

A Review of Research on Rural Travel-oriented Elderly Care Communities

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Abstract: Domestic research has expanded from a single residential function to an ecosystem that integrates medical care and elderly care, is empowered by intelligence, and features multi-party collaboration. This not only responds to the demands of an aging society but also provides theoretical support for policy-making and practical innovation. In the future, it is necessary to further explore the ethical boundaries of technology, deepen the balanced allocation of urban and rural resources, and promote the high-quality and sustainable development of elderly care communities. Research on community-based home elderly care services has undergone an evolution process from concept exploration to practical optimization and then to intelligent and diversified development. The rural-type travel and residence elderly care community is an innovative elderly care model that combines social value and economic benefits. Its characteristics are reflected in the diversity of resources and functions, the specificity of the residents, the rural features of space and environment, the exploratory and innovative development model, as well as the duality of social and economic value.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research History of Elderly Care Communities Abroad

The institutional roots of elderly care services abroad can be traced back to the nascent welfare state in Europe. The development of elderly care communities in the United States can be divided into two parts: medical care and community services. The medical care and elderly care services provided by professional institutions and the community services provided by non-professional institutions, with the assistance of volunteers, complement and improve each other. Among them, professional institutions include the Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). The Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) model and the Sun City retirement Community in the United States. Community elderly care services in the UK began after World War II and are closely related to the UK's non-hospitalization movement. Community care in the UK is mainly divided into two types: "care within the community" and "care by the community". The former is care provided by informal institutions outside of hospitals, aiming to help the elderly who are accustomed to professional medical care return to normal community life. The latter is an evolution of the former, emphasizing the realization of elderly care services free from government intervention through blood ties or morality. The elderly care communities in the UK are centered around "community care", providing daily care, medical services and psychological support for the elderly through a social service system led by local governments. As an industrialized country,

Japan is facing the most severe aging situation. This rapid aging trend has brought huge pressure to Japan's medical security system, prompting it to pay more attention to the issue of elderly care. Community elderly care services in Japan are composed of main volunteer organizations, non-profit organizations, social welfare associations, etc. The content of community elderly care services in Japan is rich, including: day care services, home visit services, and long-term and short-term services. The elderly care communities in Sweden are characterized by a "welfare state + autonomous body" model. The government provides comprehensive services for the elderly through a well-developed social security system. The core concept of Dutch Life Apartment is "Self-care and autonomy", focusing on meeting the individualized needs of the elderly and maximizing their quality of life. Canadian elderly care communities emphasize community support and social participation, providing diverse support for the elderly through non-profit organizations and volunteer services.

1.2. Domestic Research History of Elderly Care Communities

With the intensification of social aging, community-based elderly care, as a new model of elderly care, has received extensive attention from the academic community. The following is a summary of the research focuses of the three time periods to clarify the phased characteristics and development context of community-based home care services research. From 2005 to 2010, research mainly focused on the definition of the concept of community elderly care services, the construction of theoretical frameworks, and the exploration of fundamental issues. Researchers are attempting to lay the foundation for this emerging model at the theoretical level. Early research was dedicated to clarifying the core concepts of community elderly care services. For instance, Zhang Qiling proposed that community-based elderly care refers to a model of elderly care that takes the community as the carrier and, through the collaborative efforts of families, community organizations and social resources, provides comprehensive services such as daily care, medical care and spiritual comfort for the elderly [1]. Similarly, Wen Xiaofeng emphasized its characteristics of being "people-oriented" and "convenient for home use". The period from 2005 to 2010 was the stage when the theoretical system of community elderly care services was initially formed [2]. Tian Tian proposed the "Trinity Theory of community-based Home Care Services for the Elderly", namely the integration of service resources, community participation mechanisms and policy guarantee systems. Sun Zeyu, starting from the theory of social support, constructed an elderly care service network model centered on family support, community support and social support [12]. Xu Zhiwen's research shows that the community-based elderly care model has significant advantages in improving the quality of life of the elderly, but it also faces problems such as insufficient service supply and shortage of funds [3]. From 2010 to 2015, research gradually shifted from theoretical exploration to the practical level, with a focus on the demand analysis of community elderly care services, the evaluation of service quality, and the exploration of optimization paths. Li Xuebin systematically explored the current demand situation of urban elderly people for community elderly care services, proposed measurement indicators of demand, and found that demand is closely related to factors such as economic conditions and health status [4]. Chen Junyu further refined and proposed the hierarchical division of demands, including basic demands, development demands and differentiated demands. At this stage, researchers began to focus on the quality of community elderly care services and its influencing factors [5]. Hou Bing constructed a service quality evaluation model and proposed three core dimensions of service: accessibility, reliability and satisfaction [6]. Sun Jiao, through on-site research, found that the quality of service is significantly influenced by factors such as policy support, professional talent reserves, and community resource allocation. The period from 2010 to 2015 also witnessed the

initial innovation of the community-based home care service model for the elderly. Zhang Jianying proposed the concept of "community-embedded elderly care", emphasizing the improvement of the convenience and accessibility of elderly care services through the reconstruction of community space and the integration of service resources [7]. From 2015 to 2025, research will be further deepened, and community elderly care services will enter a stage of intelligent, diversified and systematic development, with a focus on the application of smart technologies, the optimization of service systems, and the improvement of policy guarantee mechanisms [8]. With the development of information technology, smart community elderly care has become a research hotspot. Liu Xia further explored the realization path of smart elderly care, including the popularization of intelligent devices, Huang Jiahao proposed that the core of integrating medical care and elderly care lies in providing comprehensive health management services through the integration of medical resources and elderly carer esources 错误!未找到引用源。 [9]. Li Xuebin further emphasized that the medical and elderly care integration model can effectively reduce medical costs and improve the health level of the elderly. The research at this stage also focuses on policy optimization and innovation in governance models 错误!未找到引用源。 . Governance system is the key to promoting community-based home care services for the elderly, among which government leadership, market participation and community collaboration are its core elements. Li Hui, from the perspective of policy design, proposed the necessity of strengthening the construction of laws and regulations, improving the fiscal support system and optimizing the regulatory mechanism [10]. Researchers have also begun to pay attention to the diversification of services and the drawing on international experience. Wang Qiong proposed that community-based home care services for the elderly should focus on personalization and differentiation to meet the needs of different groups [11]. In addition, Zhang Liya summarized the advanced experiences of Europe, America and Japan, especially in the market-oriented operation of community elderly care services, the integration of social capital and the application of technology, providing important inspirations for China [13].

2. Relevant Research on Rural Travel-Oriented Elderly Care Communities

2.1. The Concept of Rural travel-oriented Elderly Care Communities

In China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), a search with the keywords "rural travel and residence" and "elderly care community" yields a total of 4 related articles. The data is up to June 14, 2025. In his research on "Planning for New Rural Elderly Care Communities", Bian Guorui summarized domestic and international elderly care research and rural elderly care planning from different disciplinary perspectives. New rural elderly care communities are based on "shared farmhouses", "smart elderly care", "integration of medical care and elderly care", and "inclusive elderly care", and in combination with the background of rural revitalization, villages are selected as the construction carriers. A new development path proposed. It features proximity to cities, beautiful scenery, pleasant environment, suitability for the elderly to live in, convenient transportation, well-connected clusters, complete village infrastructure, good medical equipment allocation and high medical standards [14]. Zheng Yanping pointed out in "The Development Model of Traditional Village Travel and Residence for Elderly Care: Connotation, Problems and Countermeasures" that traditional village travel and residence for elderly care refers to the elderly choosing to leave their original living places and move to traditional villages with excellent ecological conditions in pursuit of a healthier and more comfortable elderly life, engaging in comprehensive activities that combine tourism, residence and elderly care. The main features of this model include: Firstly, the service targets are mainly elderly people aged 55 and above who have the ability to take care of themselves. Secondly, the long duration of residence and the slow pace of

life allow travelers ample time to enjoy the natural scenery of the countryside, experience rural life, and participate in agricultural activities without frequently moving between numerous scenic spots. In addition, with a relatively low consumption level, the elderly, while pursuing a high quality of life, pay more attention to practicality and comfort. They can obtain fresh agricultural products at a lower cost to meet their basic living needs [15]. Long Teng and Li Zheng pointed out in their research "Research on the Construction of Rural Travel-style Elderly Care Communities from the Perspective of Community Building" that the rural travel-style elderly care community model is located in the rural areas near the city, with beautiful natural resources and high-quality elderly care resources. It is composed of elderly people of different ages and physical conditions but with a common aspiration for a better elderly life. And a social relationship type community established under a professional management mechanism [16]. Liu Changping and Wang Lianjie pointed out that the community-based travel and residence elderly care model is an elderly care model that combines the elderly care industry and real estate, and has gradually become a major trend in the development of China's real estate market in recent years. Community-based travel and residence elderly care, by building a variety of business forms including elderly residential areas, elderly universities, shopping centers, hotels and hospitals, combines "sales of elderly care residences, holding and operation of elderly care real estate, and comprehensive commercial leasing" to form a complete industrial chain, thereby providing diverse elderly care services for the elderly group. Lang Fuping's definition of a rural travel and residence elderly care community: An elderly care community with seasonal characteristics, which is based on the travel and residence elderly care model and built relying on characteristic resources such as rural ecological tourism [17].

In conclusion, this article defines a rural travel-oriented elderly care community as a new type of community model that takes travel and elderly care as its core, relies on high-quality rural ecological resources and traditional culture, and integrates elderly care, tourism and health care. This model mainly serves the elderly aged 55 and above, who have strong self-care abilities and pursue a high-quality life in their old age, aiming to meet their multi-level needs in terms of residence, leisure and elderly care services. It helps the elderly achieve physical and mental recovery, spiritual comfort and self-actualization by providing a beautiful natural environment, a profound humanistic atmosphere, convenient transportation conditions and complete infrastructure.

2.2. The Needs of the Elderly in Rural-type travel and Elderly Care Communities

Ding Xiong and Wang Yizhuo pointed out in their research "Research on the Innovation and Design of Community-based Embedded Health and Wellness Travel and Residence Service Models" that seeking new social circles, gaining social recognition, and realizing self-worth have become the new core demands of the elderly group. As a result, their consumption concepts have undergone fundamental changes. On this basis, they explored a new model that combines travel and residence elderly care with community-based embedded health and wellness. By integrating health and wellness travel and residence services, community life services, and community medical and elderly care services, and through modules such as interest role experience, folk culture, and health-preserving cuisine, the goal is to meet the physiological and psychological needs of the emerging elderly group, which focus on health preservation, pursue a high quality of life, seek circle recognition, and shape self-worth [18]. Pan Bin and He Junyi conducted questionnaire surveys and interviews to understand the awareness and demand of urban elderly people and rural villagers for rural travel and residence for elderly care. The main demands for elderly care facilities in cities are: Medical facilities, living service supporting facilities, transportation facilities, sanitation facilities, and leisure and entertainment facilities. The main demands of urban elderly people for elderly care in rural areas are: It features beautiful mountain and water scenery, good air

quality, complete service facilities, reasonable economic consumption and a superior geographical location. Through on-site research, the villagers' willingness and the current situation of public service facilities in two villages in southern Jiangsu were analyzed. Research has found that in the development of rural tourism and elderly care in the southern part of Jiangsu Province, there are still three problems of rural elderly-friendly living: the lack of rural medical facilities and elderly care service facilities, inconvenience in daily life such as transportation and shopping, and the dullness and disturbance of life [19]. Li Li and Chen Xuejun pointed out in their research "Research on the Composition System and Development Driving Mechanism of the Tourism Elderly Care Industry" that in terms of psychological needs, the elderly pursue communication and exchange, spiritual comfort, self-cultivation and the realization of value, etc. The traditional ways of elderly care can no longer effectively meet the growing elderly care needs of the elderly. However, tourism-based elderly care effectively caters to the physical and psychological needs of the elderly in the new era and has become a new type of elderly care method favored by the market. Tourism-based elderly care, on the one hand, provides services such as sightseeing, leisure and entertainment, learning and seeking knowledge, fitness and health preservation, and medical care for the elderly, fully meeting their high-quality physiological needs. On the other hand, tourism-based elderly care has established a platform for social activities, providing services such as social interaction, emotional communication, spiritual comfort, and value realization for the elderly, meeting their diverse spiritual needs. For this reason, tourism-based elderly care simultaneously meets the tourism and elderly care consumption demands of the elderly, and has become an important elderly care method favored by the elderly [20].

Chen CAI pointed out in his "Research on the Evaluation Index System of Travel and Elderly Care Communities in Hainan Province" that the demand for travel and elderly care mainly includes three levels: residential demand, leisure demand and elderly care service demand. In terms of housing needs, travel and residence for the elderly should meet the demands for housing and the environment. The demand for housing has relatively high requirements for health and safety. The environmental requirements are mainly manifested as low-density accommodation and a sense of home. At the same time, there are also requirements for the environment of the residential community: far from the urban area, quiet and comfortable, and beautiful. In terms of leisure needs, the leisure activities of the elderly can roughly be divided into three categories: The first is physical leisure activities, such as walking and brisk walking; The second type is intellectual and enjoyable leisure activities, such as playing chess and fishing. The third category is social leisure activities, such as volunteer services and group activities. The demand for elderly care services involves a variety of services. In terms of medical and health care services, it requires emergency medical institutions and complete medical facilities. In terms of public service facilities, it is required that there be consultation service facilities and additional supporting facilities for the elderly to engage in outdoor activities. In terms of transportation conditions, it is required that public transportation be convenient and the locations of bus stops be appropriate [21].

As people age, the elderly may experience a series of complex psychological changes, mainly manifested as feelings of loss, loneliness and a lack of security. The emergence of these negative emotions is often closely related to factors such as social role transformation, physiological function decline and reduced social interaction. In addition, the reduction in social interaction and the decline in physical functions have also exacerbated the loneliness experience of the elderly and led to a significant increase in their need for safety. In terms of psychological needs, the elderly mainly show demands for a sense of belonging, social interaction, interest cultivation and a lively environment. The need for a sense of belonging is reflected in their hope to gain recognition and a sense of integration through communication with peers, in order to alleviate feelings of loneliness. Social needs, on the other hand, are manifested in the hope of establishing recognized social

relationships through communication with others and reducing the experience of loneliness. The demand for hobbies and interests is manifested as enriching life content and promoting physical and mental health by participating in various activities. At the same time, the elderly tend to prefer lively places to relieve their sense of loneliness and enhance the joy of life. Intensified emotional fluctuations are another notable psychological characteristic. As people age, the emotional stability of the elderly gradually decreases. Facing difficulties and challenges in life, they are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness, helplessness and desolation. The intensification of such emotional fluctuations is usually related to factors such as children's busy work, scattered living quarters or the death of a partner. Especially for elderly people living alone, due to the lack of company and communication from family members, their social circles gradually shrink, leading to an increasingly intense sense of loneliness. Rural-type travel and elderly care communities can effectively alleviate the sense of loneliness of the elderly and stabilize their emotional state by organizing cultural activities and promoting social interaction. Anxiety caused by the decline of physical functions is another important psychological characteristic of the elderly. As people age, the decline in physical functions can cause the elderly to feel tired and uncomfortable, which not only affects their quality of life but also triggers anxiety about the future. The deterioration of their physical condition may also limit their social activities and family life, such as reducing the opportunities to travel or participate in group activities. This increase in anxiety further intensifies the psychological pressure and emotional distress of the elderly. Rural travel-oriented elderly care communities, as an emerging elderly care model, combine the advantages of natural environment and cultural resources, providing the elderly with a unique living experience. Such communities are usually located in areas with excellent ecological environments, such as mountainous areas, lake areas or rural landscape regions, featuring fresh air, beautiful natural scenery and a peaceful living environment. The elderly can get away from the hustle and bustle of the city here and enjoy a life integrated with nature. In addition, the community retains a rich array of rural cultural elements, providing the elderly with unique opportunities to experience traditional farming culture and get close to nature, thus meeting their spiritual and cultural needs. In rural-type travel and elderly care communities, the needs of the elderly are mainly reflected in the following aspects: Firstly, physiological needs, including a healthy physical condition, a suitable natural environment and support from infrastructure; Secondly, there are psychological needs, such as the desire for a sense of belonging, social interaction, interest cultivation, and a lively environment. The third is the demand for housing, which requires that housing and the environment be safe and comfortable. The fourth is the demand for leisure, which enriches life through activities such as walking, fishing and gardening. Finally, there is the demand for elderly care services, which involves medical care, public service facilities and convenient transportation, etc. The community can meet the diverse needs of the elderly at different levels by providing personalized customization services, a complete social support network and diverse functional designs. Rural-type travel and elderly care communities not only offer a high-quality living environment but also help the elderly alleviate their sense of loneliness and enhance their happiness in life through diverse service functions and cultural activities. Here, the elderly can deeply experience rural life, participate in agricultural and festival activities, and feel the unique rhythm of rural life. Meanwhile, the infrastructure and service functions of the community have been gradually improved, providing more convenient living guarantees for the elderly. This elderly care model not only improves the quality of life of the elderly, but also promotes the economic development of rural areas, enhances the level of rural infrastructure, and forms a win-win development pattern for all parties.

2.3. Characteristics of Rural Travel-oriented Elderly Care Communities

In 2021, Lang Fuping and Yu Dan published "Research on the Sustainable Development of Elderly Care Rural Tourism Communities", and Zhou Hui's "Analysis of High-Quality Development Strategies for Rural Travel and Elderly Care Communities" [22]. Lang Fuping conducted interview surveys on the current development status and existing problems of elderly care rural tourism communities in the northern part of Zhejiang Province, as well as elderly people with rural elderly care tourism experience [23]. Based on this, an evaluation and analysis of the current development status of elderly care-oriented rural tourism communities was made, pointing out that urban elderly people generally hold a positive attitude towards the ecological and humanistic environment of elderly care-oriented rural tourism communities. In addition, the completeness of medical resources, the convenience of the medical insurance reimbursement process, and the configuration of fitness equipment received neutral evaluations, indicating that these aspects still need further improvement. However, regarding the allocation of professional nursing staff, it is generally reflected that there is a deficiency. The pursuit of retirement life by the elderly is not merely driven by the motivation of travel; at a deeper level, it reflects their choice of an ideal living environment that can meet their material needs and spiritual pursuits. Community tourism resources and leisure tourism products are important attracting factors. Compared with urban communities where people live and work for a long time, elderly care-oriented rural tourism communities show obvious advantages in terms of tourism resources and natural environment. From this, it can be known that rural travel-oriented elderly care communities have the following characteristics:

Ecological and natural environment advantages. Rural travel-oriented elderly care communities are usually located in areas with excellent ecological environments, such as mountainous areas, lake areas or rural landscape areas. These areas not only offer fresh air and beautiful natural landscapes, but also provide the elderly with a peaceful living environment away from the noise and pollution of the city. In addition, communities usually preserve rich rural cultural elements, providing the elderly with unique opportunities to experience traditional farming culture and get close to nature, meeting their spiritual and cultural needs.

The specificity of the occupants. The main service targets of rural-type travel and elderly care communities are relatively healthy, economically well-off and self-reliant middle-aged and young elderly people. The suitable pace of life and length of residence: The pace of life in rural areas is relatively slow. This feature can provide the elderly with a relaxed and comfortable lifestyle, avoiding the pressure brought by the fast pace of urban life. A slower pace of life can help the elderly relieve stress and prolong their lifespan. In addition, rural travel-oriented elderly care communities usually adopt a relatively long residence model (such as half a year or a year of residence), allowing the elderly to deeply experience rural life and participate in agricultural activities, festivals and other events.

Rich cultural and entertainment resources: Rural-type travel and elderly care communities make full use of the cultural resources in rural areas. By organizing traditional folk activities, festivals, and agricultural experiences, they enrich the spiritual and cultural life of the elderly. In addition, recreational activities suitable for the elderly, such as strolling in the garden, fishing, and gardening, can be easily realized in the rural natural environment, which helps to alleviate feelings of loneliness and enhance the happiness of life. With the advancement of the rural revitalization strategy, the infrastructure in many rural areas (such as transportation, medical care, communication, etc.) has been gradually improved, providing more convenient living guarantees for the elderly. Some elderly care communities are also equipped with specialized elderly care service facilities, such as medical rescue rooms, rehabilitation centers, and fitness areas, providing basic living support and health security for the elderly.

A well-established social support network. Rural communities usually have a strong tradition of

mutual assistance among neighbors, and this community culture provides the elderly with profound emotional support. In addition, volunteers, staff members and village neighbors within the community can offer daily assistance and emotional comfort to the elderly, alleviate their sense of loneliness and safety concerns, and enhance their sense of belonging. The rural travel-oriented elderly care community, which is suitable for specific elderly groups, mainly serves middle-aged and young elderly people who are relatively healthy, have relatively superior economic conditions and the ability to take care of themselves. This group usually has a strong sense of independence and social participation. They are more inclined to choose a way of retirement that combines health preservation, cultural experience and social interaction.

In conclusion, the rural-type travel and residence elderly care community is an innovative elderly care model that combines social value and economic benefits. Its characteristics are reflected in the diversity of resources and functions, the specificity of the residents, the rural features of space and environment, the exploratory and innovative development model, as well as the duality of social and economic value.

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