

Research Article

Value Preferences and Intergenerational Differences of Tourists to Traditional Chinese Villages

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Tourist values determine the behavior of tourists. To pinpoint the behaviors and preferences of tourists, it is necessary to explore their value orientation and intergenerational differences. The exploration is of great significance to the activation of tourism in traditional villages. After analyzing the value of tourists to two traditional villages (Hongcun and Xidi), this paper investigated the value preferences and intergenerational differences of tourists of four generations to traditional villages, using means-end chain (MEC) theory and hard laddering. Through a questionnaire survey on tourists born in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the authors established 36 MEC value chains of 18 classes. The results show that the post-60s traditional village tourists are a generation of wisdom-loving learners, who prefer the values of wisdom and self-improvement; the post-70s and 80s tourists are a generation of beauty lovers with a strong sense of belonging, who prefer the values of beautiful world, inner harmony, and sense of belonging; the post-90s tourists are a generation of inclusive advocators of diversity, with no special value preference. These results provide theoretical support and practical enlightenment for the market segmentation of traditional village tourism and the protection and activation of traditional villages.

1. Introduction

Traditional villages are the basic units of rural China and the living fossils of traditional culture [1]. In June 2019, the Chinese Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, in association with other departments, released the fifth batch of Chinese traditional villages. In total, 6,819 traditional villages are being protected in China. The main protective method is to activate tourism to these villages [2]. The ancient village tourism and rural tourism are an important means to activate and protect traditional villages [3]. Driven by the boom of domestic tourism, the purpose of traditional village tourism has shifted from sightseeing to both sightseeing and vacation. Thanks to unique regional cultures, improving infrastructure, better public services, and new business products, traditional villages are attracting more and more tourists of different generations.

At present, fruitful results have been achieved on the description of the behavior features of tourists to traditional villages. However, there is a lack of in-depth research on the intergenerational differences of tourists. The Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) considered intergenerational analysis as the most common and effective approach for dividing the population and segmenting the market. Tourists of different generations vary significantly in behavior features and preferences [4]. A good understanding of the intergenerational differences in tourist behaviors helps to mine the deep-seated inducers of their tourism behaviors and preferences [5]. On this basis, it is possible to accurately predict the value preferences of tourists of different generations [6] and segment the market to provide products and services tailored to their needs, thereby promoting the sustainable development of traditional village tourism. The tourists' pursuit of value is the fundamental determinant of their travel behaviors [7]. Therefore, this paper analyzes the values of tourists of

different generations to traditional villages through hard laddering, a technique of means-end chain (MEC), and tries to disclose the value preferences and intergenerational differences between traditional village tourists.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Traditional Village Tourism. The development of traditional villages as travel destinations is always accompanied by the game between core stakeholders, dormant stakeholders, and marginal stakeholders. There are differences and interconnections between these stakeholders [8]. Culture and environment are their common focuses [9]. The government plays a decisive role in the development of traditional village tourism [10], which suffers the greatest impact from community and residents [11]. Being the owners of traditional villages, the residents determine how well the tourism of these villages develops with their satisfaction, support, and active participation [12–17]. Therefore, the active involvement of the community can promote the sustainable development of tourism in traditional villages [18, 19], enhance community capacity [20], spur community development [21, 22], and underpin the good interaction between community and tourism. Hence, the development of traditional village tourism is not only a game, but also the symbiosis of multiple stakeholders.

Symmetrical reciprocity and integrated symbiosis are the optimization objectives of the symbiosis systems for traditional villages [23, 24], such as the “community participation + enterprise operation” model of stakeholders [25], the typical model of valley economy in mountainous regions [26], the diversified mixed effect model of market game [27], and the synchronized/asynchronized “urbanization + community participation + protection zone” model [28].

During the game and symbiosis of stakeholders in the development of traditional village tourism, the space of traditional villages is evolving into two social spaces, namely, tourist area and resident area, with the continued growth of tourist immigrants and tourists. Some traditional villages have developed into small towns [10], creating new ethnic cultures [29]. In this process, the spatial social order has also been reorganized: the niche space of community populations is replaced by tourist populations, which occupy the core area of traditional villages [30]. Driven by tourism interests, the tertiary industry-centered land urbanization has taken place around some traditional villages. The population is dominated by residents and tourism practitioners. Under the influence of outside cultures, the original residents of traditional villages are increasingly urbanized and modernized [31], and the rural culture is shifting from traditional farming culture to modern culture [32].

In the development of traditional village tourism, culture is the soul and resources are the body [33]. The tourism resources of traditional villages include the local environment, village shape, human landscape, and local culture [34–37], which embody the history, culture, and artistic value of traditional villages [38]. This precious heritage wins the favor of tourists. With the emerging demand from niche markets of tourism, new businesses spring up in the tourism industry.

For example, the sketching tourism, research tourism, sports tourism, and gourmet tourism in traditional villages are very popular among tourists [39, 40]. Being the subjects of traditional village tourism, tourists attach the greatest importance to the authenticity of architecture and cultural relics [41, 42], and their primary travel motives are experiencing traditional culture, sightseeing, and family trips [43–46]. The existing studies on the niche markets of tourism in traditional villages mostly discuss the consumption behaviors of overseas tourists, female tourists, and sketching tourists [47–49], as well as the trend and seasonal variation of tourism demand [50]. However, there is not yet any discovery about the niche markets, value preferences, or intergenerational differences of traditional village tourists of different generations.

2.2. Theory of Generations. Based on anthropology, Mannheim [51] proposed the theory of generations, which holds that people born in the same period have the same position in the historical process of social development and form common values, thinking patterns, and behavioral features, as they experience the same major external events. The theory of generations is composed of three progressive concepts: the site of generation, the realistic sense of generation, and the intrageneration division. This theory has been further verified, extended, and improved by many scholars [52–54], who found that different generations differ markedly; the intrageneration values are relatively stable and directly affect future behaviors and attitudes [55]; intragenerational personalities and features are predictable [6].

Foreign researchers have relied on the theory of generations for empirical analysis of tourist preferences for consumption behaviors and intergenerational differences. Most of them tackled the behaviors and preferences of tourists in two or three generations [6, 56–63]. In recent years, researchers from countries and regions like South Korea, the United States, and Taiwan have explored the intergenerational differences in the travel behaviors of strait tourists from Chinese mainland [4]. Nevertheless, the research results are not necessarily valid, because the researchers adopted the division rules for foreign generations and did not know much about the situation in Chinese mainland. In China, the studies on the generational behaviors of domestic tourism consumers mainly deal with the behavior differences between tourists born in the 1980s and 1990s [64, 65]; the differences in the impression of destinations between the tourism consumers born in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s [66]; and the description of the behavior differences between tourism consumers across generations [5, 67], female tourism consumers [68], domestic tourism consumers in scenic spots [69], and tourists searching for tourism information [70]. However, the sample sizes are relatively small, without many samples on the national scale.

3. Research Design

This paper designs a questionnaire survey based on hard laddering. All the questions were extracted from the literature and in-depth interviews (Table 1). In 2019, the authors

TABLE 1: The As, Cs, and Vs of traditional village tourists born in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Attributes (As)	Consequences (Cs)	Values (Vs)
A1, ancient architecture	C1, culinary experience	V1, inner harmony
A2, water system of traditional village	C2, harmony between man and nature	V2, satisfaction
A3, local delicacies	C3, gaining experience	V3, self-improvement
A4, environment of traditional village	C4, ecological protection	V4, sense of belonging
A5, local traditional culture	C5, spirit of workmanship	V5, wisdom
A6, engravings/couplets	C6, wisdom of the ancients	V6, sense of security
A7, lifestyle of residents	C7, cultural experience and inheritance	V7, beautiful world
A8, family tours	C8, picturesque landscape	V8, long-lasting life
A9, native products	C9, escaping from reality	V9, cleanness
A10, layout of traditional village	C10, idyllic life	V10, joy
A11, natural landscape around traditional village	C11, neatness	—
—	C12, beauty	—
—	C13, shopping experience	—
—	C14, novel experience	—
—	C15, lodging experience	—
—	C16, photo taking and sharing	—

The categories of “attribute, consequence, and value” are determined based on the first-hand data obtained from the soft-step progressive interview.

conducted a stratified sampling [71] on weijuan.com. Taking generation, gender, and residence as control variables, the questionnaire survey targets 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s tourists who had traveled to traditional villages in the previous 12 months. The occupation and education of the respondents were also taken into account. A total of 642 questionnaires were recovered, including 600 valid ones (Table 2).

The data analysis was carried out in four steps, as suggested by Reynolds and Olson [72], Gong [73], Kim et al. [74], and Richter and Bokelmann [75] for hard laddering. The correlation between attribute (A) and consequence (C) was obtained through questionnaire survey. The questionnaire is divided into three layers to design questions. First, visitors are asked to choose the attribute motivation of rural tourism, then to choose the possible results caused by the attribute motivation, and finally to choose the value motivation caused by the results. In the questionnaire, there is a blank item after each C_j item, and the respondents are asked to fill in the result caused by A_i (multiple choices can be made), so as to establish a connection. Firstly, the frequency of each attribute (A) motive, consequence (C) motive, and value (V) motive was counted, so it was with the number of consequence-value connections. Secondly, the As, Cs, and Vs were tabulated, and the frequency of A-C and C-V connections was quantified. We counted the occurrence times of A_i , C_j , and V_i in the questionnaire, respectively, to calculate the frequency. According to the results of the questionnaire, the frequency of the occurrence of A_i was marked as N_{A_i} , and then the number of the results C_j brought by A_i (the data obtained from the questionnaire) was counted and marked as n_{C_j} , so the quantitative relationship between A_i and C_j could be expressed as n_{C_j}/N_{A_i} . The quantitative relationship between C and V was similar to this. Thirdly, the cut-off point for analysis was determined based on the quantified data of A-C and C-V connections. Finally, the data above the cut-off point was plotted into a hierarchical value map (HVM) of MEC value chains. Each row of the HVM was analyzed, revealing the value preferences and intergenerational differences of traditional village tourists.

4. Results

According to the survey data, two interconnected matrices were set up for the A-C connections (Table 3) and C-V connections (Table 4) selected by these respondents, and the cut-off point of the analysis was set to 50% (any data greater than or equal to 49.5% were treated as equal to 50%). The data above the cut-off point of 50% were selected to build the HVM, forming MEC value chains (A-C-V). In the HVM, the connections between A, C, and V are shown in percentages, reflecting the proportion of tourists to each connection [75]. The percentages help to determine the important Cs and Vs [76]. According to the criteria of the 50% cutoff point, 75 or more of the 150 questionnaires selected attribute motivation to be marked, respectively, as follows: A4, traditional village environment atmosphere ($n = 101/67.3\%$); A5, local traditional culture ($n = 96/64.0\%$, 64.0%); A3, local characteristic food ($n = 95/63.3\%$, 63.3%) motivation; A1, attribute motivation of ancient building and B&B ($n = 88/58.7\%$, 58.7%); A10, pattern of traditional villages ($n = 76/50.7\%$, 50.7%).

4.1. MEC Value Chains of the Post-60s Traditional Village Tourists. A total of 150 post-60s tourists were surveyed. According to the survey data, two interconnected matrices were set up for the A-C connections (Table 3) and C-V connections (Table 4) selected by these respondents. The number of A-C connections (Table 5) and C-V connections (Table 6) being selected by the respondents was counted and used to prepare the HVM for the MEC value chains (A-C-V) of the post-60s tourists (Figure 1).

Based on 50% of the cut-off point to build hierarchical value map (HVM), six MEC value chains have been formed, including three attributes such as ancient building, local traditional culture, and local characteristics food; four consequences such as the wisdom of the ancients, spirit, culture and heritage, and dining experience; and four values such as wisdom, self-improvement, satisfaction, and happiness.

TABLE 2: Demographic statistics of respondents in traditional villages ($n = 600$).

Population information		Percentage
Gender	Male	52.0
	Female	48.0
Generation	Post-60s	25.0
	Post-70s	25.0
	Post-80s	25.0
	Post-90s	25.0
Education	Junior high school	2.0
	Senior high school or secondary technical/vocational school	19.0
	Undergraduate college/junior college	75.0
	Graduate school and above	4.0
Occupation	Civil servant	5.8
	Manager of enterprise/public institution	27.0
	Staff member/worker	40.2
	Self-employed	11.2
	Education/research/cultural practitioner	9.3
	Freelancer	4.0
	Student	1.5
	Others	1.0

TABLE 3: C motives of the post-60s traditional village tourists.

A-C	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	n
C1	—	—	65	—	—	—	—	2	18	—	—	85
C2	19	15	—	15	16	3	—	3	—	24	23	118
C3	34	25	37	23	39	23	17	10	9	24	10	251
C4	15	31	10	40	19	11	15	3	7	26	28	205
C5	54	18	—	21	18	25	9	3	2	17	6	173
C6	55	22	15	24	35	18	12	2	1	21	7	212
C7	30	17	28	34	48	19	31	5	8	31	12	263
C8	22	32	—	36	20	—	—	5	—	18	33	166
C9	11	11	—	—	17	13	11	3	—	—	7	73
C10	18	19	31	41	25	13	36	3	6	25	25	242
C11	16	13	23	30	17	13	18	3	5	9	13	160
C12	8	17	11	19	10	7	9	2	3	9	22	117
C13	—	—	12	12	—	—	8	3	22	—	—	114
C14	14	10	17	19	24	8	17	2	12	17	13	153
C15	8	5	—	10	10	3	16	1	3	13	—	138
C16	9	4	17	14	10	4	6	1	8	9	18	100

n is the number of connections. C_{ij} is the amount of C_j caused by A_i .

TABLE 4: V motives of the post-60s traditional village tourists.

C-V	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10
C1	25	60	—	—	9	10	—	—	—	41
C2	36	33	21	33	16	23	—	34	—	17
C3	22	52	58	30	46	27	42	24	—	23
C4	—	—	—	30	32	39	76	53	55	25
C5	21	39	53	24	57	—	39	27	—	10
C6	—	37	—	35	82	—	—	—	—	30
C7	—	—	75	57	62	33	—	—	—	41
C8	29	48	22	22	30	19	63	35	—	17
C9	26	26	—	28	—	29	—	—	—	17
C10	56	48	—	44	20	—	73	56	40	29
C11	—	42	—	—	—	33	—	—	70	—
C12	28	28	—	—	—	—	52	29	31	21
C13	11	32	—	19	—	—	—	—	12	23
C14	20	47	—	15	28	23	27	16	—	25
C15	14	27	—	16	—	32	—	—	18	11
C16	11	32	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	34
n	299	551	229	353	382	268	372	274	226	364

n shows the number of occurrences of C_i to V_j .

TABLE 5: A-C connections of the post-60s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

A-C	A1	A3	A5
C1	—	65/95 (68.4%)	—
C5	54/88 (61.4%)	—	—
C6	55/88 (62.5%)	—	—
C7	—	—	48/96 (50.6%)

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing an A (A_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that A (A_i) can produce a C (C_i).

TABLE 6: C-V connections of the post-60s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

C-V	V2	V3	V5	V10
C1	60/75 (80.0%)	—	—	41/75 (54.7%)
C5	—	53/104 (51.0%)	57/104 (54.8%)	—
C6	—	—	82/103 (79.6%)	—
C7	—	75/122 (61.5%)	62/12 (50.8%)	—

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing a C (C_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that C (C_i) can reflect a V (V_i).

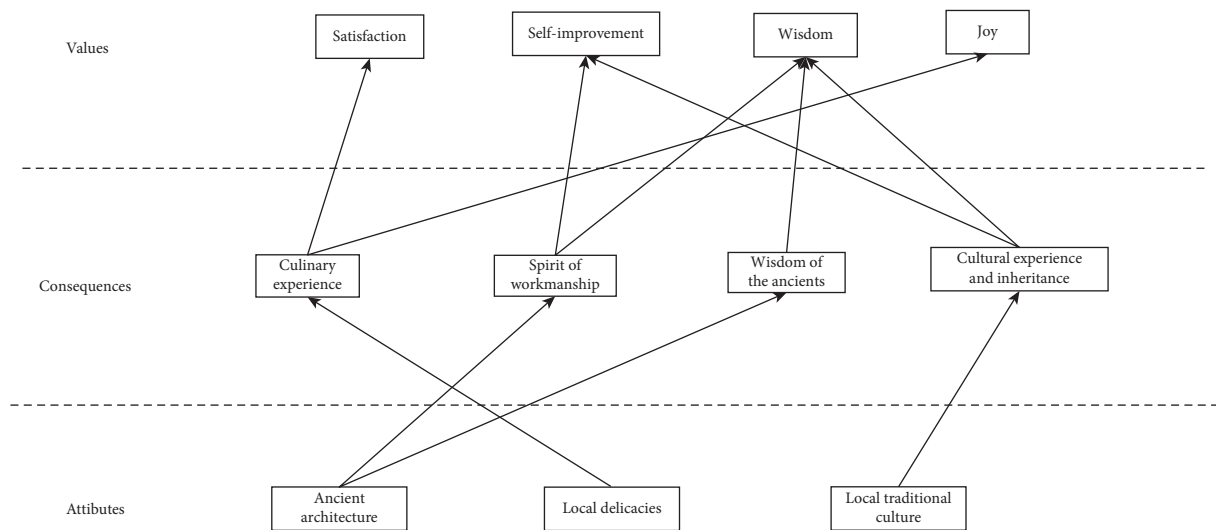


FIGURE 1: The HVM of the post-60s tourists to traditional villages (including correlated factors only) (cutoff point = 50%).

According to relevant literature, 50% cut-off point is used to construct HVM diagram, including two aspects: 1. If the total number of respondents choosing A, C, or V is less than 50% (i.e., 75 respondents), 50% is lower than the cut-off point. 2. The proportion of association relationship in A-C matrix, N_{Cj}/N_{Ai} is lower than 50%, and it is also lower than 50% of the cut-off point. The above two cases are not identified in the HVM diagram, and only the association relationship above 50% is listed in the HVM diagram to improve the typicality of MEC chain. For example, only A1, A3, A4, and A5 have more than 75 respondents selected for attribute A, so other attributes are not marked in the HVM diagram. The value of N_{Cj}/N_{Ai} greater than 50% is C1 (A3-C1), C5 (A1-C5), C6 (A1-C6), C7 (A5-C7). Other paths are not marked.

The V of job comes from the pursuit of the post-60s tourists for the A of local delicacies and the C of culinary experience. In traditional Chinese culture, food is the paramount necessity of the people. Since the beginning of the 21st century, gourmet tourism has become the main travel

motive for tourists [77, 78]. Tourists perceive the culture of destinations by experiencing food, which affects the travel experience [79]. Through the culinary experience of enjoying local delicacies, the post-60s tourists gain physical and psychological Vs like joy and satisfaction (local delicacies—culinary experience—satisfaction).

HVM results show that the V of wisdom stems from the pursuit of the post-60s tourists for spirit of workmanship, wisdom of the ancients, and cultural experience and inheritance. For those born in the 1960s, the traditional culture of rural tourism destinations can bring them cultural experience, and the ancient buildings can help them appreciate the craftsman spirit and the wisdom of the ancients, which are conducive to enhancing their cultural identity and acquiring more knowledge. The post-60s tourists are nurtured by traditional Chinese culture. Patriotism and heroism are their typical values [80]. Our findings are consistent with the literature. The nostalgic feelings encourage them to travel to traditional villages. Traveling through the ancient architecture, the tourists perceive the wisdom of the ancients in

planning and design and the spirit of workmanship exemplified by the builders. Such an experience satisfies their pursuit of the V of wisdom.

In addition, the post-80s tourists, like those born in the 1970s, realize the V of sense of belonging through the pursuit of the A of local traditional culture and the C of cultural experience, and inheritance exploration and learning are important motives for tourists [81]. Apart from the spirit of workmanship, the post-60s tourists learn the knowledge about traditional culture and ancient architecture and broaden their horizons [82–84]. In this way, they realize the V of self-improvement.

4.2. MEC Value Chains of the Post-70s Traditional Village Tourists. A total of 150 post-70s tourists were surveyed. According to the survey data, two interconnected matrices were set up for the A-C connections (Table 7) and C-V connections (Table 8) selected by these respondents. The number of A-C connections (Table 9) and C-V connections (Table 10) being selected by the respondents was counted and used to prepare the HVM for the MEC value chains (A-C-V) of the post-70s tourists (Figure 2).

It can be observed that the post-70s tourists pursue five As (ancient architecture, environment of traditional village, natural landscape around traditional village, local traditional culture, and local delicacies), six Cs (wisdom of the ancients, ecological protection, idyllic life, picturesque landscape, cultural experience and inheritance, and culinary experience), and seven Vs (wisdom, beautiful world, inner harmony, self-improvement, satisfaction, joy, and sense of belonging), which constitute eleven MEC value chains.

Like the post-60s tourists, the post-70s tourists realize the Vs of satisfaction and joy through the pursuit of the A of local delicacies and the C of culinary experience.

The V of wisdom stems from the pursuit of the post-70s tourists for the A of ancient architecture and the C of wisdom of the ancients. Going through the reform and opening-up, the post-70s tourists experienced the enrollment expansion of colleges and employment. Through diligent learning and hard work, these tourists achieved their goals of work, income, and life [85]. As a result, they generally believe in “knowledge can change your fate.” Meanwhile, the post-70s tourists are deeply influenced by traditional culture in society and family. Therefore, they pay more attention to the V of wisdom embodied in ancient architecture, during travel to traditional villages.

The V of self-improvement originates from the pursuit of the post-70s tourists for the A of local traditional culture and the C of cultural experience and inheritance. The Chinese education advocates “reading ten thousand books and traveling ten thousand miles.” Both reading and traveling are important for human development. Traveling can improve the capacity of the tourists [86] and sublimate the inner motives to higher needs, thereby promoting personal development [87]. The post-70s tourists believe that, through traditional village tourism, they can fully and deeply understand and recognize local traditional culture and customs, acquire new knowledge, broaden their

TABLE 7: C motives of the post-70s traditional village tourists.

A-C	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	<i>n</i>
C1	—	—	89	—	—	—	—	6	25	—	—	120
C2	24	27	—	26	19	9	—	2	—	27	34	168
C3	31	17	34	19	48	9	22	4	13	17	14	228
C4	22	29	18	54	24	6	13	3	5	20	39	233
C5	38	15	—	14	20	21	7	2	6	29	6	158
C6	50	23	16	22	35	23	19	3	8	31	11	241
C7	23	16	18	30	63	11	27	4	8	24	17	241
C8	15	23	—	40	18	—	—	2	—	12	58	168
C9	7	10	—	—	13	5	5	1	—	—	10	51
C10	19	30	34	50	28	3	34	4	14	22	44	282
C11	11	15	11	25	6	4	8	3	1	12	17	113
C12	8	17	9	19	10	9	6	1	5	10	26	120
C13	—	—	13	6	—	—	1	1	28	—	—	49
C14	15	13	29	12	29	4	26	5	12	16	8	169
C15	8	6	—	13	9	—	29	—	6	8	—	79
C16	10	11	23	15	15	2	7	1	14	13	21	132

n is the number of connections.

TABLE 8: V motives of the post-70s traditional village tourists.

C-V	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10
C1	34	78	—	—	17	16	—	—	—	56
C2	65	35	33	35	28	25	—	35	—	26
C3	33	49	69	29	37	17	37	20	—	26
C4	—	—	—	33	33	40	86	46	56	32
C5	23	27	48	23	58	—	31	30	—	16
C6	—	41	—	36	86	—	—	—	—	32
C7	—	—	74	61	57	28	—	—	—	42
C8	46	29	22	26	11	16	87	41	—	33
C9	21	11	—	16	—	13	—	—	—	13
C10	61	37	—	45	21	—	67	45	33	41
C11	—	34	—	—	—	27	—	—	50	—
C12	31	23	—	—	—	—	51	27	27	28
C13	17	25	—	10	—	—	—	—	8	24
C14	36	53	—	32	23	23	24	20	—	40
C15	21	28	—	24	—	22	—	—	27	18
C16	15	49	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	46
<i>n</i>	403	519	246	370	371	227	383	264	201	473

n is the number of connections.

horizons, and gain experience. In other words, travel to traditional villages both enriches their lives and increases their knowledge [82–84], thus helping them realize the V of self-improvement. At the same time, the post-70s tourists have a higher spiritual demand for traditional culture [88]. They personally feel the importance of inheriting local traditional culture to the development of the Chinese culture. This feeling results in the confidence in their culture, and a strong sense of belonging (local traditional culture—cultural experience and inheritance—sense of belonging).

The V of beautiful world derives from the post-70s tourists’ pursuit of the As of environment of traditional village and natural landscape around traditional village and the Cs of ecological protection, idyllic life, and picturesque landscape. In traditional Chinese culture, nature is the source of human life, and tourism bridges human and nature [89]. Besides, traditional Chinese philosophy emphasizes

TABLE 9: A-C connections of the post-70s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

A-C	A1	A3	A4	A5	A9	A11
C1	—	89/104 (85.6%)	—	—	—	—
C4	—	—	54/94 (57.4%)	—	—	—
C6	50/78 (64.1%)	—	—	—	—	—
C7	—	—	—	63/107 (58.9%)	—	—
C8	—	—	—	—	—	58/87 (66.7%)
C10	—	—	50/94 (53.2%)	—	—	44/87 (50.6%)

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing an A (A_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that A (A_i) can produce a C (C_i).

TABLE 10: C-V connections of the post-70s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

C-V	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V7	V10
C1	—	78/99 (78.8%)	—	—	—	—	56/99 (56.6%)
C4	—	—	—	—	—	86/116 (74.1%)	—
C5	—	—	—	—	58/101 (57.4%)	—	—
C6	—	—	—	—	86/109 (78.9%)	—	—
C7	—	—	74/118 (62.7%)	61/118 (51.7%)	—	—	—
C8	—	—	—	—	—	87/103 (84.5%)	—
C10	61/117 (52.1%)	—	—	—	—	67/117 (57.3%)	—

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing a C (C_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that C (C_i) can reflect a V (V_i).

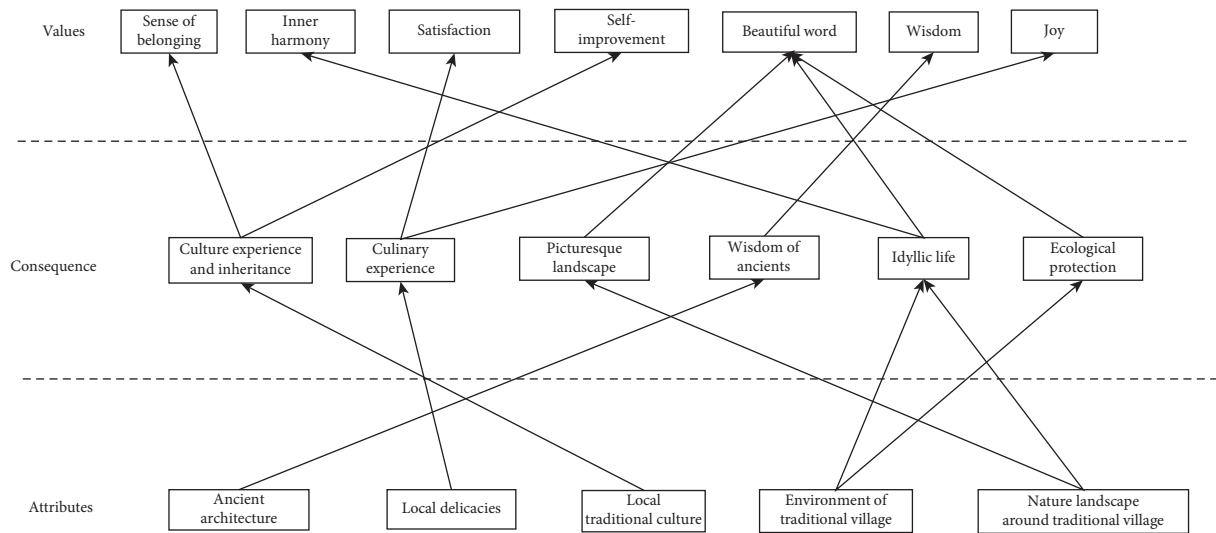


FIGURE 2: The HVM of the post-70s tourists to traditional villages (including correlated factors only) (cutoff point = 50%).

that the harmony between human and nature, human and society, and body and soul can promote spiritual cultivation [90]. The environment, surrounding natural landscape, and idyllic life of traditional villages reflect the philosophy of ecological protection and produce a beautiful environment with a picturesque landscape, which satisfies the appreciation and love of the post-70s tourists for human-nature harmony and beautiful sceneries, as well as their pursuit of a beautiful world [82, 83, 91, 92]. Traveling in such a picturesque landscape helps to cultivate their spirits.

Most post-70s tourists live in cities. They long to temporarily escape from the environment of daily life and work [93]. The tranquil environment (environment of traditional village—idyllic life—inner harmony) and natural landscape (natural landscape around traditional village—idyllic

life—inner harmony) of traditional villages can relieve the pressure of work and life [94] and ensure the harmony between human and nature [95], realizing the V of inner harmony.

4.3. MEC Value Chains of the Post-80s Traditional Village Tourists. A total of 150 post-80s tourists were surveyed. According to the survey data, two interconnected matrices were set up for the A-C connections (Table 11) and C-V connections (Table 12) selected by these respondents. The number of A-C connections (Table 13) and C-V connections (Table 14) being selected by the respondents was counted and used to prepare the HVM for the MEC value chains (A-C-V) of post-60s tourists (Figure 3).

TABLE 11: C motives of post-80s traditional village tourists.

A-C	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	<i>n</i>
C1	—	—	93	—	—	—	—	4	46	—	—	143
C2	37	23	—	29	17	10	—	3	—	18	32	169
C3	31	21	29	25	47	14	16	5	13	25	23	249
C4	30	38	15	54	21	2	23	5	9	17	47	261
C5	51	14	—	15	14	11	8	2	10	23	7	155
C6	40	25	16	21	41	15	16	3	8	23	13	221
C7	38	26	25	29	75	19	23	9	21	22	16	303
C8	18	28	—	42	17	—	—	5	—	14	49	173
C9	5	11	—	—	11	—	6	3	—	—	10	46
C10	21	27	31	57	24	4	42	6	16	18	40	286
C11	9	18	22	23	9	1	13	2	6	12	26	141
C12	15	20	16	27	11	2	10	4	5	8	36	154
C13	—	—	23	4	—	—	6	2	36	—	—	71
C14	23	13	28	11	20	2	16	10	16	9	11	159
C15	21	10	—	24	20	3	26	3	7	15	—	129
C16	23	12	44	24	11	7	9	5	16	15	29	195

n is the number of connections.

TABLE 12: V motives of post-80s traditional village tourists.

C-V	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10
C1	31	90	—	—	10	17	—	—	—	73
C2	60	25	29	41	19	20	—	31	—	36
C3	32	42	78	21	51	19	37	19	—	25
C4	—	—	—	34	22	37	85	53	53	30
C5	28	32	49	21	69	—	35	19	—	19
C6	—	30	—	50	96	—	—	—	—	30
C7	—	—	83	66	69	40	—	—	—	38
C8	61	37	22	22	14	26	88	37	—	48
C9	14	17	—	16	—	19	—	—	—	15
C10	54	62	—	55	15	—	84	51	26	50
C11	—	33	—	—	—	37	—	—	66	—
C12	38	27	—	—	—	—	69	30	35	35
C13	8	43	—	9	—	—	—	—	12	37
C14	21	51	—	20	27	23	35	21	—	43
C15	27	37	—	37	—	50	—	—	31	32
C16	25	66	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	70
<i>n</i>	399	592	261	392	392	288	433	261	223	581

n is the number of connections.

TABLE 13: A-C connections of post-80s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

A-C	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A11
C1	—	—	93/112 (83.0%)	—	—	—
C4	—	38/76 (50.0%)	—	54/102 (52.9%)	—	—
C5	51/93 (54.8%)	—	—	—	—	—
C7	—	—	—	—	75/113 (66.4%)	—
C8	—	—	—	—	—	49/84 (58.3%)
C10	—	—	—	57/102 (55.9%)	—	—

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing an A (A_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that A (A_i) can produce a C (C_i).

It can be observed that the post-80s tourists pursue six As (ancient architecture, local traditional culture, environment of traditional village, natural landscape around traditional village, water system of traditional village, and local delicacies), six Cs (spirit of workmanship, cultural experience and inheritance, ecological protection, idyllic life, picturesque landscape, and culinary experience), and seven Vs

(wisdom, beautiful world, inner harmony, self-improvement, satisfaction, joy, and sense of belonging), which constitute seven MEC value chains.

Like the post-60s and post-70s tourists, the post-80s tourists realize the Vs of satisfaction and joy through the pursuit of the A of local delicacies and the C of culinary experience.

TABLE 14: C-V connections of post-80s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

C-V	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V7	V10
C1	—	90/103 (87.4%)	—	—	—	—	73/103 (70.9%)
C4	—	—	—	—	—	85/121 (70.2%)	—
C5	—	—	—	—	69/107 (64.5%)	—	—
C7	—	—	83/130 (63.8%)	66/130 (50.8%)	69/130 (53.1%)	—	—
C8	61/111 (55.0%)	—	—	—	—	88/111 (79.3%)	—
C10	—	62/123 (50.4%)	—	—	—	84/123 (68.3%)	—

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing a C (C_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that C (C_i) can reflect a V (V_i).

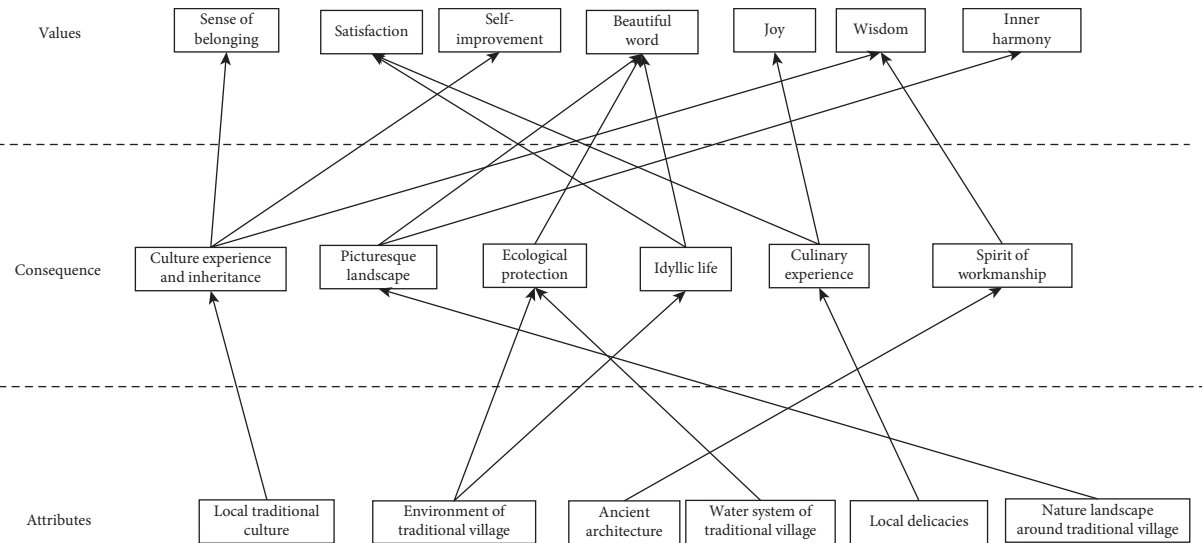


FIGURE 3: The HVM of post-80s tourists to traditional villages (including correlated factors only) (cutoff point = 50%).

The V of wisdom comes from the pursuit of the post-80s tourists for the As of ancient architecture and local traditional culture and the Cs of spirit of workmanship and cultural experience and inheritance. The post-80s tourists have the same Vs as the post-60s and post-70s tourists but differ from the latter in As and Cs.

The post-80s tourists achieved personal success through hard work and diligent learning [96]. Like the post-70s tourists, they believe that knowledge has the power to change one’s fate and are deeply influenced by traditional culture. During travel through traditional villages, the post-80s tourists highlight the V of wisdom reflected by the spirit of workmanship among the builders of ancient architecture and perceive the V of wisdom of the ancestors of the Chinese nation in the creation and inheritance of the traditional culture.

In addition, the post-80s and post-70s tourists both realize the value of “belonging” (V4) by pursuing the attribute of “local traditional culture” (A5) and the result of “cultural experience and inheritance” (C7). In other words, the post-80s and post-70s tourists share the same MEC value chain (A5→C7→V4). Similarly, tourists born in the 60s and 70s have realized the value of “self-improvement” (V3) by pursuing the attribute of “local traditional culture” (A5) and the result of “cultural experience and inheritance” (C7). The post-60s and post-70s share the same MEC value chain (A5→C7→V3).

The V of beautiful world stems from the post-80s tourists’ pursuit of the As of environment of traditional village, natural landscape around traditional village, and water system of traditional village, as well as the Cs of ecological protection, idyllic life, and picturesque landscape. In their views, the water system, environment, and surrounding natural landscape of traditional villages, plus the idyllic life of residents, protect the eco-environment and nurture a beautiful environment with picturesque landscape, providing them with the chance to realize the V of beautiful world [82, 83, 91, 92]. Hence, the post-80s tourists can cultivate their spirit by traveling to traditional villages.

The post-80s tourists share the same motive of escaping from daily routines as the post-70s tourists [93]. The environment of traditional village and natural landscape around traditional village (environment of traditional village—idyllic life—inner harmony; natural landscape around traditional village—picturesque landscape—inner harmony) set the stage for an idyllic life in the picturesque landscape, which relieves pressure [94] and realizes the V of inner harmony.

4.4. MEC Value Chains of the Post-90s Traditional Village Tourists. A total of 150 post-90s tourists were surveyed. According to the survey data, two interconnected matrices were set up for the A-C connections (Table 15) and C-V connections (Table 16) selected by these respondents. The

TABLE 15: C motives of post-90s traditional village tourists.

A-C	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	<i>n</i>
C1	—	—	96	—	—	—	—	1	40	—	—	137
C2	31	20	—	33	15	2	—	6	—	19	37	163
C3	37	20	31	31	47	9	30	5	12	23	16	261
C4	26	30	11	60	25	4	22	7	7	23	39	254
C5	48	12	—	22	24	7	12	4	7	32	8	176
C6	37	15	18	33	40	14	26	3	8	35	18	247
C7	37	31	23	35	65	8	31	11	12	26	19	298
C8	11	27	—	37	15	—	—	8	—	18	61	177
C9	6	7	—	—	15	1	10	6	—	—	9	54
C10	27	31	35	49	19	4	46	7	18	25	54	315
C11	15	15	24	33	14	3	21	4	11	14	18	172
C12	16	20	18	38	14	3	22	1	8	16	32	188
C13	—	—	18	13	—	—	8	6	32	—	—	77
C14	18	14	27	16	35	4	16	6	17	13	14	180
C15	22	11	—	20	12	2	24	3	5	10	—	109
C16	20	18	43	23	23	5	20	8	14	21	36	231

n is the number of connections.

TABLE 16: V motives of post-90s traditional village tourists.

C-V	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10
C1	31	88	—	—	18	15	—	—	—	69
C2	51	41	37	29	27	26	—	33	—	32
C3	39	62	81	27	52	34	34	17	—	33
C4	—	—	—	33	37	41	79	55	54	39
C5	31	34	53	28	75	—	28	20	—	20
C6	—	51	—	47	95	—	—	—	—	32
C7	—	—	95	61	73	42	—	—	—	51
C8	45	35	30	23	27	25	85	48	—	40
C9	23	16	—	21	—	22	—	—	—	16
C10	66	46	—	52	25	—	82	58	36	50
C11	—	50	—	—	—	47	—	—	62	—
C12	30	41	—	—	—	—	70	43	33	49
C13	19	38	—	16	—	—	—	—	14	35
C14	26	51	—	26	30	19	36	23	—	44
C15	25	33	—	31	—	33	—	—	32	35
C16	28	68	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	65
<i>n</i>	414	654	296	394	459	304	414	297	231	610

n is the number of connections.

number of A-C connections (Table 17) and C-V connections (Table 18) being selected by the respondents was counted and used to prepare the HVM for the MEC value chains (A-C-V) of post-90s tourists (Figure 4).

It can be observed that the post-90s tourists pursue six As (ancient architecture, local traditional culture, environment of traditional village, natural landscape around traditional village, lifestyle of residents, and local delicacies), six Cs (spirit of workmanship, cultural experience and inheritance, ecological protection, picturesque landscape, idyllic life, and culinary experience), and six Vs (wisdom, beautiful world, inner harmony, self-improvement, satisfaction, and joy), which constitute twelve MEC value chains.

Like the previous three generations, the post-90s tourists realize the Vs of satisfaction and joy through the pursuit of the A of local delicacies and the C of culinary experience.

Similar to the post-60s and post-80s tourists, the post-90s tourists achieve the V of wisdom through the search for

the As of ancient architecture and local traditional culture, as well as the Cs of spirit of workmanship and cultural experience and inheritance. These tourists are pragmatic, innovative, and aggressive [97, 98]. They are curious about the unknown and good at learning [99]. The ancient architecture embodies exquisite craftsmanship, superb technology, and wisdom of the ancestors of the Chinese nation in the creative culture. All these factors inspire the post-90s tourists to have a deeper understanding of the wisdom in the spirit of workmanship among ancient architecture builders and the wisdom of the ancestors. Moreover, the post-90s tourists can acquire knowledge through travel and realize the V of self-improvement (ancient architecture—spirit of workmanship—self-improvement; local traditional culture—cultural experience and inheritance—self-improvement).

For the post-90s tourists, the V of beautiful world originates from the As of environment of traditional village and natural landscape around traditional village and from

TABLE 17: A-C connections of post-90s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

A-C	A1	A3	A4	A5	A7	A11
C1	—	96/121 (85.7%)	—	—	—	—
C4	—	—	60/100 (60.0%)	—	—	—
C5	48/82 (58.5%)	—	—	—	—	—
C7	—	—	—	65/101 (64.4%)	—	—
C8	—	—	—	—	—	61/90 (61.8%)
C10	—	—	—	—	46/79 (58.2%)	54/90 (60.0%)

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing an A (A_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that A (A_i) can produce a C (C_i).

TABLE 18: C-V connections of post-90s traditional village tourists (cutoff point = 50%).

C-V	V1	V2	V3	V5	V7	V10
C1	—	88/101 (87.1%)	—	—	—	69/101 (68.3%)
C4	—	—	—	—	79/116 (68.1%)	39
C5	—	—	53/104 (51.0%)	75/90 (72.1%)	—	—
C7	—	—	95/132 (72.0%)	73/132 (55.3%)	—	—
C8	—	—	—	—	85/106 (80.2%)	—
C10	66/126 (52.4%)	—	—	—	82/126 (65.1%)	—

Percentage = n/N , where N is the total number of respondents recognizing a C (C_i) and n is the number of respondents agreeing that C (C_i) can reflect a V (V_i).

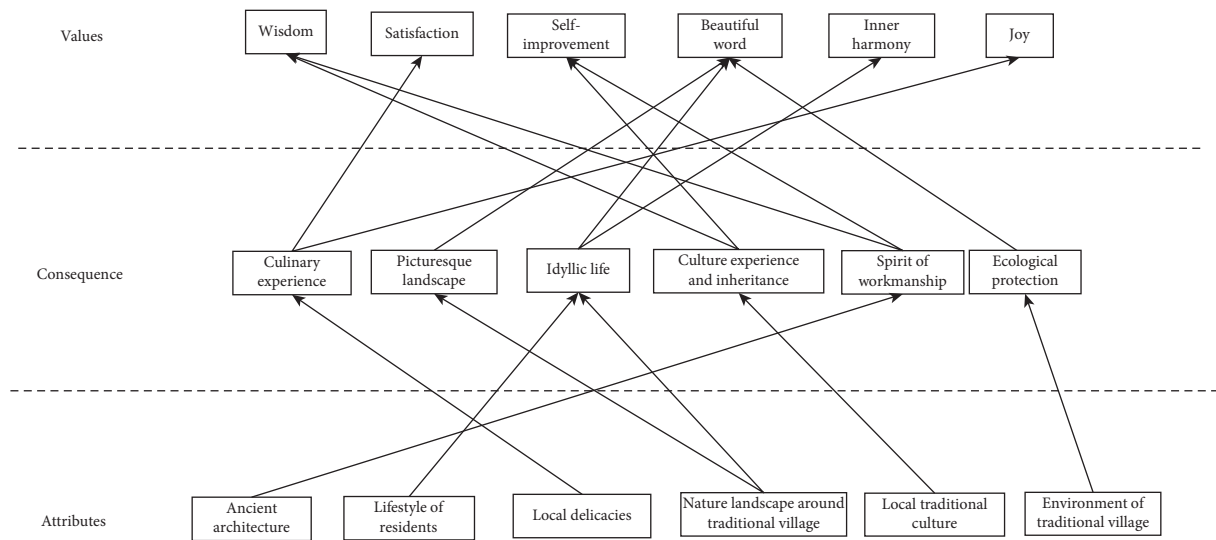


FIGURE 4: The HVM of post-90s tourists to traditional villages (including correlated factors only) (cutoff point = 50%).

TABLE 19: The MEC value chains of traditional village tourists.

	Attributes	Consequences	Values	60s	70s	80s	90s
MEC1	Ancient architecture	Wisdom of the ancients	Wisdom	✓	✓	—	—
MEC2	Ancient architecture	Spirit of workmanship	Wisdom	✓	—	✓	✓
MEC3	Local traditional culture	Cultural experience and inheritance	Wisdom	✓	—	✓	✓
MEC4	Environment of traditional village	Ecological protection	Beautiful world	—	✓	✓	✓
MEC5	Environment of traditional village	Idyllic life	Beautiful world	—	✓	✓	—
MEC6	Natural landscape around traditional village	Picturesque landscape	Beautiful world	—	✓	✓	✓
MEC7	Natural landscape around traditional village	Idyllic life	Beautiful world	—	✓	—	✓
MEC8	Water system of traditional village	Ecological protection	Beautiful world	—	—	✓	—
MEC9	Lifestyle of residents	Idyllic life	Beautiful world	—	—	—	✓
MEC10	Environment of traditional village	Idyllic life	Inner harmony	—	✓	✓	—
MEC11	Natural landscape around traditional village	Idyllic life	Inner harmony	—	✓	—	✓

TABLE 19: Continued.

Attributes		Consequences	Values	60s	70s	80s	90s
MEC12	Natural landscape around traditional village	Picturesque landscape	Inner harmony	—	—	✓	—
MEC13	Lifestyle of residents	Idyllic life	Inner harmony	—	—	—	✓
MEC14	Ancient architecture	Spirit of workmanship	Self-improvement	✓	—	—	✓
MEC15	Local traditional culture	Cultural experience and inheritance	Self-improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓
MEC16	Local delicacies	Culinary experience	Satisfaction	✓	✓	✓	✓
MEC17	Local delicacies	Culinary experience	Joy	✓	✓	✓	✓
MEC18	Local traditional culture	Cultural experience and inheritance	Sense of belonging	—	✓	✓	—

the Cs of ecological protection and picturesque landscape. These As and Cs are commonly pursued by the previous three generations. Besides, this V also stems from the A of idyllic life yearned by the post-70s tourists. Out of curiosity, the post-90s tourists choose to experience the lifestyle of residents in traditional villages and find that the idyllic lifestyle of “getting up at sunrise and going to bed at sunset” is exactly what they have imagined about a beautiful world (lifestyle of residents—idyllic life—beautiful world).

In the meantime, as the previous two generations, the post-90s tourists are eager to temporarily escape the environment of daily life and work [99] and have a taste for the rural lifestyle [100]. The surrounding natural environment of traditional villages and the lifestyle of residents jointly create a slow and idyllic life, which eases the tourists’ stress [94] and offers the V of inner harmony (lifestyle of residents—idyllic life—inner harmony; natural landscape around traditional village—idyllic life—inner harmony).

5. Conclusions and Discussion

5.1. Conclusions. According to the HVMs of traditional village tourists born in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, there are 36 MEC value chains of 18 classes for traditional village tourists (Table 19).

5.1.1. Intergenerational Preferences and Differences of Vs. The post-60s, post-70s, post-80s, and post-90s tourists pursue seven Vs, i.e., beautiful world, inner harmony, wisdom, self-improvement, satisfaction, joy, and sense of belonging. The four generations of tourists share the following MEC value chains: local delicacies—culinary experience—satisfaction (MEC16); local delicacies—culinary experience—joy (MEC17); local traditional culture—cultural experience and inheritance—self-improvement (MEC15). Therefore, satisfaction, self-improvement, and joy are the Vs commonly pursued by the four generations. Furthermore, the self-improvement realized through local traditional culture is a pursuit of culture, while the satisfaction and joy brought by local delicacies are Vs on spiritual level. The research results show that tourism can bring happiness, satisfaction, and self-improvement to tourists. This conclusion is applicable to the four generations from the post-60s to the post-90s, and there will be no difference in the values pursued by rural tourism due to generational differences.

The MEC value chains show that the post-60s tourists to traditional villages prefer the two Vs of wisdom and self-improvement; the post-70s and post-80s prefer the three Vs

of beautiful world, inner harmony, and sense of belonging. The post-90s tourists like all the Vs favored by the traditional village tourists of the previous three generations, a sign of the diversity and inclusiveness of the post-90s tourists [101].

5.1.2. Intergenerational Preferences and Differences of As. The post-60s, post-70s, post-80s, and post-90s tourists pursue seven As, i.e., ancient architecture, local delicacies, local traditional culture, environment of traditional village, natural landscape around traditional village, water system of traditional village, and lifestyle of residents. Specifically, ancient architecture refers to the ancient buildings and the homestays with local cultural features transformed from ancient architecture within the traditional villages; environment of traditional village refers to the atmosphere of human-nature harmony in traditional villages; natural landscape around traditional village refers to the natural landscape involving artificial or natural plants in the surroundings of traditional villages; lifestyle of residents refers to the slow and idyllic lifestyle of “getting up at sunrise and going to bed at sunset.”

Ancient architecture, local delicacies, and local traditional culture are the common As of the four generations of tourists. The post-80s tourists prefer the A of water system of traditional village; the post-90s tourists prefer the A of lifestyle of residents, reflecting their curiosity; the post-70s, post-80s, and post-90s tourists prefer the As of environment of traditional village and natural landscape around traditional village.

5.1.3. Intergenerational Preferences and Differences of Cs. The post-60s, post-70s, post-80s, and post-90s tourists to traditional villages have seven Cs: idyllic life, cultural experience and inheritance, culinary experience, picturesque landscape, ecological protection, spirit of workmanship, and wisdom of the ancients.

Among the seven Cs, culinary experience, and cultural experience and inheritance are shared by all four generations. The post-70s, post-80s, and post-90s tourists prefer three Cs, namely, ecological protection, picturesque landscape, and idyllic life. This is because they wish to temporarily leave the stressful environment of daily life and work [99] and take a rest in the slow and idyllic life with superior ecological conditions. The post-60s and post-70s tourists prefer the C of wisdom of the ancients. Deeply affected by traditional Chinese culture, these two generations are attracted by the wisdom of our ancestors crystallized in the

buildings, environment, and layout of traditional villages. The post-60s, post-80s, and post-90s prefer the spirit of workmanship among the builders of ancient architecture. Many ancient buildings in traditional villages are works of art, reflecting the Chinese culture and the craftsmanship of excellence. The research results show that tourists in these three ages will be motivated to explore the spirit of craftsmanship because of the ancient buildings in traditional villages.

According to the hierarchical value map (HVM) of tourists in traditional villages and the results of MEC chain research, we believe that the attributes of traditional villages produce the tourism consequence of traditional villages, and the tourism value of traditional villages is realized through the experience of the tourism consequence of villages. Meanwhile, the ultimate tourism value reflects the spiritual needs of tourists. It also affects the protection of traditional village attributes and their reuse in sustainable tourism development, so that attributes \rightarrow consequence \rightarrow value \rightarrow attributes form a cycle of mutual influence and interaction of the transmission of village protection and activation model. In this process, the attribute of traditional villages is the basis of tourism activation, and the tourism consequence of traditional villages is the guidance of tourism activation. The tourism value of traditional villages, which reflects tourists' tourism values and value pursuit, is the core of tourism activation. It is also an important factor affecting the sustainable development of traditional village tourism.

5.2. Discussion. This paper collects 600 samples of traditional village tourists across China and explores the tourism values behind the tourist behaviors through hard laddering. The main findings are as follows:

- (1) From value preferences, it can be learned that the post-60s traditional village tourists are a generation of wisdom-loving learners, the post-70s and 80s tourists are a generation of beauty lovers with a strong sense of belonging, and the post-90s tourists are a generation of inclusive advocators of diversity.
- (2) From the root and source, this paper summarizes the essence of the sustainable development of traditional villages: realizing the ultimate values of tourists, such as joy, wisdom, satisfaction, sense of belonging, self-improvement, inner harmony, and beautiful world, through careful protection of the following attributes of traditional villages: local delicacies, local traditional culture, ancient architecture, lifestyle of residents, environment of traditional village, and natural landscape around traditional village.
- (3) The MEC theory proved to be effective for the study of different types of tourists to traditional villages, the discovery of the value preferences and intergenerational differences of such tourists, and the accurate prediction of their intergenerational preferences, providing theoretical support and practical enlightenment to the product development and marketing of the niche markets of traditional village tourism.
- (4) The research results help to activate the traditional village tourism, adapt to the latest changes in the tourism market, and inherit and innovate the traditional culture of traditional villages. After experiencing the traditional culture, the tourists are very likely to spread the culture voluntarily. Besides, the tourists can affect the culture of traditional villages during travel. Through these pathways, it is possible to inherit and renovate the traditional culture in traditional villages, enhance the confidence in traditional culture, and promote rural revitalization.

The contribution of this research lies in the in-depth study of the value preferences and intergenerational differences of traditional village tourists born in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s and the subdivision of traditional village tourism market into different generations, providing theoretical support to and bridge the research gap of the product development for the niche markets of traditional village tourism.

Due to space limitations, this paper only analyzes the MEC value chains above the cut-off point (50%). The MEC value chains below that point were not considered. Besides, the authors did not deeply explore the relationship between the tourist values and the protection and activation of traditional villages. Adding the intergenerational values of traditional village tourists, the future work will try to establish a model for the protection and activation of traditional villages and to safeguard the key attributes or activities of traditional villages.

Finally, several suggestions were presented for the activation of traditional village tourism:

- (1) To revive the attributes and values of traditional villages, it is necessary to marketize the tourist values of traditional villages like satisfaction, self-improvement, wisdom, and joy, which are the results of ancient architecture, local delicacies, environment of traditional village, and local traditional culture.
- (2) The following attributes of traditional villages should be protected with special care: local delicacies, local traditional culture, ancient architecture, lifestyle of residents, environment of traditional village, and natural landscape around traditional village.
- (3) Considering the MEC value chains of post-60s, post-70s, post-80s, and post-90s tourists, it is important to design tourism products meeting the market needs of different generations, making the tourism products of traditional villages livelier.
- (4) It is necessary to establish a government-led, villager-dominated, and market-driven mechanism to activate the traditional villages. Under the mechanism, it would be possible to develop new tourism businesses and products for traditional villages, carry out marketization targeted at specific groups of tourists, and improve the service level, laying the basis for rural revitalization and sustainable development of traditional villages.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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