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Post-COVID-19 Sojourn Choices: Exploring the Distribution and Preferences of Chinese Digital Nomads Based on the Lifestyle Migration Theory

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Abstract: With the advancement of digital technologies and the gradual waning of the pandemic's impact, digital nomads have attracted significant attention from academia and industry as an emerging social group. Existing studies regarding the distribution and destination selection preferences of digital nomads remain lacking. This study aims to investigate the distribution patterns and destination selection preferences of Chinese digital nomads, guided by the lifestyle migration theory. Specifically, we address the following research questions: Where do Chinese digital nomads choose to sojourn post-pandemic, and what factors influence their destination preferences? Using a qualitative approach based on grounded theory, we analyze text data from China's largest video-based social platform to uncover key factors shaping digital nomads' choices. The findings reveal that Chinese digital nomads consider five key dimensions when selecting a destination: basic living conditions, social environment, work opportunities, travel experience, and local integrated environment. Notably, compared to traditional migrant groups, digital nomads demonstrate stronger online and sharing behaviors in work and social interactions. Additionally, "travel" is identified as a new category. This study makes a theoretical contribution by expanding the application of lifestyle migration theory to digital nomadism, offering new insights into contemporary migration behaviors. It also provides practical guidance for travel destination planning and management to better accommodate the preferences of this emerging group.

Keywords: digital nomads; spatial distribution; destination preferences; lifestyle migration theory

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly digital, networked, and intelligent era, digital nomads, as an emerging social group, are reshaping the tourism sector's supply–demand structure and industrial landscape. The term "digital nomad" was first introduced in 1997 by Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners in their book Digital Nomad, where they suggested that "network technology would alter people's habitual behaviors, breaking the geographic constraints of workplaces and enabling remote work while traveling around the world" [1]. In 2015, Pieter Levels predicted that remote work would become a mainstream trend, estimating that the number of digital nomads worldwide could surpass one billion by 2035 [2]. This prediction accelerated following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, as companies extended remote work policies initially implemented during the pandemic through 2021 and beyond. Many began considering a broader shift towards remote or hybrid workforce

models to reduce overhead costs [3]. The widespread adoption of remote work has further fueled the growth of the digital nomad population. The MBO Partners 2024 State of Independence found that 18.1 million American workers currently describe themselves as digital nomads, an increase of 4.7% year over year and a growth of more than 147% since 2019 [4]. Simultaneously, digital nomad-friendly destinations and communities have emerged globally, fostering the sustainable development of this new lifestyle [5]. The expansion of the digital nomad community has not only accelerated the digitization of host destinations but has also injected fresh vitality and opportunities into the post-pandemic recovery of the tourism industry [6].

The public awareness and influence of digital nomads in Asia are steadily increasing. As China faces post-pandemic tourism recovery and industry transformation, its rapidly advancing internet and digital infrastructure actively drive the development of the digital economy [7]. Economic shifts influence industrial transformations and directly stimulate the growth of the gig economy, a trend that has garnered attention within China's tourism industry [8]. The 2022 Employment Relationship Trends Report, jointly released by Zhaopin Limited and the National School of Development at Peking University on 12 October 2022, revealed that 76.4% of China's Generation Z (those born after 2000) were willing to become digital nomads [9]. Several locations, including Dali in Yunnan, Huangshan in Anhui, Chengdu in Sichuan, and Jinshan in Shanghai, have established paid offline communities for digital nomads [10]. Some counties and rural areas have begun promoting these communities as novel cultural and tourism marketing points; the consumption and production activities of digital nomads are stimulating local economic growth, gradually becoming a driving force in China's rural revitalization strategy [11]. The underlying research questions prompted by this phenomenon merit further exploration.

Research on Western digital nomads offers valuable insights for Eastern scholars, as drawing on these theoretical findings can facilitate a deeper understanding and explanation of the new phenomena and issues emerging from China's digital nomad population. Additionally, studies on Eastern digital nomads must account for the differences between Western and Eastern digital nomads, including social systems, cultural backgrounds, values, policy environments, and the media platforms that underpin their work and lifestyles. Given China's vast population, the growing digital nomad group significantly influences social and economic dynamics [8]. However, current academic attention in China to digital nomads remains insufficient. Existing studies include reviews of Western research, single-case studies based on grounded theory, and discussions of mobile lifestyles and psychological identity. Yet, there is a notable lack of theoretical and systematic analysis regarding digital nomads' choice of destinations. Issues surrounding Chinese digital nomads are closely tied to the development of the nation's youth and its future trajectory, underscoring their significant social impact and research value. Thus, studying the distribution of digital nomads in China and the key factors influencing their choice of living destinations is crucial [12–14]. Compared to traditional travelers, digital nomads' decision-making may be driven by broader needs, warranting systematic theoretical analysis [15]. The Lifestyle Migration Theory proposed by Benson and O'Reilly provides a critical theoretical framework for understanding migrations driven by pursuing an ideal lifestyle rather than economic or geographic convenience alone [16]. This theory highlights the role of quality of life, cultural appeal, personal values, and social needs as motivators [17], offering a fresh perspective for digital nomad studies and aiding in a deeper analysis of the research questions outlined above.

Building on the above discussion, this study aims to address underexplored questions: What is the current distribution of Chinese digital nomads in the post-pandemic era, and what factors influence their destination preferences? This research collects and analyzes

video data related to "digital nomads" from Bilibili, China's largest video-based social platform, to map the global geographic distribution of Chinese digital nomads. Using grounded theory, this study conducts step-by-step coding of the video texts and applies lifestyle migration theory to identify key factors influencing Chinese digital nomads' destination choices. The study contributes to the theoretical enrichment of lifestyle migration by applying it to digital nomads as a migratory group and develops a conceptual model of lifestyle migration for Chinese digital nomads. The findings will provide a scientific foundation for local governments, tourism enterprises, and policymakers in the post-pandemic era. Furthermore, the results are expected to inform strategies to address emerging tourism market dynamics, meet the specific needs of digital nomads, generate new tourism revenues, and promote the sustainable development of the tourism market.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Nomads and Destination Preferences

Digital nomads are sojourners who select destinations based on personal expectations, combining work and travel [18]. With the rise of the gig economy and digital technology, an increasing number of workers can opt to work from virtually any location, free from traditional office constraints [19,20]. Adopting remote work following the COVID-19 pandemic has further enhanced the feasibility of working globally [21,22]. Remote workers, enabled by mobile communication technology, generally transition from offline offices to online workspaces but often maintain a fixed location [23,24]. Digital nomads, however, merge work and leisure more fluidly [25]. Prester et al. explored how information technology integrates into digital nomads' workflows, affecting remote work practices and productivity [26]. Digital nomads challenge traditional work models by virtualizing spatial and organizational boundaries [27,28].

This study used "digital nomads" as a search keyword to collect the titles of the top 100 most-cited articles published on Google Scholar since 2023. A word frequency analysis of these titles revealed that Western scholarship has already developed theoretical explanations and analyses across four critical areas related to digital nomads (Figure 1): mobility [29–33], destination conditions [25,34–38], workation lifestyle [39–41], and co-living spaces [41–45]. Their movement may occur between home, sojourn, or various travel locations [8]. Sutherland's interviews reveal that digital nomads have flexible movement patterns, with some relocating weekly, monthly, or semiannually, often without a permanent residence [12]. Compared to remote workers with stable social connections and fixed residences, digital nomads place more value on location independence; they seek freedom and aspire to break away from traditional work structures [34]. However, some scholars argue that while technology enables digital nomads to work "anytime, anywhere", not all locations are equally suitable for this lifestyle [46], and this freedom comes with challenges [47]. These include adapting to new residency policies, managing tax compliance, planning pensions, obtaining work permits, addressing contract inequities, and handling income variability [48–50].

Research by Western scholars has found that the cost of living and policies in a destination significantly influence digital nomads' choices. American writer Tim Ferriss has noted that many digital nomads prefer countries with lower living expenses [31]. Public safety and political stability are also key considerations, as these factors are directly linked to personal security, work continuity, and quality of life [13]. The high risks, isolation, and instability associated with nomadic life make digital nomads particularly attentive to the availability of shared communities in new locations [51]. Upon entering a new environment, digital nomads may experience heightened stress and cultural conflict, which can hinder their ability to integrate into local groups, limiting access to economic, social, and emotional

support [39]. Living within a nomad community can foster new relationships and expand social networks [41]. Digital nomads report higher levels of well-being when engaging with others who share similar social identities, interests, values, and life goals. This connection enhances their sense of identity and belonging [52].



Figure 1. High-frequency words in Western academic research on digital nomads.

2.2. Chinese Research on Digital Nomads

Since 2021, Chinese academia has gradually increased its focus on the digital nomad community, predominantly employing qualitative research methods. Existing studies have primarily explored four key themes: the definition of digital nomads, lifestyle practices, spatial integration, and destination impact. Chinese scholars have also delved into the unique attributes of digital nomads in Eastern contexts, emphasizing the necessity of recognizing differences between Eastern and Western digital nomads in areas such as social systems, cultural backgrounds, values, policy environments, and the media platforms that support their work and lifestyles [53–55]. However, research from an international comparative perspective remains underdeveloped, often limited to descriptive analyses and summaries of previous literature. In addition, some studies have incorporated self-determination theory, actor–network theory, and individualization theory to investigate the interplay between work, leisure, and spatial practices among digital nomads [56–59]. These studies have highlighted behaviors such as mobile socialization, geographic arbitrage, and co-working, as well as how destinations create co-living communities and symbiotic systems for neoliberal subjects [60–63]. However, this research is frequently case-specific or context-bound, lacking a comprehensive analysis of dynamic, overarching trends.

Distinct from Western scholarship, research rooted in China's policy context—particularly its rural revitalization strategy and the integrated development of agriculture, culture, and tourism—has drawn attention to the relationship between digital nomads, rural collective economic organizations, and tourism economies. Scholars have examined how digital nomads interact with and contribute to rural sustainable development, identifying positive effects on urban–rural integration and village transformation while acknowledging potential issues such as gentrification and cultural friction [62,64,65]. However, empirical studies on policy efficacy and broader social impacts remain scarce.

In summary, research on Chinese digital nomads remains largely descriptive, lacking systematic analyses of preference differences or the development of theoretical models. Particularly in China, factors such as social environments, language, culture, and lifestyle

habits may influence destination preferences in ways distinct from digital nomads in other regions.

2.3. Lifestyle Migration Theory

Social imaginaries form the foundation of understanding the world and our place within it, shaped by specific cultural and historical contexts [66,67]. Together with social structures and moral orders, they influence human behavior and decision-making [68], which may lead to societal structure changes [69]. In 2009, Benson proposed the theory of lifestyle migration, defining it not merely as a descriptive term for cross-border physical movement but as a social phenomenon [16]. This migration is not production-oriented but rather a voluntary relocation undertaken by individuals seeking an improved lifestyle, often to gain autonomy by escaping unsatisfactory environments [70]. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks for lifestyle migration research primarily derive from ethnographic studies, emphasizing descriptive and subjective interpretations of migration experiences [34,71–75]. This theory has since been applied to various migration topics, such as residential migration to the Mediterranean in Spain [76], retirement migration of Americans to northwestern Mexico [77], and the relocation of North Americans to Cuenca, Ecuador [78].

The destination choices of migrants aiming to reshape their lives are influenced by the comprehensive local environment, constrained explicitly by economic, social, and political factors [70]. Skeggs notes that migrants' financial resources and living costs at the destination are critical in shaping their lifestyle choices [79]. Only individuals of higher economic status—typically those from wealthier or developed countries—can actively pursue an ideal lifestyle [80–82]. After World War II, North American and European "baby boomers", benefiting from considerable wealth accumulation, leveraged global inequalities and regional power imbalances to pursue desired lifestyles [83,84]. Hayes' concept of "geo-arbitrage" further explains why some North American migrants choose Ecuador, strategically deploying their capital, assets, and resources to enjoy a higher quality of life in lower-cost countries [78]. Additionally, social transformation drives migration. For instance, economic restructuring triggered by late-1980s layoffs in the UK led many to seek new retirement lifestyles in rural France [85,86]. Rural transformations have created specific destinations for real estate investment and lifestyle migration [87,88]. Studies of migrant inflows to German spa towns [89] and rural Sweden [90] illustrate how the post-productivity view of rural landscapes attracts affluent populations. Research by Osbaldeston et al. highlights the importance of preserving and curating "authenticity" in place marketing to attract migrant groups [91]. These policies have improved local infrastructure and enhanced the destination's appeal through marketing, contributing to rural economic diversification. Similarly, Velasquez Runk shows that Panama's neoliberal land reforms and rural development policies have attracted numerous lifestyle migrants [92]. While migration studies within Europe emphasize the importance of reciprocal welfare and freedom of movement, these conditions are often more challenging to achieve outside of Europe [93]. Even within the EU, migrants frequently face complex legal obstacles [74]. Upon arrival in new environments, migrants may encounter multiple risks, including limited healthcare access, a lack of social networks, and economic uncertainty [71]. Financial, health, and legal factors thus render migrants significantly vulnerable and unstable as they adjust to new lives [94].

Research on rural migration and local cultural narratives indicates that the value of destinations lies not merely in their inherent environments but in what they offer to migrants and how migrants envision reshaping their lives and identities within these social imaginaries [95]. Knowles emphasizes that the lifestyle migration process entails

how individuals perceive the environment and culture of their destination and how they experience its various resources in everyday life [96]. Moss suggests that in seeking new places to reside, individuals look beyond material conditions, focusing on whether these places can meet their aspirations for quality of life and personal development, aiming to realize self-worth and identity reformation through new social interactions and cultural experiences [91].

2.4. Lifestyle Migration of Digital Nomads

According to lifestyle migration theory, migrants are typically defined as individuals who voluntarily relocate across regions in search of more desirable living environments. These migratory behaviors are often shaped by structural factors such as economic, social, and political conditions, as well as by migrants' resources, identities, and the characteristics of their destinations. Traditional migration emphasizes the stability of resettlement and adaptation to new environments, with the ultimate goal often being the improvement of living conditions for oneself and one's family. In contrast, digital nomads represent a unique migratory group. Leveraging digital technologies and the flexibility of remote work, they are characterized by high mobility, frequently transitioning between different destinations. For digital nomads, these destinations serve not only as workplaces but also as sociocultural spaces that align with their lifestyle aspirations. Unlike traditional migrants, digital nomads often favor short-term stays and rely heavily on the support of the sharing economy, seeking to balance work and life dynamically while pursuing identity fulfillment and personal values.

Lifestyle migration theory partially aligns with the migratory behaviors of digital nomads. The theory posits that destination choices are influenced not only by material conditions but also by the role of sociocultural experiences in reshaping identity. Digital nomads' choices of destinations are often determined by a combination of work convenience, cultural appeal, and cost of living, mirroring the motivations described in lifestyle migration theory.

However, the high mobility and technological dependence of digital nomads present new challenges to traditional lifestyle migration theory. While traditional migration typically revolves around the concept of "settlement", digital nomads exhibit temporary and decentralized migration patterns. They maintain connections with global communities through digital technologies, enabling cross-regional collaboration and social interaction. This technological dependence not only alters traditional perceptions of a "sense of place" but also calls for the expansion of lifestyle migration theory to accommodate the mobility features of the digital age. Digital nomads' migratory behaviors are predicated on globalization and technological advancements, distinguishing them from traditional lifestyle migration. Their high mobility allows continuous exploration of new locations without being constrained by material conditions requiring prolonged stays. Simultaneously, their reliance on technology enables access to resources and support through virtual networks, shifting the traditional need for geographic proximity to a demand for digital connectivity.

Consequently, lifestyle migration theory must integrate technological and mobility factors to better explain the migratory behaviors of this emerging group and their destination selection patterns. This study adopts this theoretical framework to analyze how digital nomads, within the context of globalization, reshape their preferences and how these preferences influence their choice of destinations (Figure 2).

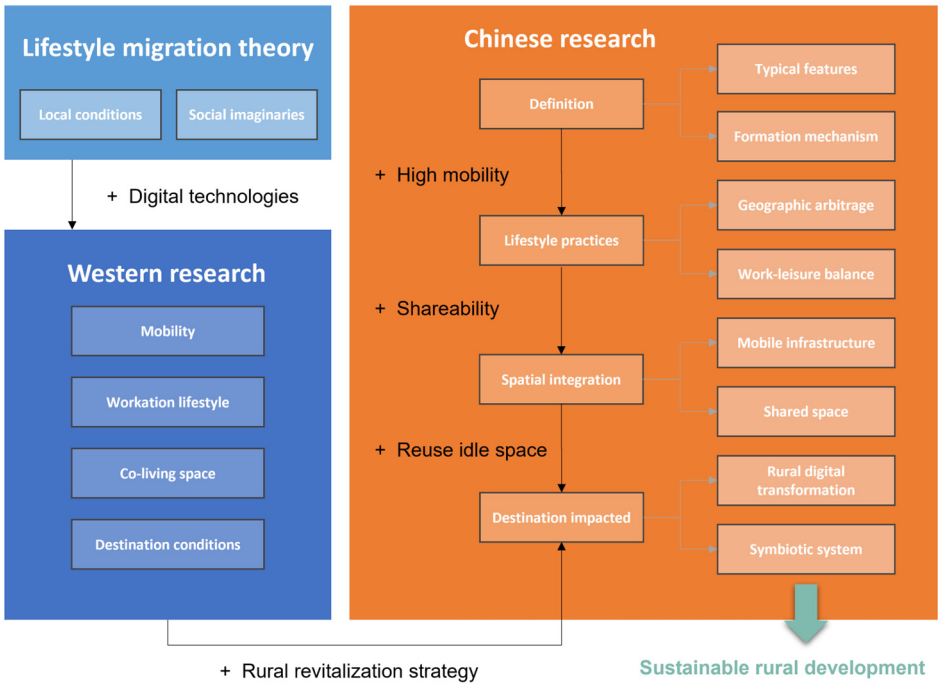

Figure 2. Framework of previous research on digital nomads.

3. Research Method

3.1. The Issues of Research

This study aims to investigate what factors influence the destination preferences of Chinese digital nomads and explore their post-pandemic sojourn distribution patterns, two under-researched topics in the existing literature. This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena that lack sufficient theoretical foundations. Qualitative research focuses on understanding human behaviors, perceptions, and decision-making processes through systematic analysis of non-numerical data [97]. In this study, the subjective experiences and preferences of Chinese digital nomads are explored through textual data, aligning with the core characteristics of qualitative research. Grounded theory is one of the most scientifically rigorous methods in qualitative research. It involves systematically analyzing collected data to extract relevant abstract concepts, reveal their logical connections, and ultimately derive theoretical insights. This method allows for inductive exploration, enabling researchers to directly develop abstract concepts and uncover underlying relationships from the data without being constrained by existing frameworks. In this study, NVivo 11 software is employed to follow the grounded theory process to investigate the factors influencing the destination preferences of Chinese digital nomads.

To address the second research question: "What is the distribution of Chinese digital nomads in the post-pandemic era?". This study utilizes the "Maptive" (v4) software to generate spatial density maps based on specific location keywords extracted from textual data. By converting these keywords into geographic coordinates and mapping them onto a global scale, we create a visual representation of the global distribution patterns of Chinese digital nomads. GIS analysis not only provides a visual depiction but also serves as a key component of quantitative analysis. The spatial density maps enable us to identify hotspot regions of digital nomad activity and their preferences for specific locations. This visualization method simplifies complex distribution data, facilitating the discovery and interpretation of underlying patterns and trends that influence digital nomads' choice of destinations. The integration of grounded theory analysis and GIS

spatial analysis ensures a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The spatial distribution results, generated through GIS analysis, serve to validate and enrich the conceptual theoretical model derived from the coding process, confirming its robustness and completeness. Conversely, the grounded theory findings provide explanatory depth, revealing the underlying reasons behind the identified hotspot regions in the spatial density maps. This complementary relationship between the two methods strengthens the reliability and interpretive power of the study, offering a holistic and nuanced perspective on the destination preferences and distribution patterns of Chinese digital nomads.

3.2. Data Collection and Cleaning

Digital nomads frequently share aspects of their daily lives, opinions, and experiences on social media platforms. These contents do not need to be artistically processed or cater to the needs of others. Hence, the data authenticity is high and can be observed by multiple people for longer. Compared with field observations in specific locations, online platforms offer access to a broader and more diverse sample of digital nomads from various regions and backgrounds, thereby reducing bias associated with geographical and situational limitations.

Bilibili, China's largest online video platform, boasts a vast user base, with an average monthly upload volume exceeding 22 million. According to its Q1 2024 financial report, the platform had approximately 294 million monthly active users and 79.4 million daily active users, with an average daily usage time of 95 min. Many Bilibili creators share their experiences on topics such as "nomadic lifestyles", "remote work", and "digital nomadism", reflecting the authentic living conditions and preferences of this group. Compared to user-generated content (UGC) on forums or in text formats, video data more vividly captures the travel destinations and surrounding environments of digital nomads. Although Bilibili's content is primarily produced and consumed for entertainment and sharing—and may sometimes present selectively curated information—the platform's user demographics offer significant advantages. The gender ratio is balanced, and users under the age of 30 constitute 78.67% of the total, with high levels of economic and educational attainment. These younger users, who are tech-savvy, culturally diverse, and open to emerging trends, closely align with the core characteristics of digital nomads, a group distinct from traditional migrants. Digital nomads typically exhibit a younger age structure and a strong reliance on digital technologies for work and life. As a widely influential platform with a substantial user base, Bilibili provides rich and relatively authentic data resources, making it an effective tool for exploring the factors influencing Chinese digital nomads' destination choices. Future research could compare data across multiple platforms to further verify the generalizability and representativeness of these findings.

Thus, this study selects Bilibili as the primary data source, with data collection and cleaning conducted according to the following criteria: (1) Using "digital nomad" as a search keyword (search date: 21 March 2023), video text was scraped with software, gathering nine fields of information (title, description, tags, upload date, views, likes, vlogger's name, vloggers bio, and follower count), resulting in 805 videos (251,735 words in total). The collected videos were then filtered using the following criteria: (1) Removal of videos uploaded before August 2017. (2) Exclusion of videos with fewer than ten likes and views. (3) Deletion of duplicate content. (4) Exclusion of videos irrelevant to the research theme. (5) Exclusion of videos from non-Chinese uploaders. After processing, 579 relevant videos (179,213 words) remained for further analysis.

Throughout the data collection process from Bilibili, this study prioritized user rights and privacy, strictly adhering to Bilibili's terms of service to ensure that only publicly accessible content from creators was collected. The user-generated content on Bilibili

represents a valuable resource, and this study approached its use with the utmost respect. The collected data is used solely for academic research purposes, with a firm commitment not to employ it for commercial or unauthorized uses.

3.3. Coding Analysis

During the open coding phase, the process followed the steps of "defining phenomena—standardizing concepts—identifying categories", with preliminary conceptualization conducted sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph. During the data coding process, this study established clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the specificity and effectiveness of the analysis. The inclusion criterion required that the data reflect the underlying motivations and decision-making processes of digital nomads when selecting destinations. Exclusion criteria included content that was not directly related to destination preference, or that merely described personal travel experiences or anecdotes without offering specific explanations of preferences. Additionally, overly fragmented or unclear text data were excluded to maintain data quality and ensure the depth of analysis. Free nodes were established to extract, integrate, and label meaningful content. Using NVivo 12.0 software, 476 Preliminary concepts were identified (Table 1).

Table 1. The progress of free node coding (excerpt).

Case	Preliminary Concept	Original Entry
1	32 years old (a), 500 yuan for rent (a), 8000 yuan for transportation (a), as long as I don't go to work (a), I am willing to lower my desires (a) and consumption (a).	a age a rent a scooter a doesn't work a decrease in desire a decrease in consumption
2	Freelance Vlog (a), Part-time Mom (a) Working at Home (a) Daily, Eating Braised Noodles with Pork Ribs and Beans (a) and Self-Disciplined Work (a)	a freelance a age a work from home a eat a home-cooked meal a self-discipline
3	Anyway, I can't make any money from working. Please freelance like this (a)~ If you can handle these 4 points, maybe you can start a new life (a); My career sharing (a), from working as a laborer to starting a business as a contractor to becoming a freelancer. The development path of digital nomads in the media industry (a).	a freelance a pursue a new life a professional experience sharing a media industry

Note: Due to the length of the article, only part of it is listed.

Due to the large number of initial codes and semantic overlap, axial coding was employed to cluster and deeply analyze individual categories. Relationships within each category were explored through repeated analysis and comparison of the logical relationships between initial categories, resulting in more systematic classifications. After analysis and synthesis, critical information reflecting Chinese digital nomads' travel destination preferences was identified, and overlapping nodes were merged, yielding 215 concepts and 29 Normalization concepts.

These Normalization concepts were further refined into 12 categories. Finally, selective coding determined five main categories: Basic living, work, travel, social, and Local integrated environment (Table 2).

Table 2. The Main Category Formed by Axial Coding (excerpt).

Core Category	Main Category	Category	Normalization Concept	Concept
Individual dimension	Basic living	Residence	Accommodation services	Low prices, diverse room types, local art decoration, pet-friendly, privacy and security guarantees, flexible rental terms, customized services
			Supporting facilities	Leisure and entertainment facilities, kitchen, fitness equipment, self-service laundry, library, basic medical resources
			Environmental atmosphere	Few people, suitable climate, far away from noise, secluded
		Diet	Food flavor	South East Asia, Hometown, White Rice, Chinese, Novelty
			Meal style	Self-made, in-store dining, takeout, shared community package
		Move	Move distance	Surrounding areas, scenic spots, not going out
			Transportation	Electric vehicles, self-driving, walking, renting a car, public transportation
	Work	Career choices	Remote work	Programmer, designer, language teacher, illustrator, web3 practitioner, We Media blogger, freelance writer, data analyst
			Offline work	Barista, photographer, fitness coach, chef, volunteer
		Working environment	Hardware facilities	Multifunctional work space, IT equipment, work furniture, network connection, lighting system, temperature control system, security measures, sound insulation
			Service experience	Open 24/7, Weekends open, Comfort, Byte Flow Control, Cleaning Service, Safety Measures, Pet Care
	Travel	Characteristics of the tourist destination	Basic conditions	Convenient transportation, small and medium-sized cities, few tourists, low degree of monetization, customized travel services, leisure resorts
			Characteristics of tourism resources	Unique natural landscapes, rich historical relics and monuments, fresh and simple pastoral scenery, ancient towns and villages far from the crowd, islands, diverse folk cultures, special local flavors, and many festival activities

Table 2. *Cont.*

Core Category	Main Category	Category	Normalization Concept	Concept
	Social	Travel experience	Psychological perception	Interesting, healing, freedom, wandering, self-discovery, sense of belonging, happiness
			Tourism activities	Visit cultural relics and historic sites, experience food culture, traditional customs and festivals, outdoor nature activities, city walk, extreme sports, handicraft production
		Social activities	Leisure and entertainment	Singing, book club, outdoor movies, board games, cooking
			Health and well-being	Yoga classes, meditation sessions, outdoor adventures, cultural experiences, fitness activities
			Experience sharing	Job search platform, career transition, entrepreneurship, good things to share, travel guide, personal growth, lectures
		Network construction	Build new relationships	Online netizens, local residents, interest communities, nomadic communities, offline gatherings
			Maintain long-term relationships	Friends, family, relatives, lovers
National dimension	Local integrated environment	Economic environment	Economic attractiveness	Local consumption level, light tax burden, stable exchange rate
			Business friendliness	Good Enterprise Quality, Banking Financial Services, Employment Facilitation, Entrepreneurship Policy Support
		Social environment	social security	Pension, healthcare level, insurance
			Cultural environment inclusive	Multilingualism, Internationalization, Multiculturalism, Racial Discrimination
			Public security	Political stability, low crime rate
			traffic conditions	The public transportation system is perfect and convenient, the road network quality, and the water and power grid quality
			accessibility	Good residency rights, easy visa application and fast process, long stay time, many airports and stations, not remote
		Political environment	Mature rule of law	Labor law, housing policy, children's education policy
			Policy benefits	Residence rights, visa policies, tax policies, work permits, freelancer policies,

Note: Due to the length of the article, only part of it is listed.

3.4. Spatial Distribution Analysis

This study compiled the destinations mentioned in the video descriptions and categorized them by continent, summarizing the names of cities and countries and their frequency of occurrence (Table 3). Based on this dataset, GIS software Maptive (v4) was used to construct a spatial distribution density map of digital nomads' destinations, visually depicting the global hotspots. In the GIS analysis, the spatial density method involved statistical and visual representation of geographic data to identify regions and hotspots where digital nomads are concentrated worldwide. Specifically, geographic data are converted into coordinates, including latitude and longitude, with each data point representing a location. These geographic coordinates are categorized by continent and country, and the frequency of occurrence is summarized. Using these frequency data, the GIS software calculates the density value for each region through spatial analysis tools, with color and area size representing different densities of digital nomad distribution. Areas with higher density values are marked as hotspots, with darker colors or larger areas indicating higher concentrations of digital nomads. This spatial density analysis transforms the distribution data into a visual format, enabling the identification of global regions where digital nomads are concentrated and providing a foundation for further analysis of the geographic factors influencing their destination preferences.

Table 3. Statistics on the Residences of Chinese Digital Nomads.

Continents	Frequency	Proportion	Nation
Asia	122	57.28%	South Korea, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Georgia, Singapore, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Republic of Turkey, Philippines, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia
North America	11	5.16%	United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Antigua, Barbados, Cuba, Guatemala
Europe	49	23.00%	Cyprus, Portugal, Bulgaria, Albania, Switzerland, Spain, Estonia, Croatia, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Norway, Malta, Hungary, Germany, Iceland, Greece
South America	16	7.51%	Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Ecuador
Africa	11	5.16%	Tanzania, Rwanda, Morocco, Cape Verde, Seychelles, Mauritius
Oceania	4	1.88%	Australia New Zealand

4. Research Results

Based on grounded theory, this study identified five key factors influencing the choice of residence for Chinese digital nomads: basic living conditions, social opportunities, work environment, travel experience, and the overall local environment. Through spatial density analysis, the global distribution of Chinese digital nomads in the post-pandemic period was revealed. Domestically, they are primarily concentrated in slow-paced cities south of the Yangtze River, with the top three locations being Dali in Yunnan Province, Huzhou in Zhejiang Province, and Chengdu in Sichuan Province. Internationally, Chinese digital nomads are mainly distributed across Southeast Asian countries, with smaller clusters in other continents. The top three countries identified are Indonesia, Thailand, and Turkey. Integrating these preferences and distribution results within the framework of lifestyle migration theory, this study constructed a conceptual model of destination preferences for Chinese digital nomads. Compared with traditional migrants, Chinese digital nomads exhibit stronger online and sharing-oriented characteristics in work and social dimensions, while also highlighting travel as a distinct new category. At the national level, they demon-

strate a marked preference for high mobility concerning economic, social, and political systems. Furthermore, unlike their Western counterparts, the international mobility of Chinese digital nomads is notably influenced by the "language environment" factor.

4.1. Factors Influencing Sojourn Residence Selection

4.1.1. Basic Living

Digital nomads typically reside in areas with lower living costs, a slower pace of life, and access to basic amenities. "Take Dali as an example: local rent ranges from 700 to 1600 RMB per month, significantly lower than cities like Beijing or Shanghai, and the pace of life is very comfortable" (source: original entry). Shared communities have emerged in many regions, offering diverse accommodation options, comprehensive leisure facilities, flexible dining arrangements, privacy protection measures, and flexible lease terms. These developments have created living environments that better cater to the needs of digital nomads, greatly facilitating their highly mobile lifestyles and further enhancing their life satisfaction and well-being. Around the world, various tourist destinations have introduced innovative shared spaces alongside traditional tourism services [3,27], such as Kamigamo Town in Japan [46], Lisbon and Madeira in Portugal [2], Barcelona, Spain, New York, USA, and Berlin and Wiesbaden in Germany [14,45]. Bali, Indonesia, and Chiang Mai, Thailand, have developed rapidly, hosting mature digital nomad communities that provide shared spaces and lifestyle services. BWork restaurant has launched daily and monthly meal plans, offering digital nomads flexible and convenient dining options. "The DNA Commune in Anji, Zhejiang, China, offers a range of room types, from single rooms to multi-person rooms, with prices starting at only 180 RMB per week. The facility provides comprehensive services, including a kitchen, dryer, indoor gym, and transportation" (source: original entry). Shared kitchens and restaurants, as critical infrastructures, reduce dining costs and allow self-cooking, catering to the nostalgia for home flavors that digital nomads often experience.

4.1.2. Social

The social activities of digital nomads include three main types: sports and wellness, leisure and entertainment, and knowledge and experience sharing. Hubud in Bali offers well-established and professional yoga activities, while Dojo Bali focuses on a lifestyle that combines surfing, nightlife, and work. The BWork community provides a swimming pool, table tennis facilities, and fitness equipment and offers free yoga and boxing classes to meet digital nomads' pursuit of a healthy lifestyle. "Tianxing Village in Chengdu, Sichuan, features cycling paths and running tracks and has hosted sports activities such as badminton, frisbee, and yoga. In the evenings, outdoor movies and karaoke events are held" (source: original entry). The diversity of spaces and facilities significantly enhances the likelihood of digital nomads' long-term residence. In addition to maintaining long-term relationships with friends, family, and partners, digital nomads often join offline or online communities to build new social networks while on the move. Communities play a crucial role in communication and knowledge sharing, hosting resources and activities such as interest groups, work experience exchanges, and idea-sharing sessions. Nomads living in co-working spaces in Bali have reported benefiting from the unique and diverse knowledge within these communities, which often inspires them to uncover hidden talents and passions. In China, digital nomad hubs, such as Dali, offer participants spaces for learning and creating through photography, painting, design, and crafts workshops, fostering creativity and collaboration. Regular entrepreneurship salons and professional seminars in Wenchang in Hainan, Chengdu in Sichuan, and Guangshan in Henan provide knowledge exchange and resource-sharing platforms. These platforms and activities offer

online and offline opportunities for interaction, helping participants expand their cognitive boundaries while strengthening connections and collaboration among global peers. They promote deep, cross-regional, and cross-cultural interactions and collaborative innovation. The creation and maintenance of diversified social networks in nomadic destinations not only help digital nomads find a sense of belonging and deepen their identification with their redefined identities but also enable them to realize their self-worth in the context of globalization.

4.1.3. Work

Digital nomads have a wide range of professions, and their living destinations are significantly influenced by work income and the work environment. They seek the flexibility of remote work, making the quality of office space hardware and service experience crucial. The hardware facilities are the foundation of workspaces and should include essential equipment such as reliable mobile networks, power outlets, desks, and chairs. These spaces should also offer multifunctional areas like meeting rooms, soundproof zones, and phone booths and be open 24/7, catering to non-traditional working hours. Some well-established workspaces even feature specialized recording and photography studios, demonstrating a deep understanding of the professional needs of digital nomads. In addition, a high-quality service experience holds strong appeal for digital nomads. BWork office spaces excel, offering fully equipped, round-the-clock work areas and value-added services, such as package storage, parcel management, pet care, professional cleaning, and security monitoring. These services comprehensively meet the living and working needs of digital nomads; by gaining a deeper understanding of the professional identities and working styles of digital nomads, workspace operators in these destinations can provide more tailored and thoughtful services, attracting more digital nomads and fostering the growth and development of the co-working culture.

4.1.4. Travel

Digital nomads travel significantly differently from traditional tourists, as travel is a critical component of their post-restructured lifestyle. They seek long-term, immersive experiences and personal growth rather than short-term relaxation. For them, travel is not just a way to adjust their lifestyle but also a journey of self-exploration. They are passionate about seeking extraordinary experiences, desiring healing, freedom, and self-discovery rather than merely engaging in surface-level sightseeing. The natural environment provides a space to escape daily pressures and promotes physical and mental well-being, satisfying their appreciation of natural beauty and adventurous spirit. Religious ceremonies in Bali and Buddhist temples and monasteries in Chiang Mai offer them spiritual peace and a sense of belonging, facilitating their personal transcendence. Their desire for cultural depth and historical significance drives them to delve into local traditions and historical sites. Unlike traditional tourists, they are more inclined to become part of the destination. Extended stays allow them to closely observe the daily lives of locals, providing an opportunity to experience the most authentic cultural atmosphere. Personalized activities such as city walks, craft workshops, and hiking enable digital nomads to explore cities at their own pace, uncover hidden corners, and engage with the local culture more genuinely and immersively. This approach helps them avoid typical tourist traps while enjoying a more authentic travel experience. For example, the handcraft experiences in Dali's Bai ethnic villages, such as tie-dye making and tasting the traditional Three-Course Tea, not only allow them to experience ethnic minority cultures firsthand but also deepen their understanding and respect for local lifestyles and values. This profound cultural interaction allows them to transcend the role of mere tourists and become active participants and promoters of local

culture, fostering cross-cultural exchange and understanding. This, in turn, provides new perspectives and momentum for innovation in the tourism industry.

4.1.5. Local Comprehensive Environment

Digital nomads' destination selection is influenced not only by their personal preferences but also by the destination's economic, social, and political dimensions. From an economic perspective, digital nomads, who intend to stay long-term, are more focused on the local business environment compared to regular tourists who prioritize infrastructure and accessibility. A robust business environment and reasonable tax policies directly affect personal financial planning and work quality, while efficient banking and financial services ensure smooth cross-border transactions. From a social perspective, digital nomads prefer areas with robust social security systems, good public safety, cultural inclusivity, and ease of mobility. The reduction of risks such as property loss, personal injury, or financial loss not only enhances the sense of security but also creates a conducive environment for remote work. Cities with high levels of internationalization and inclusive cultural environments are typically more open to people from diverse backgrounds, reducing the likelihood of racial discrimination and fostering a friendly, harmonious living environment. Work permits, residence rights, insurance, healthcare services, labor laws, and entrepreneurial policies not only provide legal assurance for digital nomads to live and work but also offer comprehensive support for their health, safety, and professional development. Furthermore, destinations with relaxed visa requirements, fast application processes, and the allowance for long-term stays simplify administrative procedures and provide nomads with greater flexibility in choosing their duration of residence. Following the pandemic, the digital nomad population has grown further. Barbados was the first to launch a digital nomad visa in June 2020. To attract more financially robust digital nomads, the Migration Policy Institute, a U.S.-based think tank, released data showing that over 25 countries or regions worldwide have introduced "nomad visas", including Estonia, Georgia, and Bermuda [89]. These policies aim to facilitate long-term stays for remote workers and highlight the increasing importance placed on digital nomads by various governments.

4.2. Global Distribution of Chinese Digital Nomads

The spatial distribution analysis reveals that Chinese digital nomads are predominantly concentrated in southern China and Southeast Asia, with smaller populations dispersed across Europe, South America, North America, Africa, and Oceania. The results indicate that in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia (Figure 3), as well as in southern Chinese cities like Dali and Anji, digital nomads form relatively dense clusters. These destinations are characterized by comparatively low living costs, comfortable and tranquil living environments, well-developed co-working spaces, and vibrant communities. They also offer inclusive social environments, unique natural and cultural tourism resources, and policies favorable to digital nomads. Furthermore, for Chinese digital nomads, these cities' proximity, lower travel expenses, and familiarity with the local language and culture make them particularly appealing. In Europe, countries such as Portugal, Spain, and Germany have emerged as popular destinations due to their political stability, low crime rates, and high levels of internationalization. Moreover, some European nations have introduced tax incentives and visa policies tailored to digital nomads, facilitating their seamless entry and enabling them to live and work in these regions efficiently.



Figure 3. Chinese Digital Nomads destinations' spatial distribution density map.

The findings demonstrate that the distribution of digital nomads is closely tied to their travel preferences and decision-making factors, further validating the influence of five core factors on destination choice. The widespread availability of co-working spaces in popular regions, equipped with reliable internet, professional amenities, and 24/7 services, aligns with digital nomads' needs for remote work. These spaces, complemented by community-based social activities, facilities that balance work and life, high levels of comfort and safety, and additional services such as pet care, significantly enhance the willingness of digital nomads to settle and improve their quality of life. Collectively, these attributes have driven the global rise of co-working culture.

4.3. Conceptual Model

Building on the grounded theory analysis, this study constructs a conceptual model of Chinese digital nomads' destination choices based on lifestyle migration theory and network text analysis (Figure 4). Lifestyle migration theory posits that destination choices are influenced by two primary dimensions: intrinsic individual needs and external environmental factors.

On the individual dimension, this study identifies four core factors that align with and extend the theoretical understanding of individual needs driving migration: ① Basic living: Digital nomads prioritize destinations that meet their expectations for lifestyle transformation, such as slower-paced environments. They also value the convenience of local living spaces. Unlike traditional migrants, who may prioritize long-term settlement and stable living conditions, digital nomads—due to their high mobility—pay greater attention to the availability of essential services rather than comprehensive infrastructure. ② Work: While traditional migration—such as British rural migration due to downsizing reforms—was often necessity-driven, or cases like affluent migrants in German spa towns and Swedish countryside reflected independence from work factors, digital nomads actively choose destinations to maintain and develop their professional identities. Advances in digital infrastructure and remote work technologies have liberated employment from geographic constraints, enabling the high-mobility lifestyle of digital nomads. Thus, the availability of robust digital infrastructure and the ease of remote work are critical considerations for destination selection. ③ Social: The high mobility of digital nomads limits the establishment of long-term social relationships typical of traditional migrants. Instead, they fulfill their

social needs through dynamic offline community activities and online networks. Local offline communities that offer social events and creative workshops have emerged as key attractions for digital nomads. ④ Travel: Distinct from traditional migrants and short-term tourists, digital nomads integrate travel as a core aspect of their lifestyle, seeking long-term, immersive experiences that foster personal growth. This emphasis expands the explanatory scope of lifestyle migration theory regarding individual motivations.

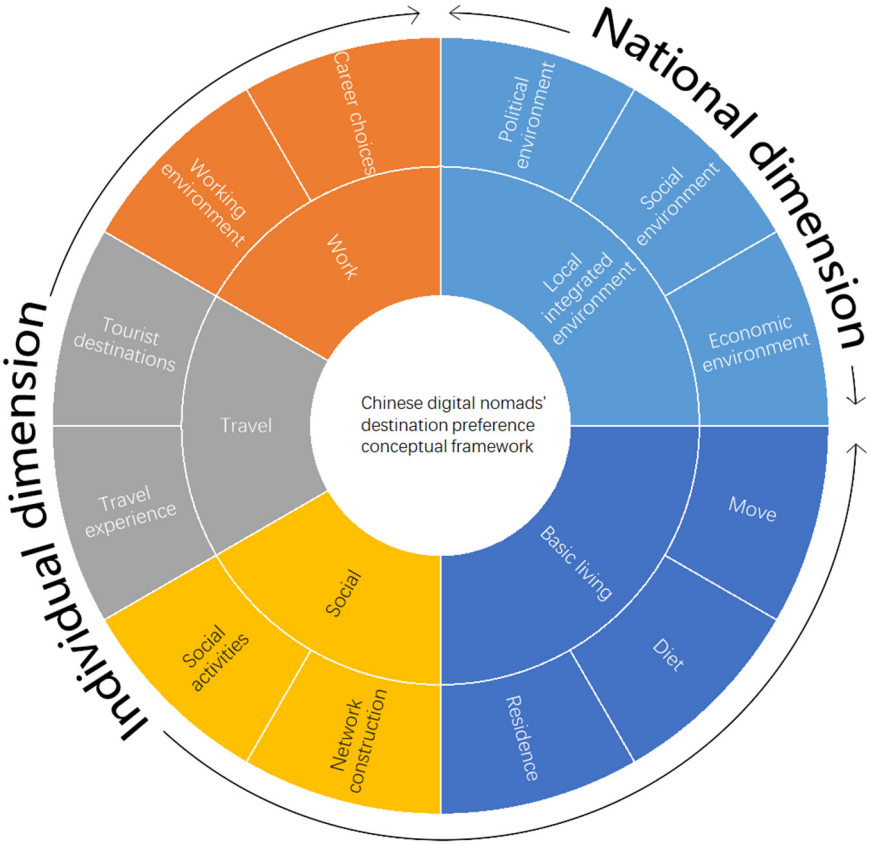

Figure 4. Chinese digital nomads' destination preference conceptual Model.

On the National dimension, research findings indicate that local economic conditions, social environments, and political systems play critical roles in digital nomads' destination choices, echoing the "external environmental factors" outlined in lifestyle migration theory. For instance, the principle of geographic arbitrage—where North American migrants previously relocated to Ecuador to benefit from lower living costs—has been adapted by contemporary digital nomads. Through remote work, they earn incomes aligned with higher economic standards while enjoying an improved quality of life in cities with lower living costs. Historical social changes, such as economic restructuring or rural transformation policies in the 20th century, prompted migrations to rural areas. In the 21st century, initiatives like China's rural revitalization strategy and international policies, such as digital nomad visas and tax incentives, aim to attract digital nomads to specific cities or countries. However, both digital nomads and traditional migrants face significant risks and uncertainties in adapting to new living environments, including financial instability, health challenges, and the protection of rights.

5. Discussion

This study not only validates the applicability of lifestyle migration theory to the modern digital nomad community but also uncovers new characteristics of migration behavior shaped by digital technology, remote work, and global mobility. The findings highlight the

heightened importance of "work" and "social" factors in this emerging migration group, which exhibit dynamic and digitalized attributes. The reliance of digital nomads on digital technology for remote work redefines the "work" dimension in their migration decisions. Beyond traditional considerations of career planning, digital nomads prioritize destinations offering robust digital infrastructure, co-working spaces, and professional support services. These factors introduce a novel dimension to lifestyle migration theory in the context of the digital economy. Additionally, compared with traditional migrants, digital nomads' social interactions are characterized by strong transregional and immediate connectivity. They actively participate in online and offline community activities to establish and maintain social networks, fulfilling their needs for belonging, self-worth, and identity. This redefines the role of social interaction in migration behavior. The study also reveals a symbiotic relationship between work and social factors in the lifestyles of digital nomads. Workspaces, such as co-working hubs, serve not only as centers of productivity but also as important venues for social engagement. Conversely, social interactions, such as community events and professional seminars, create new opportunities and resources for work. This interplay allows digital nomads to achieve a dynamic balance between work and life at their chosen destinations, further driving their pursuit of the "good life". These findings deepen the understanding of digital nomad behavior and contribute new perspectives to lifestyle migration theory by identifying the unique features and dynamic balancing mechanisms of migration in the context of globalization and digitalization.

Moreover, the study identifies "travel" as a core factor in digital nomads' choice of destinations. This dimension reflects not only their preference for tourism resources and experiences but also their motivation to reshape their lifestyles through travel. For digital nomads, travel is both a component of their pursuit of the "good life" and a practice for balancing work and life, transforming anxiety into tranquility. This insight extends beyond the traditional focus of lifestyle migration theory on "production" and "settlement", expanding the framework to encompass "mobility" and "experience". As a result, the study offers a more dynamic and multifaceted interpretative model of migration behavior.

This study, focusing on Chinese digital nomads, broadens its scope and applicability through comparative analysis with findings from Western research, uncovering both commonalities and differences across cultural contexts. Globally, digital nomads exhibit diverse preferences in selecting travel destinations, but certain shared characteristics emerge. For instance, Southeast Asia is a key hub for digital nomads worldwide, including those from China. Locations such as Chiang Mai in Thailand and Bali in Indonesia are particularly popular due to their low living costs, availability of co-working spaces, international communities, and favorable climates. However, Chinese digital nomads tend to favor destinations closer to home, where cultural and linguistic familiarity is higher. This preference reflects practical considerations, such as geographic proximity and cultural adaptability, as well as a focus on minimizing migration costs and benefiting from local cultural inclusivity. In terms of policy environment, global digital nomads place significant importance on visa accessibility and tax incentives in their choice of destinations. For example, European countries such as Portugal and Spain have introduced digital nomad visas and special tax policies, attracting a substantial number of international nomads. Chinese digital nomads, influenced by their native language and cultural ties, often prioritize destinations with straightforward visa processes and strong diplomatic relationships with China.

6. Conclusions

From the perspective of lifestyle migration theory, this study examines the preferences and global spatial distribution of Chinese digital nomads in selecting travel destinations, constructing a conceptual model of the factors influencing these choices. Using grounded

theory to analyze video text data, the study identified 12 subcategories and grouped them into five primary dimensions. Spatial distribution analysis reveals that Chinese digital nomads are predominantly concentrated in southern China and Southeast Asia, with smaller populations distributed across Europe, South America, North America, Africa, and Oceania. These findings underscore the close relationship between nomadic living patterns and destination preferences, further validating the role of five core factors in shaping destination choices. The study identifies five dimensions influencing destination preferences: basic living, work, social, travel, and local integrated environment. Unlike traditional office workers or conventional immigrants, digital nomads' highly mobile lifestyle presents unique challenges, including economic uncertainty, unstable interpersonal relationships, lack of fixed residences, and limited social security. Consequently, digital nomads must carefully assess whether the overall environment of their next destination can meet their needs for daily living, work, socialization, and travel. This evaluation is crucial for shaping an ideal lifestyle, fostering identity reconstruction, and achieving self-actualization. The conceptual model developed in this study provides a theoretical foundation for subsequent empirical examinations of the structural dimensions influencing digital nomads' destination choices.

6.1. Theoretical Contribution

This study, grounded in lifestyle migration theory, identifies the structural dimensions influencing digital nomads' destination choices through coding analysis and constructs a conceptual model. This framework provides a theoretical foundation for future empirical studies on the factors shaping destination selection among digital nomads. Unlike traditional applications of lifestyle migration theory, which primarily focus on 20th-century migration patterns in Western contexts under economic or social transformations, digital nomads represent a new migratory group whose behaviors are profoundly influenced by the rapid advancement of digital technologies, widespread internet accessibility, the rise of remote work, and the gig economy. The research identifies five core characteristics driving destination choices, reflecting the unique lifestyle and motivations of digital nomads. These findings extend the applicability of lifestyle migration theory, bridging a critical gap in understanding migration behaviors driven by digital technology. They offer theoretical insights into the mechanisms of lifestyle reshaping among emerging social groups in the contemporary era.

By integrating lifestyle migration theory with the modern phenomenon of digital nomadism, this model not only extends the theory's applicability across temporal dimensions but also enhances its explanatory power regarding spatial and behavioral diversity. The approach highlights both the continuity and evolution of traditional migration theory while emphasizing the novel features of human mobility in the digital age. These contributions advance migration theory in the context of globalization and digitalization. However, it is important to note that while this study expands theoretical understanding, the sample primarily focuses on Asian digital nomads, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the global digital nomad population.

6.2. Managerial Implications

This study explores the comprehensive social environment of destinations, providing profound insights into the global lifestyle and work patterns of digital nomads in China. The research contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of the new tourism market under the wave of digitalization. It supports the transformation of the tourism industry toward higher-quality growth. The findings offer valuable implications for the planning, development, and management of destinations and provide a foundation for differentiated

services to tourism operators, enabling them to meet the needs of this emerging group more accurately. (Figure 5).

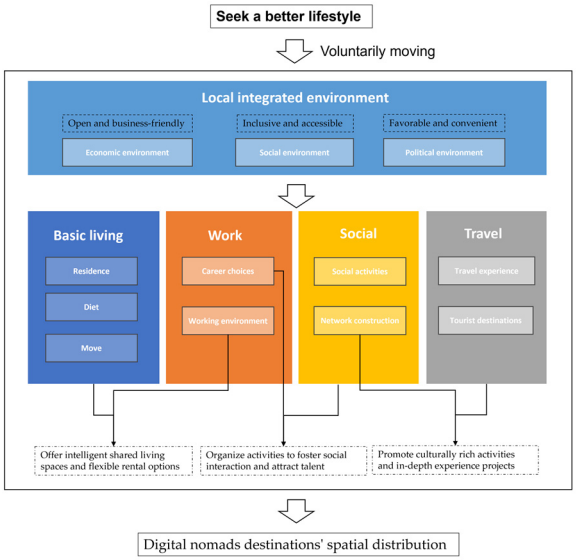

Figure 5. Managerial Implications.

On the individual dimension, destinations should leverage digital technologies to enhance the convenience of living and socializing, offering intelligent shared living spaces and flexible rental options to meet the diverse needs of digital nomads. Organizing both online and offline activities can foster social interaction, strengthen community cohesion, and promote cultural exchange and local economic development. To meet the work needs of digital nomads, destinations should be equipped with office facilities and customized services for nomads. Furthermore, since the digital nomad group includes professionals from various industries, supporting their participation in innovative ecosystems could attract capital and talent, facilitating the deep integration of the economy, culture, and technology, leading to sustainable growth. This will provide a new growth engine for the local economy and contribute to China's urban–rural development and rural revitalization strategies. Additionally, destinations should emphasize the authenticity and uniqueness of their tourism resources, creating customized tourism products and apps that focus on promoting culturally rich activities and in-depth experience projects. This will not only enhance the diversity of local tourism offerings but also foster deeper cultural understanding and emotional connections for digital nomads. They will strengthen their resonance with local customs and traditions by transitioning from mere tourists to cultural participants.

On the National dimension, to attract digital nomads, destinations should focus on creating an open and business-friendly environment, a stable and inclusive social atmosphere, and improved infrastructure and accessibility, alongside implementing policies and regulations that benefit digital nomads. Specifically, destinations should prioritize improving the quality of businesses, optimizing digital payment systems and services, and introducing favorable tax policies to attract investment and talent. Additionally, they should enhance internationalization, respect diverse cultures, combat racial discrimination, and create an inclusive, harmonious social environment. Destinations should streamline visa procedures and entry requirements, ensure political stability, maintain low crime rates, and improve public safety and transport networks to enhance accessibility and provide convenient long-term living and working conditions for digital nomads. Regarding policies and regulations, destinations should simplify the application processes for work permits and residence rights, optimize visa and labor policies, and provide insurance and

healthcare services tailored to digital nomads, thereby offering them a stable and reliable support system.

While actively attracting the emerging group of digital nomads, destination managers and policymakers must also thoroughly assess and mitigate potential negative impacts to ensure local stability and sustainable development. Digital nomads typically possess significant cross-regional income-generating capabilities. In the context of geographic arbitrage, they can achieve a high quality of life in regions with lower living costs. However, this influx of purchasing power can drive up living expenses, such as rent and commodity prices, particularly in small towns or popular cities with limited housing resources. Such increases may place substantial economic pressure on local residents, potentially displacing lower-income groups—a phenomenon known as the "residential displacement effect". The high mobility and short-term stay characteristics of digital nomads hinder the establishment of long-term cultural ties with local communities. This can accelerate cultural homogenization and, in some cases, erode traditional local cultures. Local cultural industries and social structures may gradually shift to accommodate external preferences, weakening local cultural identity and social cohesion. Furthermore, although digital nomads can stimulate short-term economic growth, particularly in consumption-driven service sectors, over-reliance on this group introduces significant risks. Changes in external conditions, such as policy adjustments or visa restrictions, could destabilize local economies due to the transient nature of digital nomads. An economy overly dependent on this demographic may also experience a decline in traditional industries, reducing the region's resilience to economic shocks.

6.3. Limitations and Future Study

Based on lifestyle migration theory, this study explores digital nomads' sojourn place preferences. However, the findings have certain limitations. First, the data primarily comes from Chinese social platforms, which restricts the generalizability of the results and does not fully capture global digital nomads' diverse choices and preferences. Future research should expand the sample to include digital nomads from different regions worldwide, conducting comparative analyses to explore how cross-cultural differences influence destination choice, thereby enhancing the universality and international scope of the conclusions.

Second, the conceptual model developed in this study summarizes and synthesizes the qualitative data, with preliminary findings suggesting that basic living conditions, work environment, and the local comprehensive environment significantly influence decision-making more than social opportunities and travel experiences. Nonetheless, this study does not quantitatively evaluate the relative importance of these factors. Future studies could further develop scales to empirically test the structural dimensions of the conceptual model, exploring in greater depth the specific considerations of digital nomads when choosing destinations and determining the relative importance of these factors, thus improving the depth and precision of the research.

Third, this study acknowledges that digital nomads' psychological perceptions and emotional fluctuations before, during, and after their mobility can profoundly impact their decisions regarding lifestyle, work, and travel. Future research could adopt interdisciplinary perspectives from psychology, sociology, and economics. Analyzing data from other platforms or using in-depth interviews could further explore the influence of individual differences and subjective emotions on decision-making, providing a more nuanced and holistic analytical framework for understanding this group.

Finally, while this study offers directions and recommendations for tourism destinations seeking to attract digital nomads, the theory of lifestyle migration emphasizes that migration is not merely a result of consumption behavior but also closely linked to

the production activities created or maintained by migrants in their new environment. Future research could further investigate the impact of the arrival of digital nomads on the economic development and social structure of destinations and explore how these destinations should respond to these changes.

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