

Research on the Influencing Factors of Rural Tourism Behavioral Intention: An Exploration Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior

Received: June 13, 2024

Revised: June 21, 2024

Accepted: June 22, 2024

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the influencing factors of rural tourism behavioral intention, particularly focusing on consumers in Meizhou City, which possesses significant practical and theoretical values. Through purposive sampling combined with online and offline questionnaire surveys, a total of 202 valid responses were collected. Utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior as a framework, the study thoroughly analyzed the impacts of variables such as rural tourism attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and social support on behavioral intention. In the research process, statistical software such as SPSS was employed to conduct empirical analysis on the collected data, ensuring the scientific rigor and accuracy of the study. The findings revealed that rural tourism attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and resource conditions within social support have significant positive effects on rural tourism behavioral intention. Additionally, political systems and resource conditions, as aspects of social support, positively influence behavioral perception factors. Based on these results, the study suggests that managers and operators of rural tourism should actively guide the public to adopt a positive attitude towards rural tourism. At the same time, a comprehensive social support system should be established to promote the sustainable development of rural tourism and the realization of rural revitalization.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior; Rural Tourism; Behavioral Intentions; Social Support

1. Introduction

With the global flourishing of rural tourism, its significance in promoting rural economic growth, driving rural revitalization, and facilitating cultural exchange and inheritance has become increasingly evident. In China, rural tourism, as an essential branch of the tourism industry, plays an active role in promoting the adjustment of rural industrial structure, increasing farmers' income, and satisfying urban residents' leisure needs. However, the development of rural tourism also faces numerous challenges, such as effectively motivating consumers' behavioral intention towards rural tourism and promoting its sustainable development. Therefore, a profound exploration of the influencing factors of rural tourism behavioral intention holds significant theoretical and practical implications for promoting rural tourism development and supporting rural revitalization.

Existing research has accumulated rich theoretical and practical experiences in investigating tourism behavioral intention. Among them, the Theory of Planned Behavior

(TPB), a classic theory in the field of social psychology, has been widely applied in the study of tourism behavioral intention. According to this theory, individuals' behavioral intention is influenced by three core variables: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Additionally, social support, as an external environmental factor, may also have a significant impact on individuals' behavioral intention. In the context of rural tourism, these theoretical achievements provide a solid theoretical foundation and important references for the research presented in this paper.

This study focuses on consumers in Meizhou City to deeply investigate the factors influencing rural tourism behavioral intention. Specifically, this paper aims to address the following questions:

1. How do rural tourism attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control affect rural tourism behavioral intention?
2. Which factors within social support (such as resource conditions, political systems, etc.) significantly impact rural tourism behavioral intention?
3. How can the development of rural tourism and rural revitalization be promoted by guiding the public's positive attitude towards rural tourism and improving the social support system?

This study is expected to reveal the influence mechanism of rural tourism behavioral intention, providing useful references for managers and operators in rural tourism. Specifically, this research will help understand the formation process of consumers' rural tourism behavioral intention, revealing the extent and mechanisms through which different factors affect behavioral intention. Meanwhile, this study will also propose targeted policy recommendations and management strategies, offering scientific evidence and theoretical support for guiding the public's positive attitude towards rural tourism and establishing a comprehensive social support system. Through this research, we aim to promote the sustainable development of rural tourism and the comprehensive advancement of rural revitalization.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on Rural Tourism

The development of rural tourism has promoted the transformation and upgrading of agriculture, enabling farmers to convert agricultural resources into tourism resources, such as through farm stays, picking gardens, and sightseeing farms, thereby enhancing the added value of agricultural products and increasing farmers' income. Rural tourism, as a multidimensional and complex research field, its definition and connotation have been continuously enriched as research deepens. Scholars such as Rosalina, P. D. (2021) have revealed four key factors of rural tourism: location, sustainability, community-based characteristics, and experience. They argue that any tourism activity related to the culture, environment, and resources of rural areas can be categorized as rural tourism. Furthermore, rural tourism is not limited to various tourism activities in rural areas, but also encompasses broader economic, cultural, social, and other multidimensional aspects, as proposed by Bramuell, B. (1994). Nilsson (2021) further clarifies the conceptual scope of rural tourism by distinguishing it from activities such as wilderness

exploration and leisure sightseeing.

The positive role of rural tourism in promoting rural economies has been widely recognized. Wang Bing Zhao (2023) points out that rural tourism has become an essential driving force for rural economic development and urban-rural integration. In this context, the distinction between rural tourism and traditional agriculture and leisure agriculture forms has become increasingly prominent. Tang Song (2023) believes that rural tourism is still in its development stage but has tremendous potential and is significant for promoting rural economic development. Peng Shun sheng (2023) further states that although Chinese rural tourism still lags behind developed countries, its development model is sound and has enormous potential for growth.

The international research on rural tourism exhibits a diverse range of characteristics. According to Ruiz-Real, J. L. et al. (2022), rural tourism and its impact on rural economic development have been a significant and dynamic research area. While the research primarily focuses on locations such as Spain, Romania, and China, the most prolific authors originate from Portugal, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, due to political and religious factors, there is a notable scarcity of research targeting African, Asian, and Latin American countries. Despite this, the global importance and emerging nature of rural tourism, particularly in countries like Romania and China, cannot be ignored.

There exists a profound relationship between rural tourism and the rural revitalization strategy. Yang, J. et al. (2021) examined the morphological and social evolution of rural communities from a tourism perspective and analyzed its driving factors. They found that the increase in the proportion of non-agricultural employment and the emergence of tourism as a leading industry support the positive role of the rural revitalization strategy in promoting economic development and growth in non-urban communities in China. Consequently, rural tourism is viewed as one of the strategies to promote sustainable rural development in developing countries, and it is also an inevitable trend under the global urbanization trend. Against this backdrop, understanding and grasping the key success factors of rural tourism is of significant importance in driving rural economic development and achieving rural revitalization. Rural revitalization is not only a strategy to promote sustainable rural development in developing countries, but also an inevitable trend of global urbanization. Tourism is the best means to revitalize the tourism economy, thus, it is crucial to deeply understand and grasp its key success factors.

2.2 Related Research on Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a theoretical framework further developed and refined by educational scholars Fishbein and Ajzen in the 1980s, based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). TRA posits that individuals' behavioral intention is jointly determined by behavioral attitudes and subjective norms, but it neglects the complete autonomy of individual behavior. To overcome this limitation, Ajzen introduced the new concept of "Perceived Behavior Control" (PBC) in his studies in 1988 and 1991. Ajzen (2020) emphasized the technical and frequency aspects of this theory, with PBC highlighting individuals' perceived ability and sense of control to execute a specific behavior, making TPB able to explain and predict individual behavior more comprehensively.

With the widespread introduction and application of TPB at home and abroad, it has demonstrated strong explanatory and predictive power in the field of individual behavior research. A meta-analysis by Conner and Armitage (1998) pointed out that behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control in TPB can explain 39% to 50% of changes in behavioral intention, while behavioral intention and perceived behavior control jointly

account for 20% to 40% of changes in actual behavior. This indicates the high effectiveness of TPB in understanding and predicting individual behavior.

In tourism and related fields, TPB has also been widely applied and validated. Scholars such as Yao Yanhong and Luo Yan first introduced TPB into the tourism industry, exploring the complexity of tourists' destination choices and proposing a new extended model based on TPB. Wang, Q., Liao, Y. E., & Gao, J. (2022) examined the impact of rural residents' attitudes towards PPT (Participatory Tourism), their perceived support for PPT, and their perceived behavioral control over PPT participation on their willingness to participate in PPT in southern Xinjiang, China. Through a household survey of six national PPT pilot villages in southern Xinjiang, 112 valid questionnaires were collected. The results showed that locals' attitudes towards PPT and their perceived behavioral control over PPT participation had positive effects on their willingness to participate in PPT. Guo, et al. () conducted in-depth research on rural tourism behavior intention, revealing the fundamental factors and their mechanism of influence on rural tourism intention. Furthermore, Zhang, et al. (2023) studied rural tourists' behavioral intention using the TPB and TSR (Theory of Self-Regulation) models, providing valuable references and suggestions for the development of rural tourism. These studies not only enrich the theoretical connotation of TPB but also provide powerful tools and methods for research in tourism and related fields.

2.3 Research on the Correlation Between Perceived Behavioral Factors and Rural Tourism Intention

Perceived behavioral control is an important concept in tourism behavior research, referring to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing a specific behavior. In the context of rural tourism, perceived behavioral control has a significant impact on tourists' behavioral intention.

An empirical study on rural tourism (Lin Tie et al., 2019) found that perceived behavioral control has a significant positive effect on the willingness and behavior of rural tourism operators to participate in online marketing. The study analyzed the influence of cultural level, income level, risk type, behavioral attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on the willingness to participate in online marketing through a questionnaire survey of rural tourism operators. The results indicate that perceived behavioral control is one of the important factors affecting the willingness and behavior of rural tourism operators to participate in online marketing.

In the study of rural tourists' behavioral intention, perceived behavioral control also plays an important role. Rural tourists often need to consider factors such as time, money, physical strength, and information, all of which can affect their perceived behavioral control over rural tourism. If tourists believe they have enough time and money, are physically strong, and have sufficient information, they are more likely to develop an intention to engage in rural tourism.

In the study of rural tourism intention, perceived behavioral factors are considered core variables affecting tourist decision-making and behavioral tendencies. These perceived factors mainly include three dimensions: attitudes towards rural tourism, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Together, these three dimensions constitute a comprehensive cognition and evaluation of an individual's rural tourism behavior.

Rural tourism attitude and behavioral intention, within the Theory of Planned Behavior, an individual's attitude towards a behavior itself is regarded as a key factor directly affecting their behavioral intention. Specifically, in the field of rural tourism, tourists' attitudes towards rural tourism activities will directly affect their behavioral intention. Specifically, when tourists hold a positive attitude towards rural tourism, they are more likely to have a strong intention to

participate; conversely, their willingness to participate may be weakened. Based on this theoretical logic, this study proposes research hypothesis H1: Attitudes towards rural tourism have a significantly positive impact on rural tourism behavioral intention.

Subjective norms and behavioral intentions, as social creatures, humans are often influenced by the opinions and behaviors of those around them when making decisions. Subjective norms reflect this social influence mechanism. In the context of rural tourism, tourists often consider the opinions and suggestions of relatives, friends, companions, or social groups when deciding whether to participate in rural tourism activities. These subjective norms affect tourists' cognition and attitudes, thereby acting on their behavioral intentions. Therefore, this study proposes research hypothesis H2: Subjective norms regarding rural tourism have a significantly positive impact on rural tourism behavioral intention.

Perceived behavioral control is another important dimension in the Theory of Planned Behavior, focusing on an individual's perception of the resources, opportunities, and capabilities needed to perform a behavior. In the field of rural tourism, when tourists believe they have sufficient resources, abilities, and opportunities to participate in rural tourism activities, they are more likely to have a strong intention to participate; conversely, if they perceive insufficient resources, abilities, and opportunities, their willingness to participate may be reduced. Empirical research by Ajzen (1991) also supports this view, indicating that the higher the perceived behavioral control, the stronger the behavioral intention. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes research hypothesis H3: Perceived behavioral control has a significantly positive impact on rural tourism behavioral intention.

2.4 Related Research on Social Support

In academic research, the concept of social support is endowed with rich connotations. Scholar Caplan particularly highlights the diversity of social support forms, arguing that such support not only originates from family, friends, and neighbors, but also encompasses emotional, cognitive, and other significant forms. This diversity reflects the comprehensive care that social support provides to individuals in different contexts. Caplan's perspective reveals that social support, as a multidimensional concept, plays a crucial role in individuals' lives and development.

The comprehensiveness and subjective perceptions of social support, furthermore, have attracted the attention of Prosidano and Heller, who shifted their focus to individuals' subjective satisfaction with received interpersonal interactions. This provides a new perspective for understanding social support. Meanwhile, Linnetar proposes that social support should be viewed as a comprehensive action spanning individuals, organizations, groups, and even entire social networks. He emphasizes that such support can help people gain access to more resources, thereby improving their quality of life and social status. This perspective not only emphasizes the broadness of social support but also highlights its positive role in enhancing individual well-being and social functioning.

In terms of the practical significance and construction of social support, the research of scholars Hu Xiangming (1996) and Hou Lijie (2009) has further enriched the theoretical connotations of social support. Hu Xiangming argues that social support encompasses both the humanistic care and material support that individuals obtain in social relationships, as well as practical assistance. Both forms of support are significant for individuals to fulfill their social responsibilities, acquire resources, and achieve their social value. On the other hand, Hou Lijie emphasizes that social support is a recipient-centered interpersonal network, whose construction involves three aspects: objectivity, initiative, and effective utilization by the recipient. These studies not only reveal the practical significance of social support but also

provide new ideas for understanding and constructing social support networks.

2.5 Related Research on Social Support Factors and Behavioral Intentions in Rural Tourism

From the perspective of tourists' needs, when engaging in tourism activities, tourists first face issues related to time and money, followed by transportation, then accommodation, basic physiological necessities such as sustenance, and finally leisure and entertainment. The spiritual and material support provided by various social sectors (including the government) to meet these needs constitutes a vast and complex social support system. From the perspective of the source and role of social support, it can be divided into two dimensions: policy institutions and rural tourism conditions.

Rural tourism policy institutions primarily refer to macro policies or systems adopted by government departments or enterprise organizations that can promote or inhibit the development of rural tourism. These include national paid leave policies, social security systems, rural tourism industry plans, as well as the intensity of implementation of paid leave systems, welfare benefits, and working environments by enterprise organizations. With the development of the national market economy, the improvement of the statutory holiday system, and the introduction of the "Regulations on Paid Leave for Employees," especially the mandatory implementation of the leave system in government departments, enterprises, and institutions, the economic strength of urban residents has continuously increased, and their leisure time has gradually increased. Consequently, the demand for tourism among the public has also correspondingly strengthened. Moreover, with the gradual improvement of the social security system, people need not invest excessive worries and savings into their old age, leaving them with more energy and financial resources for essential travel resources. If enterprise organizations, in pursuit of greater profits, disregard the national paid leave system and directly or indirectly require employees to work overtime on weekends or statutory holidays, further increasing work intensity, this leads to irregular working hours, increased work pressure, and a blurring of work and leisure time. This scenario results in employees having neither the time nor the leisure to engage in recreational activities, thus reducing their intention to participate in rural tourism. Additionally, government promotion and sales activities as well as the formulation of relevant preferential policies can effectively encourage urban residents to pay attention to and participate in rural tourism, creating a social atmosphere that positively stimulates the needs of various potential tourists and enhances their intention to engage in rural tourism. Therefore, this study posits that the degree of perfection of policy institutions directly affects rural tourism behavioral intentions. The more comprehensive the policy institutions are, the stronger the individual's intention to engage in rural tourism; conversely, the weaker the intention. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed: H4: Policy institutions have a positive and significant impact on rural tourism behavioral intentions.

Rural tourism resource conditions refer to various tangible or intangible resources and conveniences that influence tourists' decisions to visit rural tourism destinations, such as the tourism transportation system, service levels and facilities, rural environments and products, and security conditions. In recent years, the deteriorating urban ecological environment and the accelerating pace of urban life have made more and more urban residents aspire to the rural atmosphere close to nature and the simple and serene living environment. Rural resource conditions serve as the carrier of market demand for rural tourism, with its unique selling point being its "rurality," which is the uniqueness displayed by rural areas in terms of landscape, society, and culture, distinguishing them from urban areas. This uniqueness is the primary attraction for urban residents. The enhancement of attractiveness is primarily achieved through the creation of rural environments, the enrichment and updating of rural tourism products, the

improvement of infrastructure in rural tourism destinations (including basic service facilities such as sanitation, transportation, and communications), as well as increased promotion and introduction of rural tourism. Through the improvement of these resource conditions, the charm of rural landscapes can be enhanced, the accessibility, comfort, and convenience of urban residents participating in rural tourism can be improved, further stimulating the enhancement of demand. With the construction of "Beautiful Villages" and the "City of Leisure" in Hangzhou, rural tourism attracts an increasing number of urban residents due to its convenient transportation, beautiful environment, rich resources, and good security conditions.

Therefore, this study posits that the quality of resource conditions has a direct impact on behavioral intentions in rural tourism. The more comprehensive the resource conditions are, the stronger the individual's behavioral intention towards rural tourism; conversely, the weaker the behavioral intention towards rural tourism. Consequently, it can be hypothesized that: H5: Resource conditions have a positive and significant impact on behavioral intentions in rural tourism.

2.6 Related Research on Behavioral Intentions

The Centrality of Behavioral Intentions in the Theory of Planned Behavior. In recent years, the concept of behavioral intentions has gained increasing attention in behavioral science research. Bosnjak, Ajzen, and Schmidt (2020) in their study delved deeply into the latest advancements and applications of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), clearly indicating that behavioral intentions play a pivotal role in this theoretical framework. Behavioral intentions are not only considered as a key variable in predicting actual behaviors, but they also exert a significant influence in tourism decision-making and practice. They reflect individuals' expectations and tendencies towards specific behaviors, thus influencing their choice and execution of actual actions.

The Theoretical Foundation and Multidimensional Interpretation of Behavioral Intentions. Since Smith (1983) introduced the concept of behavioral intention based on Engel's attitude theory, research in this field has gradually enriched. Bai Lin (2009) emphasized the importance of behavioral intention as a tendency for future decision-making, while Li Huamin (year not mentioned) further applied this concept to the tourism field, pointing out that tourists' choice of tourism activities is deeply influenced by their behavioral intentions. International scholars Eamon and Peter (1996) also noted that personal behavioral intentions have a significant impact on the likelihood of executing a specific action in the future. Minyard and Engle (2001) defined behavioral intention from the perspective of subjective evaluation, emphasizing its subjective predictive value for people's future behaviors. Additionally, Chen Lianyu (2004) and Yi Ying (2006) explored the multidimensional meanings of behavioral intention from the perspectives of consumers and product services, further enriching the theoretical system in this field.

Analysis on the Correlation between Behavioral Intention and Actual Behavior, Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020) pointed out in their study that people tend to act on their intentions when they have sufficient practical control over their behavior. Ajzen (2019a) also emphasized that intention is assumed to be the direct antecedent of behavior, while perceived behavioral control serves as a proxy for actual control, aiding in the prediction of related behaviors. This viewpoint has been validated in research within the tourism sector. For instance, Pujiastuti et al. (2017) discovered in their study on rural tourism in Indonesia that customer experience significantly impacts both trust and behavioral intention, with customer trust acting as a precursor to behavioral intention. This study not only reveals the correlation between customer experience, trust, and behavioral intention but also further proves the significant role of behavioral intention in predicting actual tourism behavior.

Application Value of Behavioral Intention in Sustainable Tourism Development

The study by Joo, Seok, and Nam (2020) unveiled the role of social media in the decision-making process of rural tourism and emphasized the driving effect of social atmosphere and personal circumstances on the willingness to visit. This discovery provides new perspectives for the formulation of tourism marketing strategies; that is, marketers should focus on cultivating a social atmosphere related to subjective norms and showcase the functional benefits of rural/sustainable tourism itself to attract potential visitors. Furthermore, the study highlighted the impact of motivation on behavioral intention and the driving role of behavioral intention on actual behavior. Therefore, to achieve the growth of sustainable tourism, tourism destinations (TR) should seek social support factors, including improving tourism regulatory systems, exploring cultural and natural resource advantages, and encouraging tourists to share their travel experiences. These measures will help increase potential tourists' attention and participation, thereby promoting the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

2.7 Relevant Research on Social Support Factors and Behavioral Perception Factors

In the research field of rural tourism, social support factors play a crucial role. Drawing from the research of Hong Zhen (2012), this study recognizes that individuals' perception of social support systems significantly positively influences their attitudes towards leisure tourism, behavioral control perception, and subjective norms. Combining the specific context of rural tourism, the social support factors for rural tourism are further refined into two major aspects: national or corporate policy systems and rural tourism resource conditions. These two aspects not only reflect the external environment for rural tourism development but also directly influence tourists' willingness to participate and their experience.

Policy systems are the core component of social support factors, encompassing national paid leave systems, social security systems, as well as the implementation of paid leave systems and the degree of flexibility in the work environment within corporate organizations. The soundness of policy systems directly relates to the allocation of resources such as time, money, and energy for individuals to participate in rural tourism. For instance, comprehensive paid leave systems and social security systems can provide individuals with ample leisure time and financial security, thus increasing their likelihood of participating in rural tourism. Similarly, the implementation of paid leave systems, employee welfare, and the completeness of the work atmosphere within corporate organizations also influence individuals' willingness and ability to participate in rural tourism. Therefore, this study argues that the soundness of policy systems has a significant positive impact on the formation of individuals' attitudes towards rural tourism, the strength of subjective norms, and the perception of behavioral control. Based on this, the study proposes three hypotheses: H6a: Policy systems have a positive and significant impact on attitudes towards rural tourism; H6b: Policy systems have a positive and significant impact on subjective norms; H6c: Policy systems have a positive and significant impact on perceived behavioral control.

In addition to policy systems, the conditions of rural tourism resources are also crucial factors influencing individuals' participation in rural tourism. These resource conditions include tourism transportation, facilities, services, and a stable and harmonious social environment for rural tourism development. The quality of these resource conditions directly affects individuals' evaluation and perception of rural tourism, as well as the attitudes and perspectives of surrounding groups towards rural tourism. Specifically, the better the transportation conditions, service facilities and levels, and security situation in rural tourism destinations, the more positive individuals and surrounding groups will be towards rural tourism. Additionally, the intensity of promotion and marketing efforts in rural tourism

destinations also affects the ease of individuals accessing information about rural tourism. Therefore, this study believes that the quality of resource conditions has a significant positive impact on the formation of individuals' attitudes towards rural tourism, the strength of subjective norms, and the perception of behavioral control. Based on this, this study proposes three hypotheses: H7a: Resource conditions have a positive and significant impact on attitudes towards rural tourism; H7b: Resource conditions have a positive and significant impact on subjective norms; H7c: Resource conditions have a positive and significant impact on perceived behavioral control.

In summary, social support factors play an indispensable role in rural tourism. Both policy systems and resource conditions directly influence individuals' willingness to participate in rural tourism and their overall experience. Future research can further explore how to optimize policy systems and enhance resource conditions to attract more tourists to participate in rural tourism and enhance their satisfaction. At the same time, this study also needs to pay attention to the different needs of different tourist groups and formulate corresponding strategies to meet their diverse demands.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Model Construction

This paper introduces social support factors into the theoretical model, establishing a linkage between the perception of the external environment and personal behavior (individual perception) to explore the internal mechanisms that influence behavioral intentions in rural tourism. The study focuses on social support factors and characteristics of rural tourism, aiming to enrich the research in the fields of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and rural tourism. Furthermore, it provides recommendations for rural tourism managers and operators. The research model proposed in this paper is depicted in Figure 3.1.

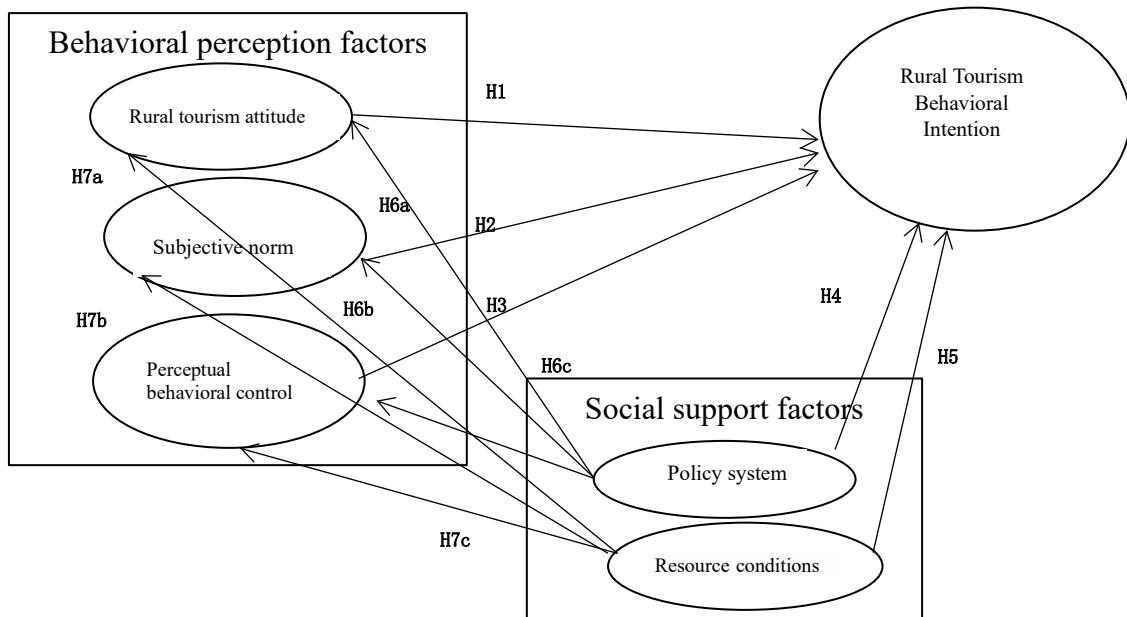


Figure 1

Model of Influencing Factors of Rural Tourism Behavior Intention

3.2 Definition and Measurement of Research Variables

In this study, established scales were adapted from questionnaires designed by scholars such as Fishbein, Ajzen, Hong Zhen, and Li Huamin, who tailored their measurement tools according to specific dimensions. The adapted scales were modified accordingly to measure the influencing factors of behavioral intentions related to rural tourism, ensuring their suitability for use among residents in Meizhou.

3.2.1 Behavioral Perception Scale

The behavioral perception scale is based on a validated scale that has been optimized and modified to reflect the actual conditions of rural tourism. Three variables are considered in this scale: the rural tourist's attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. This adaptation aims to better capture the behavioral characteristics of rural tourists, as illustrated in Table1.

Table1

Behavioral Perception Scale

Variables	Sub-dimensions	Measurement items	Source of items
Rural tourism attitude	Emotional attitude	1. I believe that rural tourism can alleviate stress and bring joy to the body and mind.	Guo et al. (2013), Shi (2013), Wu et al. (2003), Hong (2013)
		2. I consider rural tourism as a way to enjoy life.	
		3. I am full of interest in rural tourism.	
	Cognitive attitude	4. I believe rural tourism is conducive to promoting rural development.	Guo et al. (2013), Xu (2014)
		5. Rural tourism allows one to experience different cultural and lifestyles.	
	Attitude	6. My family supports my participation in rural tourism.	Wu et al. (2003), Li (2007)
		7. My friends support my participation in rural tourism.	
		8. My colleagues (classmates) support my participation in rural tourism.	
		9. My leaders (teachers) support my participation in rural tourism.	
	Subjective norm	10. My family members often participate in rural tourism.	Wu et al. (2003), Hong (2013)
		11. My friends often participate in rural tourism.	
		12. My colleagues (classmates) often participate in rural tourism.	
Perceived behavioral control	Behavior	13. My leaders (teachers) often participate in rural tourism.	
		14. I have sufficient ability to handle problems that arise during rural tourism.	Cao (2013), Zeng (2011), Xu (2014), Li (2007), Hong (2013)
		15. I can autonomously decide whether to participate in rural tourism.	
	Control beliefs	16. I am in good physical condition to participate in rural tourism.	
		17. I have adequate income to participate in rural tourism.	Li (2007), Guo et al. (2013), Xu (2014), Zeng (2011), Shi (2013)
		18. I have enough time to participate in rural tourism.	
		19. I can conveniently obtain relevant information about rural tourism.	

3.2.2 Social Support Scale

The social support system relied on by rural tourism encompasses multiple dimensions such as the macro environment, legal policies, industrial factors, and infrastructure, which include aspects like political systems and resource conditions. Social support, as an essential regulatory mechanism, is closely related to tourism development, serving as one of the effective tools to promote sustainable rural tourism development. In previous research, the measurement of social support variables was not commonly encountered. Therefore, we have referenced past research outcomes in this scale and designed a new measurement indicator for social support, as presented in Table 2-3.

Table 2
Social Support Scale

Variables	Sub-dimensions	Measurement items	Source of items
Policy System	National policy	1. The state encourages rural revitalization and the development of rural tourism.	Hong (2013)
		2. With a robust social security system in place, there is no need for excessive future savings.	
Resource Conditions	Related promotion	3. There is a strong effort in promoting and introducing rural tourism.	Wu (2003), Hong Zhen (2012), Li (2007), Fan (2011), Shi (2013)
		4. Meizhou boasts a well-developed tourism transportation system.	
	Environmental service	5. Meizhou offers a diverse range of rural tourism routes and products to choose from.	
		6. The surrounding rural tourism destinations in meizhou have good environmental conditions.	Wu (2003), Hong (2013), Li (2007)
	Public security management	7. The service level of rural tourism professionals in meizhou is high.	
		8. The service facilities in the surrounding rural tourism destinations in meizhou are complete.	
		9. The management level of the rural tourism destinations around meizhou is high.	Wu (2003), Hong (2013), Li (2007), Fan (2011)
		10. The social security situation in the rural tourism destinations around meizhou is good.	

3.2.2 Behavioral Intention Scale

Table 3

Behavioral Intention Scale

Variables	Sub-dimensions	Measurement items	Source of items
Rural		11. Under the current conditions, I am willing to engage in rural tourism.	Fan (2011), Wu (2013), Hong (2013), Wu (2003)
Tourism		12. I have already planned to participate in rural tourism.	
Behavioral		13. I will try rural tourism within the next year.	
Intention			

3.3 Research Subject and Sampling Method

Meizhou city in Guangdong Province of China, leveraging comprehensive tourism, combined with rural revitalization and the construction of “beautiful villages”, integrated into the Guangdong “Yue Mei Village” brand, has created a batch of distinctive rural tourism in Meizhou to promote the orderly development of rural tourism. This study aims to survey residents in Meizhou City using non-probability sampling techniques within random sampling methods. An electronic questionnaire was produced using Questionnaire Star and distributed on social networking platforms such as WeChat, ultimately successfully collecting 202 valid questionnaires. The scale used in this study adopts the Likert scale, divided into five levels from strong to weak, with scores ranging from 5 to 1 indicating “strongly agree”, “agree”, “somewhat agree”, “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. The higher the score, the more agreement; the lower the score, the less agreement.

4. Empirical Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

4.1 Descriptive statistical analysis of demographic variables

In this study, the demographic variable of female ratio comprises approximately 52.97% of the total sample, with males accounting for 47.03%, maintaining a relatively balanced state. Age distribution indicates that those aged 45 and below constitute a significant portion, accounting for 87.13%. As per the survey results, the education levels of consumers are predominantly undergraduate and college degrees, accounting for 39.11% and 24.75% respectively. Regarding occupation, workers and self-employed individuals hold a relatively larger share, at 19.8% and 16.34% respectively. From the perspective of family structure, married individuals with minor children constitute the largest proportion, accounting for 39.6%. Overall, the questionnaire data collected for this study on the influencing factors of rural tourism behavior intentions among Meizhou residents indicates that there are more female consumers than male consumers, and the majority of consumers hold undergraduate and college degrees. This trend is highly aligned with the consumption characteristics of the target population, thus contributing significantly to drawing meaningful research conclusions.

4.2 Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Variables

The questionnaire for this study comprised 32 items. Using SPSS 27, descriptive statistics were conducted on the collected sample data, including the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the three dimensions: behavioral perception factors, social support factors, and

rural tourism behavior intention. The standard deviation of each indicator was greater than 0.6, and there were no significant differences among the indicators. Judging from the indicators such as deviation, peak, and skewness among various variables, the sample data used in this paper is both representative and reliable.

4.3 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability refers to the internal consistency of measurement scales. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for this study is 0.968. The reliability of each construct has been analyzed, as detailed in the table below. All sub-constructs and the overall Cronbach's Alpha values exceed 0.7, indicating a high level of reliability. This demonstrates the reliability and stability of the items in the questionnaire, which meet the requirements of general academic research.

All variables in this study have been empirically validated through literature, and the content of the measurement targets can effectively cover the research topics to be discussed. Additionally, before the testing phase of this study, every item was discussed by two scholars and experts in relevant fields, ensuring that the measurement tools used in this study possess good content validity.

When the KMO value exceeds 0.6, researchers consider that there is a high correlation and high validity among all variables. Furthermore, when the significance level of the Bartlett's test of sphericity is below 0.05, it indicates the effectiveness of factor analysis. In addition, there is a strong correlation among the items. As shown in the figure below, the KMO value in this study is 0.954, and the results of the Bartlett's test of sphericity are highly significant, indicating a high correlation among the variables and suitability for extracting common factors. Therefore, the measurement tools used in this study possess good discriminant validity.

4.4 Regression Analysis

4.4.1 Collinearity Test

The collinearity test results for the behavioral perception factors and social support factors in the equation predicting rural tourism behavior intention indicate that the tolerance values are all greater than 0.1, and the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) for both factors is greater than 5. The conditional index for social support factors is less than 30, as shown in Table 4.

Table4

Scale Behavior Perception factors and Social Support Factors on Rural Tourism Behavior Intention Equation Collinearity Test Table

variable	Collinearity statistics		eigenvalue	Conditional indicators	Proportion of variation		
	Tolerance	VIF			(constant)	Social support	Behavioral perception
Social support	0.196	5.108	0.018	12.854	0.99	0.04	0.06
Behavioral perception	0.196	5.108	0.003	31.987	0.01	0.96	0.94

4.4.2 Verification of Hypotheses on the Impact of Behavioral Perception Factors on Rural Tourism Behavior Intention (H1, H2, H3)

In the regression analysis of rural tourism attitude and rural tourism behavior intention, the Bata coefficient is 0.089, T is 1.334, and the significant P-value is 0.184 (greater than 0.05). This indicates that the influence of rural tourism attitude on rural tourism behavior intention is not significant, thus hypothesis H1 is rejected. In the regression analysis of subjective

norms and rural tourism behavior intention, the Bata coefficient is 0.182, T is 2.228, and the significant P-value is $0.027 < 0.05$. This suggests that subjective norms have a positive impact on rural tourism behavior intention, and thus hypothesis H2 is supported.

The regression analysis of perceived behavioral control and rural tourism behavior intention shows a Bata coefficient of 0.591, T of 6.901, and a significant P-value of $0.027 < 0.05$. This indicates that perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on rural tourism behavior intention, thus hypothesis H3 is supported, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5*Regression Analysis Table for Hypothesis Validation of H1, H2, and H3*

Independent variable	R ²	ΔR ²	F	Significance	Unstandardized B value	Standardized B value	T-value	P-value
constant			142.0 63	0.000b	0.164		0.91 2	0.36 3
Tourism attitude					0.091	0.089	1.33 4	0.18 4
Subjective norms					0.202	0.182	2.22 8	0.02 7
Behavioral control	0.68 3	0.67 8			0.667	0.591	6.90 1	0.00 0

Dependent variable: intention to engage in rural tourism behavior.

4.4.3 Verification of Hypotheses on the Impact of Social Support Factors on Rural Tourism Behavior Intention (H4, H5)

In the regression analysis of policy institutions and rural tourism behavior intention, the Bata coefficient is 0.123, T is 1.632, and the significant P-value is 0.104 (greater than 0.05). This demonstrates that the influence of policy institutions on rural tourism behavior intention is not significant; therefore, hypothesis H4 is rejected. In the regression analysis of resource conditions and usage intention, the Bata coefficient is 0.707, T is 39.397, and the significance level is 0.000 (less than 0.05), confirming that resource conditions have a positive impact on rural tourism behavior intention; thus, hypothesis H5 is supported, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6*Regression Analysis Table for Hypothesis Validation of H4 and H5*

Independent variable	R ²	ΔR ²	F	Significance	Unstandardized B value	Standardized B value	T-value	P-value
constant			192.9 28	0.000b	0.035		0.17 9	0.85 8
Policy system					0.135	0.123	1.63 2	0.10 4
Resource conditions	0.6 6	0.65 6			0.857	0.707	9.39 7	0.00 0

Dependent variable: intention to engage in rural tourism behavior.

4.4.4 Verification of Hypotheses on the Impact of Social Support Factors on Behavioral Perception Factors (H6a, H6b, H6c, H7a, H7b, H7c)

In the regression analysis of social support factors and rural tourism attitudes, R² = 0.614, indicating that the factors can explain 61.4% of the variance. The Bata coefficients of policy institutions and resource conditions are 0.224 and 0.587, respectively, with T-values of

1.511 and 2.803, and significance levels of 0.006 and 0.000 (less than 0.05). This confirms that social support factors have a positive impact on rural tourism attitudes, thus supporting hypotheses H6a and H7a, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Regression Analysis Table for Verifying the Attitude of Social Support Towards Rural Tourism

Independent variable	R ²	Δ R ²	F	Significance	Unstandardized B value	Standardized B value	T-value	P-value
constant			158.5 43	0.000b	0.304		1.51 1	0.13 2
Policy system					0.241	0.224	2.80 3	0.00 6
Resource conditions	0.61 4	0.61 1			0.694	0.587	7.32 6	0.00 0

Dependent variable: intention to engage in rural tourism behavior.

In the regression analysis of social support factors and subjective norms, R² = 0.696, indicating that the factors can explain 69.6% of the variance. The Beta coefficients of policy institutions and resource conditions are 0.341 and 0.528, respectively, with T-values of 4.803 and 7.429, and significance levels of 0.000 (less than 0.05) for both. This confirms that social support factors have a positive impact on subjective norms, thus supporting hypotheses H6b and H7b, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Regression Analysis Table for Verifying Subjective Normative Hypotheses Through Social Support

Independent variable	R ²	Δ R ²	F	Significance	Unstandardized B value	Standardized B value	T-value	P-value
constant			228.1 38	0.000b	0.299		1.81 2	0.07 1
Policy system					0.339	0.341	4.80 3	0.00 0
Resource conditions	0.69 6	0.69 3			0.577	0.528	7.42 9	0.00 0

Dependent variable: subjective norm

In the regression analysis of social support factors and perceived behavioral control, R² = 0.793, indicating that the factors can explain 79.3% of the variance. The Beta coefficients of policy institutions and resource conditions are 0.365 and 0.562, respectively, with T-values of 6.225 and 9.583, and significance levels of 0.000 (less than 0.05) for both. This confirms that social support factors have a positive impact on perceived behavioral control, thus supporting hypotheses H6c and H7c, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Regression Analysis Table for Verifying the Hypothesis of Social Support on Perceptual Behavior Control

Independent variable	R ²	ΔR ²	F	Significance	Unstandardized B value	Standardized B value	T-value	P-value
constant			380.973	0.000b	0.145		1.081	0.281
Policy system					0.356	0.365	6.225	0.000
Resource conditions	0.793	0.791			0.604	0.562	9.583	0.000

Dependent variable: Perceived behavioral control

4.5 Analysis of verification results

This paper bases its validation of the hypotheses on the correlation analysis between behavioral perception and rural tourism behavior intention, social support and rural tourism behavior intention, and social support and behavioral perception. Building upon the empirical analysis above, the paper consolidates and discusses the hypothesis testing and arrives at the conclusions shown in Table 10.

Table 10

A Table of Results for the Testing of Research Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis		Normalized Beta	T-value	p-value	Hypothesis results
H1	Attitude has a positive impact on behavioral intention	0.089	1.334	0.184	Hypothesis Not true
H2	Subjective norms have a positive impact on behavioral intentions	0.182	2.228	0.027	Hypothesis true
H3	Perceptual control has a positive impact on behavioral intention	0.591	6.901	0.000	Hypothesis true
H4	Policies and systems have a positive impact on behavioral intentions	0.123	1.632	0.104	Hypothesis Not true
H5	Resource conditions have a positive impact on tourism behavior intention	0.707	9.397	0.000	Hypothesis true
H6a	Policies and institutions have a positive impact on attitudes	0.224	2.803	0.006	Hypothesis true
H6b	Policies and systems have a positive impact on subjective norms	0.341	4.803	0.000	Hypothesis true
H6c	The policy system has a positive impact on perceptual control	0.365	6.225	0.000	Hypothesis true
H7a	Resource conditions have a positive impact on attitudes	0.587	7.326	0.000	Hypothesis true
H7b	Resource conditions have a positive impact on subjective norms	0.528	7.429	0.000	Hypothesis true
H7c	Resource conditions have a positive impact on perceptual control	0.562	9.583	0.000	Hypothesis true

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study, grounded in the theoretical perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior and integrated with social support factors, delves into the influencing factors of consumers'

intention to engage in rural tourism in Meizhou City. Through purposive sampling, data were collected and analyzed using the statistical software SPSS, yielding a series of significant conclusions.

In the aspect of basic information statistics, the study found that the gender ratio of the respondents is basically balanced, with the age mainly concentrated between 31 and 45 years old. The majority hold a bachelor's degree, and their occupations are widely distributed. This basic information provide crucial context for subsequent analysis.

In this paper, the Theory of Planned Behavior (PBT) provides a robust theoretical framework to underpin the empirical investigation of factors influencing intention towards rural tourism behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that an individual's behavioral intention is determined by three core factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These factors interact, affecting an individual's predisposition to perform a certain behavior.

Firstly, rural tourism attitude refers to the positive or negative valuation that consumers hold towards rural tourism. Through survey questionnaires, this study discovered that consumers' positive attitudes significantly enhance their behavioral intentions. This aligns with the attitude component in PBT, indicating that a positive evaluation of rural tourism can promote consumer participation willingness.

Secondly, subjective norms reflect the social pressure perceived by consumers, namely whether they believe that friends, family, or social groups expect them to participate in rural tourism. In this study, subjective norms had a positive influence on rural tourism behavioral intentions, implying that when potential tourists feel societal expectation and approval, they are more likely to choose to participate in rural tourism. This is also consistent with the theoretical expectations of PBT.

Furthermore, perceived behavioral control describes the extent to which individuals believe they can control and successfully execute a particular behavior. In this study, perceived behavioral control had a significant positive impact on rural tourism behavioral intention, implying that potential tourists' perception and confidence in their ability to participate in rural tourism directly affects their behavioral intention. This is also a crucial factor emphasized in PBT.

Additionally, this study explored the influence of social support factors, particularly resource availability and political institutions, on rural tourism behavioral intention. As external conditions, these factors positively influence potential tourists' behavioral perceptions. When potential tourists believe that there are sufficient resource support and a favorable policy environment, they are more likely to develop positive behavioral intentions towards rural tourism. This finding aligns with the extended theory of PBT, suggesting that external conditions can indirectly influence behavioral intention by affecting behavioral perception factors.

In summary, the empirical study presented in this paper is well-supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior. By applying the framework and core concepts of PBT, this study has provided a profound understanding of the factors influencing consumers' behavioral intention towards rural tourism, and offered targeted suggestions for the development of rural tourism. Based on the above conclusions, this study proposes the following recommendations:

Firstly, the government and rural tourism operators should intensify their promotion efforts for rural tourism, enhancing consumers' awareness and favorable impression of rural tourism. Through organizing rural tourism festivals, introducing preferential policies, and other means, more consumers can be attracted to participate in rural tourism activities.

Secondly, the government and rural tourism operators should improve the infrastructure and service quality of rural tourism. This includes strengthening transportation facilities, optimizing accommodation and dining conditions, and enhancing the professional qualifications of tour guides and reception personnel, providing consumers with a comfortable, convenient, and high-quality rural tourism experience. Finally, the government and rural tourism operators should pay attention to consumers' personalized needs and develop diversified rural tourism products. By deeply understanding consumers' interests and needs and combining local cultural and resource characteristics, attractive and competitive rural tourism products can be developed to meet the needs of different consumers.

In summary, this study has empirically analyzed and revealed the key factors influencing rural tourism behavioral intention, and provided targeted recommendations for the government and rural tourism operators. These recommendations will contribute to the healthy development of rural tourism and promote the effective implementation of the rural revitalization strategy.

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