

# *The Influence of Restorative Environment of Rural Sojourner on Sojourner's Emotional Experience and Behavioral Intention*

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of restorative environment in rural sojourns on sojourners' emotional experience and behavioral intention. Based on the theory of "cognitive-emotion-behavior", a model of the relationship between restorative environment, sojourners' emotions and behavioral intentions was established, and the data of emotional responses and behavioral tendencies of sojourners from different backgrounds in rural environment were collected by means of questionnaire survey to test the relevant hypotheses. The results show that: (1) the factors of natural environment, man-made environment and social environment in rural sojourns all have significant effects on the emotional experience and behavioral intention of sojourners, and the factors of natural environment are more significant. (2) Restorative environmental perception factors can indirectly influence sojourners' behavioral intention through the mediating effect of sojourners' emotional experience. (3) sojourners' emotional experience significantly affects tourists' behavioral intention. The research shows that the restorative environment of rural sojourns plays an important role in promoting sojourners' mental health and positive tourism behavior. This study provides a theoretical basis for the development of rural tourism, and provides practical guidance for how to optimize the environmental design of rural hostel.

## 1. Introduction

In the fast-paced life of modern society, people often feel stressed and tired. With the pursuit of health and well-being on the rise, more and more people are looking to travel to relax and recharge. As a unique form of tourism, rural sojourn has become a destination for many tourists with its quiet natural environment, simple life style and rich cultural connotation. However, a country retreat is more than just a haven from the hustle and bustle of the city, it also has potential psychological

restorative functions. The purpose of this study is to explore how the restorative environment of rural sojourners affects their emotional experience and behavioral intention, in order to provide psychological perspective support for the development of tourism, and to provide empirical evidence for promoting people's mental health and happiness.

## **2. Theoretical basis and research hypothesis**

### **2.1 Restorative environment and evaluation**

Restorative environment has always been the focus of environmental psychology research abroad. Restorative environment has attracted much attention because of its beneficial effects on people's psychological recovery, stress reduction and psychological and physiological health. In recent years, scholars in the fields of health geography, tourism geography and urban planning have also begun to pay attention to restorative environment. There's been a lot of research on what kind of environment is restorative. It is found that environmental type [1], environmental elements [2] and spatial characteristics [3] are important factors affecting physical and mental health recovery. Most researchers' discussion of restorative environment is mainly based on the binary classification of city and nature. With the continuous deepening of the research, it is gradually refined to include specific areas such as forests, tourist resorts, parks and villages [4-6]. Gesler believes that the various elements of the geographical environment, mainly including the natural environment elements, architectural elements, sense of place, symbolic landscape, daily activities, beliefs and philosophies, social relations and domain are important components of the restorative environment. In subsequent studies, it is believed that natural environment, social environment and man-made environment enable people to better obtain health [7]. Domestic scholars are also constantly exploring which environment has an important role in restoring human health or can obtain the most satisfactory state. In the restorative environmental planning and design of rural environment, landscape, architecture, facilities, culture, five senses therapy and other environments are considered to have a restorative effect on people's physical and mental health [8]. With the development of rural tourism, sojourning has the advantages of life and comfort. Some groups will choose to sojourn from the city to the countryside, and these groups are characterized by older age and longer residence and vacation time. They will take into account the climatic conditions of the destination, the natural environment and the image of the destination. It is believed that the quiet rural environment, with fresh air and charming landscape, plays an important role in regulating physical and mental health. Based on the existing research and the interaction and perception characteristics between sojourners and the destination environment in rural tourism activities, the restorative environment is divided into three dimensions: natural environment elements, man-made environment elements and social environment elements.

### **2.2 Influence of restorative environment on emotion**

At present, although there are few studies on the relationship between tourists' environmental restorative perception and emotion, the close relationship between environmental restorative effect and emotion has been confirmed by some scholars. Herranz et al. found that restorative environment can significantly positively predict positive emotion [9]. Most studies have shown that compared with the urban environment, the natural environment can provide better emotional, physiological and restorative effects. Walking in the countryside can increase the feeling of nature, comfort, relaxation and vitality, reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression, etc. [10], which can make people mentally relaxed and is beneficial to emotional and cognitive recovery. Therefore, tourists' sojourn activities in rural and other natural environments can improve their emotional

experience to a certain extent and produce positive emotional experience. Gesler believed that natural environment, social environment and man-made environment enable people to better obtain emotional experience [7]. It can be seen that there is a close relationship between restorative environmental perception elements and emotion. Hypothesis H1 is proposed: natural environment has significant positive influence on positive emotion; H2: Human environment has significant positive influence on positive emotion; H3: Social environment factors have a significant positive impact on positive emotion; H4: Natural environment factors have a significant negative impact on negative emotion; H5: Human environment factors have a significant negative impact on negative emotion; H6: Social environment factors have a significant negative impact on negative emotion.

### **2.3 Elements of restorative environment perception and behavioral intention**

The quality of tourists' restorative environmental perception is an important factor affecting their post-tour behavior. Backman et al. 's research shows that restorative environment, as an important part of healthy tourism experience, has an impact on tourists' positive emotions and life satisfaction, and significantly affects individual behavioral intention [11]. Huang Jie et al. have shown that tourists' restorative environmental perception has a positive impact on their behavioral intention [12]. Good environmental perception experience has a positive impact on tourist behavior, thus promoting tourists' willingness to re-visit and recommend. It can be seen that there is a close relationship between restorative environment and behavioral intention. In summary, hypothesis H7 is proposed: natural environment factors have a significant positive impact on behavioral intention; H8: Human environment factors have a significant positive impact on behavioral intention; H9: Social environment factors have a significant positive impact on behavioral intention.

### **2.4 Emotional experience and behavioral intention and their mediations**

Combining the two variables of people and place can enrich the understanding of psychological rehabilitation and landscape perception. The concept of place described by Duan Yifu is that there is an emotional bond between people and the place or environment, and it has an important relationship with health and happiness [13]. A person's emotional bond to a place will have a significant impact on his perception of the local restorative environment, thus affecting the generation of his behavioral intention [14]. Sojourn in a restorative environment that is beneficial to their physical and mental health, with the aim of maintaining and improving physical and mental health, relieving stress, reducing negative emotions, and enhancing feelings of experience and well-being. Therefore, this study believes that emotional experience can be used to measure travelers' travel experience, and it can be studied as a mediating variable. Based on this, hypothesis H10 is proposed: positive emotion has a significant positive impact on behavioral intention; H11: Negative emotion has a significant negative effect on behavioral intention; H12: Positive emotion plays a mediating role between natural environment elements and behavioral intention; H13: Positive emotion plays a mediating role between artificial environment elements and behavioral intention; H14: Positive emotion plays a mediating role between social environment elements and behavioral intention; H15: Negative emotion plays a mediating role between natural environment elements and behavioral intention; H16: Negative emotion plays a mediating role between artificial environment elements and behavioral intention; H17: Positive emotion plays a mediating role between social environment elements and behavioral intention. Based on the above assumptions, the conceptual model of restorative environmental perception elements, emotional experience and behavioral intention in rural soiree is constructed, as shown in Figure 1.

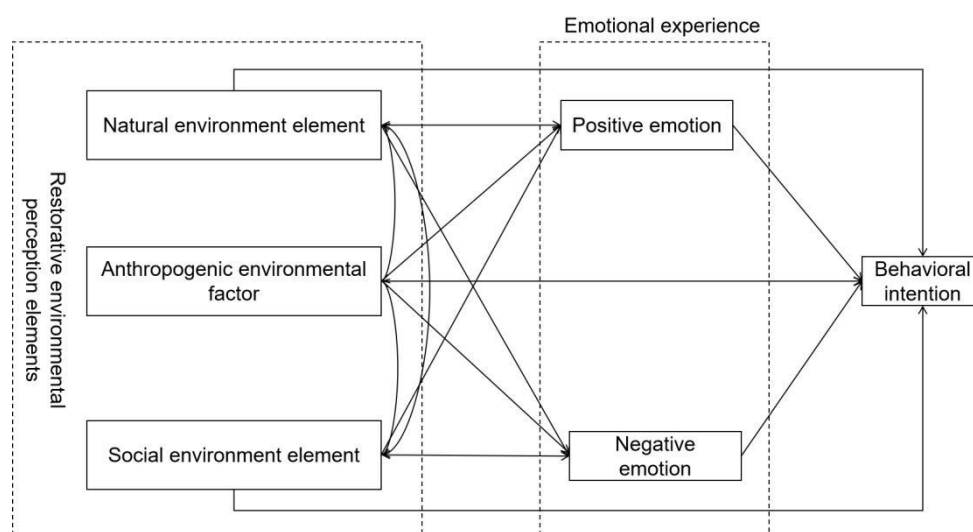


Figure 1. Conceptual model diagram

### 3. Study design and data collection

#### 3.1 Overview of the research site

Dashan Village, Chizhou City, Anhui Province, is known as "the first selenium-rich village in China", located at 30 north latitude. Nearby, is a good health place. Here belongs to the north subtropical humid climate zone, sufficient light, abundant rainfall, four distinct seasons, and winter and summer long, short spring and autumn. The ecological environment in the village is beautiful, and the selenium content in soil, water system and vegetation is very high, which is about 20 times higher than that in ordinary soil. The negative oxygen ions in the air are 40 times the WHO fresh air standard, known as the "natural oxygen bar"; Forest coverage reaches 87.6 percent, and per capita water resources are seven times the national average. It is not only famous for its natural scenery, but also rich in cultural resources. There are ancient villages left from the Ming and Qing dynasties, Xianyu Mountain, selenium rich tea garden, Shenlong Valley, General Rock and other scenic spots. These beautiful landscapes and magical selenium-rich properties together build an earthly paradise full of charm and charm. The villagers here are simple, kind, hardworking and capable, none of them is fat, all are thin and healthy, and there are many old people with long lives, known as thin village and longevity village. In recent years, it has attracted many tourists to come here to cool off in the summer and travel healthily, and some people come here to stay for ten days and half a month, and stay for six months or one year.

#### 3.2 Questionnaire Design

The first part of the questionnaire is the factors of restorative environment perception in rural sojourn, which mainly include natural environment factors, man-made environment factors and social environment factors [15-18]. The second part of the questionnaire is the emotion measurement of sojourners, including positive emotion and negative emotion [19-22]. The third part is the post-tour behavioral intention scale [23-25], which adopts the five-point Likert scale scoring method. 1-5 indicates that from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", there are 25 observation indicators of restorative environment perception factors in rural hostel, 8 observation indicators of positive emotion, 5 observation indicators of negative emotion, and 4 observation indicators of behavioral intention. The fourth part is mainly demographic characteristics; The fifth part is

behavior activity.

### 3.3 Data acquisition and sample structure

This study takes the sojourners of Dashan village as the research object. According to the relevant studies of relevant scholars, rural sojourn refers to the temporary residence of elderly people in rural areas with good climate and environment, and a single trip and residence for 15 days or more. This questionnaire survey adopts an anonymous method to ask the respondents one-on-one, and indicates that the survey content is only for the use of thesis research to ensure the effectiveness of the questionnaire.

The survey team (6 graduate students) distributed questionnaires in Dashan Village from July 10 to 13, 2024, and conducted training for the survey team members before departure. According to the living habits of the sojourners here, the survey time is mainly concentrated in three periods: 9:00-11:30, 15:00-17:00, 18:30-20:00. Considering the large mobility of the survey objects, the questionnaire survey mainly selects the forest oxygen bar, the general Rock, the village committee square, and the Cangxi covered bridge where the flow of people gathers, and investigates the soiree in nearby Li Village. A total of 460 questionnaires were issued, 456 were recovered, and 449 valid data were obtained after incomplete and random answers were eliminated.

In terms of gender, female sojourners accounted for 61% of the total valid samples, and males accounted for 39% of the total valid samples. From the perspective of age distribution, more than half of the sojourners are aged 60-69, accounting for 55%; There are relatively few sojourners aged 44 and under and 80-89. In terms of education level, almost half of the sojourners' education is high school/vocational high school/technical school, followed by junior high school and junior college/undergraduate education, accounting for about 20%. In general, sojourners' education level is relatively high. Monthly salary/retirement allowance: sojourners with a monthly income of 3001-5000 yuan account for the largest proportion, followed by 5001-8000 yuan. It shows that sojourners are generally middle and high income groups with high economic level, which can support them to carry out sojourn life. At the same time, it can also be seen that the cultural level and economic strength are proportional. Occupation: Most of the sojourners in Dashan village are retirees, accounting for 86% of the total valid samples, followed by public institution personnel accounting for 6%; Civil servants, business managers and others accounted for 2%. On the whole, it can be seen that retired people are the main force of living companions: most of them choose friends and partners to live, and few of them accompany relatives and parents.

### 3.4 Analysis Method

In this paper, questionnaire survey, factor analysis and structural equation model are used. Firstly, the demographic characteristics of the questionnaire and the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were analyzed. Secondly, the structural equation model is used to analyze the influence of restorative environment perception factors on two dimensions of emotion and behavioral intention. Finally, Bootstrap method was used to analyze the mediating effect and explore the mediating effect of emotion. SPSS27.0 and AMOS28.0 software were used to analyze the questionnaire data.

## 4. Result Analysis

### 4.1 Reliability and validity analysis

Firstly, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value was used to test the reliability of the scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of



the 6 factors was all higher than 0.8 by SPSS software, indicating high reliability. Validity analysis was carried out with the help of KMO value and Bartlett sphericity test in factor analysis. The data showed that the KMO value of the questionnaire as a whole was 0.949, the Bartlett sphericity test value was 11481.683, and the significance level  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating good structural validity.

### 4.2 Structural equation model test

AMOS28.0 software was used to test the fit of the structural equation model. In this paper, five indexes, including CMIN/DF, RMSEA, IFI, TLI and CFI, were selected for testing. All indexes were within a reasonable range and the adaptation was satisfactory. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Model fit test

index	Reference standard	Measured result
CMIN/DF	1-3 is excellent, 3-5 is good	2.053
RMSEA	<0.05 is excellent, <0.08 is good	0.048
IFI	> 0.9 is excellent, >0.8 is good	0.923
TLI	> 0.9 is excellent, >0.8 is good	0.918
CFI	> 0.9 is excellent, >0.8 is good	0.923

### 4.3 SEM model path

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the fitting effect of the model is very good. AMOS was used to test the path coefficient of the model, as shown in Figure 2. It can be seen from Figure 2 that the coefficients of the standardized paths of hypothesis H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, H9, H10 and H11 are 0.3, 0.29, 0.23, -0.35, -0.22, -0.18, 0.21, 0.14, 0.13, 0.22 and -0.27, respectively.

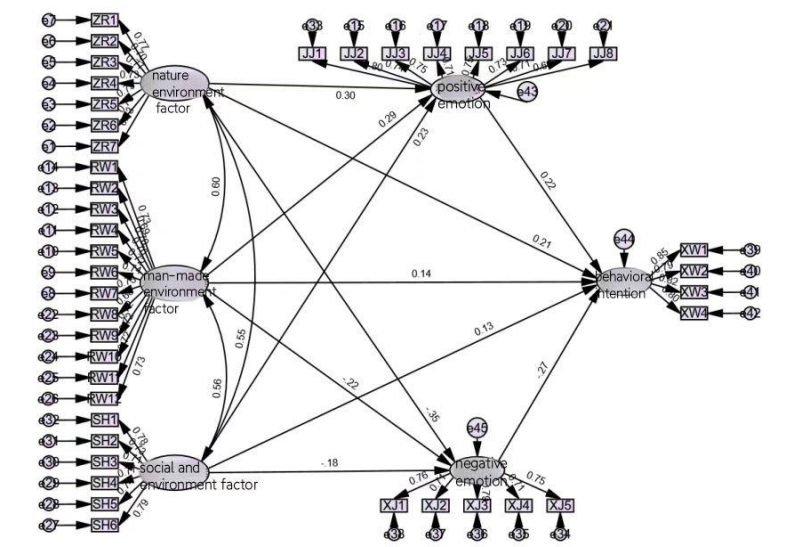


Figure 2. SEM analysis model

From the standardized estimates and significance in Table 2, it can be seen that natural environmental factors, man-made environmental factors and social environmental factors have a positive and significant impact on positive emotion and behavioral intention; natural environmental factors, man-made environmental factors and social environmental factors have a negative and

significant impact on negative emotion; positive emotion has a significant and positive impact on behavioral intention. Negative emotion has a significant negative effect on the influence intention, and the solid hypothesis is valid.

Table 2. SEM path relationship test results

Path relation			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	conclusion
Positive emotion	<---	Man-made environmental factors	0.286	0.06	4.897	***	Forward support
Positive emotion	<---	Social environment element	0.227	0.051	4.073	***	Forward support
Negative emotion	<---	Natural environment element	-0.347	0.075	-5.359	***	Negative support
Negative emotion	<---	Man-made environmental factors	-0.221	0.069	-3.562	***	Negative support
Negative emotion	<---	Social environment element	-0.178	0.058	-2.985	0.003	Negative support
Positive emotion	<---	Natural environment element	0.298	0.064	5.02	***	Forward support
Behavioral intention	<---	Negative emotion	-0.267	0.058	-5.019	***	Negative support
Behavioral intention	<---	Positive emotion	0.223	0.064	4.102	***	Forward support
Behavioral intention	<---	Natural environment element	0.208	0.074	3.549	***	Forward support
Behavioral intention	<---	Man-made environmental factors	0.141	0.5066	2.582	0.01	Forward support
Behavioral intention	<---	Social environment element	0.134	0.055	2.572	0.01	Forward support

#### 4.4 Bootstrap mediation effect test

This study applied Amos28.0 and Bootstrap method, set the confidence interval to 95%, repeated sampling 5000 times, and the test results were shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Test of mediating effect

Effect class	Effect size	SE	P	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Total effect					
Social environment element → Behavioral	0.159	0.050	0.000	0.077	0.275

intention					
Man-made environmental factors → Behavioral intention	0.123	0.040	0.000	0.052	0.205
Social environment element → Behavioral intention	0.098	0.040	0.001	0.037	0.192
Direct effect					
Social environment element → Positive emotion	0.298	0.087	0.001	0.130	0.468
Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	0.223	0.076	0.003	0.086	0.379
Social environment element → Positive emotion	-0.347	0.089	0.000	-0.525	-0.175
Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	-0.267	0.079	0.000	-0.433	-0.123
Social environment element → Behavioral intention	0.208	0.078	0.005	0.059	0.367
Man-made environmental factors → Positive emotion	0.286	0.079	0.001	0.130	0.440
Man-made environmental factors → Positive emotion	-0.221	0.078	0.005	-0.375	-0.069
Man-made environmental factors → Behavioral intention	0.141	0.069	0.028	0.015	0.282
Social environment element → Positive emotion	0.227	0.079	0.002	0.087	0.394
Social environment element → Positive emotion	-0.178	0.074	0.012	-0.334	-0.036
Social environment element → Behavioral intention	0.134	0.077	0.094	-0.021	0.282
Indirect effect					
Social environment element → Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	0.066	0.033	0.003	0.015	0.144
Social environment element → Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	0.093	0.041	0.000	0.031	0.188
Man-made environmental factors → Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	0.064	0.026	0.003	0.020	0.121
Man-made environmental factors → Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	0.059	0.028	0.005	0.014	0.122
Social environment element → Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	0.051	0.028	0.004	0.012	0.119
Social environment element → Positive emotion → Behavioral intention	0.048	0.027	0.012	0.007	0.109

As can be seen from Table 3, the total effect of natural environmental factors, man-made environmental factors, social environmental factors and emotional experience on behavioral intention is significant (0 is not included in the confidence interval). The direct effects of natural environmental factors, man-made environmental factors and social environmental factors on positive and negative emotions are significant (the confidence interval does not include 0). The



direct effect of positive emotion and negative emotion on behavioral intention is significant (the confidence interval does not include 0). The direct effect of natural environmental factors, man-made environmental factors and social environmental factors on behavioral intention is significant (confidence interval does not contain 0), but the direct effect of social environmental factors on behavioral intention is not significant (confidence interval contains 0). Among the six indirect effects, "Natural environment elements → positive emotions → behavioral intention", "natural environment elements → negative emotions → behavioral intention", "human environment elements → positive emotions → behavioral intention", "human environment elements → negative emotions → behavioral intention", "social environment elements → positive emotions → behavioral intention", "social environment elements → negative emotions → behavioral intention", and "social environment elements → negative emotions → behavioral intention" have all achieved indirect effects Significance level (confidence interval does not include 0). According to the above results, hypothesis H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, H10 and H11 are verified, while hypothesis H9 is not valid. The above results suggest that "emotional experience" plays a complete mediating role between social environment elements and behavioral intention, and plays a partial mediating role between natural environment elements and social environment elements. It can be seen that emotional experience is a mediating variable.

#### 4.5 Analysis of empirical results

According to the analysis of AMOS 28.0, the p values under standardization in Table 2 are all significant, indicating that the influence relationship among all paths is established and there is a significant correlation. Table 1 shows the test results of model fit. By comparison, the structural equation model has a good fit. Combined with the test results in Table 2 and Table 3, the hypothesis test results can be summarized as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of hypothesis testing.

hypothesis	Verification result
H1:Natural environment factors have significant positive influence on positive emotion	Set up
H2:Human environment factors have significant positive influence on positive emotion	Set up
H3:Social environment factors have significant positive influence on positive emotion	Set up
H4:The factors of natural environment have significant negative influence on negative emotion	Set up
H5:Human environment factors have significant negative effects on negative emotion	Set up
H6:Social environment factors have significant negative influence on negative emotion	Set up
H7:Natural environment factors have significant positive effects on behavioral intention	Set up
H8:Anthropogenic environmental factors have significant positive effects on behavioral intention	Set up
H9:Social environment factors have significant positive effects on behavioral intention	Set up
H10:Positive emotion has significant positive effect on behavioral intention	Set up
H11:Negative emotion has a significant negative effect on behavioral intention	Set up
H12:Positive emotion plays a mediating role between natural environment elements and behavioral intention	Set up

H13:Positive emotion plays a mediating role between artificial environment elements and behavioral intention	Set up
H14:Positive emotion plays a mediating role between social environment elements and behavioral intention	Set up
H15:Negative emotion plays a mediating role between natural environment elements and behavioral intention	Set up
H16:Negative emotion plays an intermediary role between artificial environment elements and behavioral intention	Set up
H17:Negative emotion plays an intermediary role between social environment elements and behavioral intention	Set up

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

### 5.1 Conclusion

From the perspective of tourism geography, this paper summarizes the index system suitable for sojourners to perceive the restorative environment of rural sojourners, which mainly divides the restorative environment of rural sojourners into three dimensions: natural environment elements, man-made environment elements and social environment elements. This index system is an exploration of the theory of restorative environment in the field of tourism, and its rich content system and good effectiveness will further provide new ideas for the study of tourism construction and restorative environment.

With the support of questionnaire data, this study built a model of the impact of restorative environment in rural sojourners on their emotional experience and behavioral intention. The factors of natural environment, human environment and social environment in the restorative environment of rural sojourner have positive effects on the positive emotion and behavioral intention of sojourner, and negative effects on the negative emotion, and the influence of natural environment is the most significant.

Emotional experience plays a partial mediating role between natural environmental factors, artificial environmental factors and behavioral intentions, and a complete mediating role between social environmental factors and behavioral intentions. The results show that the complex environmental factors perceived by sojourners in their interaction with rural sojourners can indirectly affect the expression of their behavioral intention by influencing their emotional experience.

### 5.2 Suggestions

Protect and enhance the natural environment, maintain the natural beauty and biological diversity of rural areas, and provide travelers with a peaceful place away from the hustle and bustle of the city. This can be done by protecting green Spaces, forests and water bodies.

Optimize the man-made environmental factors of rural residence, carry out all-round, multi-level and focused rural landscape planning and design transformation (such as upgrading rural farmland, orchards, tea gardens and other pastoral landscapes, enrich rural pastoral style, strengthen public infrastructure construction, provide more hostel products and services, optimize the cultural characteristics of architectural layout and architectural style), and improve the quality of rural landscape. Strengthen the comfort and safety of housing design, and add some commercial services to effectively protect the medical services of sojourners), and further improve the rural transportation system to enhance the convenience of transportation. In the vicinity of popular scenic spots in rural areas, it is more necessary to provide transportation efficiency, such as opening up a

variety of transportation modes, optimizing transportation lines, and strengthening communication and contact between different areas in rural areas, so as to better meet the tourist needs of travelers, so as to better improve the tourism experience and satisfaction level. At the same time, we should also pay attention to avoid large-scale construction of facilities during the peak period, so as not to bring bad experience to the sojourners.

Efforts should be made to improve the social and environmental elements of rural sojourners, so as to better promote the standardization of the social governance system and provide better services for sojourners. Local cultural activities can be organized to understand the needs and expectations of sojourners, build leisure and social places, and enrich the cultural life of sojourners.

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