

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

## Journal of Destination Marketing &amp; Management

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm)

## From farmland to city-land: Dissecting leisure travel experience of Chinese urban re-settlers

Xiaoxiao Fu<sup>a,\*</sup>, Xinran Y. Lehto<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, USA

<sup>b</sup> School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University, USA

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Destination experience  
Motivation  
Activity  
Resettlement  
Farmers  
China

### ABSTRACT

This study brings attention to a neglected traveler segment, i.e. the rural-to-urban resettlers. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study examines important elements of their leisure travel experience, including destination activity participation, leisure travel motivations, motivation-activity linkages, and sense making of travel in relation to life changes. The unique psychological and behavioral characteristics of this traveler segment are thereby revealed. The findings are discussed in relation to life transitions and lifestyle changes caused by displacement and resettlement. As an initial report of Chinese urban resettled farmers' destination experiences, this study has conceptual, practical, and policy-related implications.

### 1. Introduction

The urbanization led by farmland requisition is a prevailing phenomenon in emerging economies (Xu, Tang, & Chan, 2011). Since 1980, an estimated 100–200 million people across the globe have been resettled due to development-induced displacement (Agrawal & Redford, 2009). The change of rural land use caused the removal of villages and resettlement of farmers into cities. Due to the urban-rural division in developing countries, the resettlement of rural communities is usually more than a change of physical place. It entails adjustments of economic, social, and cultural status (Xu et al., 2011). The urban settings introduce the resettled farmers to a new way of life with access to more economic, developmental, and recreational opportunities (Xue, Kerstetter, & Buzinder, 2015). Because of their new residential situation and non-farming work schedule, the resettlers are willing to embrace an urban-based lifestyle that is more aligned with their updated socioeconomic status (Xu et al., 2011). Learning the urban lifestyle has been considered a ticket to inclusion, and one means to do it is through common experiences in the leisure sphere (Anonymous, 2013). However, little is known about how lifestyle, self-identity, and other psychological aspects of displaced farmers may have been affected by life changes. Particularly, there has been a lack of research on this group's leisure experience, vacation behavior, or general wellbeing; although leisure and tourism is deemed important mechanisms for overcoming pressure, facilitating life transitions, and improving life quality (Iwasaki & Smale, 1998). The resettled population deserves particular scholarly attention because of the transforma-

tions of social status and lifestyle as a result of relocation. Given this background, this research aims to bring attention to resettled farmers: a neglected social group in tourism literature.

The study is set in the context of China, an emerging market where resettlement is a significant, ongoing phenomenon. Since the implementation of market-oriented economic reform in 1978, China has experienced rapid urban expansion (Xu et al., 2011). In 1978, China's urbanization rate was 17.9%, with 170 million urban residents, whereas in 2014, the urbanization rate rose to 54.77%, with 750 million urban population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2015). By 2025, the government expects to fully integrate 70% of China's population, or roughly 900 million people, into city living (Johnson, 2013). With the resettlement of numerous Chinese rural residents to the urban area, empirical evidence of their life situation and lifestyle is needed. Unlike the limited current literature (e.g. Xue et al., 2015), the intent of the current study is not to describe the general impacts of tourism development on resettlers. Rather, it aims to explore resettled farmers' leisure travel experience and how their travel characteristics correspond to the broader context of changed life situations and lifestyles. The five study objectives are: (1) to understand their motivations for leisure travel experiences; (2) to examine whether/how destination activities facilitate personal needs and interests; (3) to develop a classification of urban resettlers based on their destination activity tendencies; (4) to explore how these groups differ in trip outcomes (trip satisfaction and subjective well-being after resettlement); and (5) to develop a contextual understanding of how resettlers construct the meaning of their travels in the context of resettlement life

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [Xiaoxiao.Fu@ucf.edu](mailto:Xiaoxiao.Fu@ucf.edu) (X. Fu), [xinran@purdue.edu](mailto:xinran@purdue.edu) (X.Y. Lehto).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.12.002>

Received 12 August 2016; Received in revised form 5 December 2016; Accepted 7 December 2016  
2212-571X/© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

situation. The outcome of this research could provide an insightful interpretation of the specificities of this group's leisure vacation experience during their transition to urban life. Given the scale of urbanization in transitional China, such knowledge would enrich the understanding of this segment and facilitate service provision and public policy-making.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Urban resettlement in China

In transitional China, due to drastic urban-rural division that generates disparity in nearly all aspects of life, the urbanization process of rural villages through state-led farmland requisition has inevitably led to transformation of physical, economic, social, cultural, and other profiles. In a study that examined the impact of urbanization on resettled farmers in suburban Shanghai, [Xu, Li, and Jiao \(2015\)](#) identified four major changes, including a shift in residence from farmhouses to urban apartments, a shift in household registration identity from peasantry to urbanites, a shift in occupation from farming to non-farming jobs, and a shift in resident structure from single village to multiple sources. These findings showed that transformation is not only about relocation of a rural population into urban setting but also changes in lifestyle ([Friedmann, 2006](#)).

The main effects of urbanization include household registration status, resettlement housing, and urban social security provision ([Xu et al., 2011, 2015](#)). As compensation for having their land requisitioned, Chinese farmers were given one or more apartments in urban districts and their household registration status was switched from agricultural to non-agricultural. Also, they were included in urban security system and their social welfare fund was paid by the local government. Such policies provided them with benefits parallel to those with an urban identity such as medical insurance, old-age pension, and employment opportunities ([Xu et al., 2015](#)). Displaced farmers could receive a monthly subsistence pension when they reached retirement age. This arrangement allowed them, especially the elderly, to have more free time and less uncertainty ([Xu et al., 2015](#)).

As a result of the farmland requisition for urban use, many former farmers in China engage in various types of non-farming work. Such new ways of life are considered more appropriate to their new employment status ([Xu et al., 2011](#)). Non-agricultural jobs, which in nature allow for a more fixed work schedule, replaced the farm-centered production. Accordingly, the former farmers establish a relatively more structured life routine, which differentiates work days from off-duty time. Due to such changes, previous village-related traditions were gradually dissolved and urban-based lifestyles were adopted. Drastic changes occur in farmers' social networks, too. As [Liepins \(2000\)](#) remarked, for social contacts to occur, a certain physical setting and a certain social structure is needed. Therefore, any change in the two parameters is bound to lead to the changes of one's social contacts. The study of [Xu et al. \(2015\)](#) showed that the widespread farming-related linkages were no longer the basic units of resettled Chinese farmers' social networks; instead, new social ties were formed with family and household labor division as the basis, such as those among neighbors and workmates.

Despite the fact that the resettled farmers engage in non-agricultural jobs and reorient themselves to urban lifestyles, they are 'neither fully rural nor urban' ([Xu et al., 2011](#), p. 63). While the farmers start to embrace modern mannerisms, urban customs, and lifestyles, they may embody transitional or even conflicting modes of self-identity, attitudes, and beliefs. The mixture of rural and urban characteristics may produce unique social and psychological manifestations, which warrant research attention. One unique change as result of resettlement happens in the leisure sphere. Propelled by improved living condition and new work-life division, the resettled farmers have increasingly resorted to leisure as a means of enhancing their life quality and wellbeing ([Xu](#)

[et al., 2011, 2015](#)). Although this resettled population is quickly becoming a substantial social group in China, an understanding of their consumptive experience in leisure and tourism has yet to be fully established.

### 2.2. Destination activities

Crystallizing the interaction between consumers and the service environment, activity is the core component of consumer experience. Activities pursued within a travel destination, as important consumptive behavior, can be linked to benefits that people seek ([Tkaczynski & Prebensen, 2012](#)). Previous studies have found market segmentation based on activities to be a superior approach to geographic or demographic segmentation in understanding the nature of tourists and their behavior ([Mehmetoglu, 2007](#)). By uncovering specialized consumer needs, patterns, and preferences, activity-based segmentation provides a more meaningful segmentation solution. This is especially helpful for businesses aiming to tap into new markets, as activities are directly related to destination attributes and consumer preferences ([Moscardo, Pearce, & Morrison, 2001](#)). Activity participation also plays an important role in a traveler's overall trip satisfaction ([Kim, Sun, & Mahoney, 2008](#)) and can serve as a mechanism through which needs are satisfied and quality of life is enhanced ([Iwasaki, 2007](#)). It is then reasonable to assume that gratification of needs and the satisfaction with a leisure trip would be different across participants, due to the varied nature of activity participation ([Brajša-Žganec, Merkaš, & Šverko, 2011](#)). This proposition however remains under-addressed in tourism research.

In China, individuals have increasingly chosen leisure and tourism as a means to enhance their quality of life. However, it worth noting that stark differences exist in leisure style between rural and urban population. In a study that explored the urban-rural differences in Chinese older adults' leisure life, [Su, Shen, and Wei \(2006\)](#) found that urban respondents tended to participate in activities of personal interest, such as attending senior school and recreation, while their rural counterparts chose to do housework, take care of grandchildren, or simply be idle. Traveling was selected as the favorite activity during free time by the urban samples, whereas playing with children and chatting with relatives and neighbors were the top leisure activities among rural residents. Compared to urban residents, rural respondents rated low in three aspects of their leisure life: availability of recreational facilities, sense of security, and satisfaction of leisure life. They felt highly insecure and unsure about life. The rural-urban contrast is largely due to the deeply rooted dichotomous societal structure in China. It is thus reasonable to presume that with resettlement to cities, inclusion in the household registration system, and other before-mentioned changes, the former farmers would exhibit new characteristics in their leisure participation. In fact, acclimatizing to their new life style, Chinese resettled farmers have increasingly adopted activities of a urban nature, such as square dancing, singing, and interest clubs ([Xu et al., 2011](#)). Even so, knowledge of resettled farmers' leisure engagement is far from sufficient, although considerable literature has documented the benefits of leisure and tourism activities in helping people cope with life transitions, alleviating the negative effects of life stress, engendering positive changes, and promoting psychological wellbeing (e.g. [Iwasaki & Smale, 1998](#)). This study intends to address what resettlers do during leisure travel and how homogenous they are in activity participation. Since activity assumes a central role in a travel experience, knowledge related to activity patterns can shed light on the design of favorable destination experiences ([Tkaczynski & Prebensen, 2012](#)).

### 2.3. Psychological drivers and activity participation

Motivation explains why tourists vacation in the ways they choose ([Fodness, 1994](#)). Differences in motivation may lead to differences in

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7419504>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7419504>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)