

## Article

# Crossover Paths for Peri-Urban Markets in Tourism Planning and Development: Mobility Motivations, Career Stage, Life Stage, and Desired Characteristics

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**Abstract:** This study is a case examination of multiple types of resident and visitor markets of a county that can be described as a fringe community, having both rural and urban amenities and characteristics. It is part of a larger economic development study examining perceptions towards a fringe community seeking to encourage additional company relocation to the county, entrepreneurial activity, and attraction of new residents and visitors. This research is supported by data collected from an online survey, six focus groups, a “speed survey” of business managers, and secondary data. The various markets examined were visitors, relocates, returnees, retirees, “outsiders”, entrepreneurs, young professionals, and long-time residents; however, the critical findings lie in the overlap of these markets, and how these markets may transition from—or “crossover to”—one to another. The study revealed economic development markets evolving over time, possessing multiple characteristics that are not mutually exclusive; tourism functions as a significant driver along varied dynamic paths. Therefore, the industry’s influence on economic growth should be considered beyond its short-term economics to its role in resident migration. Implications for destination leaders to identify and plan for markets over a lifetime are discussed including those associated with entrepreneurial amenity migration in fringe communities.

**Keywords:** counterurbanization; fringe communities; amenity migration; crossover pathways; economic development markets; mixed methods



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## 1. Introduction

There has been a long-held assumption that tourism development has the potential to stimulate economic growth through activities that bring in “new” money from tourists to local economies. While new jobs are created through tourism businesses that capture direct expenditures, barring economic leakages [1,2], supporting businesses to circulate this money, and creating indirect and induced effects from the original spending (i.e., multiplier effect) [3]. However, the directionality of the relationship between tourism (as a form of economic development) and economic growth is no longer assumed [4,5], and many have begun to identify specific factors that might affect the degree of tourism-led economic growth within a destination [6–8]. In light of the growing critical examination of the causal relationship between tourism and economic growth, scholars need to consider a more holistic view of the role of tourism development and the various avenues for which it contributes to economic growth. This paper draws upon historic data to develop new ways of thinking about the directional pathways between tourism and other forms of economic development.

Important to this discussion, then, is that not only does tourism represent an industry sector that may bring in new earnings and job creation to a community, but tourism development also reflects social, built, and cultural processes that may be critical for development of a community [4,9]. When framed in such a way, it can be noted that tourism development often leads to the enhancement of quality of life for local residents as well. This may include attracting businesses such as restaurants, shopping, entertainment, and attractions to the community. Likewise, this may include investment into aesthetic and built infrastructure such as proper lighting, sidewalks and pedestrian connectivity, beautification projects, and support for basic infrastructure needs (e.g., water treatment, sewage). Furthermore, amenities such as parks, greenways, cultural sites, and other public spaces that can host events (e.g., farmers' market, "music on the green") also become a focus of making the destination attractive to potential tourists [10,11]. In other words, the clustering of these types of initiatives not only attract tourists and contribute to the satisfaction of their experiences while at the destination, but—if planned and managed sustainably—they can benefit the local residents by improving their quality of life as well. Tourism development should, after all, fundamentally lead to "a clear improvement in the conditions of life and livelihood of ordinary people" [12] (p. 9).

Chambers of commerce and other economic development organizations have long held the responsibility of appealing to potential new businesses and residents while also attracting visitors to their communities to gain economic benefits through tourism. This notion highlights the similarities of promoting a high quality of life that would exist for future employers and their employees that may relocate to the community for work, and the attractions and activities that make the community a place worth visiting for tourists. As such, research has observed that there is a positive relationship between tourism development and the migration of new residents [13–16]. While this research suggests that some tourists may transition to residents—which can bring about continuous economic gains—there are distinct market segments within these in-migration groups worth noting. For instance, in the context of rural communities, past research has shown that the tourism industry offers opportunities to attract new small businesses and entrepreneurs, especially those associated with lifestyle motivations [17,18]. The effects of in-migration may be even more substantial when new residents are entrepreneurs and young professionals who have much to contribute to a local economy [19]. Furthermore, studies have shown that when retirees move to new communities, they too contribute to the tax base, spend money in the economy on goods and services, and may even provide volunteer time that adds economic value to their local communities [14,20,21]. Retirees may also create both new market demand and bring with them depth of financial and business capital that can lead to prosperity in the local economy [22].

With this in mind, this study considers the phenomenon of various in-migration markets (i.e., visitors, relocatees, retirees, "outsiders", entrepreneurs, young professionals) within the context of a fringe community. Fringe communities, sometimes referred to as exurbia, the peri-urban, the rurban, or the rural–urban fringe, represent communities that have blurred place identity; they were once distinctively defined as rural, but now embody qualities of the urban as well [23]. Resources and amenities available in fringe communities have the potential to attract new residents, particularly *amenity migrants*, who desire a certain lifestyle that would be supported in this community context [16,24–26]. Importantly, fringe communities offer an attractive space for new business development; for instance, researchers have found that the natural, scenic, and greenspace views in these spaces contribute to employee well-being, with the organizational benefits of productive and engaged workers, which potentially aid in increased business development in these locations [27]. Though amenity migrants are most commonly talked about with retirees, there is increasing reason to consider how amenity migrants may represent entrepreneurs and young professionals attracted to the same amenity-rich fringe areas to start careers or businesses, a phenomenon that can be described as *entrepreneurial amenity migration* [26].

Building on the nascent tourism research in fringe settings, e.g., [28–36], this study investigates the perceptions across various resident, visitor, and outsider markets to a county that can be described as a fringe community. The research presented in this paper is a part of a larger economic development study that examined perceptions towards company relocation to the county, entrepreneurial activity, and attraction of new residents and visitors. The three questions guiding the present study are as follows: *Who are the tourist and migration markets? What attracts them to fringe communities? What is their pathway to residency?* The markets discussed include visitors, relocates, returnees, retirees, outsiders, entrepreneurs, young professionals, and long-time residents. The findings of this research, which is informed by an online survey, six focus groups, a “speed survey” of business managers, and examination of available secondary data, have implications for fringe communities looking to attract various tourist markets; however, the contribution of the study goes beyond tourism, as we examine how residential and visitor markets feed into one another, utilizing a variety of data points to include in the “story” of Moore County, North Carolina, USA, whose location as a peri-urban community has both advantages and disadvantages.

### 1.1. Literature Review

The relationship between tourism and migration remains complex, multifaceted, and nuanced [37]. Initially, Williams and Hall [38] called attention to the relatively scant literature that had focused on the relationship between tourism and migration, citing that disparate bodies of knowledge had not yet been substantially integrated to create meaning about the direct and nuanced ways in which the social phenomena intersected. Conceptually, they offered five specific types of tourism–migration relationships—tourism and labor migration (tourism attracts new workers to support businesses), tourism and return migration (those returning to their origin, often bringing with them financial savings), tourism and entrepreneurial migration (those attracted to the lifestyle of the community and amenity seekers who make a profession from it), tourism and retirement migration (those moving to retire into the lifestyle and amenities of the community), and second homes (includes an extreme blurring between tourist and migrant, and visits can happen temporarily off and on through the lifespan)—have held firm as one of the more important attempts to provide an analytical framework for thinking about the pathways from tourist to resident.

In practice, these categories often blend. For example, scholars have explored return migration in the context of rural Portugal [39,40], finding that immigrants (ages 29–39 in particular) are interested in returning to and investing in tourism in their rural home communities. As another example [41] investigated, the ways in which return visits of Eastern Caribbean migrants residing in Toronto, Canada, resulted in both social visibility and, eventually, return migration. Using Florida’s creative class theory [42], Xiong, Zhang, and Lee examined tourism and entrepreneurial migration of the creative class to two towns in the suburbs of Chengdu City in the Sichuan Province of China [43]. Specifically, the in-migration comprised Chinese (predominantly reflecting 30–39-year-old participants) individuals who were looking to engage in tourism entrepreneurship. They found that these migrants were willing to allocate more resources into innovation and management operations. Finally, second home tourism, which as an umbrella term—encompassing the phenomenon of people who own a second dwelling for the purpose of leisure and recreation [44]—is interconnected with both amenity and retirement migration [45]. Stemming from early seminal work on the topic [46], some researchers have considered the motivations of second homeownership, which includes interest in the rural lifestyle and retirement planning, among other factors [47]. As Hall [44] notes, destination managers and tourism planners need to consider the longer-term trends of retirement, lifestyle, and amenity migration; as an offshoot of being a successful destination, second homes have the ability to challenge policy, create challenges for local governance and policy, and affect the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of a community. To this end, the importance of

exploring these various types of migration is also centered on the potential for economic growth from them that may be triggered, at least in part, by tourism activity.

Industry has taken note of the economic opportunities to leverage tourism for longer-term amenity and retirement migration. For example, the Center for Carolina Living explored this phenomenon in North and South Carolina, USA: using a proprietary survey with over 4000 visitors to the Carolinas annually, coupled with U.S. census data, forecasting data, and empirical research, the organization argues that the USD 44.2 billion of tourism dollars spent within the two states in 2016 is the precursor to in-migration spending of new residents who had previously visited [48]. Terming them “turbo-tourists”, these are visitors turned relocatees who return to live after several exploratory trips, making an unprecedented economic impact to the local economies [49]. They suggest that, of the approximately 77 million tourists visiting the Carolinas each year, approximately 8 million of them are looking to relocate, or consider partial residence in the states, for the purpose of furthering a career, starting a new business, or purchasing a second home [38]. This is also supported by research from Longwood International who conducted a study of 18,000 consumers and found that positive tourism advertising and a positive visit influence their perceptions of a destination as a good place to live, start a business, start a career, attend college, retire, and purchase a vacation home [50]. The idea that travel is a precursor to becoming a new resident can also be observed in recent state-wide campaigns targeting retirees. For example, boasted on the “Retire North Carolina” webpage in 2020 ([www.Retirenc.com](http://www.Retirenc.com), accessed on 4 January 2022), a function of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the tagline is, “Imagine returning home to a vacation” [51]. Further, in 2013 the Selig Center for Economic Growth recommended that the state of Georgia build on retiree-based economic development because it can grow and diversify the economy. For instance, they found it would only take 1.8 in-migrating retirees to generate one job for a Georgian, but business sectors that would also be keen to grow include healthcare, home building, and retail [52].

However, the idea of attracting tourists to stay permanently incites questions regarding our understanding of the fluidness between market segment classifications (returnee, relocatee, retiree), how we understand pathways to residency (from tourist to resident), and our assumption that this activity leads to economic growth. The Center for Carolina Living [48], for instance, cautions overselling to retirees who may not “have enough money in the bank”, because the financial burden may not be a benefit to their new communities. They have also noted two distinct types of turbo-tourists: according to their research, 63% of these relocatees are over 50 years old and have savings in a bank as a result of being in a mature stage of their career; furthermore, these people are moving for some type of entrepreneurial opportunity or amenity-driven retirement goal. The remaining 37% of turbo-tourists are under 50 years old, reflecting the creative class as an educated, younger market looking to fulfill career or entrepreneurial goals (see [42]). The second market is perhaps more important, particularly in the sense that they have a future career (and economic impact) that they may bring to the local economy. With this in mind, this study considered the context of an amenity-rich fringe community (Moore County in North Carolina) to explore various pathways to migration.

### *1.2. Fringe Communities and Counterurbanization*

Existing between the outskirts of major cities, metropolitan areas, and traditional “suburbia”, fringe communities are typified by the constant, rapid growth they face under pressures of counterurbanization (i.e., exurbanization, or individuals moving to the countryside) [29,53]. Part of this phenomenon is reflective of amenity migration, which includes individuals who are seeking the distinctive resources that rural communities can provide [24,54–57]. Fringe communities often have a wealth of natural, cultural, and built resources and amenities that attract visitors and support resident quality of life alike. Natural resources can include mountains, lakes, access to outdoor spaces (e.g., trailheads), and pastoral farmland that may appeal to nature-based, outdoor recreation, and agri-

tourism activities. Likewise, cultural resources that attract history and heritage, rural, and other cultural tourists may include quaint downtown settings, local museums, farms, art festivals and carnivals [29,30,33,58].

Amenity migration can result in a change of demographics in ways that may shift locus of control of development decisions, employment opportunities, cost of living, and challenge a community's traditional identity [59]. Additionally, while demographic shifts have been noted [24,60,61], questions remain as to who these amenity migration markets reflect beyond their interest in the natural or cultural resources of the area. Some have considered amenity migrants to often be retirees [24]. However, others have noted that amenities and "quality of life issues" have become central to the discussion of migration among workforce age individuals (both high and low skilled workers); that is, it is not only about the job, but the desirability of the location is an important factor in the decision [62,63]. Still, this phenomenon has traditionally been studied from a binary of "old timers" to "newcomers"; as Qin [57] suggests, there is potential to rethink the homogenous classifications of this comparison that may provide a new understanding of the effects of migration. For instance, "returnees" and second home owners blur these fuzzy binaries [38]. Thus, it is important to examine migration markets to fringe communities, and how migrants develop a relationship with the community. Had they previously been tourists to the area? Had they lived there previously and are returning, or are they relocating?

Tourism literature has noted that previous visitation to communities as tourists is the precursor to moving permanently [13–16]. Other literature on counterurbanization trends specifically noted that migratory movement results in second homes purchasing, where individuals who were once seasonal travelers to rural areas become permanent residents [37,64]. To this end, while second home or seasonal home ownership is contested for whether it qualifies as a form of migration [65], others have found that it is still important to note because second home ownership can trigger retirement migration in later life [66]. Conversely, Cromartie, von Reichert, and Arthun [67] found that some individuals relocate back to rural communities to be closer to family, provide opportunities to their family for outdoor recreation, and school systems that will provide their children more opportunities in sport. What is more, with placeless industries becoming a significant part of the economy—such as technology and communication companies—there is also an opportunity to consider whether fringe communities are attracting young professionals or entrepreneurs that could create the "turbo tourist" effect [38]. Furthermore, a budding focus on *entrepreneurial amenity migration* has also emerged with a direct connection to tourism, because some that could be identified as part of this market are starting businesses within the tourism and recreation economy [53].

### 1.3. Entrepreneurship in Fringe Communities

While the success of small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures is linked to established relationships with local community networks [68,69], it has also been found that entrepreneurs and small business owners seek out fringe areas for enhanced lifestyles and improved business prospects [17,18,38]. To this end, communities provide space for new business development and entrepreneurial activity because the natural resources can contribute to quality of life and employee well-being [27]. Thus, the relationship between tourism development and the attraction of new residents is inherent. In a longitudinal study, Kuentzel and Ramaswamy [15] found that, though a secondary concern or motivation, a positive relationship existed between tourism development (e.g., recreational activities, museums, restaurants, etc.) and migration/residential development. However, the study also suggested that other factors, such as integral economic and social situations, acted as the primary influencers of an individual's change in residence.

The importance of understanding what attracts various in-migration market segments is important as traditional tourism and economic development authorities continue to ramp-up marketing and advertising attempts to attract new residents. Yet, being a tourist may not be the only path to residency as there may be other types of relationships with the

area that influence one's decision to become a resident. Thus, further guiding questions of this study include the following: *Who are the tourist and migration markets? What attracts them to fringe communities? What is their pathway to residency?*

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Study Area

Moore County, North Carolina is situated in a unique region called the "Sandhills" on the east coast of the USA, halfway between New York and Florida, where there are mild winters and elevations are no higher than 1000 feet; these attributes, in addition to its longleaf pine ecosystem, have contributed to it being a popular golf destination. It is close to major military installations, Fort Bragg and Pope Airfield, and centrally located between the state's three biggest airports [70].

The population pushed over 100,000 residents in 2019 and is expected to be 120,000 by 2035 with 1.4% annual growth; however, 2.4 million people live within a 60-mile radius of the county [70]. Moore County, with the population it has, is not an urban county. It has three main townships—Aberdeen, Pinehurst, and Southern Pines—all of which have small town charm. Many of the county residents are clustered closely within these three townships, which collectively provide city-like amenities (e.g., shopping and business opportunities), while much of the land is considered rural. Moore County is an ideal description of a "fringe" or peri-urban county given its proximity to metro areas and rural land, which give it a dual identity. Therefore, the study is presented as having potential application to other fringe regions, whereby tourism activity intersects with other economic development markets. Moore County came to be a golfing destination when, in the late 1800s, James Walker Tufts bought 6000 acres and hired Frederick Law Olmstead to design the Village of Pinehurst. Leveraging these early beginnings, there are now 40 premier golf courses within a 15-mile radius of Moore County, which have brought prestige to the area by hosting various golf tournaments (e.g., U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, The Ryder Cup) [71,72].

The area has annual total estimated tourism visits of 1.1 million in 2018; 71% of these visitors are college graduates [71,72]. Moore County ranks 11th out of 100 counties in North Carolina in terms of visitor revenues, earning over USD 520 million in 2018, an almost 6% increase from 2017. Tourism is the second biggest employer in the area [70], with over 6000 people working in the industry and the tourism payroll reaching over USD 1.2 million dollars in 2018 [71]. The majority of visitors to the county (84%) plan to play golf; the top three visitor activities beside golf include dining, shopping, and spa treatments [71], activities found in more cosmopolitan destinations. This also reflects previous literature, that has suggested golf courses are a common feature in fringe communities [30,33].

### 2.2. Study Design

This study is situated within the context of a larger consulting project focusing on resident, visitor, and outside perceptions of Moore County, and was designed to inform a marketing campaign led by the local economic development group, *Moore County Partners in Progress* (PIP). PIP wanted to know why people move to Moore County, and how all residents felt about living and working in Moore County. There were four markets identified by PIP that would form the foundation of the project. These were groups of residents who came to live in the county for various reasons: *traditional retirees*, *returnees* (or people who grew up there, left for college/work, and then returned), *relocatees* (who were either active or recently retired military personnel or others who have relocated to the county for work or family), and *outsiders* (which focused on young professionals and families who are residents of the nearby Raleigh–Durham and Fayetteville, NC areas). However, once the data collection was underway, it was apparent that other markets were definable and relevant.

The methods used to collect data were deliberately wide-ranging; all data was collected in 2013 (Table 1). The questions were adapted to the three specific primary data collection

formats; however, a deliberate overlap of concepts was used. The common goal across the efforts was to discover people's views about Moore County as a place to live and work; aspects that could be improved about Moore County; how the atmosphere/ecosystem was perceived for young professionals, entrepreneurs, and young retirees; types of businesses/industry missing within the county that fit with the area's location, current industry base, human resources, heritage, and culture. Specifically, five types of data were amassed to complete the consulting project itself, and the concepts developed in this paper grew from the synthesis and analysis of these data pools. The design of these data collection methods took over six months and the collection process itself spanned three months (Table 1). Because the emphasis of this research is exploring the macro-level patterns that were revealed across the entirety of the methods, and because individual dataset results are previously published, we do not explicate survey and focus group findings separately here.

**Table 1.** Study methods.

Data Collection Method	Data Collection Dates	Responses	Notes
Online survey	7 May–10 July	600	19% living outside county
Focus group	27 May–28 July	Six groups; 26 total informants	Outside county = 6 Moore Young Professionals = 6 Moore County's chapter of Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) = 4 Other residents varying age, residential length in county, and affiliation with the military = 10
Speed survey (door-to-door short survey within varying business districts)	31 May and 1 June	132	Business owners, managers, and employees from throughout the county
Secondary data regarding region and surrounding counties	N/A	N/A	National Survey of Recreation and the Environment; NC Department of Commerce; NC State Parks; US Census; USDA Economic Research Service; US Bureau of Labor Statistics
Existing reports, plans, and websites	N/A	N/A	CVB tourism strategic plan; Moore County Partners in Progress website; Moore County Economic Development Strategic Plan

The original findings from the structured online survey data, speed survey data, and focus group data are synthesized below in order to draw conclusions on patterns and formulate a model of relationships between and among markets. Data analysis integrating the statistical results from both the online and speed surveys, content analysis from surveys, content analysis from the focus groups, and a summary of secondary data analysis, are shown below. Results from two statistical analyses were previously published (see redacted) and the meaning of these analyses has also been included. Thus, this study reflects the collective discourses and themes that crossed over the different types of data in order to describe the macro-level migration trends and the pathways to residencies that threaded across the study.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Description of Primary Data Sample

The sample for the online survey was 93% White, 67% female, with almost half (46%) of the sample reflective of the baby boomer generation (aged 49–67 at the time of the survey), followed by 33.9% from the gen X generation (aged 33–48). A proportion of 8% could be considered young professionals and almost half (48%) of the sample worked in the public sector. Nearly one third were in the private sector (12.5%) or owned their own business (17.3%). One sixth (16%) had a direct association with the military, one third (33.7%) had friends or family in the military, and another tenth (9.7%) are civilian employees with the military or have business dealings with the military. The sample had a high education level with 40% holding a Bachelor's degree and an additional 36.5% holding a graduate degree. Just over 43% had household incomes of USD 100,000 or greater. Over

one third (35.7%) considered themselves entrepreneurial, while another 31.4% said they were somewhat/sometimes entrepreneurial. Just over 11% returned to live in Moore County after moving away (designating them as a returnee), 11% had retired there (retiree), and nearly one quarter (24.8%) moved to Moore County for professional reasons (relocate).

The ages of the focus group participants ranged from 25 to 87 years; the groups totaled 11 females and 15 males. All participants identified as White. The participants who lived within Moore County had varying residential tenure in the county, ranging from one year to 28 years; they all considered themselves “very active” in the community. Non-residents stated that they had a fairly good–strong familiarity with the county.

The speed surveys were completed by 55 business owners, 37 managers, 33 employees, and 7 others/unknowns. Businesses ranged from insurance companies, to restaurants, to banks, to medical facilities, to industrial suppliers, to retail shops. Over 27% were from the northern and more rural parts of the county. The gender, age, and race of the respondents were not recorded.

### 3.2. Attractive Qualities of Fringe Communities

Residents are enthusiastic about the quality of life in Moore County; one study participant aptly described its appeal as “small town living with big city amenities”. Because towns within the county are of moderate size—neither cities nor rural towns—residents are split in how they think of the scale of the economy and community. Some, primarily those who moved from larger areas (*relocatees*), feel that the scale is too small, while others who are comfortable with the current scale worry that economic growth will occur too quickly and perhaps obscure some of the more charming elements of the county. At the same time however, many residents expressed a desire to see additional job opportunities, development of low-cost public recreational activities, expansion of restaurants that offer unique/diverse food options, and varied price points within retail establishments. The overall charm of the town was repeatedly mentioned and appreciated by study participants across data sources.

The location of the county is both a strength and weakness. The strength is its centrality, as well as its proximity to other urban areas in the state, to the beach, and to the mountains. The location also provides the foundation for beautiful natural resources. The weakness is that it is a bit “out of the way”, taking over an hour to reach from major urban hubs [23,24,26]. The county relies on hospitality and personal services, health care, education, and government jobs. Therefore, it is recommended that the industrial base be broadened to include manufacturing, “green” industries, location-neutral jobs, and complimentary or ancillary services for RTP businesses.

Human capital is also considered one of the greatest assets of the community, and the diverse intellectual and cultural backgrounds of the residents, was cited frequently. The social and cultural assets of the community include the arts, restaurants, quality and quantity of golf, equestrian facilities, and the main street in Southern Pines. Mirroring past migration studies [52,53], people move to the country for both work and amenities: specifically, military or military-related work, to be near family of all generations (e.g., grandchildren, adult children, parents), for the excellent golfing opportunities, and the climate were all cited as drivers for migrating. This was also similar to a study of retiree migration to South Carolina, USA, that found some of the motivators for location choice to be climate and recreational activities [14]. Many respondents mentioned that moving offered them a chance to escape a frenetic pace of life, higher costs of living, and traffic congestion often found in big cities. That said, non-residents/outsideers who were asked about the potential of moving to the county expressed concern about affordable real estate, the availability of diverse activities for young adults and families, and the quality of public schools. Additionally, non-residents/outsideers perceive the county as being too homogenous, older, and conservative, and they worry if they will find people like themselves and/or a big enough customer base. Overall, there is a perception among non-residents that it is an expensive area to live. Non-residents also said they would need assistance finding office space, financial incentives, raising capital, and broadband internet if they were going to

start a business in the county. The slower pace of the county is not as attractive to the young adults who move to the area for work and/or who return to their home region after finishing college. They noted that the county needs “more of everything” for young adults, including jobs, recreational activities, professional development and networking opportunities, affordable and modern housing, nightlife, and transportation to nearby metro areas [23,24,26]. Most participants wanted more variety from the current boutique, Walmart, and strip mall offerings.

All participants were asked to select the words that they associate with the towns and residents of Moore County. The most frequently cited responses were “Retirement area” (55.4%), “Charming” (54.2%), “Friendly” (48.1%), “Clean” (47.6%), “Historic” (45.3%), “Safe” (41.5%), and “Quiet” (40.2%). Residents were most frequently thought to be “Retired” (55.7%), “Friendly” (46.6%), “Military-friendly” (45.5%), “Educated” (43.8%), and “Conservative” (42.2%). Respondents were asked to comment on readily available amenities in the county; those mentioned the most often were farmers markets (54.7%), hotels (52.9%), coffee shops (52.4%), great restaurants (48.6%), gyms/fitness centers (46.6%), parks/open space (45.8%), public library (45.1%), and scenic beauty (45.6%) [28].

Residents are aware of the economic disparity between the northern (more rural) and southern halves of the county (where the three townships are located) and would like to see more put in place to provide opportunity to the north. When examining the elements that support a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, opinions differed somewhat between several groups within the county: rural and town residents, long-time residents, and newer residents, males and females, Whites and non-Whites, and upper- and lower-income residents. The category of amenities that held the greatest amount of disagreement was “Basic Community Needs” which was made up of items that reflected quality medical care, affordable housing, and public safety [28]. Despite issues that some residents would like to see resolved, residents in general have a “can-do spirit” and express optimism for a bright future for Moore County.

Within the online survey, speed survey, and focus groups, respondents were asked to rate a number of amenities and characteristics of the county on a school grading scale, where A was outstanding, C was average, and F was failing. Most respondents felt positive about the atmosphere and amenities in Moore County as they relate to traditional retirees (65 and older) and young retirees, giving it an A. The atmosphere for entrepreneurs was awarded a B overall, and the atmosphere for young professionals a B−/C+.

### 3.3. Profiles of Migration Markets

At the outset of the project, PIP demarcated their target markets by a mix of three factors: relocation motivation (and potential relocation motivation), life stage/professional status, and geographical origin. They specified that the study should focus on retirees, returnees, relocatees, and outsiders (nonresidents); however, as the project continued, it became evident they were also interested in learning about how they might attract young professionals, how to be appealing to homegrown or outside entrepreneurs, and how to best serve the military families who relocate to the area temporarily for their “assignment”. As such, each of these markets was deemed “desirable” by the community client. Below is a snapshot of each based on the study findings.

*Traditional Retirees:* In addition to being solely defined by their reason to move to the county, traditional retirees can also bear classifications such as golfers, military, grandparents, urbanites, northerners, international, former visitors, second home owners, and/or long-time residents. They are attracted to the area for its climate, beauty, charm, golf, horse facilities, sailing, medical facilities, location, family, cost of living, and slower pace of life. This profile reflects trends in past research on amenity migration, retirement migration, and second home tourists [37].

*Returnees:* This group come back to the county for work, to be near family, or to raise a family, and for the atmosphere (slower pace, mild climate). They are mainly baby boomers, but increasingly there are gen X (38–53 years old) and gen Y (25–37 years old). Literature on

return migration theoretically supports this profile [39,40]; however, previous research has mostly looked at the return migration on a global scale where the migrants are crossing international borders [41,47].

*Relocates:* In this study, relocatees came to Moore County to take a job, create a business, or serve in the military, as well as for the beauty and charm, and the golf. They are primarily baby boomers and gen X, have families, or less frequently are single young professionals, and at least half could be considered somewhat or fully entrepreneurial. This aligns with past research on the movement of the creative class within tourism and entrepreneurial migration [43].

*Outsiders:* This group were found to overlap with the relocatees; however, few outsiders from the nearby urban Raleigh–Durham area expressed interest in moving to Moore County. The military seem to be a stronger market, as they are looking for an alternative to living in an adjacent military town—Fayetteville. In this regard, outsiders are non-residents who have no prior residency in the county.

However, the analysis revealed three other strong markets that PIP should focus on, indicating a needed shift in how markets are considered, hopefully thereby executing more efficient and nuanced marketing strategies. These markets are briefly outlined below.

*The Military Market:* This group includes active duty, retired, and civilian employees and contractors. The group was discussed informally as an important part of the community, but was, in general, lumped into the relocatee market. The data showed, however, that some military personnel could also be classified as retirees, having served in the Moore County area during an earlier career phase and were subsequently transferred elsewhere only to return after retirement. Additionally, there were some returnees who were originally from the area and who once enrolled in the military sought a permanent assignment back to their home region. While the military market is particularly unique to the case of Moore County, it reflects markets with temporary residency conditions, such as students attending a boarding school or university.

*Young professionals:* This group was also heavily discussed as a coveted but elusive resident; however, they also were found to be spread across returnee and relocatee markets. The non-resident outsider market, while aware of Moore County, did not necessarily associate it with a better quality of life than a moderate-sized city. Moore County leaders recognized that the positive perception of amenities, identity, and reputation of the local area are currently more aligned with an older crowd. Though areas may provide rich resources and opportunities for young professionals, social dynamics, such as generational differences, have implications of settlement decisions [24].

*Entrepreneurs:* Within both private sector and non-profit and government sector organizations, entrepreneurs were also a desired group who were discussed by PIP leadership throughout the course of the study. Clearly, they represent a group of creative, innovative, and passionate individuals who are known to infuse economic and cultural vitality into a “place” and who were desired as a target market by PIP. Similarly, Komppula’s [18] research supports this as entrepreneurs contribute to a destination’s competitive nature and they can attract other businesses which may facilitate economic growth [43].

#### 4. Discussion: Pathways to Migration in Fringe Communities

One of the more practical contributions of this study is development of a framework of market segment classifications that allows for a more layered and dynamic understanding of the pathways to migration. Figure 1 outlines the segment classifications that came out of this particular study; it would be exciting to further develop these market considerations relevant to different geographic, cultural, economic, and touristic contexts. The figure depicts factors that can differentiate market segments but are not the market segments themselves, since the factors represented are not mutually exclusive characteristics of individuals. Specifically within Moore County, the markets were defined by their “mobility motivation” (e.g., returnee, relocatee, and retiree) as well as their status of resident or non-resident (outsider). However, it became apparent that the market’s life stage (young

professional, family, mid-career) was also important to PIP. The connection between life course/life stage and migration pathways is something Williams and Hall [38] called for in future research. Additionally, beyond these classifications, PIP leaders wanted to attract entrepreneurial individuals and/or those who would otherwise “invest” in the community through volunteerism, participation in community activities or leadership, and whose intellectual and social capital would contribute to the greater good of the county. This idea is consistent with past research that has suggested that entrepreneurs may have outsized effects to local economies [19]; additionally, retirees have been shown to volunteer their time in ways that add economic value [14].

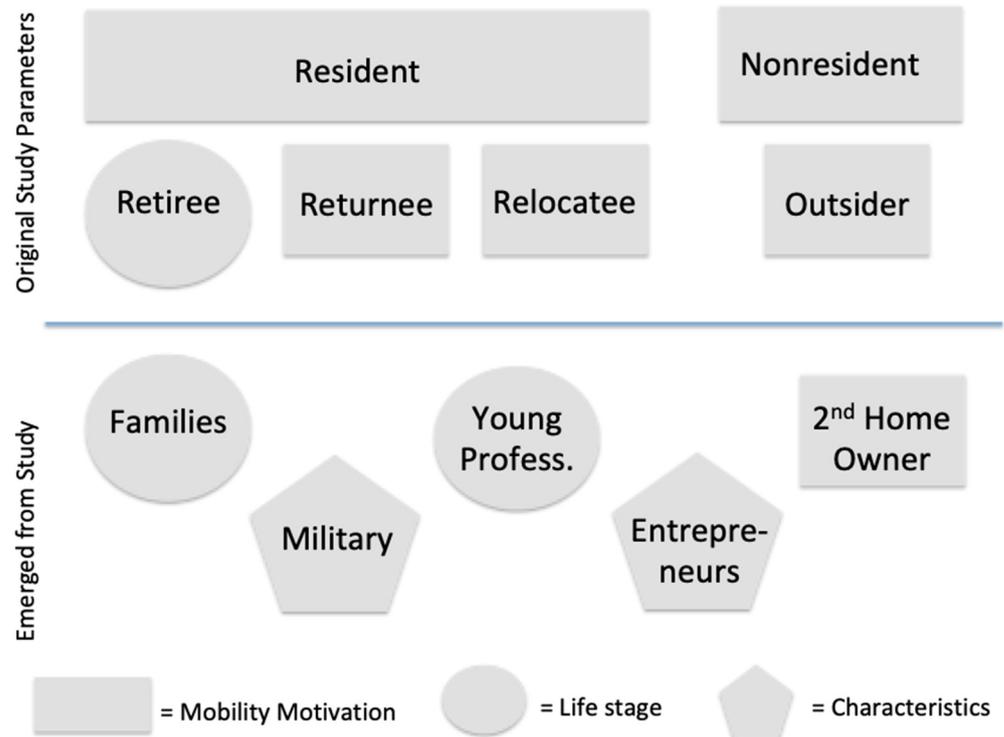


Figure 1. Mobility motivations, life stage, and desired characteristics.

Another contribution of this study was the identification and outlining of patterns or “pathways” that represent the complicated relationship between types of markets. Rather than traditional market segmentation techniques that classify groups of people into market typologies—which then further tries to distinguish them via differences in characteristics—our study proposes a layered and dynamic approach to viewing markets. Further, supporting previous research that has found a positive relationship between tourism and the migration of new residents [13–16], this study also demonstrates the importance of tourism within the pathway of various other forms of economic development, providing another reason why tourism should firmly have a place at the table of mainstream economic development. Figure 2 displays four examples of such pathways that this study uncovered, demonstrating where being a tourist emerges in the pathway towards residency.

*Example Pathway 1:* A resident grows up in Moore County but moves away for educational and/or career reasons. During their time away, they visited Moore County to see friends and family, thus becoming a part of the VFR market. Once their career is completed, they have the option to choose where to live out the next phase of their life, and chooses to return to their hometown. At this point, this resident may retire (retiree), or may begin a second job or start an entrepreneurial venture (returnee) before retirement. A subset of this group may have selected a military career and may have opted to retire at age 50 or under (for example).

*Example Pathway 2:* A tourist visits Moore County to enjoy golf, spa, and the budding culinary scene. As their career progresses, they have the opportunity to work remotely from or start a business in Moore County, and they moved their family there (relocatee). When they have the ability to retire, they and their partner decide to stay in Moore County (retiree).

*Example Pathway 3:* A person moves to Moore County for work purposes (permanent or temporary relocatee). While there, friends or family come to visit them, become attracted to the location, and decide to retire there (alternatively, they might relocate there to start a business or take another position).

*Example Pathway 4:* A tourist visits Moore County for their equestrian activities. At some point, they want to be more than a tourist but are unable or unwilling to become a full-time resident. At this stage, they buy or build a second residence. Once retired, they may decide to make the Moore County home their permanent residence. All the while that they own this property, they entertain and share it with friends who come to visit, essentially bringing in additional tourists to the county.

#### Pathway 1.



#### Pathway 2.



#### Pathway 3.



#### Pathway 4.



**Figure 2.** Sample market pathways.

These four examples are only representations of a myriad of potential paths that beg further consideration in other contexts. While more attention has been paid to tourism providing a path to new residence (i.e., pathways 2, 3, 4) [14], this analysis demonstrates that there are many other aspects to consider. Broader implications and major takeaways follow.

#### *Discussion: Implications*

Returning to the research questions of this study—Who are the tourist and migration markets? What attracts them? What is their pathway?—there are several practical implications that can be drawn.

First, *tourism figures prominently in several pathways and types of economic development* [13–16]. It is highly unlikely that a person would transition from being a nonresident outsider to becoming a relocatee or retiree, without the mediating role of being a tourist. Similarly, a tourist would likely be a step in the process of becoming a second home owner. Hidalgo and Zunino [73] noted in their study of mobility processes that there was a pathway of a visit, followed by real estate acquisition or second home purchasing.

These pathways reveal more unrecognized potential than simply “going after tourists”. Instead, a community might design strategies and messages to attract second home owners, relocatees, and retirees, realizing the importance of visiting as a tourist before becoming a migrant [13–16]. If destination managers and suppliers wish for their tourism efforts and

resources invested to be more effective in positively affecting the greater economy and quality of life, these potential patterns and pathways should be taken into account [7–10].

To that end, the impact of tourism activity is not merely a day, a weekend, or a week—it could be for decades. Not only is it important for economic development leaders to understand the role of tourism, but also local elected officials, as noted by Hall [44]. Within North Carolina, there has been negative feedback from politicians on occupancy tax and building moratoriums, and policy decisions are made that affect both the community and the tourism industry (i.e., decisions regarding homelessness, closing hours, alcohol sales, sharing economy, environmental restrictions) that potentially could impact the current nonresident who could start down a pathway to residency. To plan tourism activity and development, leaders must not think about static, exclusive, and insular markets anymore—to do so would be too narrow. This notion mirrors the shift in tourism planning discourses that now center goals of planning on resident quality of life and other community-centric concerns [11,74].

Finally, there was strong interest by economic development leaders to attract entrepreneurs and young professionals. While the literature supports the notion that they can lead to sizable contributions to the local economy [18,19,43], there needs to be a focused strategy on entrepreneurial amenity migrants [26]. For example, highlighting opportunities for new businesses connected to the amenities and lifestyle of the community (often those associated with tourism, such as this case, golf) may be attractive to this potential market [11,17,18].

Second, *tourist activity can influence more than just repeat visits and referrals*. Families may often relocate to be near relatives; similarly, individuals or couples may influence their peer groups to relocate over time. Therefore, a tourist visiting may be thought of as a “potential pioneer” to bring in visiting friends and relatives (VFR) if they were to retire, move, or purchase a second home in the destination (see Example Pathway 4 above).

Further, second home homeowners typically make a decision to downsize and sell one or more houses. Therefore, part of the goal of the tourism efforts/strategy is to use the original attractiveness of the destination to convert the multi-home owner to a retiree in that community. As Marjavaara and Lundholm [56] noted, second home ownership can indeed trigger retirement migration, and further noted the chances of this being the case is higher in those purchasing a second home when they are already close to retirement (between ages 55 and 70 years old). This suggests that there could be specifically partnerships between PIP and other economic development firms and the realty companies to create targeted campaigns towards those purchasing second homes while in this age bracket.

Third, *markets are not mutually exclusive and are dynamic, and therefore should always be considered as such in research, planning, development, and marketing efforts*. Just as within this study, many community leaders and researchers will have natural inclinations on how they wish to primarily define their economic markets—these inclinations likely reflect important issues of what is driving their decisions in the present moment of time. Secondary considerations, which are additional motivations, characteristics, and family stages must be taken into account from the onset of a study or strategic planning process to the degree that it is possible. This notion aligns with other tourist market segmentation and specialized niche tourism research that has called for more sophisticated ways for conceptualizing and analyzing segments that account for overlap in dimensions/markets and fuzziness between concepts [7–10].

Finally, *markets that flow through crossover pathways provide alternative ways to understand your customers*. The four initial markets provided by PIP combined with the markets that emerged from the study work to illustrate the potency of moving beyond target markets to *pathways of how the markets relate to one another*. Understanding how these markets move through the pathways, i.e., cross over from one market label into another, has far-reaching implications for segmenting, targeting, and positioning. Our study has demonstrated that tourism and migration have complex interactions [37], where these

markets are dynamic in their relations to one another; therefore, strategies must be multi-layered and situational.

## 5. Conclusions

From a consulting project on economic development markets, a new perspective on tourism activity emerged. The contribution of this study is its illustration that markets evolve over time and possess multiple characteristics that are not mutually exclusive (i.e., a person can at the same time be an entrepreneur, retired, ex-military, and part of a family/community). Tourism enters the equation in different places along varied evolutionary paths but, nonetheless, is demonstrably an important trigger for future migration. Therefore, the tourism industry's influence on economic growth should be considered beyond its initial development of hospitality, attractions, and retail businesses, but needs to extend to more holistic considerations of its contribution to resident migration. The tourism industry has a role in the overall and long-term social, intellectual, cultural, and economic progress of a community [4,9]. Because of the complexity of these evolving roles, tourism leaders are challenged to think more broadly and with a more long-term vision about their vital contribution, and must educate the other stakeholders about the potential pathways from temporary tourist to resident (relocatee, returnee, retiree).

Furthermore, we demonstrate and assert that tourism thinking must reach beyond the immediate fiscal year, to encompass a life stage view. A destination's leadership should be working with other leaders in economic development to provide an underlying message—"We want you to come here and be a pioneer, be an entrepreneur, live out the second half of your life". One of this study's limitations is the age of the data upon which the analysis rests. It would behoove the field to explore these pathways—and others—within various cultural, geographical, and spatial contexts. Future research on tourism development and planning should strive for insights relative to answering the following question: *How does the tourism industry help to identify and market a destination to pioneers, entrepreneurs, remote workers, and passionate and self-actualizing retirees?*

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