTUE destinations use idle houses as places to operate nongjiale. Simultaneously, they are constantly improving their accommodation facilities and enhancing the comfort of their accommodation. As a local government staff (F2) said, “Tourists have raised their requirements for accommodation along with the development of tourism; most of them prefer standard rooms with private bathrooms... Residents perceive that operating a nongjiale has improved their standard of living, so they continue to improve their accommodation to attract tourists”.

(2) Investors’ capital investments

Rural resources are the “asset capital” of rural tourism [114]. Brand capital is intangible capital [115], and destinations from brands often attract investments [116]. RSHTUE destinations with comfortable summer temperatures and a good image attract investors’ investments to support the local development of RSHTUE. As a village leader (F4) said, “Under the government’s leadership, operators’ cooperation, and tourists’ support, we have built a special summer resort town. China Central Television has also reported on our tourism industry. Therefore, Zhongyuan Township attracts plenty of investors to invest... Real estate companies saw the prospect of RSHTUE development. Therefore, they built some large-scale nongjiales”.

(3) Low cost of destination service

Nongjiale is a form of rural tourism with Chinese characteristics that aims to provide accommodation and food for tourists [117]. Organic food in rural tourism destinations is popular among tourists [118] and is a major factor in attracting tourists. Cooking ingredients are a critical component of an operator’s operating costs [119]. RSHTUE destination operators employ locals during the peak season. The number of local seasonal workers is high, labor productivity is high, and hiring prices are low [120]. Vegetables in the city are considerably expensive owing to transportation costs. As an operator (F7) said, “We buy vegetables grown locally because there is no transportation expense, which helps

us save money. Our organic vegetables are popular with the urban elderly because they are nutritious. . . We hire locals during the busiest months of July and August every year because the wage is low, thereby reducing labor costs”.

4.2.2. Social Drivers of Supply

(1) Improved the competencies of villager-operators

Operators’ service attitudes [121], work experience, and industry knowledge [122] influence the scale of RSHTUE development and service quality. Human capital, such as the entrepreneurial experience and skills of small tourism entrepreneurs, contributes significantly to firm performance [123]. Educational tourism destination operators have been influenced by foreign investors, and operators have improved their business and thinking skills [124]. RSHTUE operators are chiefly local villagers, most of whom are poorly educated. Local operators usually operate their nongjiale based on previous work experiences. As an operator (F8) said, “I operate nongjiale with minimal skill, but it is a good idea to provide a warm and considerate service to tourists. I treat the elderly living in my nongjiale as family members and try to satisfy their needs. . . Many operators and I have accumulated extensive work experience by taking jobs in the city when we were young. We also learn from the more successfully operating nongjiale to improve our capabilities. . .”.

(2) Good social order of destination

Destination trust includes the honesty, friendliness, and competence of residents. It is influenced by reputation, cognitive perceptions, and affective evaluations [125]. It is considered unethical for operators to cheat tourists, which can affect their potential income and negatively impact local development [126]. A secure environment can be an attractive element [127]. Public and transparent tourism information in rural tourism destinations is more likely to draw elderly tourists opting for longer stays [63]. RSHTUE destinations have a good social order that promotes the willingness of urban retired seniors to travel. As a tourist (F19) said, “I’ve been coming here for so many years for my summer vacation, and I have not been cheated when I go shopping; the merchants are quite honest. . . There’s no need to close the door for outings; there’s mutual trust among tourists”.

4.2.3. Political Drivers of Supply

(1) Rural development policies

A well-developed infrastructure is an important factor in public services for rural tourism [128] and a major driver of tourism development [129]. Such initiatives as the *Rural Cleaning Project* and the *Rural Highway Project* address the rural foundation issues of sanitation, transportation, and environmental protection; these initiatives also serve as important prerequisites for developing rural tourism [130,131]. The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The General Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China [132] promulgated *the Implementation Measures of the Responsibility System for Rural Revitalization*. These measures clarified the responsibilities of central government departments and local governments for rural revitalization. These responsible bodies effectively guarantee the rights and interests of rural tourism development and ensure the improvement of rural infrastructure. RSHTUE destinations upgrade the core landscape and improve their function to provide a comfortable travel environment. As a village leader (F3) said, “According to government policies, we have been continuously improving the infrastructure, such as the walkway along the river, public toilets, and garbage disposal, offering a comfortable and clean environment for tourists to have a pleasant travel experience. . .”.

(2) Medical resource allocation

Local governments are managers and service providers in rural tourism, as well as coordinate resources [133]. July to September is the peak period for RSHTUE destinations. For example, the Zhongyuan Township in Jiangxi Province had around 20,000 summer

tourists during this period in 2019. The local government deployed medical resources to ensure that tourists could receive timely medical treatment in emergencies. As a tourist (F25) said, “I am satisfied that the government sent doctors from Jing’an County People’s Hospital to be stationed in Zhongyuan Township... I have minor health problems. Although we bring medication while on vacation, we cannot guarantee that there will be no accidents. With professional doctors stationed here, we will be more at ease”.

(3) Land use planning adjustments

The Chinese government adopted the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China [134], which allows rural collectives to operate construction land and enter the market. This decision could revitalize idle rural land and optimize the use of land resources [135]. The General Office of the People’s Government of Jiangxi Province [136] supports all types of participants using idle land to develop health and well-being tourism. To develop tourism, the RSHTUE destination government has adjusted the land use plan. As a village leader (F3) said, “An increasing number of tourists are coming to Zhongyuan Township for their summer vacation. The government has built a trail along the river, parking lots, and activity plazas to promote tourism. The government encourages residents to use idle houses to operate nongjiale...”.

(4) Prevention measures for pandemics

During the COVID-19 pandemic, proximity tourism was an important form of tourism [97,137]. Tourists’ positive perceptions could be attributed to the effective measures taken by the Chinese government to control the spread of COVID-19 [138]. Effective pandemic prevention measures can improve tourists’ sense of safety and tourism willingness [139]. As a tourist (F14) said, “During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is safer to travel at close range... In Zhongyuan Township, the government distributed masks to us and set up nucleic acid detection points. The system of separate food can reduce contact between everyone, so we stay here with peace of mind”.

(5) Skills training for villager-operators

Government-enhanced skills training for villagers is also effective in improving their service quality and participation level, which is conducive to the sustainable development of local tourism [140]. The RSHTUE destination government regularly organizes skills training for operators, thereby improving the service quality and provision capacity of destinations. As an operator (F10) said, “The government regularly organizes practical training, such as how to clean up, prepare a variety of breakfasts, and treat guests to make them more satisfied. We have the opportunity to learn from our peers’ experiences outside... After numerous training opportunities, I have the confidence that I can do well in my nongjiale”.

(6) Dedicated financial funds for infrastructure

Government financial support [141] and clear funding programs [78] are sustainable tourism driving forces. Dedicated financial funds from the government can improve the destination’s infrastructure and accessibility, which is a driver for rural tourism willingness [77]. Moreover, the degree of infrastructure improvement affects farmers’ sense of gain [142]. Therefore, the Jing’an county government arranges certain funds to improve rural infrastructure and service reception conditions for Zhongyuan Township every year [143]. As an operator (F9) said, “Before the development of tourism in Zhongyuan Township, the road had potholes whenever it was raining... Now that tourism has developed, the government has invested in building a lot of infrastructure. We are happier when life is more convenient”.

(7) Establishment of nongjiale associations

Destination management is the decisive factor in destination competitiveness [144]. Making destination management strategies, coordinating destination stakeholders, developing destination tourism products, and marketing this destination externally requires the

establishment of a destination management organization [145]. In 2013, the Zhongyuan Township Nongjiale Culture Rural Tourism Association was established under the guidance of the Party Committee and the government of Zhongyuan Township [146]. This association, as a destination management organization, regulates the supply of the destination by unifying the quality of services and prices of nongjiales in Zhongyuan Township. As a village leader (F5) said, “The Zhongyuan Township Nongjiale Culture Rural Tourism Association has developed a standard of prices and services, effectively preventing vicious price competitions. . . The association also assists operators and tourists and resolves business disputes effectively. . .”.

(8) Star rating standard of nongjiale

A star rating is an important way for local governments and destination management organizations to regulate operators. Standards for the star rating include reception facilities, service quality, and environmental requirements. The higher the degree of perfection to these standards, the higher the grade of the star rating. The county government of Zhongyuan Township has developed and implemented star rating standards. The results of the star rating are used as bases for supporting policies, such as credit support, policy assistance, and tax relief [147]. Policies associated with the star rating motivate nongjiale operators to continuously improve hospitality facilities and service quality. As a local government staff (F2) said, “The rules of star rating stimulate competition among the operators of nongjiale, which can improve the service level of operators, create a favorable environment for tourists, and contribute to the development of RSHTUE. . .”.

4.2.4. Cultural Drivers of Supply

(1) Friendly and kind villagers

The friendliness and hospitality of residents are important factors in tourists’ perceptions of satisfaction and in their positive evaluations of destinations [148,149]. Tourists anticipate being treated with respect and hospitality by residents during their travels [121]. Enthusiastic hospitality and a warm atmosphere create emotional attachment and loyalty among tourists [150]. As a tourist (F21) said, “I have minimal interaction with my urban neighbors. The doors are closed almost every day, which is a dull life. . . Unlike those living in the city, residents of Zhongyuan Township are passionate. Even if we do not know each other, they will ask us, ‘Have you eaten yet? Are you taking a walk?’ People are sincere and helpful to each other, which warms me up so much. . . Operators are enthusiastic, and they will try to meet any needs we have as if I were a member of their family”.

(2) Quiet and relaxed living environment

Rural tourism is a relaxed lifestyle for people [151]. Relaxation and escape from routine can allow the elderly to be themselves again [74]. Retirees consider city life “too crowded” and prefer a quiet and relaxed living environment [152]. Quiet and relaxing is not “silent”, but sounds that bring peace and relaxation include the sound of running water, animals chirping, and folk songs [153]. RSHTUE destinations have unique rural soundscapes that appeal to retirees. As a tourist (F22) said, “The noise of car horns in the city has never been my favorite. . . I adore the sound of animals, the flowing river, and people sitting together singing and playing erhu by the river, which makes me feel very relaxed”.

(3) Similar food tastes

Dietary culture is one of the main reasons for traveling [154]. The elderly often prefer familiar foods, given that their gastrointestinal function is already weak, and changes in diet can affect their health [155]. Taste-appropriate food can bring pleasure to the elderly [156]. Emotionally, the elderly are likely to choose destinations with food tastes similar to their own [64]. Retirees in neighboring cities are more attracted to RSHTUE destinations because the local food tastes similar to theirs. As a tourist (F23) said, “I am fond of experiencing new things, but this excludes food. I am not as adaptable compared with when I was young. I

prefer familiar tastes when it comes to food... A sense of home will be experienced when eating familiar food in an unfamiliar place”.

(4) Similar customs to tourist-origin

Customs are one of the main reasons for traveling [157]. Traditional cultural customs of villages can purify the mind [158]. Local cultural customs are part of cultural tourism, which can reduce prejudice and narrow the distance between people [159]. The elderly tend to select long-stay places with customs similar to their own [64]. Elderly tourists are more attracted when RSHTUE destinations have similar customs and habits to neighboring cities. As a tourist (F20) said, “While vacationing in a destination with similar customs and habits, I have no barriers to communicating with the service staff and residents, which makes me more relaxed. I would experience difficulty adapting to a destination with unfamiliar customs and habits...”.

4.2.5. Natural Drivers of Supply

(1) Comfortable temperature

Comfortable temperatures are a prerequisite for RSHTUE development [11]. The elderly focus considerably on local weather conditions when choosing their travel destinations [61]. Pleasant weather is one of the reasons for tourists staying longer in their destinations [63]. Most of the high-temperature cities in China are surrounded by high-altitude mountains, such as the Daba Mountains in Hubei Province, Hengshan Mountains in Hunan Province, Wuling Mountains in Chongqing Municipality, and Huangshan Mountains in Anhui Province. RSHTUE can be developed in high-altitude mountain villages, where summer temperatures are substantially lower than in cities [70]. As a tourist (F27) said, “The maximum summer temperature in Nanchang is over 40 °C. My daily life is significantly affected by this condition because it feels like living in an oven. What appeals to me the most about Zhongyuan Township is that the summer temperatures are comfortable. There is no need to sleep with the air conditioning...”.

(2) High air quality

Air quality can be measured using negative oxygen ions and PM2.5 concentrations. Fresh air can purify the body, amplify and awaken the five senses, and benefit physical and mental health [156]. Negative oxygen ions are necessary to restore physical vitality and promote metabolism [160], and places with a high negative oxygen ion content are good for maintaining health [107]. Epidemiology has shown that the elderly are particularly vulnerable to adverse cardiovascular effects caused by PM2.5 exposure [161]. High negative oxygen ion content and low PM2.5 concentrations are the natural drivers for RSHTUE development in the countryside. As a tourist (F28) said, “There is fresh air in Zhongyuan Township. When I wake up in the morning, I open the door, take a breath of fresh air into my lungs, and feel refreshed and relaxed...”.

(3) Near major tourist-origin

The distance from origins to destinations is the predominant factor influencing the elderly to travel [59]. As distance increases, the likelihood of elderly family travel decreases [162]. Within a three-hour drive of a high-temperature city, there are a considerable number of villages that meet the temperature and air quality standards of RSHTUE, which is a natural driver for supply. As a tourist (F24) said, “This location is near where I reside in the city. We had no communication hurdles with the natives because we spoke the same dialects... Moreover, it is near our home and convenient for our children to visit us, being just an hour or so away by car...”.

(4) Healthy organic food

Rural tourists prefer to consume organic food [163]. Cohen et al. [164] argued that adherence to a predominantly organic and plant-based dietary health regimen for over one week resulted in substantial improvements in health. The main purpose of RSHTUE

tourists coming to villages for their summer vacation is to maintain physical fitness. Natural resources, such as land for growing organic vegetables and other organic ingredients, are natural drivers for supplying villages that intend to develop RSHTUE. As a tourist (F26) said, “Vegetables grown by the locals that tourists eat in nongjiale are fresh, tasty, and healthy... Vegetables are organic, which means they were planted without using pesticides or chemical fertilizers... Not very productive, but healthier...”.

5. Discussion, Implications and Limitations

5.1. Discussion

This study identifies the drivers of RSHTUE development in terms of demand and supply, in line with Gunn and Turgut [20]. They argued that the “supply subsystem” and “demand subsystem” were the two most fundamental tourism subsystems. Unlike Li [54] and Ullah et al. [57], who argued that there were other drivers of tourism system development in addition to demand and supply, the current study argues that other drivers can eventually be translated into demand and supply drivers. These drivers include media, decision-making, and support, as mentioned by Ullah et al. [57]. The current study further subdivides the supply and demand drivers of RSHTUE development into economic, social, political, cultural, and natural, similar to Dwyer et al. [53]. It is concluded that the drivers of tourism development can include economic, social, political, and environmental.

Regarding economic drivers, this study found that an increasing disposable income among urban retirees is a demand driver for RSHTUE development, which is consistent with Hsu et al. [58] and Tuo et al. [59]. The current study found low consumer prices in destinations to be a demand driver for RSHTUE development, consistent with Tuo et al. [59], Cheng et al. [64], and Singh [71]. The present study found that additional investment in hospitality facilities by investors and villagers is a supply driver of RSHTUE development, consistent with Pestana et al. [61] and Wong and Musa [66]. They found that accommodation facilities are the main pull for elderly tourists. This study also found that the low cost of destination services is a supply driver for RSHTUE development that has not been deeply explored in the existing literature. This finding further explored the reasons for the low consumer prices at destinations because RSHTUE nongjiale operators use their idle houses as facilities for hosting tourists, use locally grown ingredients, and employ local residents as temporary staff.

On social drivers, this study found that the increased demand of urban retirees to improve their life quality is a demand driver for RSHTUE development, consistent with Hsu et al. [58], Alen et al. [60], Cheng et al. [64], and Wong and Musa [66]. They also argued that tourists could improve their physical and mental health through tourism, thereby improving their life quality. The result of the current study is also consistent with Hsu et al. [58], Pestana et al. [61], Ozyurt [65], Wong and Musa [66], Kim et al. [72], and Lewis and D’Alessandro [74] regarding the factors of escape from routine, knowledge seeking, self-improvement, self-satisfaction, self-development, and other needs to achieve a high-quality life. This study found that the perceived proximity travel reduced the probability of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a demand driver for RSHTUE development. This result agrees with Shin et al. [95] and Gyimothy et al. [165] that tourists have preferred domestic travel since the COVID-19 pandemic. This study found that increasing age increased the number of potential tourists as a demand driver for RSHTUE development. This result is consistent with Pan et al. [166] and Hsu et al. [58], who suggested that the accelerating rate of aging in China is responsible for the increase in potential tourists. The current study found that tourist revisits and recommendation behavior are demand drivers for RSHTUE development, consistent with the findings that satisfaction [99] and memorable travel experiences [100] influence revisit and recommendation behavior. Moreover, this study found that good social order at the destination is a supply driver for RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Alen et al. [60], Wong and Musa [66], and Sangpikul [62], who found that safety, security, and stability in the social order of tourist destinations are attractive factors. The present study found that

villager-operator capacity enhancement is a supply driver of RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Haber and Reichel [123], who concluded that human capital, such as the entrepreneurial experience and skills of tourism micro-entrepreneurs, contributes the most to firm performance.

On political drivers, this study found that support for rural development policies, special financial funds to improve destination infrastructure, and land use policy inclination to improve reception capacity are supply drivers of RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Kumar et al. [77] and Lun et al. [78], who argued that government policies and financial support are important reasons for rural tourism development. The current study found that the government deployment of healthcare resources during peak seasons is a supply driver of RSHTUE development that has not been deeply explored in the existing literature. In addition, this research further explored the perfect degree of local medical security as an important reason for urban retired elderly to choose RSHTUE. This study also found government pandemic prevention initiatives to be a supply driver of RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Shin et al. [139], who argued that tourist trust is an important factor in tourist destination choice, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. This study found that skills training for villager operators organized by the government is a supply driver of RSHTUE development. This result is consistent with Nogueira and Pinho [167] and Saufi et al. [168], who argued that skills training for operators is an important factor in tourism development. The current study found that the government has guided the establishment and operation of nongjiale associations and guides to formulate the star rating standard, which can contribute as a supply driver of RSHTUE development. This aspect has not been explored in depth in the existing literature. This finding further explores the fact that government guidance and support are necessary ways of achieving rural revitalization. The RSHTUE nongjiale association was first formed by local villagers on their initiative and was standardized under government guidance. Collaboration between the government and the nongjiale association could provide more detailed and considerate services to tourists and operators.

On cultural drivers, this study found that an increased demand to re-experience rural life is a demand driver for RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Hsu et al. [58], Christou et al. [104], and Lwoga and Maturo [6], who argued that nostalgia for rural life is a driver of rural tourism. The current study found that the elderly's consideration of their children's visitation convenience as a demand driver for RSHTUE development has not been thoroughly explored in the existing literature. "Filial piety" is one of the most important aspects of Chinese family relationships, in which parental support and children's support are mutual. The urban retired elderly often choose RSHTUE as a destination because it is more convenient for their children to visit them and to satisfy their desire for family unity and happiness. This study found that the friendliness and kindness of residents are supply drivers of RSHTUE development. This result is consistent with Wong and Musa [66] and Lyu et al. [63], who found that the friendliness and kindness of residents are important factors in attracting tourists. The current study found that destinations with a quiet and relaxed living environment are supply drivers of RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Lyu et al. [63] and Wong and Musa [66], who found that a quiet and relaxed living environment in tourist destinations is an important factor in attracting elderly tourists. The current study found that having similar diets and customs to those of tourist-origin areas is a supply driver of RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Cheng et al. [64] and Balderas-Cejudo et al. [155], who suggested that similar diets and customs are reasons for elderly tourists to choose destinations. By contrast, Ghadban et al. [79], Lewis and D'Alessandro [74], Turker and Suzer [169], and Correia et al. [170] argued that tourists aim for novelty and try local cuisine. However, differences and novelty should be discerned based on the purpose of the tourists. RSHTUE tourists aim to escape from the heat and fancy the temperature difference. RSHTUE tourists prefer to live in places with similar food and customs due to their weak adaptive capacity [171].

On natural drivers, this study found that the alleviation of summer thermal discomfort is a demand driver for RSHTUE development. This result is consistent with Juschten et al. [70] and Serquet and Rebetz [110]. The current study found that comfortable destination temperatures, good air quality, and proximity to the tourist source are supply drivers of RSHTUE development. This result is consistent with Alen et al. [60], Wong and Musa [66], Ghadban et al. [79], and Savas et al. [67]. The present study found that having healthy organic ingredients in destinations is also a supply driver for RSHTUE development. This finding is consistent with Sergo et al. [163] and Yin et al. [172], who concluded that having healthy organic food in destinations is an important factor in attracting tourists.

5.2. Implications

This study systematically and deeply explores the drivers of RSHTUE development from supply and demand aspects. Theoretically, this study explains the reasons for the rapid development of RSHTUE in China, deepens the application of supply and demand theory to specific industries, and enriches knowledge in the field of industrial development. For the practical aspect, the results of this study could guide the development of RSHTUE as follows:

First, villages that are suitable for developing RSHTUE have comfortable summer temperatures, while the cities near these villages have high summer temperatures. The natural drivers in the research results show that the relief of discomfort caused by heat waves is a demand driver for RSHTUE development, and comfortable temperatures in potential destinations are a supply driver for RSHTUE development. The desire to travel to the nearby countryside, where the temperature is comfortable, is set to increase among the retired elderly living in high-temperature cities. The cultural drivers in the research results show that the potential tourist destinations' proximity to tourist-origin areas, which facilitates children's visits to the elderly, is a demand driver for RSHTUE development. Moreover, the similarity of food and customs is a supply driver for RSHTUE development.

Second, RSHTUE destination villages should increase the level of community participation to achieve sustainable and high-quality RSHTUE development. The natural drivers in the research results show that the high quality of air in the destination villages and organic vegetables grown by villagers are supply drivers for RSHTUE development. The cultural drivers in these findings show that the desire of the elderly to re-experience a rural lifestyle is a demand driver for RSHTUE development. The friendly and kind residents, as well as the quiet and relaxed lifestyle of the destination villages, are supply drivers for RSHTUE development. The maintenance of these drivers requires the deep involvement of all parties that are involved in the destination, such as villagers who perceive the benefits of tourism development for themselves, who consciously support local tourism development, and who protect the natural and human environment. Operators should use part of these proceeds for community development. Therefore, a benign interaction between tourism and rural communities is formed.

Lastly, local governments can provide policies to promote the development of RSHTUE in three aspects: (1) The local government should establish a system for training rural tourism talents. They should strengthen the training and guidance of local villagers and operators, improve their professionalism and service level, and enhance the management and service capacity of RSHTUE. (2) The local government should guide residents and village cadres to establish a destination management organization. This organization should be responsible for destination branding, thereby increasing tourists' satisfaction and loyalty and achieving sustainable destination development. (3) The local government should develop relevant policies from a demand side to expand the demand of potential tourists for summer vacation and recreation. Political drivers in these research results show that the government has supported villages to develop RSHTUE mainly from the supply side. The government can encourage tourists to choose RSHTUE from a demand side. Moreover, the government can encourage tourists to choose RSHTUE in terms of

policies and funds (e.g., the government provides tourists with certain travel subsidies). For villages where RSHTUE is to be developed, the government drives RSHTUE development primarily from the supply side. For villages that have already developed RSHTUE, the government can also drive the higher-quality development of RSHTUE from the demand side after the supply drivers are nearly saturated.

5.3. Limitations

Although this study conducted comprehensive and in-depth interviews with rural-related participants in the typical villages developing RSHTUE, extracted preliminary drivers of RSHTUE development from the interview data, and reviewed the existing literature to verify these drivers, some limitations remain, which are directions for further research.

First, this study follows the idea of a single case study, conducting research only on a typical township that developed RSHTUE. Some drivers may not have been discovered. Future studies need to expand this scope, selecting more villages in China and overseas that are developing RSHTUE for field research to complement and refine new drivers.

Second, the drivers of RSHTUE development should consider the differences in the different development stages of the destination life cycle. The results of this study could only represent the drivers of the current stage of developing RSHTUE in China. Ongoing tracking will be required in the future to fully understand the demand and supply drivers at different stages of RSHTUE development throughout its life cycle.

Lastly, this study only identified the drivers of RSHTUE development through qualitative research without quantitatively distinguishing the importance of these drivers or verifying the logical relationships among them. Future quantitative studies are needed to rank the importance of these drivers and explore their causality.

6. Conclusions

On the bases of the characteristics of RSHTUE, this study conducted field research in Zhongyuan Township, Jiangxi Province, China, and explored the drivers of RSHTUE development using semi-structured interviews, thematic coding, and searches of the literature. RSHTUE development has 30 drivers in terms of demand and supply. (1) Nine demand drivers of RSHTUE development were clustered into four categories: economic, social, cultural, and natural. (2) A total of 21 supply drivers of RSHTUE development were clustered into five categories: economic, social, political, cultural, and natural. Some of these drivers were unique to RSHTUE in the Chinese context, such as considering the convenience of child visitation, having similar food and customs to tourist-origin areas, local government guiding the establishment and operation of the nongjiale association, and local government guiding the nongjiale association to develop star rating standards. (3) The literature supporting each driver should be systematically reviewed.

This study enriches the knowledge of RSHTUE development drivers from the demand and supply aspects. RSHTUE-relevant participants can use these drivers to identify villages suitable for developing RSHTUE, such as villages with comfortable summer temperatures, while cities adjacent to these villages that have hot summers could be selected for RSHTUE development. RSHTUE-related participants can also use these drivers to explore countermeasures for the sustainable development of RSHTUE, such as enhancing the level of community participation in RSHTUE destination villages. Local governments can formulate relevant policies from the demand side to expand their demand for summer vacation and recreation. The literature on each driver can provide literature support for subsequent studies.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to the privacy concerns of the interviewees.

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Appendix A. Interview Outline

For local government staff

1. Does the government have any policy or financial support for the development of RSHTUE?
2. What role do you think the government plays in the development of RSHTUE?
3. What do you think is the key factor to developing RSHTUE?
4. In the process of developing RSHTUE, which type of relevant participants do you think is the most critical?

For village leader

1. What do you think are the advantages of the successful development of RSHTUE in Zhongyuan Township?
2. What role do you think village leaders play in the development of RSHTUE?
3. What do you think is the key factor to developing RSHTUE?
4. In the process of developing RSHTUE, which type of relevant participants do you think is the most critical?

For operator

1. Why did you choose to operate nongjiale?
2. What kind of changes has operated a farmhouse brought to your life?
3. What do you think is most important to operate the farmhouse?
4. Did the government provide any help or support for you to operate nongjiale?
5. What role do you think operators play in the development of RSHTUE?
6. What do you think is the key factor to developing RSHTUE?

For tourist

1. Where did you come from?
2. How old are you?
3. Why did you choose to come to Zhongyuan Township for your tourism?
4. What do you think is the key factor in developing RSHTUE?
5. What are you most concerned about in tourism?

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