

# Study on the Relationship between Elderly Tourism Motivation and Active Aging: A Case Study of Elderly Population in First-tier Cities of China

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**Abstract:** This paper explores active aging by examining elderly tourism through the lenses of existential theory, the broaden-and-build theory, and the circular theory. It investigates the travel motivations of the elderly in tourism scenarios, integrating factors such as positive thinking, positive behavior, and a positive organizational environment into the research. A path model was constructed to analyze how active aging influences travel motivations in a tourism context, supported by empirical analysis using 337 valid samples. The study found that key dimensions of active aging influencing elderly travel motivations include positive behavior, positive thinking, and a positive organizational environment. The path model and research data show good compatibility and explanatory power regarding the impact of active aging on travel motivations. Positive thinking, positive behavior, and a positive organizational environment all positively affect the travel motivations of the elderly. In the path analysis, positive thinking as an independent variable does not directly influence travel motivations; instead, positive behavior and a positive organizational environment serve as important mediating variables.

**Keywords:** Active Aging, Elderly Tourism, Tourism Characteristics, Existential Theory, Broaden-and-Build Theory.

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## 1. Research Background

In contemporary China, the issue of aging extends beyond traditional elderly care. Especially in large and medium-sized cities, the elderly are no longer solely focused on meeting basic material needs; instead, they increasingly prioritize spiritual well-being and quality of life. Active aging has emerged as an effective approach to enhancing the quality of life for Chinese seniors. Tourism, as a modern form of leisure and entertainment, represents one of the best avenues to realize the concept of active aging. This study aims to explore the phenomenon of elderly tourism within the framework of active aging in China. Active aging promotes seniors' active participation in social activities and contribution to society, naturally aligning with the essence of elderly tourism. Elderly tourism, as a specific manifestation of active aging, has a positive impact on the quality of life and the physical and mental health of seniors. However, there is currently limited research on the correlation between elderly tourism and active aging in China. Therefore, this study focuses on the elderly tourism population in China, employing a path model to analyze the impact of active aging on travel motivations within a tourism context. The objective is to provide theoretical and practical support for the coordinated development of elderly tourism and active aging, addressing a gap in the domestic literature and guiding the further advancement of the elderly tourism market.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Concept and Role of Active Aging

"Active aging" refers to a process aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the aging population, ensuring optimal physical and mental health, social engagement, and life security (World Health Organization, 2003). The term "active" encompasses not only physical activity and work but also ongoing involvement and contribution in social,

economic, and cultural spheres. It highlights that seniors can utilize their strengths to actively engage in social activities, create value, and achieve self-fulfillment, similar to their past experiences. From this perspective, elderly tourism represents a specific manifestation of active aging.

### 2.2. Positive Behavior

Saleebey (1992) introduced the strengths perspective for the elderly, emphasizing the importance of recognizing their behavioral capabilities, skills, and competencies regardless of the environment. This perspective advocates for utilizing the resources and abilities of the elderly effectively to assist them. The strengths perspective encompasses three main aspects: (1) Empowerment Behavior: This involves actively coordinating relationships between individuals, families, and society through their rights and resources (Kaplan, 1994). (2) Membership: Walzer (1983) underscores the significance of the elderly being respected and realizing their self-worth within a group or family. Membership behavior hinges on one's ability to actively become a respected member of a group or society through their behavior while achieving self-worth. (3) Resilience: Resilience stems from the interaction between the elderly and their environment. Despite adverse or challenging circumstances, what matters most is how individuals perceive their ability to cope with the environment and their level of mastery over environmental resources (Rutter, 1987).

### 2.3. Positive Thinking

Researchers have investigated positive thinking and the development of life wisdom in the elderly from an educational standpoint (Ardelt, 2003; Sternberg, 1998). Sternberg (1998) proposed the balance theory of wisdom, suggesting that wisdom in the elderly is characterized by a unique way of thinking and a vital, practical core quality in life.

Expanding on the balance theory of wisdom, Ardelt (2003)

introduced a three-dimensional model of wisdom. She argued that personality traits combining cognitive, reflective, and affective thinking abilities characterize the independent completeness of human wisdom. Specifically: (1) Cognitive Thinking: This involves understanding and contemplating social choices, practical knowledge about life, and various aspects of aging. The deeper the understanding, the stronger the positive thinking. (2) Reflective Thinking: This entails self-reflection and self-understanding, maintaining a proactive and continuous learning spirit to find more suitable ways of living and handling situations through reflection. (3) Affective Thinking: This involves effectively controlling personal emotions through thought processes, maintaining the ability to keep emotions stable.

## 2.4. Positive Organizational Relationships

In the 1990s, the United States witnessed the emergence of an active aging movement aimed at safeguarding the social rights of the elderly, which gradually became a research focus in active aging. When examining positive social organizations for the elderly, it is crucial to underscore the equality of life subjects, emphasizing the participation of seniors in social life to ensure their mental well-being and enhance their quality of life.

Drawing from the ideas of social constructionist Gergen (2016), the concept of positive organizational relationships in active aging should advocate three core themes: self, interpersonal relationships, and social participation. Specifically: (1) Self: This involves proactive self-awareness and learning, enhancing recognition of oneself on physiological, psychological, and social levels. Through aging education and learning, seniors are encouraged to maintain a positive appearance, expand their knowledge or self-awareness, and stimulate vitality to arrange their daily lives positively. (2) Interpersonal Relationships: This focuses on the wisdom of developing interpersonal connections, maintaining and expanding personal social networks for high-quality aging. In China, building interpersonal relationships for the elderly should prioritize the spouse and children as the core, with a positive extension to other relationship networks (Zhao, 2017). (3) Social Participation: This entails efficient social interactions, enhancing the elderly's self-efficacy, pride, and sense of accomplishment through community involvement. The scope of social activities should actively expand around positive and efficient interactions (Guo, 2006).

## 2.5. Research on Elderly Travel Motivation

Elderly tourism serves as more than a continuation of pre-retirement lifestyle and hobbies; it also facilitates effective transition after retirement, promoting the self-development of seniors. Various motivations influence the elderly's decision to travel, including maintaining interests, bridging the gap post-retirement, and pursuing self-development (Oliver, 2008). As time elapses post-retirement, factors such as reduced social interactions, decreased income, and health changes can dampen outdoor travel. Therefore, the initial

retirement phase is deemed the optimal time for travel (Janke, 2007). Research by Cathy Hsu (2007) reveals diverse travel motivations among the elderly, encompassing physical and mental health pursuits, social needs, curiosity, and patriotism. Through both in-depth interviews and quantitative analysis, significant travel motivations for seniors have been identified, including enriching life, fulfilling dreams, nostalgia, maintaining health, and making friends (Liu, 2016). These motivations not only reflect seniors' love for life but also signify their aspiration to meet spiritual needs and enhance their quality of life through tourism.

## 2.6. Research on Decision-making and Behavioral Characteristics in Elderly Tourism

The decision-making and behavior of elderly tourists are shaped by various factors. Objective factors such as income and family wealth determine their travel capacity and destination choices (Song & Li, 2008). Additionally, aspects like the ecological environment, tourism facilities, transportation convenience, and destination living conditions impact destination selection. Subjectively, factors such as values, education level, income, family relationships, and destination cultural level also influence their decisions (Wang, 2008). Moreover, social and economic differences, personal needs and interests, travel experiences, and physical condition play pivotal roles (Hung & Lu, 2015).

Safety emerges as a primary concern for elderly tourists, leading them to avoid areas prone to natural disasters or with poor security. Language barriers and cultural conflicts can further hinder travel. Additional constraints include limited resources, time constraints, lack of decision-making power, diminished travel capability, absence of companions, health issues, and a lack of security perception (Janga, 2006). According to social exchange theory, parental support from children influences elderly travel decisions, closely tied to their late-life happiness and physical and mental health (Lee, 1995). Moreover, caregiving for grandchildren in exchange for support from adult children can also impact their travel decisions and behavior (Silverstein, 2002).

## 2.7. Broaden-and-Build Theory

In positive psychology research, it's been discovered that the strengths inherent in human nature play crucial roles as regulators and buffers against psychological disorders. Contemporary psychology strives to enhance human health and happiness by scientifically fostering and nurturing these inherent strengths (Wu, 2014). This notion resonates with the concept of active aging, which underscores leveraging the strengths and positivity of the elderly population. Within the framework of active aging, the interplay among the cognitive, behavioral, and social aspects of aging individuals largely aligns with Barbara Fredrickson's "broaden-and-build" theory (2011).

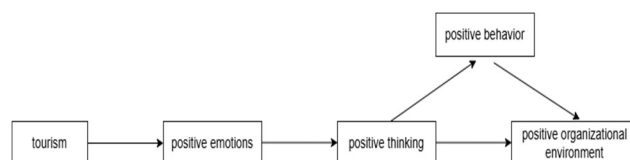


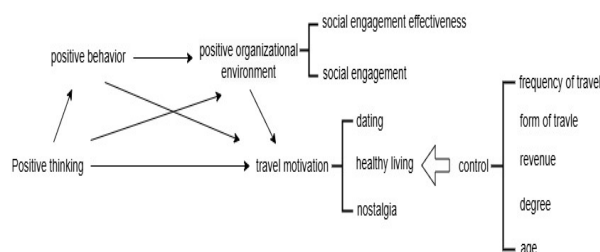
Figure 1. Pathways of Tourism Impact on Active Aging in the "Broaden-and-Build" Theory

The theory posits that activities like tourism and leisure, which evoke happiness and life satisfaction, can instigate optimistic and positive changes in future life outlook. Positive emotions such as happiness, joy, and inspiration experienced during tourism contribute to broadening individual perspectives towards various life aspects in a positive and effective manner. Additionally, they foster the adoption of long-term behaviors beneficial to personal development and the surrounding social environment (Wu, 2014). Consequently, when elderly tourists derive positive emotions from tourism and translate them into positive behaviors through optimistic thinking, along with showcasing positive transformative tendencies towards their surroundings, it ultimately enriches the overall positivity of their lives.

### 3. Theoretical Model and Research Hypotheses

#### 3.1. Theoretical Model

In the literature review, specific influencing factors of



**Figure 2.** Model of the Impact of Positive Aging on Elderly Travel Motivation in a Tourism Context

#### 3.2. Research Hypotheses

The path hypotheses of this study draw upon Barbara Fredrickson's (2011) "Broaden-and-Build" theory, as reviewed in the previous literature. The theory constructs a model with positive thinking as the independent variable, positive behavior, and positive organizational environment as mediating variables, and travel motivation as the dependent variable to analyze the pathway of how the active aging system influences travel motivation. The theoretical process of transforming active aging into travel motivation supports the influence of active aging on elderly travel motivation, leading to the following hypotheses:

H1: Positive thinking directly influences health-related travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation.

H2: Positive thinking indirectly influences health-related travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation.

H3: Positive thinking directly influences health-related travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation efficacy.

H4: Positive thinking indirectly influences health-related travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation efficacy.

H5: Positive thinking directly influences socialization travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation.

H6: Positive thinking indirectly influences socialization travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation.

H7: Positive thinking directly influences socialization travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive

positive aging thinking, behavior, and organizational environment were distilled from theories such as wisdom balance (Ardelt, 2003), social constructionism (Gergen, 2016), and the strengths perspective. Positive thinking was found to be influenced by cognitive thinking, reflection, and emotional thinking, amalgamated into a single dimension. Positive behavior was associated with empowerment behavior, membership status, and resilience, consolidated into a single dimension. The positive organizational environment was jointly influenced by the "proactive" awareness of self-learning, "wisdom" in interpersonal relationships, and "efficient" social interactions, theoretically explained through two main factors: social participation and social participation efficacy. Regarding travel motivation, after reviewing the literature and considering the unique characteristics of elderly tourist groups, it was determined that the main dimensions of elderly travel motivation include health-related lifestyle, socialization, and nostalgia. Based on these insights, the article has constructed the preliminary conceptual model for this study.

behavior and social participation efficacy.

H8: Positive thinking indirectly influences socialization travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation efficacy.

H9: Positive thinking directly influences nostalgia travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation.

H10: Positive thinking indirectly influences nostalgia travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation.

H11: Positive thinking directly influences nostalgia travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation efficacy.

H12: Positive thinking indirectly influences nostalgia travel motivation through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social participation efficacy.

## 4. Research Methods and Questionnaire Design

### 4.1. Research Variables

This study examines the relationship between active aging and travel motivation, drawing upon survival theory. Utilizing the "Broaden-and-Build" theory, we propose a model hypothesis with positive thinking as the independent variable. The dimensions of positive thinking, namely cognitive, reflective, and affective thinking, are preliminarily considered, yet require validation through subsequent testing. Positive behavior and positive organizational environment are incorporated as mediating variables to explore their impact on travel motivation. It's noteworthy that while there exist more than the three identified travel motivations, certain

motivations deemed unsuitable for this study, given the focus on the elderly population, were excluded. The relationships between the variables are illustrated in the following diagram.

**Table 1. Research Scale and Measurement Factors**

Variable type	Variable name	Measurement Factors of Variables
Argument	Positive thinking	cognition
		rethink
		emotion
Dependent variable	Travel motivation	healthy living
		dating
		nostalgia
Mediation variables	Positive behavior	empowering behavior
		eligibility of members
		resilience
	Positive organizational environment (Engagement /efficiency)	initiative
		smart interpersonal relationships
		engagement

## 4.2. Questionnaire Design

To ensure questionnaire reliability and validity, items are

crafted from established scales both domestically and internationally. A literature review identifies and summarizes items related to various variables. The questionnaire utilizes a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "completely uninterested" to "strongly interested." Structurally, it comprises two sections: demographic information of elderly travelers and relevant questionnaire items.

## 5. Data Analysis and Results

This study utilized SPSS 27.0 for data analysis to examine the collected survey data.

### 5.1. Reliability and Validity Testing

The questionnaire was distributed in both paper-based and electronic formats in Beijing and Hangzhou. Surveys were collected from elderly tourist groups, organizations, and recommendations. Out of 406 distributed questionnaires, 337 valid responses were obtained after eliminating invalid ones, yielding an 83% effective response rate. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, while validity was examined through confirmatory factor analysis, calculating composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Results indicated good reliability and validity across all dimensions.

### 5.2. Sample Distribution Characteristics

**Table 2. Sample Distribution**

Type		Number	Percentage	Type		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	169	50.10%	Travel Frequency	Once a year	128	38.00%
	Female	168	49.90%		Twice a year	93	27.60%
Age	55-60 years old	132	39.20%		Three times a year	76	22.60%
	61-65 years old	132	39.20%		Four times or more a year	40	11.90%
	66-70 years old	73	21.70%		One day per trip	28	8.30%
Degree	High school and below	67	19.90%	Travel Duration	Two to three days per trip	80	23.70%
	College	119	35.30%		Four to seven days per trip	140	41.50%
	Undergraduate	124	36.80%		Eight to fourteen days per trip	68	20.20%
	Master's degree or above	27	8.00%		Fifteen to twenty-nine days per trip	15	4.50%
Revenue	¥ 5001- ¥ 9000	152	45.10%		Thirty days or more per trip	6	1.80%
	¥ 8001- ¥ 12000	113	33.50%	Travel Mode	Group Tour	109	32.30%
	¥ 12001- ¥ 16000	55	16.30%		Independent Travel	108	32.00%
	¥ 16001- ¥ 20000	11	3.30%		Semi-Independent Travel	80	23.70%
	¥ 20000 and above	6	1.80%		Private Customized Tour	40	11.90%
Working Status	Employed	89	26.40%		Travel Style	Traveling with Spouse	104
	Retired	203	60.20%	Traveling with Children		73	21.7%
	Semi-Retired	7	2.10%	Traveling with Three Generations (Children and Grandchildren)		40	11.9%
	Rehired	35	10.40%	Solo Travel		25	7.4%
	Other	3	0.90%	Traveling with Relatives and Friends		95	28.2%
Occupation	Civil	63	18.70%				
	Servant	74	22.00%				
	Professional	70	20.80%				
	Managerial	62	18.40%				
	Self-employed	24	7.10%				
	Freelancer	22	6.50%				
	Other	22	6.50%				

### 5.3. Path Analysis Examination

#### 5.3.1. Study on the Mediating Effect of Behavior and Organization between Thinking and Motivation

Based on the literature review section, according to

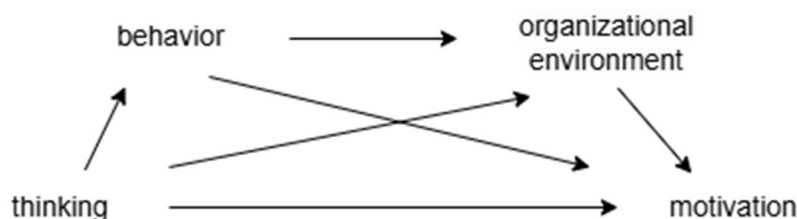


Figure 3. Path Model of the Influence of Positive Aging on Elderly Travel Motivation

Among them, positive organizational environment is divided into two aspects: participation and participation efficacy. Travel motivations are divided into three parts: healthy living, socialization, and nostalgia. This section is divided into six models to test the mediating effects of positive behavior and positive organizational environment.

existing theories and literature, the relationships between positive thinking, positive behavior, positive organizational environment, and travel motivation are as follows:

#### 5.3.2. Study on the Mediating Effect of Positive Behavior and Participation in Positive Thinking and Healthy Living

This section examines the mediating effects of positive behavior and participation in positive thinking and healthy living. Positive thinking is treated as the independent variable, while positive behavior and participation are considered as mediating variables. Mediation analysis was conducted, and the results are as follows:

Table 3. Results of Path Analysis of Positive Thinking and Healthy Living with Positive Behavior and Participation as Mediators

	coefficients	se	T	P	R2
Thinking → Behavior	0.949	0.036	26.675	<0.001	0.737
Thinking → Participation	0.738	0.054	13.775	<0.001	0.789
Behavior → Participation	0.193	0.047	4.123	<0.001	
Thinking → Healthy Living	0.065	0.082	0.800	0.424	0.379
Behavior → Healthy Living	-0.003	0.058	-0.052	0.958	
Participation → Healthy Living	0.332	0.067	4.960	<0.001	

Based on the computation results above, the direct effects and mediating effects are as follows:

Table 4. Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Healthy Living with Positive Behavior and Participation as Mediators

	Direct effect	Mediation effect	Total mediation effect	Total effect
Thinking → Healthy Living	0.0653 (P>0.05)			0.3677 (P<0.05)
Thinking → Behavior → Healthy Living		-0.0029 (P>0.05)	0.3025 (P<0.05)	
Thinking → Participation → Healthy Living		0.2448 (P<0.05)		
Thinking → Behavior → Participation → Healthy Living		0.0606 (P<0.05)		

Based on the comprehensive conclusions above, the following hypothesis testing results can be obtained:

Table 5. Hypothesis test results

	Hypothesis	Conclusion
H1	Thinking can directly influence healthy living.	Not Supported
H2	Behavior and participation serve as significant positive mediators between thinking and healthy living.	Supported

#### 5.3.3. Study on the Mediating Effect of Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy in Positive Thinking and Healthy Living

This section examines the mediating effects of behavior and participation efficacy in positive thinking and healthy living. Positive thinking is treated as the independent variable, with positive behavior and participation efficacy as the mediating variables. Mediation analysis was conducted with healthy living as the dependent variable. The results are as follows:

**Table 6.** Path Analysis Results of Positive Thinking and Healthy Living with Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy as Mediators

	coefficients	se	T	P	R2
Thinking → Behavior	0.949	0.036	26.675	0.000	0.737
Thinking → Participation	0.371	0.047	7.910	0.000	0.830
Behavior → Participation	0.540	0.041	13.218	0.000	
Thinking → Healthy Living	0.245	0.073	3.358	0.001	0.343
Behavior → Healthy Living	-0.034	0.072	-0.471	0.638	
Participation → Healthy Living	0.176	0.079	2.232	0.026	

Based on the computation results above, the direct effects and mediating effects are as follows:

**Table 7.** Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Healthy Living with Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy as Mediators

	Direct effect	Mediation effect	Total mediation effect	Total effect
Thinking → Healthy Living	0.245 (P<0.05)			0.3677 (P<0.05)
Thinking → Behavior → Healthy Living		-0.0322 (P>0.05)	0.1227 (P<0.05)	
Thinking → Participation → Healthy Living		0.0651 (P<0.05)		
Thinking → Behavior → Participation → Healthy Living		0.0899 (P<0.05)		

Based on the comprehensive conclusions above, the following hypothesis testing results can be obtained:

**Table 8.** Hypothesis test results

	Hypothesis	Conclusion
H3	Thinking can directly influence healthy living.	Supported
H4	Behavior and participation efficacy serve as significant positive mediators between thinking and healthy living.	Supported

### 5.3.4. Study on the Mediating Effect of Positive Behavior and Participation in Positive Thinking and Socialization

This section examines the mediating effects of behavior and participation in positive thinking and socialization. Positive thinking is treated as the independent variable, with positive behavior and participation as the mediating variables, and socialization as the dependent variable. Mediation analysis was conducted, and the results are as follows:

**Table 9.** Path Analysis Results of Positive Thinking and Socialization with Positive Behavior and Participation as Mediators

	coefficients	se	T	P	R2
Thinking → Behavior	0.949	0.036	26.675	<0.001	0.737
Thinking → Participation	0.738	0.054	13.775	<0.001	0.789
Behavior → Participation	0.193	0.047	4.123	<0.001	
Thinking → Socialization	-0.047	0.092	-0.506	0.613	0.394
Behavior → Socialization	0.320	0.066	4.866	<0.001	
Participation → Socialization	0.155	0.076	2.052	0.041	

Based on the computation results above, the direct effects and mediating effects are as follows:

**Table 10.** Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Socialization with Positive Behavior and Participation as Mediators

	Direct effect	Mediation effect	Total mediation effect	Total effect
Thinking → Socialization	-0.0468 (P>0.05)			0.3998 (P<0.05)
Thinking → Behavior → Socialization		0.3035 (P<0.05)	0.4466 (P<0.05)	
Thinking → Participation → Socialization		0.1147 (P>0.05)		
Thinking → Behavior → Participation → Socialization		0.0284 (P>0.05)		

Based on the comprehensive conclusions above, the following hypothesis testing results can be obtained:

**Table 11.** Hypothesis test results

	Hypothesis	Conclusion
H1	Thinking can directly influence socialization.	Not Supported
H2	Behavior and participation serve as significant positive mediators between thinking and socialization.	Supported

### 5.3.5. Study on the Mediating Effect of Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy in Positive Thinking and Socialization

This section examines the mediating effects of behavior and participation efficacy in positive thinking and

socialization. Positive thinking is treated as the independent variable, with positive behavior and participation efficacy as the mediating variables, and socialization as the dependent variable. Mediation analysis was conducted, and the results are as follows:

**Table 12.** Path Analysis Results of Positive Thinking and Socialization with Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy as Mediators

	coefficients	se	T	P	R2
Thinking → Behavior	0.949	0.036	26.675	0.000	0.737
Thinking → Participation	0.371	0.047	7.910	0.000	0.830
Behavior → Participation	0.540	0.041	13.218	0.000	
Thinking → Socialization	0.025	0.081	0.311	0.756	0.390
Behavior → Socialization	0.288	0.080	3.611	0.000	
Participation → Socialization	0.116	0.087	1.330	0.185	

Based on the computation results above, the direct effects and mediating effects are as follows:

**Table 13.** Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Socialization with Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy as Mediators

	Direct effect	Mediation effect	Total mediation effect	Total effect
Thinking → Socialization	0.025 (P>0.05)			0.3998 (P<0.05)
Thinking → Behavior → Socialization		0.2728 (P>0.05)	0.3747 (P<0.05)	
Thinking → Participation → Socialization		0.0428 (P>0.05)		
Thinking → Behavior → Participation → Socialization		0.0592 (P>0.05)		

Based on the comprehensive conclusions above, the following hypothesis testing results can be obtained:

**Table 14.** Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis	Conclusion
H1 Thinking can directly influence socialization.	Not Supported
H2 Behavior and participation efficacy serve as significant positive mediators between thinking and socialization.	Supported

### 5.3.6. Study on the Mediating Effect of Positive Behavior and Participation in Positive Thinking and Nostalgia

This section examines the mediating effects of positive behavior and participation in positive thinking and nostalgia. Positive thinking is treated as the independent variable, with positive behavior and participation as the mediating variables, and nostalgia as the dependent variable. Mediation analysis was conducted, and the results are as follows:

**Table 15.** Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Nostalgia with Positive Behavior and Participation as Mediators

	coefficients	se	T	P	R2
Thinking → Behavior	0.949	0.036	26.675	0.000	0.737
Thinking → Participation	0.738	0.054	13.775	0.000	0.789
Behavior → Participation	0.193	0.047	4.123	0.000	
Thinking → Nostalgia	0.096	0.100	0.964	0.336	0.280
Behavior → Nostalgia	0.233	0.071	3.274	0.001	
Participation → Nostalgia	-0.016	0.082	-0.191	0.849	

Based on the computation results above, the direct effects and mediating effects are as follows:

**Table 16.** Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Nostalgia with Positive Behavior and Participation as Mediators

	Direct effect	Mediation effect	Total mediation effect	Total effect
Thinking → Nostalgia	0.0963 (P>0.05)			0.3029 (P<0.05)
Thinking → Behavior → Nostalgia		0.221 (P<0.05)	0.2066 (P<0.05)	
Thinking → Participation → Nostalgia		-0.0115 (P>0.05)		
Thinking → Behavior → Participation → Nostalgia		-0.0029 (P>0.05)		

Based on the comprehensive conclusions above, the following hypothesis testing results can be obtained:

**Table 17.** Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis		Conclusion
H9	Thinking can directly influence nostalgia.	Not Supported
H10	Behavior and participation serve as significant positive mediators between thinking and nostalgia.	Supported

### 5.3.7. Study on the Mediating Effect of Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy in Positive Thinking and Nostalgia

This section examines the mediating effects of positive behavior and participation efficacy in positive thinking and nostalgia. Positive thinking is treated as the independent variable, with positive behavior and participation efficacy as the mediating variables, and nostalgia as the dependent variable. Mediation analysis was conducted, and the results are as follows:

**Table 18.** Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Nostalgia with Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy as Mediators

	coefficients	se	T	P	R2
Thinking → Behavior	0.949	0.036	26.675	0.000	0.830
Thinking → Participation	0.371	0.047	7.910	0.000	
Behavior → Participation	0.540	0.041	13.218	0.000	
Thinking → Nostalgia	0.043	0.087	0.492	0.623	0.283
Behavior → Nostalgia	0.169	0.086	1.967	0.049	
Participation → Nostalgia	0.114	0.094	1.218	0.224	

Based on the comprehensive conclusions above, the following hypothesis testing results can be obtained:

**Table 19.** Statistical Summary of Path Analysis Conclusions for Positive Thinking and Nostalgia with Positive Behavior and Participation Efficacy as Mediators

	Direct effect	Mediation effect	Total mediation effect	Total effect
Thinking → Nostalgia	0.0426 (P>0.05)			0.3029 (P<0.05)
Thinking → Behavior → Nostalgia		0.1599 (P>0.05)	0.2603 (P<0.05)	
Thinking → Participation → Nostalgia		0.0422 (P>0.05)		
Thinking → Behavior → Participation → Nostalgia		0.0583 (P>0.05)		

Based on the comprehensive conclusions above, the following hypothesis testing results can be obtained:

**Table 20.** Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis		Conclusion
H9	Thinking can directly influence nostalgia.	Not Supported
H10	Behavior and participation efficacy serve as significant positive mediators between thinking and nostalgia.	Supported

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

### 6.1. Research Conclusion and Theoretical Contribution

Under the framework of positive aging, tourism is an important driving factor for positive aging. However, existing studies have not provided a clear and consistent explanation, path analysis, or a comprehensive theoretical framework for the relationship between elderly tourism and positive aging,

as well as the internal mechanisms of how positive aging influences elderly travel motivations.

This study focuses on the concept of positive aging within the context of tourism. Based on extensive literature research and comparative analysis in various fields related to positive aging, including positive behavior, positive thinking, and positive organizational environment, combined with the unique travel motivations and influencing factors of the elderly, this study primarily employs quantitative research and qualitative research assisted by Delphi method. By utilizing differential testing and regression analysis, the study determines the structural dimensions of positive aging under the influence of tourism. It constructs a four-dimensional path model with positive thinking as the independent variable, positive behavior and positive organizational environment as the mediating variables, and travel motivation as the dependent variable. The study clarifies the internal mechanisms among the four dimensions in the post-travel period with travel motivation as the dependent variable. This section mainly discusses and reports the results based on the hypothesis testing results and the path analysis.



**Table 21. Statistical Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results**

Number	Hypothetical content	Inspection Category	results
H1	Positive thinking directly influences the motivation for health-promoting lifestyle tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement level.	Path Analysis	Not Supported
H2	Positive thinking indirectly influences the motivation for health-promoting lifestyle tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement level.	Path Analysis	Supported
H3	Positive thinking directly influences the motivation for health-promoting lifestyle tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement efficacy.	Path Analysis	Supported
H4	Positive thinking indirectly influences the motivation for health-promoting lifestyle tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement efficacy.	Path Analysis	Supported
H5	Positive thinking directly influences the motivation for socializing tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement level.	Path Analysis	Not Supported
H6	Positive thinking indirectly influences the motivation for socializing tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement level.	Path Analysis	Supported
H7	Positive thinking directly influences the motivation for socializing tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement efficacy.	Path Analysis	Not Supported
H8	Positive thinking indirectly influences the motivation for socializing tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement efficacy.	Path Analysis	Supported
H9	Positive thinking directly influences the motivation for nostalgia tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement level.	Path Analysis	Not Supported
H10	Positive thinking indirectly influences the motivation for nostalgia tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement level.	Path Analysis	Supported
H11	Positive thinking directly influences the motivation for nostalgia tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement efficacy.	Path Analysis	Not Supported
H12	Positive thinking indirectly influences the motivation for nostalgia tourism through the mediating effects of positive behavior and social engagement efficacy.	Path Analysis	Supported

## 6.2. The Impact of Related Paths

In this study, positive thinking is the independent variable, and travel motivation is the dependent variable. Various path outcomes emerge with the inclusion of mediating variables: positive behavior and positive organizational relationships. The positive organizational environment is divided into social participation and social participation efficacy. Travel motivation is segmented into healthy living, socializing, and nostalgia. The path analysis involves six models to test the mediating roles of positive behavior and the positive organizational environment, as well as the direct relationship between positive thinking and travel motivation.

Using positive thinking as the independent variable, with positive behavior and social participation efficacy/social participation as mediating variables, and healthy living/nostalgia/socializing as dependent variables, we conducted a mediation effect analysis. Frequency, travel form, age, education, and income were control variables in the path analysis. The results showed that of the six direct influence paths of positive thinking on travel motivation, only the path where positive thinking influences travel motivation for healthy living through positive behavior and social participation efficacy was supported. The other five paths were not supported. This indicates that positive thinking can directly and positively influence the travel motivation for healthy living among the elderly, mediated by positive behavior and social participation efficacy (H3 is supported).

Additionally, after conducting the mediation effect

calculations for the paths with positive behavior and social participation efficacy/social participation as mediating variables, the results indicated that all paths with these mediators between positive thinking and travel motivation were supported. Therefore, positive behavior and a positive organizational environment effectively serve as mediators in the relationships between various types of positive thinking and travel motivation.

Based on the aforementioned findings, positive thinking among elderly travelers is influenced by positive behavior and a positive organizational environment, subsequently impacting travel motivation through mediating pathways. Specifically, positive thinking affects travel motivation through positive behavior, positive thinking influences travel motivation through the positive organizational environment (social participation efficacy/social participation), and positive thinking collectively impacts travel motivation through both positive behavior and the positive organizational environment (social participation efficacy/social participation). Therefore, hypotheses H2, H4, H6, H8, H10, and H12 are all supported.

The pathways through which positive thinking influences travel motivation align closely with the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2011), which suggests that thinking can alter behavior and the organizational environment, thus impacting travel motivation through the mediating influence of various factors. The finding that positive behavior serves as a direct and positive mediator of travel motivation

resonates with Marcus Schaefer's (2000) research, indicating that elderly individuals who exhibit behaviors surpassing their age or maintain a more positive outlook are likely to display greater confidence and boldness in their choice of future destinations, demonstrating increased adaptability and tolerance, thereby reinforcing travel motivation. Travel motivation serves as a tangible expression of autonomy cultivated through active aging (Luthar, 1991). Moreover, the direct positive mediating effect of a positive organizational environment on travel motivation is consistent with the notion that stable community relationships within the tourism context can notably enhance the sense of security and satisfaction among the elderly, consequently amplifying their travel motivation (Oliver, 2008).

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