

# *A Study on the Migration Logic of "Snowbird Seniors" from the Perspective of Push-Pull Theory: An Investigation of W Community in Sanya City*

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**Abstract:** The intensifying aging population in China has brought numerous social challenges, among which the phenomenon of "snowbird seniors" has garnered increasing attention. Snowbird seniors refer to elderly individuals who migrate seasonally to warmer southern cities to escape the cold winters of the northern regions. This paper, using the push-pull theory as an analytical framework, delves into the underlying motivations behind snowbird seniors' decision to migrate to the W Community in Sanya City. Through field research and data analysis, the study reveals various push and pull factors influencing the migration decisions of the elderly, including climate, living costs, community facilities, social support, and mental health. The findings show that both push and pull factors interact, forming a complex migration logic among snowbird seniors. These factors not only include the pursuit of a more liveable environment but also involve multidimensional considerations such as social, economic, and cultural aspects. Based on these findings, the paper proposes a series of policy recommendations aimed at optimizing the migration experience of snowbird seniors and improving their overall quality of life.

## **1. Introduction**

China is currently undergoing rapid population aging, with the proportion of elderly individuals steadily increasing. Against this backdrop, the group of snowbird seniors has attracted widespread social attention and academic discussion. Snowbird seniors are typically elderly individuals who migrate seasonally to warmer regions in search of a more suitable living environment. This phenomenon reflects the multiple needs of the elderly in their later years, including health, safety, comfort, and social participation. This paper aims to explore the logic behind snowbird seniors' decision to migrate to the W Community in Sanya City from the perspective of push-pull theory, and through in-depth field research, uncover the complex motivations behind this migration phenomenon.

## **2. The Framework and Applicability of Push-Pull Theory**

Push-pull theory provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding migration behavior. Proposed by E. Lee in 1966, the theory simplifies the decision-making process of migration into the

interaction of push and pull factors.<sup>[1]</sup> Push factors are those negative conditions that compel individuals to leave their original place of residence, while pull factors are the positive attractions that draw them to a new location. Although initially applied to explain the migration behavior of the labor force, the flexibility of this framework makes it equally applicable in studying other types of population movements, particularly the migration of the elderly.

Push and pull factors play a significant role in explaining the migration behavior of snowbird seniors. Push factors primarily include undesirable climatic conditions, living pressures, and social isolation in the place of origin, whereas pull factors involve favorable climate conditions, affordable living costs, abundant social support, and higher quality of life in the destination. After weighing these push-pull factors, snowbird seniors make the decision to migrate seasonally. Therefore, push-pull theory serves as an effective theoretical tool for understanding the migration phenomenon of snowbird seniors.

### **3. Push Factors in Snowbird Seniors' Migration**

Push factors play a crucial role in the migration process of snowbird seniors. First and foremost, the harsh climate of northern cities is one of the primary push factors.<sup>[2]</sup> Many snowbird seniors come from northern cities where the winters are cold and long. For elderly individuals, especially those in poor health, such climatic conditions can exacerbate various health issues, such as arthritis, respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular problems. Therefore, escaping the cold climate of the north becomes a direct motivation for many snowbird seniors to migrate.

Second, the rising cost of living is another important factor pushing snowbird seniors to leave their place of origin. With China's economic development, the cost of living in large northern cities, especially the cost of heating during winter, has been increasing year by year. For retirees who rely on a fixed income, the rising cost of living can negatively impact their quality of life. Moreover, the winter energy expenses in northern cities, such as heating and utility costs, are a significant economic burden for the elderly, prompting them to seek more affordable living locations.<sup>[3]</sup>

Furthermore, the lack of social support systems and increased feelings of loneliness are also push factors.<sup>[4]</sup> Many elderly individuals face a transition in social roles and a shrinking social circle after retirement, especially when children are not around or relationships with friends and relatives become distant. The cold weather in northern cities often leads to a reduction in outdoor activities and social opportunities for the elderly, further exacerbating their feelings of loneliness. Consequently, seeking a warmer climate and more abundant social activities becomes a key reason for snowbird seniors to choose migration.

### **4. Pull Factors in Snowbird Seniors' Migration**

In contrast to push factors, pull factors mainly stem from the attractive climate, good living facilities, and strong social support in Sanya City. First, the warm and humid climate of Sanya City has a strong appeal to the elderly.<sup>[5]</sup> Especially in winter, the warm climate in Sanya helps the elderly alleviate health problems exacerbated by cold weather and provides a more comfortable living environment. The warm climate not only enables the elderly to maintain a higher level of outdoor activity but also improves their mental health, reducing the incidence of seasonal affective disorders.

Second, the well-developed living facilities in Sanya City are also significant pull factors for snowbird seniors. The W Community, as a typical community in Sanya City, is equipped with modern living facilities such as senior activity centers, healthcare institutions, supermarkets, and restaurants. These facilities provide the elderly with a convenient and safe living environment that meets their daily needs. Additionally, the W Community offers a variety of cultural and entertainment activities

and social opportunities, such as square dancing, chess rooms, and cultural lectures, helping the elderly maintain an active social life.

Moreover, the social support system in Sanya City is relatively strong. Especially in the W Community, snowbird seniors can enjoy excellent healthcare services, psychological support, and community care. <sup>[6]</sup>These services provide comprehensive security for the elderly, not only improving their quality of life but also enhancing their sense of belonging and social participation. The community's volunteer services and mutual support groups, in particular, offer emotional support and practical assistance to snowbird seniors, helping them quickly adapt to and integrate into the community.

## 5. Migration Logic and Strategies of Snowbird Seniors

Based on the analysis of push-pull theory, the migration logic of snowbird seniors can be understood as a process of weighing multiple factors. In this process, snowbird seniors need to comprehensively consider various conditions of both the place of origin and the destination, including climate, economy, social support, cultural adaptability, and more. <sup>[7]</sup>This decision-making process is often complex and individualized, with each snowbird senior making different migration choices based on their personal background and needs.

In terms of specific migration strategies, snowbird seniors usually take some preparatory and adaptive measures to ensure a smooth migration process. First, they often conduct thorough research and surveys before migration, learning about Sanya City's living environment, community services, and healthcare conditions through the internet, recommendations from friends, and site visits. This information-gathering process not only helps them make more informed migration decisions but also reduces the risks and uncertainties they may encounter during migration.

Second, snowbird seniors typically choose to migrate with companions or live with old friends or relatives in the destination. This approach not only allows them to look after each other in daily life, reducing loneliness but also provides stronger social support. Additionally, migrating with companions helps them quickly establish a social network in the new environment, enhancing their sense of community integration.

Third, after migrating to the new environment, snowbird seniors usually actively participate in community activities to accelerate the adaptation process. By participating in various cultural and entertainment activities, volunteer services, and interest groups organized by the community, they can make new friends, expand their social circle, and improve their adaptability to local culture and lifestyle. Active social participation and cultural integration have significant positive effects on the mental health and life satisfaction of snowbird seniors.

## 6. Policy Recommendations

To better support the migration behavior of snowbird seniors and improve their quality of life, this paper proposes the following detailed policy recommendations:

### 6.1. Construction of Senior-Friendly Communities

To attract and serve snowbird seniors, the government should increase investment in the construction of senior-friendly communities. <sup>[8]</sup>Senior-friendly communities should include barrier-free facilities, senior activity centers, healthcare institutions, and age-friendly housing. Community planning should consider the special needs of the elderly, such as increasing green spaces, parks, and pedestrian paths, providing more outdoor activity spaces. Additionally, the government can encourage developers to build residential areas suitable for the elderly through financial subsidies and

tax incentives.

## **6.2. Optimization of Cross-Regional Healthcare Services**

One of the significant challenges faced by snowbird seniors is accessing healthcare services across regions. To address this issue, the government should promote the improvement of cross-regional medical insurance policies, simplify reimbursement procedures, and ensure that snowbird seniors can receive timely and convenient medical services in their migration destinations. Specific measures include establishing cross-regional medical information-sharing platforms to facilitate referral and information inquiry across different regions, setting up special medical service windows for snowbird seniors to provide personalized medical consultation and services, and promoting cooperation among medical institutions to offer more convenient medical security for snowbird seniors.

## **6.3. Strengthening Community Social Support Systems**

To help snowbird seniors better adapt to the new environment, communities should strengthen the construction of social support systems. Specific measures include setting up community psychological counseling services to help snowbird seniors cope with the psychological stress brought by migration, organizing mutual support groups for seniors to encourage mutual support and communication among snowbird seniors, and establishing community volunteer service teams to provide daily assistance to snowbird seniors, such as shopping, medical accompaniment, and home maintenance. Furthermore, communities can regularly hold cultural and entertainment activities to enrich the spiritual lives of snowbird seniors and enhance their sense of community integration and belonging.

## **6.4. Provision of Migration Information Services**

The government and community organizations can establish a migration information service platform for snowbird seniors, providing detailed information about migration destinations, such as climate conditions, living costs, medical resources, community services, and more. This platform can offer comprehensive migration advice and support to snowbird seniors through various channels, including the internet, telephone hotlines, and offline consultations. Additionally, organizing visits and inspections of migration destinations can help snowbird seniors make more informed migration decisions.

## **6.5. Cultural Adaptation and Integration**

To promote cultural exchange and integration between snowbird seniors and local residents, communities should actively organize cross-cultural exchange activities. For example, lectures and workshops on local traditions and customs can be held to help snowbird seniors better understand and adapt to the local culture. Additionally, encouraging snowbird seniors to participate in community volunteer services can foster interaction and communication between them and local residents, enhancing community cohesion.

## **7. Conclusion**

This paper, from the perspective of push-pull theory, combined with field research and data analysis, explores the logic behind the migration of snowbird seniors to the W Community in Sanya City. The study finds that the migration behavior of snowbird seniors is influenced by a combination

of push and pull factors, including climate conditions, living costs, and lack of social support in the place of origin, as well as the climate advantages, living facilities, social support, and cultural adaptability in the destination. These factors work together, forming a complex decision-making process for snowbird seniors. Based on these findings, the paper proposes a series of policy recommendations to optimize the migration experience of snowbird seniors, including the construction of senior-friendly communities, the optimization of cross-regional healthcare services, the strengthening of community social support systems, the provision of migration information services, and cultural adaptation and integration.

In the future, as China's aging process continues to accelerate, the size of the snowbird senior group will continue to expand.<sup>[9]</sup> Research on this special group is not only of significant academic value but also has practical implications for policy-making and the improvement of social services. By better understanding the migration logic and needs of snowbird seniors, we can provide more effective support and services to enhance their quality of life and social participation.

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