



Social inclusion of domestic tourism migrants: Evidence from four destinations in China

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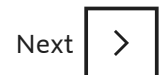
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Highlights

- Data were collected via systematic, large-scale surveys in four cities in China.
- Developed a model of domestic tourism-led migrants' social inclusion strategies.
- Identifies four groups based on their spatiotemporal mobility patterns.
- The choice of social inclusion strategy depends on both individual and destination factors.
- Returning to hometown was necessary and positively influenced social inclusion.

Abstract

This study investigates social inclusion strategies and how they differ among various domestic tourism migrants. Through data collection in four Chinese destination cities, the current study: (1) develops a two-dimensional model of the social inclusion strategies of domestic tourism migrants, which includes four strategies (assimilate into local society, assimilate into parallel society, assimilate into reconstructed society, and non-assimilating); (2) identifies four groups of domestic tourism migrants (peripatetic visitors, amenity migrants, seasonal migrants, and full residents) based on their spatiotemporal mobility patterns; and (3) compares the variations in social inclusion strategies among different tourism migrants from different destinations. The results add to the body of knowledge on tourism migration and offer practitioners practical advice on how to make the destinations more appealing.



Keywords

Tourism migrant; Social inclusion; Mobility pattern; Retirement migrants; Tourism entrepreneurial migrants

1. Introduction

Tourism and migration are both forms of human mobility. Tourism migration refers to the movement of individuals who relocate to tourist destinations for work or residence exceeding a certain duration, driven by the development of the tourism industry or for leisure consumption purposes (Yang & Lu, 2008). As a non-coerced form of migration, it is primarily motivated by lifestyle preferences rather than economic necessity or resource acquisition (Benson & O'Reilly, 2018). Unlike educational or economic migrants who seek specific resources, tourism migrants prioritize quality-of-life factors, including favorable climates, amenities, and living standards (Casado-Díaz et al., 2014; Iversen & Jacobsen, 2016). This non-coerced migration pattern is further evidenced by migrants' self-determined selection of destinations and their voluntary adoption of various social inclusion strategies (Liang et al., 2021). Compared with traditional forms of migration, tourism migration emphasizes non-permanent settlement or periodic movement between tourist destinations and other regions. Unlike transient tourists, tourism migrants demonstrate significantly prolonged residence durations at their destinations and may seek employment locally (Sari & Uygur, 2024; Williams & Hall, 2000). The concept of tourism migration encompasses a wide range of phenomena and can be classified using various criteria, such as the duration of stay, ownership of property, or motivations for migration (O'Reilly, 1995; 2000; Williams & Hall, 2000). The groups represented by these concepts often overlap; for instance, an individual may simultaneously be a seasonal migrant, second-home owner, and retirement migrant.

Several forms of tourism migration fall along the tourism-migration continuum, from vacations or one-week holidays to permanent residency ([Longino & Marshall, 1990](#); [Warnes, 1994](#)). Tourism entrepreneurs and retirement migrants occupy opposite ends of the "production-consumption" spectrum, reflecting significant differences between these groups ([Liang, 2021](#)). Similarly, Yang and Lu (2008) proposed a classification system based on motivations, which has been widely adopted in subsequent studies. Retirement migrants exemplify tourism consumption migrants, while tourism entrepreneurs represent tourism labor migrants. In the past three decades, the rapid growth of China's tourism industry, coupled with rising income levels, has driven an increase in domestic tourism migration. Both retiree migrants and tourism entrepreneurs are widely distributed across most tourist cities in China, and extensive research has been conducted on these populations, facilitating meaningful dialogue and exploration ([Ma & Xu, 2016](#); [A & Sun, 2021](#); [Su, 2022](#)). Based on the principles of maximal differentiation, representativeness, and generalizability, the selection of these two distinct groups for comparative study enables a more comprehensive understanding of social inclusion strategies among tourism migrants.

Social inclusion is one of the important topics of immigration research and has been widely discussed in cross-country and cross-cultural immigrant groups, such as transnational refugees, the second generation of immigrants, and migrant workers ([Berry et al., 2006](#); [Berry & Hou, 2017](#); [Gui et al., 2012](#)). Social inclusion is also important for tourism migrants and destinations. For tourism migrants, social inclusion is an important factor influencing their subjective well-being ([Liang et al., 2022](#); [Wong & Musa, 2014](#)). For a tourist destination, the harmonious coexistence between residents and immigrants is conducive to the long-term stable development of the destination ([Hudson et al., 2019](#)). Therefore, social inclusion is accepted as a key dimension of sustainable tourism ([Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023](#)) and a social goal of most immigration destinations ([Quinn et al., 2021](#)). The place integration, social integration, and social interaction of tourism migrants within their destinations have garnered significant scholarly attention ([Liang et al., 2021](#); [Tang & Xu, 2015](#)). However, due to limitations such as focusing on a single research site, a single migrant group, small sample sizes, and reliance on qualitative analysis methods, existing studies have limited cross-group and cross-case dialogue. Consequently, their findings often lack theoretical generalization and broader applicability. Moreover, there is an absence of a unified analytical framework for exploring the social inclusion strategies of tourism migrants.

Upon reaching their destination, migrants need to choose whether and how to live among locals and become part of the community. Maintaining social interactions and lifestyles while moving between their home and destination cities is usual for the majority of tourism migrants ([Liang et al., 2021, 2022](#)). Their choice of social inclusion strategies may change as a result of the multiple identities and attachments that result from their various mobilities and residences ([Gustafson, 2009](#); [Howard, 2008](#)). In order to better understand how movement patterns affect migrants' social inclusion techniques, the current study expands on previous research in this area.

To address the aforementioned gap, this study aims to explore social inclusion strategies and associated consequences among domestic tourism migrants. In particular, our study objectives are threefold. First, the study proposes a two-dimensional model that distinguishes tourism migrants' social inclusion strategies. Second, we identify four tourism migrant groups based on spatiotemporal mobility patterns. Lastly, to provide a more holistic understanding of migrants' social inclusion strategies, we compare and elucidate social inclusion differences among various tourism migrants from different destinations. The results also provide actionable suggestions for practitioners to better design and implement support policies. These policies will help tourism migrants engage in local society and promote the attractiveness of destinations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Mobility patterns of tourism migrants

Mobility patterns not only differentiate tourism from migration but also serve as a basis for categorizing various types of tourist migration ([Williams & Hall, 2000](#)). Previous research highlights that different groups of tourism migrants exhibit unique mobility characteristics, including variations in the frequency and duration of return trips, choice of residential areas, overseas experience, multi-city living arrangements, and the length of time spent annually in their destination(s) ([Casado-Díaz et al., 2014](#); [Gustafson, 2001](#); [van Noorloos, 2013](#)). Contemporary tourism migrants in pursuit of a good life are no longer seen as one-time movers; rather, they cultivate numerous relationships in two or more destinations simultaneously ([van Noorloos, 2013](#)). Economic disparity and social/cultural differences play an influential role in the distribution/mobility of tourism migrants ([Wang et al., 2023](#)). For example, some retirement migrants are “snowbirds” who move to a destination for its warm winters but later travel either home or elsewhere to enjoy cool summers ([Wu et al., 2018](#)). Some other retirees may live there year-round with their children and rarely visit their hometown ([Liang et al., 2021](#)). [Gustafson's \(2009\)](#) research on international retirement migrants indicates they are likely to migrate permanently and only visit their home countries for a few weeks each summer (or not at all).

The present study focuses on retirement migrants and tourism entrepreneurs. Specifically, retirement migrants are lifestyle-focused and have free time to move and live at will ([Abdul-Aziz et al., 2014](#); [Barbosa et al., 2021](#); [Casado-Díaz et al., 2014](#)). Tourism entrepreneurial migrants own tourism-related small businesses (e.g., family-run inns, souvenir shops, cafés, travel agencies, or small scenic spots) and tend to be concerned with work–life balance ([Carson et al., 2018](#); [Sun et al., 2020](#)). They usually seek an ideal destination for both life and business. Differently, tourism entrepreneurial migrants demonstrate highly diverse mobility and dwelling patterns. Some entrepreneurial migrants return home frequently, others live in their destination during the peak season, and still others stay in their destination most of the year, apart from returning home for a few days ([Bredvold & Skålén, 2016](#); [Carson et al., 2018](#); [Ma & Xu, 2016](#)). The multiple mobilities characteristic of tourism migrants foster complex place attachments and multilayered identities

(Hall & Müller, 2018). This mobile lifestyle presents theoretical challenges to conventional understandings of place attachment, social identity, and property rights (McIntyre et al., 2006). Unlike forced migrants who must fully integrate into destination societies, tourism migrants maintain meaningful connections to both origin and destination locations, developing dual senses of belonging that reflect their unique mobility patterns (Gustafson, 2001).

2.2. Social inclusion of tourism migrants

The United Nations' SDGs 10 refers to social inclusion as "a process of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background, can equally participate in society and access fundamental rights." Similarly, the European Union conceptualizes it as "having the opportunities and resources to participate fully in economic, social, and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of well-being that is considered normal in the society in which we live." Drawing upon extant research and policy frameworks, this study defines social inclusion as the process whereby temporary migrants in tourism destinations achieve equitable participation in social, economic, political, and cultural domains while securing access to fundamental rights, resources, and services during their non-permanent residence.

Social inclusion, as one of the key issues, has attracted wide attention in immigration studies. In the study of immigrant social inclusion, there are two representative research models. First, Berry (1974, 1980) studied international forced migrants' social inclusion strategies and proposed a two-dimensional acculturation model based on cultural connection and identified four strategies: assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation (AIMS). Mishra et al. (1996) further added a new strategy of coexistence between integration and assimilation. The AIMS model emphasizes cultural adaptation in transnational contexts, and its developments were widely accepted and used in different forced immigrant groups (Berry et al., 2006; Berry & Hou, 2017; Gui et al., 2012), including Chinese rural migrants (Xie et al., 2023). Second, it was proposed by Phinney (1990), who also developed a two-dimensional model based on ethnic identity, namely identification with the majority group and identification with the ethnic group. Phinney's (1990) model was applied in the setting of minority youth or ethnic immigrants (Farr et al., 2018; Phinney et al., 2001). Both aforementioned models conceptualized the social inclusion strategies of forced migrants who move across countries or cultures. Since they face obvious cultural, ethnic, and regional differences. Thus, cross-cultural adaptation and ethnic identity are key considerations of their social inclusion strategies.

While international tourism migration has been extensively studied in recent decades, research on domestic tourism migration remains in its nascent stage (Liang et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2017). Unlike international migrants who must navigate cross-cultural and transnational challenges, domestic migrants encounter fewer cultural and linguistic barriers (Howard, 2008). For these migrants, social inclusion entails access to opportunities and resources for full participation in economic, social, and cultural spheres (Chen, 2023; Wilson & Secker, 2015). Notably, economic integration appears less critical for domestic tourism migrants compared to other migrant groups,

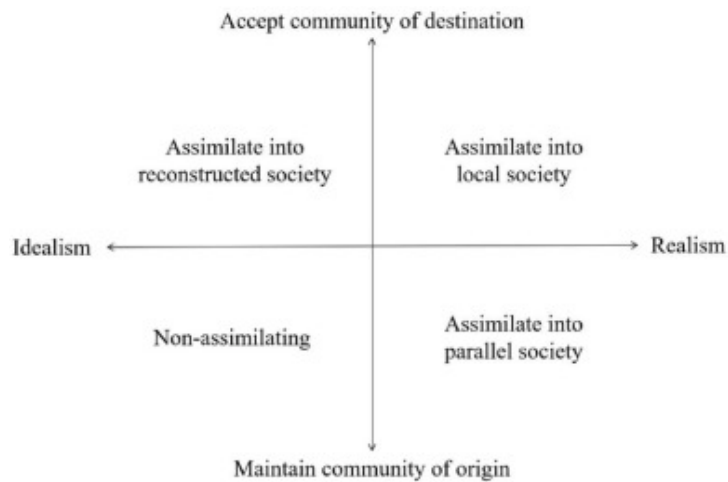
as they typically possess relatively favorable socioeconomic conditions (Chen, 2023). Their distinctive residential patterns - maintaining homes in multiple cities - necessitate active management of social roles across locations. This involves engaging with local culture authentically, cultivating a sense of belonging, developing business networks, pursuing preferred lifestyles, and seeking emotional support and spiritual fulfillment (Gibler et al., 2009; Hall & Müller, 2018; Williams & Hall, 2000). Consequently, domestic tourism migrants may develop distinct social inclusion strategies that afford them greater flexibility in assimilating into destination societies.

Although a unified research framework for understanding the social inclusion strategies of tourism migrants has yet to be established, studies on the social integration and interactions of specific groups provide valuable insights. Based on integration outcomes, Smallwood (2007) categorizes lifestyle-related migrants into three groups: well-integrated subjects, non-integrated subjects who do not seek integration, and non-integrated subjects who are seeking integration. From the perspective of social interactions, retiree migrants often form ethnically specific social circles, engage in superficial yet amicable interactions with local residents and other migrants, and maintain their social networks in their places of origin through phone calls and online communication (Tang & Xu, 2015). Lifestyle-oriented tourism entrepreneurs typically establish "acquaintance societies" within the confines of their residential and business communities. These groups are based on shared interests and hobbies, with members maintaining frequent contact with tourists and friends from their original social networks (Ma & Xu, 2016). In China, tourism migrants experience a dual sense of belonging and alienation within their destination communities. This dynamic is shaped by limited access to public resources and traditional cultural values emphasizing "returning to one's roots" (Chen & Wang, 2023; Su, 2022). While material exchanges have improved tourism migrants' integration into local societies (Wu et al., 2018), their seasonal, itinerant, and multi-residential lifestyles continue to hinder deeper social inclusion within destination communities (Gustafson, 2002).

Current models of social inclusion are inadequate for addressing the unique characteristics of tourism migration. Moreover, many studies on this topic are constrained by methodological limitations, small sample sizes, and the demographic characteristics of surveyed groups, resulting in a lack of a unified analytical framework. To foster greater dialogue among studies and advance theoretical understanding, it is essential to propose a novel conceptual model for analyzing domestic tourism migration.

2.3. The conceptual framework

Building upon the AIMS model (Berry, 1974, 1980) and Phinney's (1990) model, we have developed a two-dimensional conceptual framework (Fig. 1) specifically adapted to the characteristics of domestic tourism migration. This framework addresses two fundamental dimensions that capture the core concerns of tourism migrants: (1) the degree to which they maintain connections with their origin community versus adopt characteristics of the destination community, and (2) the extent to which their orientation reflects idealistic versus realistic perspectives.



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Fig. 1. Social inclusion strategies of domestic tourism migrants.

Maintain community of origin – Accept community of destination. The multiple mobility patterns between the original city and destination(s) and between ideal and reality reflect the distinguished social inclusion strategies of tourism migrants. The choices of whether and how to engage with the local community and destination society depend on these tourism migrants' own will, and it greatly informs their mobility (Liang et al., 2021). Tourism migrants to a destination can maintain their lifestyle in their hometown or adjust to/adapt to/accept the destination life and culture. These strategy differences can be easily identified through their lifestyle, daily routine, and interaction with locals. It is not an either-or situation. Many domestic tourism migrants experience multiple iterations of alienation and resonance (A & Sun, 2021). Migrants' social inclusion strategies could apply to both the destination and the place of origin rather than just to the destination. In Spain, Swedish retirement migrants reported feeling at home in both places, although the content of their emotional bonds differed (Gustafson, 2009). Such meanings and emotions related to migrants' multiple homes, together with stronger social inclusion in a destination community, can influence a range of strategic decisions (Williams et al., 2004).

Idealism - Realism. Tourism migration is widely believed to be driven by an ideal life (Benson & O'Reilly, 2018; Casado-Díaz et al., 2014; Iversen & Jacobsen, 2016). People move for a certain degree of idealism. However, they also need to face facts and take responsibility, as destination life and tourism businesses do not always act as they say. Tourism-led migrants have to move between their destination and hometown each year and adjust their life strategies (Liang et al., 2022). Mobility provides opportunities for tourism entrepreneurial migrants to reorganize and redefine their businesses and preferred lifestyles by rediscovering themselves and participating in local society. Just as Wu et al. (2018) pointed out that although retirement migrants are still inclined to idealize a home of integrity and togetherness, the tremendous changes in contemporary society and

destination life have more or less shattered it. Tourism migrants should have to attend to the idealism-realism balance.

Drawing from the two-dimensional classification, this study suggests four strategies for the social inclusion of domestic tourism migrants ([Fig. 1](#)), arranged from highest to lowest by their degree of social inclusion: assimilating into local society, assimilating into a parallel society, assimilating into a reconstructed society, and non-assimilating.

Assimilating into local society appears to be a cost-effective and realistic social inclusion measure. In this scenario, migrants do not intend to change their destination but instead adapt their lives to cater to it. A common precondition of this choice is that local society heavily aligns with one's expected life and community. Migrants adopting this strategy may undertake initiatives, such as learning the local language, making friends with residents, participating in the community, forming business collaborations with (or otherwise benefiting from) locals, and even establishing matrimonial bonds with local residents. Long-term residents and some deep-rooted peripatetic visitors often adopt this approach. The former group may appreciate a destination's lifestyle and social culture. Long-term residents may also be returnees ([Hayes, 2015](#); [O'Reilly, 1995](#)) who lived there when they were children. Peripatetic visitors wish to embrace local life and experience an authentic destination culture ([Gravari-Barbas & Guinand, 2017](#)). They act similarly to residents, wear local clothes, eat local food, and even live in local homes as couch surfers ([Decrop et al., 2018](#)).

Assimilating into a parallel society represents another realistic option. Certain migrants resist adopting the host population's norms, and their lifestyle is hence unique from that of local society. [Jackson \(2016\)](#) coined this decision as a parallel expatriate bubble outside the local population. This social inclusion approach is widespread among Western professional migrants to Eastern destinations ([McKercher & Yankholmes, 2018](#)). These migrants proactively isolate themselves from local residents, maintaining their daily routine separate from the local population. The Chinese tradition prioritizes familial needs, framing migration as an essential "family move" versus a personal one, as for their Western counterparts ([Liang et al., 2021](#); [Wu et al., 2018](#)). Some family migrants encourage relatives and friends to move to a destination with them and build a small community mirroring their hometown. This parallel society erases the need for migrants to adapt to the local society. They can simply live as they did before, eating their native foods, speaking their mother tongue, and celebrating the traditional festivals from their hometown. Some tourism entrepreneurial migrants could even rely on geopolitical organizations with blood ties and local affiliations to build and benefit from business networks. Such practices enable the migrant group to continue enjoying their hometown society while making a living in their destination, frequently returning each year.

Assimilating into a reconstructed society is a niche choice and quite an idealistic decision that arises among multiple migrant groups. These individuals do not favor the local lifestyle or a parallel society. Instead, they pursue an ideal life as they envision it. They might build a community of like-minded travel migrants embedded in the local society. Generally, these migrants prize the

destination's natural environment and climate and even some local cultural elements, but they live a life different from the locals. Their ideal lifestyle is, after all, a dream rather than reality. The dream society is not necessarily stable but is beyond the migrants' control. These migrants must still visit their hometowns occasionally. Some migrants return to “reality” frequently, whereas others live in their dream destination for short periods ([Gustafson, 2001](#); [Liang et al., 2021](#)).

Non-assimilating appears to be a decision that applies to three distinct groups: migrants with multi-city residence ([McIntyre et al., 2006](#)), peripatetic visitors or long-stay tourists ([Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019](#)), and purposeless migrants. Multi-city migrants may possess two or more secondary homes, moving between their origin cities and various residences either regularly or seasonally. This nomadic lifestyle becomes integral to their way of life, such that assimilating into a particular city's society is rare ([McIntyre et al., 2006](#)). In some cases, these migrants display multiple place attachments and multiple forms of inclusion without a strong affiliation to a specific destination ([Gustafson, 2001](#)). Peripatetic visitors typically engage in cultural exploration and act as spectators to witness the locals, explore new surroundings, and enjoy life in their chosen destination ([Anantamongkolkul et al., 2019](#)). Purposeless migrants do not have a clear idea about whether and how to integrate into local society.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study sites: four domestic tourism-led migration destinations

To enhance the generalizability of research findings and minimize contextual biases that may arise from single-case studies, two representative cities were selected for fieldwork from each of the retiree migrant and tourism entrepreneur migrant groups. Considering the historical development and current state of tourism migration in China, as well as to facilitate dialogue with existing studies, Zhuhai, Sanya, Lijiang, and Dali were chosen as the fieldwork sites. All these destinations are located in the southern region of China and feature warm weather, a leisurely-paced lifestyle, a picturesque environment, well-developed urban infrastructure, and myriad tourist attractions. As traditional tourist destinations, these cities welcomed 26.04, 22.94, 54.02, and 53.00 million visitors in 2019, respectively ([Table 1](#)).

Table 1. Overview of Zhuhai, Sanya, Lijiang, and Dali (2019).

	Zhuhai	Sanya	Lijiang	Dali
Population (million)	2.3318	0.9885	1.3020	0.6893
Tourists per year (million)	26.04	22.94	54.02	20.622

	Zhuhai	Sanya	Lijiang	Dali
GDP (billion CNY)	344.42343	67.78614	47.251	46.794
Per capita income (CNY)	52,495	33,130	35,667	39,564
Feature	A large and developed city with warm weather, a beautiful environment, thriving city infrastructure, and advanced medical facilities	A tropical city with warm winters, white beaches, a slow life, and numerous tourist attractions	A small heritage city in a minority nationality region with a relaxed pace of life and tourism business opportunities	
Tourism migrant	355,000 registered population and about 2 million immigrants; roughly 150,000–300,000 seasonal retirement migrants	200,000–450,000 in 2016–2018 (Wu et al., 2018); 600,000 tourism migrants in 2021 (authors' estimate)	1,234,800 registered population; 50,000–120,000 tourism migrants (authors' estimate)	645,350 registered population; 30,000–80,000 tourism migrants (authors' estimate)

Source: Statistical Bulletin of Zhuhai (Sanya, Lijiang, and Dali) National Economic and Social Development of 2019.

Retiree migrants: Zhuhai is a developed city and a special economic zone in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, adjacent to Hong Kong and Macao. Its advanced infrastructure and medical facilities attract numerous domestic retirees ([Liang et al., 2021](#)). Zhuhai is renowned for its beaches, historical areas, and theme parks, making it a migration hub that welcomed more than 100,000 migrants from northeastern, northern, eastern, and central China in 2019 ([Statistical Bureau of Zhuhai, 2020](#)). Sanya is also an immigrant city and a destination for domestic retirement migration ([Wu et al., 2018](#)). This city is famous for its warm winters and white beaches. Its retirement migrant numbers have increased rapidly to between 200,000 and 450,000 ([Wu et al., 2018](#)). This number increased in 2021, observably thanks to Sanya's status as a low-risk city during the pandemic.

Tourism entrepreneur migrants: Lijiang and Dali are heritage cities located in minority ethnic regions of southwestern China. Both are renowned tourism destinations and have been chosen as representative case sites for studying tourism entrepreneurs ([Su et al., 2021](#); [Xu et al., 2017](#); [Xu & Ma, 2014](#)). [Xu and Ma \(2014\)](#) estimated that entrepreneurial migrants from outside each city accounted for 59.9% of small tourism businesses in Lijiang and Dali. These tourism entrepreneurial

migrants engaged in the operation of travel agencies, hotels, craft shops, cafés, pubs, and similar establishments.

3.2. Measurement

The questionnaire comprises two sections. The first section includes sample characteristics ([Chen, 2023](#)) and mobility patterns ([Bell & Ward, 2000](#); Casado-Díaz et al., 2014), with a total of 14 questions. A diverse set of question formats, including single-choice, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and forced-choice full binary, was employed to enhance data accuracy and minimize respondent fatigue ([Dolnicar, 2021](#)).

Demographic Information (7 Items) includes age, gender, education level, household income, origin, overseas experience, and multi-city residence. The question about "origin" is a fill-in-the-blank item requiring respondents to specify the city. Based on the regional divisions of China, the "origin" is categorized into eight regions: North China, Central China, East China, South China, Northwest China, Southwest China, Northeast China, and Overseas. Both "overseas experience" and "multi-city residence" are forced-choice, full binary questions, where respondents are asked to indicate whether they have lived in other countries or cities based on their personal experiences.

Mobility Patterns (7 Items) include years of residence, housing area (m²), housing area comparison, household size, months of residence per year, frequency of return to the place of origin, and the number of weeks spent in the place of origin. The "years of residence" item is a fill-in-the-blank question where respondents provide the duration of residence in years. For "months of residence per year," respondents are presented with options for each month (January to December) and are instructed to select the months they reside at the destination. The total duration of residence per year is then calculated based on their responses.

The second section is the **Social Inclusion Scale** (see [Appendix 1](#)), consisting of 20 items ([Secker et al., 2009](#); [Wilson & Secker, 2015](#)), assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale (5=strongly agree; 1=strongly disagree). This scale can be used in two ways: (1) as a comprehensive 20-item measure of social inclusion or (2) divided into three distinct subscales—Social Acceptance (5 items), Social Isolation (8 items), and Social Relations (5 items)—for separate analysis. The conceptual measurement was conducted by calculating the mean value of the item scores through summation. All measurement items were translated into Chinese following the back-translation procedures recommended by [Fink \(2015\)](#).

3.3. Data collection

No sampling frame and population statistics currently exist for tourism migrants in China. We used different identification criteria for two types of migrants from the four cities before formal interviews, according to the current study ([Gustafson, 2009](#)). Our survey focused on retirement migrants from regions outside of Zhuhai/Sanya who are aged 50 or above. The tourism entrepreneurial migrants are those who are originally from regions other than Lijiang/Dali and are

at least 18 years old. All respondents lived in their corresponding cities for at least three months per year.

We employed the same investigation procedure and sampling method in all cities (see appendix: investigation procedure report). According to the pilot field investigation, the spatial distribution of tourism migrants tended to present a large dispersion but a small aggregation. Numerous migrants were clustered in hotspots, covering a wide range. For example, the migrant distribution in Zhuhai was scattered at the city scale. By contrast, they lived close together at the community scale, usually residing within a few blocks of the seaside, heritage sites, or other tourist attractions. We first identified target survey locations through information searches, site recommendations in the literature, and interviews with established migrants who served as local “gatekeepers.” Second, several trained interviewers were deployed to distribute questionnaires. Each interviewer was asked to survey no more than 50–60 respondents and was responsible for their assigned survey locations. Third, as there was a relatively fixed number of corresponding migrants per location, a general survey and judgment sampling were employed in each place. The survey was scheduled to take at least 20 min to complete. All surveys were conducted between the winter peak season in 2019 and December 2021, during the period when the pandemic was well controlled in China. We distributed 550, 550, 330, and 170 questionnaires in Zhuhai, Sanya, Lijiang, and Dali, respectively, and collected 546, 525, 298, and 157 useable responses. The response rates for valid questionnaires were 99.3%, 95.5%, 90.3%, and 92.4%, respectively (Table 2). The remaining surveys were discarded because they contained incomplete and invalid answers.

Table 2. Profile and mobility patterns of migrants from four cities.

Variable		Frequency (Percentage %)			
		Zhuhai (N=546)	Sanya (N=525)	Lijiang (N=298)	Dali (N=157)
Gender	Male	227 (41.6)	318 (60.6)	212 (71.1)	108 (68.8)
	Female	319 (58.4)	207 (39.4)	86 (28.9)	49 (31.2)
Age	≤35			218 (73.2)	105 (66.9)
	35–39			29 (9.7)	16 (10.2)
	40–44			19 (6.4)	11 (7.0)
	45–49			15 (5.0)	10 (6.4)
	50–54	27 (4.9)	11 (2.1)	17 (8.0)	15 (13.9)
	55–59	94 (17.2)	50 (9.4)		
	60–64	136 (24.9)	71 (13.3)		

Variable		Frequency (Percentage %)			
		Zhuhai (N=546)	Sanya (N=525)	Lijiang (N=298)	Dali (N=157)
	65–69	157 (28.8)	126 (23.6)		
	70–74	79 (14.5)	125 (23.4)		
	75–79	31 (5.7)	84 (15.7)		
	≥80	22 (4.0)	58 (10.9)		
Education	Primary school	118 (21.6)	75 (14.3)	9 (3.0)	1 (0.6)
	Junior high school	77 (14.1)	124 (23.6)	17 (5.7)	14 (8.9)
	High school	140 (25.6)	177 (33.7)	85 (28.5)	40 (25.5)
	College/University	196 (35.9)	143 (27.2)	179 (60.1)	97 (61.8)
	Graduate school	15 (2.7)	6 (1.1)	8 (2.7)	5 (3.2)
Household per capita monthly income (CNY)	≤¥3000	120 (22.0)	141 (26.9)	19 (6.4)	20 (12.7)
	¥3001–¥5000	212 (38.8)	211 (40.2)	49 (16.4)	38 (24.2)
	¥5001–¥8000	161 (29.5)	139 (26.5)	74 (24.8)	41 (26.1)
	≥¥8001	53 (9.7)	34 (6.5)	156 (52.3)	58 (36.9)
Overseas experience	Yes	53 (9.7)	58 (11.0)	40 (13.4)	29 (18.5)
	No	493 (90.3)	467 (89.0)	258 (86.6)	128 (81.5)
Multi-city residence	Yes	234 (42.9)	279 (53.1)	267 (89.6)	142 (90.4)
	No	312 (57.1)	246 (46.9)	31 (10.4)	15 (9.6)
Months of residence per year	0–11 months	303 (55.5)	470 (89.5)	147 (49.3)	86 (54.8)
	12 months	243 (44.5)	55 (10.5)	151 (50.7)	71 (45.2)
Years of residence	0–2 years	117 (21.4)	171 (32.6)	122 (40.9)	73 (46.5)
	2+ years	429 (78.6)	354 (67.4)	176 (59.1)	84 (53.5)
Housing area (m ²)	≤70	59 (10.8)	321 (61.1)	114 (38.3)	51 (32.5)
	71–90	123 (22.5)	118 (22.5)	29 (9.7)	13 (8.3)
	91–110	152 (27.8)	49 (9.3)	19 (6.4)	8 (5.1)
	111–144	144 (26.4)	22 (4.2)	21 (7.0)	9 (5.7)
	≥145	68 (12.5)	15 (2.9)	115 (38.6)	76 (48.4)

3.4. Sample: retirement migrants and tourism entrepreneurial migrants

The sociodemographic characteristics of our respondents largely aligned with those of prior studies ([Wu et al., 2018](#); [Xu et al., 2017](#); [Xu & Ma, 2014](#)), reinforcing our sample's representativeness. In Sanya, Lijiang, and Dali, males were the majority of tourism migrants but represented a smaller percentage of the sample in Zhuhai. Less than 20% of migrants spent over a month residing overseas. However, a considerable number of migrants reported having lived in two or more cities during the previous year. These sample proportions were especially high in Lijiang (89.6%) and Dali (90.4%). Around 70% of retirement migrants had relocated to and settled in Zhuhai and Sanya for over two years, contrasting with less than 50% of tourism entrepreneurial migrants who had lived in Lijiang and Dali for the same duration. Tourism entrepreneurial migrants in this study thus demonstrated higher mobility and richer experience compared to retirement migrants. Regarding respondents' housing area, tourism entrepreneurial migrants from Lijiang and Dali were similar in that 61.1% lived in small houses (i.e., less than 70m²). In contrast, Zhuhai respondents generally lived in houses of varying sizes.

3.5. Overview

Four steps were taken in order to conduct the empirical analysis for this study: (1) The four samples underwent a two-step clustering process utilizing similar operational procedures in order to examine the possible impact of mobility patterns on the selection of social inclusion strategies and degrees of inclusion among tourism migrants. Fourteen factors (residence status from January to December, months of residence each year, and origin city) were chosen as clustering criteria based on previous research ([Hudson et al., 2019](#); [Liang et al., 2021](#)) and field survey experience. Following the classification of four different categories of tourism migrants based on mobility patterns, a descriptive analysis of their distribution features throughout the four case study locations was conducted. (2) ANOVA was used to compare social inclusion levels across the four case study samples and among the four mobility-based migrant categories in order to investigate differences in social inclusion among various types of tourism migrants (retirement migrants and tourism entrepreneurial migrants) and those with different mobility patterns. (3) Multiple regression analysis was used to comprehensively analyze the four migrant categories and four case study samples in order to better examine the effects of movement and residential patterns on social inclusion. (4) By combining long-term field observations with the empirical data, the social inclusion strategies of tourism migrants were examined and explored, guided by the conceptual framework that was previously proposed.

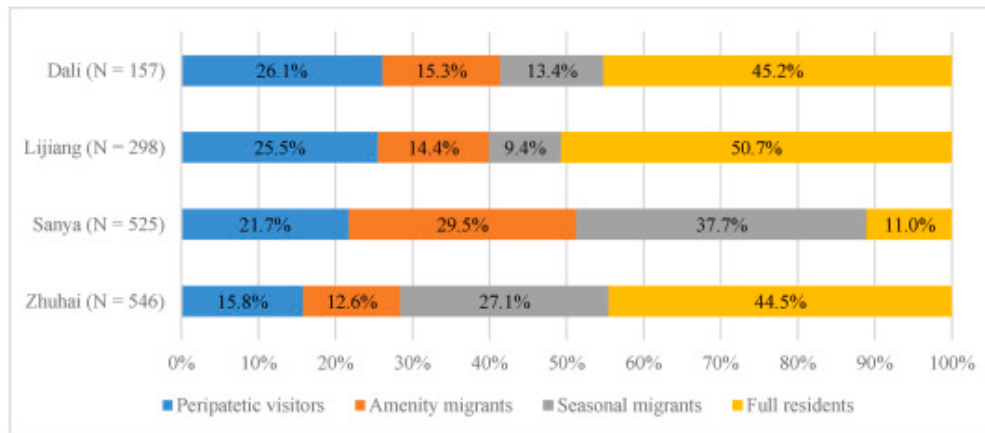
4. Differences in social inclusion among tourism-led migrants

4.1. Four groups of tourism migrants

Drawing on the typology established in prior research ([Hudson et al., 2019](#); [Liang et al., 2021](#)), the four case study locations were classified into four groups using the same criteria through a two-step

cluster analysis using SPSS 26. These groups were named based on the characteristics of their mobility patterns: peripatetic visitors, amenity migrants, seasonal migrants, and full residents.

Nearly half of the respondents surveyed in Zhuhai, Lijiang, and Dali were full residents who resided in their respective destinations year-round. Sanya attracted larger proportions of amenity and seasonal migrants who lived there for a few months and returned home seasonally or more frequently. Peripatetic visitors accounted for approximately one-quarter of each of the respondents surveyed in Sanya, Lijiang, and Dali, compared with 15.8% in Zhuhai (Fig. 2).



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Fig. 2. Cluster analysis results.

4.2. Social inclusion consequences and differences

A series of analyses of variance revealed significant differences in social inclusion (overall measures), social acceptance, social isolation, and social relations among tourism migrant groups by destination city (Table 3). Moreover, multiple regression analysis with social inclusion (overall measure) as the dependent variable highlighted the differences in mobility patterns based on both destinations and tourism migrant groups (Table 4). The model incorporates six representative indicators of mobility and residential patterns to examine their potential variations across different city contexts and tourism migrant types (Casado-Díaz et al., 2014; Gustafson, 2001; van Noorloos, 2013). Overseas experience and multi-city residence reflect individuals' migration backgrounds. Migrants with extensive transnational or intercity living experiences may demonstrate greater social inclusion in destination societies. Mobility patterns (including frequency of return visits in the past year, duration of stay in cities of origin, and years settled in destinations) have been shown to significantly influence the relationships between tourism migration motivations, social inclusion, and subjective well-being (Liang et al., 2022). Housing area serves as an indicator of migrants' socioeconomic status and quality of life in destinations, which consequently affects their social inclusion levels.

Table 3. Social inclusion differences (Social Inclusion Scale).

Destination	Peripatetic visitors	Amenity migrants	Seasonal migrants	Full residents	Total	<i>F</i>
Social Inclusion (overall measures)						
Zhuhai	3.5775	3.2425	3.3905	3.6244	3.5054	8.275***
Sanya	3.4096	3.4829	3.3270	3.3819	3.3970	2.925*
Lijiang	3.8237	3.7798	3.6810	3.7166	3.7497	0.837
Dali	3.6309	3.7167	3.7365	3.5878	3.6386	0.601
Total	3.5831	3.4891	3.3977	3.6192		12.153***
<i>F</i>	9.871***	9.789***	6.268***	4.081**	25.887***	
Social Acceptance						
Zhuhai	4.1008	3.5778	3.9063	4.1572	4.0071	10.981***
Sanya	3.9614	3.8942	3.7212	3.8034	3.8335	3.807**
Lijiang	4.2140	4.3240	4.0857	4.2706	4.2465	0.724
Dali	4.1545	4.2000	4.2508	4.2714	4.2272	0.232
Total	4.0848	3.9079	3.8446	4.1662		
<i>F</i>	2.085	11.838***	5.475***	5.839***	24.633***	17.030***
Social Isolation						
Zhuhai	3.4264	3.0145	3.2905	3.6365	3.4310	8.335***
Sanya	3.6162	3.4581	3.3510	3.2759	3.4319	2.596
Lijiang	4.0132	4.0078	3.8929	4.0287	4.0089	0.187
Dali	3.8455	4.1250	3.9841	3.8451	3.9066	0.729
Total	3.6895	3.4891	3.4004	3.7380		11.208***
<i>F</i>	6.398***	15.008***	5.885***	10.011***	35.062***	
Social Relations						
Zhuhai	3.0517	2.4976	2.6411	2.9698	2.8339	5.481***
Sanya	2.6944	2.8538	2.5707	2.7730	2.7035	3.650*
Lijiang	3.7135	3.5426	3.3571	3.4724	3.5332	1.830
Dali	3.4336	3.5278	3.5291	3.2410	3.3737	1.144
Total	3.1313	2.9267	2.7038	3.1299		16.466***

Destination	Peripatetic visitors	Amenity migrants	Seasonal migrants	Full residents	Total	F
<i>F</i>	23.355***	15.356***	11.766***	9.621***	59.687***	

Notes: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 4. Regression analysis results.

Variable		Peripatetic visitors	Amenity migrants	Seasonal migrants	Full residents
City groups ref.=Lijiang	<i>Zhuhai</i>	-0.185*	-0.315***	-0.133	-0.028
	<i>Sanya</i>	-0.307***	-0.134	-0.110	-0.098*
	<i>Dali</i>	-0.156*	-0.006	0.033	-0.082 [†]
Overseas experience		0.168**	0.038	0.132**	0.075 [†]
Multi-city residence		0.134*	0.246***	0.231***	0.221***
Frequency of return to origin		0.055	0.077	0.061	0.083 [†]
Number of weeks spent in the origin		-0.088 [†]	-0.033	-0.041	0.008
Years of residence		0.133*	0.154*	0.073	0.179***
Housing area		0.023	0.076	0.103 [†]	0.166***
R ²		0.175	0.192	0.151	0.149
<i>F</i>		7.226***	7.399***	7.586***	9.977***
VIF		1.048–2.094	1.057–2.405	1.079–1.989	1.044–1.408

Variable		Zhuhai	Sanya	Lijiang	Dali
Migrant groups ref.=Full residents	<i>Peripatetic visitors</i>	0.004	0.093	0.024	0.115
	<i>Amenity migrants</i>	-0.148***	0.151 [†]	-0.023	0.166 [†]
	<i>Seasonal migrants</i>	-0.131**	0.022	-0.059	0.155 [†]
Overseas experience		0.124**	0.111**	0.07	0.087
Multi-city residence		0.255***	0.215***	0.051	-0.101
Frequency of return to origin		0.106**	0.043	0.051	0.020
Number of weeks spent in the origin		-0.066	-0.041	0.15**	-0.155

Variable	Zhuhai	Sanya	Lijiang	Dali
Years of residence	0.237***	0.11*	0.005	0.027
Housing area	0.085*	0.115**	0.117*	0.081
R ²	0.247	0.128	0.054	0.050
F	19.549***	8.366***	1.812†	0.864
VIF	1.021–1.38	1.057–4.543	1.039–1.494	1.098–1.771

Note: Coefficients are standardized. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$, † $p < 0.10$.

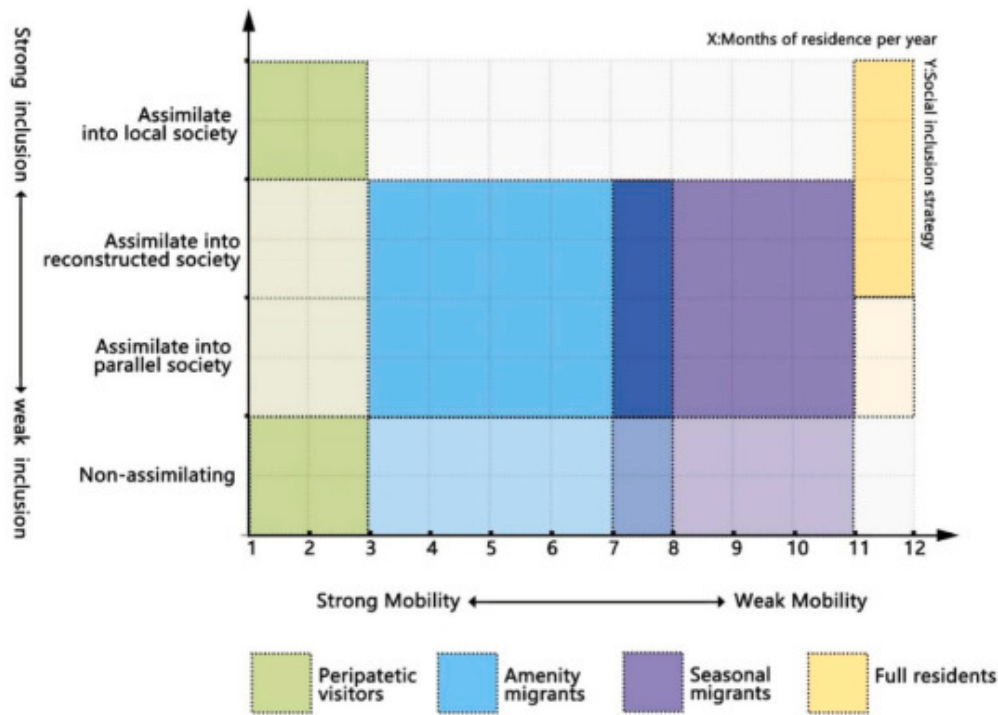
The results revealed that social inclusion among tourism entrepreneurial migrants was significantly higher than that among retirement migrants. Among travel migrants, those from Lijiang displayed the highest level of social inclusion, whereas those from Sanya exhibited the lowest. Full residents showed the greatest degree of social inclusion, while seasonal migrants had the lowest level. Additionally, social inclusion varied by city within the same migrant groups. The highest levels of social inclusion were observed among peripatetic visitors, amenity migrants, and full residents of Lijiang, as well as seasonal migrants from Dali. Conversely, social inclusion was lowest among amenity migrants, seasonal migrants, and full residents of Zhuhai and peripatetic visitors of Sanya. Furthermore, distinct migrant groups from Zhuhai and Sanya demonstrated varying degrees of social inclusion. Peripatetic visitors and full residents in Zhuhai scored higher in social inclusion compared to amenity migrants and seasonal migrants in the same destination, while amenity migrants in Sanya reported stronger social inclusion than seasonal migrants. However, migrant groups in Lijiang and Dali did not exhibit significant variation in this regard.

Full residents exhibited the lowest mobility but the greatest social inclusion, mainly because they chose to integrate into local society or reconstructed society. This group was prevalent in Zhuhai. Their overseas experience and multi-city residence, as well as years of residence and house size in the destination, significantly affected their social inclusion (Table 4). These migrants sought to live among residents longer and even become “new locals.” The longer they spent in their destination, the more opportunities they had to interact with locals and engage with society. The larger their house, the more likely they were to live with family, which contributed to their higher social inclusion. This group was also detected in Lijiang and Dali as lifestyle entrepreneurial migrants who moved to their destination and returned home in a particular tourist season each year (Carson et al., 2018; Simpson & Sigauw, 2013). The longer one lived in one's destination, the more chances and time one also had to build the life one envisioned using local elements.

Seasonal and amenity migrants had similar social inclusion levels and even held the same strategies. Most of them integrated into the reconstructed society or the parallel society, and only a few migrants chose not to integrate. Most tourism entrepreneurial migrants in Dali and Lijiang who entered the reconstructed society were amenity and seasonal migrants. Retirement migrants in

Sanya who had overseas experience and multiple dwellings in different destinations ([van Noorloos, 2013](#)) were mostly amenity and seasonal migrants. These kinds of migrants in Sanya might have had more adaptive capacity to build an ideal life and thus developed greater social inclusion ([Table 4](#)). However, all these idealistic migrants also returned to normal and visited their hometowns. Some even lived briefly in their dream society ([Gustafson, 2001](#); [Liang et al., 2021](#)). These patterns partly explain why amenity migrants and seasonal migrants in Sanya and Dali demonstrated stronger social inclusion than full residents who lived in the destination year-round. The more often migrants returned to their usual lives, the more tangibly they perceived the destination's reconstructed society. Amenity and seasonal migrants who chose to integrate into a parallel society were also easily found in Sanya, even having been nicknamed “Lao Yu” ([Wu et al., 2018](#)).

Peripatetic visitors, especially those in Dali and Lijiang who chose to integrate into local society, exhibited the greatest inclusion ($M=3.8237$, [Table 3](#)). Dali and Lijiang are heritage cities with a rich minority lifestyle. The novel lifestyles of these two cities attracted many migrants and persuaded them to become immersed in local society. However, migrants' social participation was fairly superficial—they lived there for less than three months and were significantly influenced by their overseas experience and multi-city residence ([Table 4](#)). They were also highly mobile. Moving overseas or to other destination cities afforded these migrants more chances to behave as locals, integrate into society, and experience authentic local culture, leading to a high level of social inclusion. Additionally, a large number of peripatetic visitors possessed high mobility and opted not to integrate into the destination society. Some of these visitors moved to more than two destinations per year. Their social inclusion was, therefore, heavily affected by their overseas experience and multi-city residence ([Table 4](#)). The above findings and analysis are summarized in [Fig. 3](#).



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Fig. 3. The matrix of four groups of tourism migrants and their social inclusion strategies.

Note: The dark color indicates a full match, while the light one means a partial match. The vertical axis represents four levels of inclusion strategies, ranging from low to high. The horizontal axis represents the degree of mobility, measured by the total duration of stay at the destination per year (in months). 1 indicates the highest level of mobility (an average stay of 1 month per year at the destination), while 12 indicates the lowest level of mobility (year-round residence at the destination).

5. Conclusion and discussion

The study extends the existing tourism research on domestic tourism migrants and offers empirical evidence to better understand their social inclusion strategies (Hall & Müller, 2018; Benson & O'Reilly, 2018). The present research sheds light on the unique social inclusion strategies of these migrants and the consequences for tourism migrants. The theoretical and practical implications of the results of this study are discussed as follows.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The current study makes significant theoretical contributions across several domains. First, the study explores the domestic tourism migrants, revealing their completely different social inclusion strategies. Our findings indicate that these tourism migrants fall into four groups: peripatetic visitors, amenity migrants, seasonal migrants, and full residents. Various types of tourism migrants

adopt separate social inclusion strategies. Even among the identical migrant groups, distinct strategies were observed in different destinations. For example, full residents typically have enough time and sufficient will to assimilate into the local society or reconstructed society, while most amenity and seasonal migrants tend to integrate into the reconstructed society or parallel society. People who adopted the above strategies were somewhat idealistic. Certain amenities and seasonal migrants, being newcomers to destinations, often lack a clear sense of whether and how they should integrate with the local society. However, some individuals are disappointed about life in their destination and intend to leave. The differences in social inclusion strategies suggest that not all tourism migrants engage in local society, even if the destinations take steps to attract them (Abdul-Aziz et al., 2015; Wong & Musa, 2014).

Second, unlike the prior studies that underscore the impact of individual factors, such as age, income, overseas experience, multi-city residence, overseas experience, residence duration, and housing size in the destination (Chen, 2023), on migrants' strategies of social inclusion (Table 4), our findings indicate that one's social inclusion strategy is not only dependent on individual factors (Liang et al., 2021; Wong & Musa, 2014, 2015) but also affected by many destination factors, such as climate, culture, lifestyle, cost, etc. The flexibility in strategic choices makes tourism migrants different from the forced migrant groups (Berry et al., 2006; Berry & Hou, 2017; Gui et al., 2012). Tourism migrants can independently choose, adjust, and even change their social inclusion strategies with freedom, catering to a series of push-pull factors (Wong & Musa, 2014, 2015). For example, Zhuhai is a modern city and has advanced medical and old-age care, which are the vital pull factors attracting retirement migrants (Liang et al., 2021). In comparison, Lijiang and Dali are popular heritage tourism cities with a rich minority lifestyle and tourism business opportunities (Table 1). These pull factors make Lijiang and Dali both places to earn a living and places to live (Su et al., 2013; Xu & Ma, 2014; Xu et al., 2017). Tourism migrants are not passive or forced migrants because of war or disaster but free migrants who can choose a destination of their own will. If the destination cannot offer the expected life, they can emigrate to other destinations.

Third, we developed a two-dimensional model of social inclusion among domestic tourism migrants and identifies four social inclusion strategies: (1) assimilate into local society, (2) assimilate into parallel society, (3) assimilate into reconstructed society, and (4) non-assimilating among various tourism migrants. Among all the strategies, assimilate into local society is similar to Berry's (1974, 1980) strategy of assimilation when there is little to maintain original culture and identity and to engage the destination society. Meanwhile, assimilate into parallel society is close to Berry's (1974, 1980) separation strategy when there is a strong desire to maintain the original culture and identity even though they live in the destination society. However, the strategies of assimilate into reconstructed society and non-assimilating are all new and quite different from Berry's (1974, 1980) integration and marginalization. Despite the similarity of some strategies, the foundational dimensions of social inclusion choice between tourism-led migrants and Berry's immigrant groups are different. Cross-cultural adaptation and ethnic identity are key considerations of social inclusion strategies for common forced migrant groups, while ideal lifestyle and balance

between original city and destination(s) are tourism-led migrants' main concerns, which determines the differences in their social inclusion strategies.

Lastly, in terms of research methodology, this study incorporates the mobility and residence characteristics of migrant groups to develop a sampling approach tailored to different types of tourism migrants. This method was tested through fieldwork in four case study locations, contributing to the operationalization of tourism migrant identification and survey methods. Building on this foundation, the cross-case quantitative study overcomes the limitations of previous single-case and small-sample research, yielding more generalizable and representative findings.

5.2. Practical implications

Destination authorities and tourism practitioners could amplify tourism migrants' social inclusion by carefully assessing their strategies. Given that full residents with the lowest mobility and peripatetic visitors with the highest mobility exhibited the greatest social inclusion (Fig. 3), it is critical for destinations to attract and satisfy these two groups of tourism migrants. More precisely, because peripatetic visitors often pursue cultural authenticity during shorter stays, there is less necessity for providing them with extensive living facilities and services. However, it is essential to provide convenient and short-term facilities and services, such as short-term rental apartments, seasonal rehabilitation centers, transportation passes, and monthly or seasonal passes for tourist attractions.

The recommendations for full residents and seasonal migrants are different. Apart from enhancing and expanding living facilities for both groups, authorities could consider creating a migrant community and interactive spaces that would facilitate opportunities for migrants to build local connections, make friends, and integrate into the community. Moreover, offering free local language learning classes, cultural and festival activities, interest groups, and social gatherings could encourage resident–migrant interaction. Consumer migrants are often economically well-off and highly educated elites. They can be encouraged to actively participate in community management and public service, sharing their personal knowledge and experiences to enhance their sense of belonging and honor.

Tourism migrants should be advised to strike a balance between their place of origin and destination societies. Returning home intermittently each year was found to affect social inclusion. As a result, destinations should consider strategies to attract migrants who intend to maintain connections with their hometown by visiting it regularly. Notably, retirement migrants who had multiple dwellings exhibited a higher level of social inclusion than other groups. More frequent returns to one's place of origin promoted better destination-based social inclusion, especially for retirement migrants. However, these return trips will inevitably lead to vacancies in housing and communal facilities. If these travel patterns are seasonal, destination authorities and policymakers should be mindful of handling migrant flows during the off-season. This could involve developing time-share houses and offering seasonal housekeeping and labor as potential strategies.

Over the long term, it is important to implement measures that encourage tourism migrants to extend their stay in the destination and become more deeply engaged in the local community, especially for tourism entrepreneur migrants. To achieve this goal, tourism entrepreneurs and migrants should have a voice in the development of local legislation, policies, and urban planning via participation in migrant organizations and community boards. Actively participate in or establish business associations and alliances to enhance business influence.

5.3. Recommendations for future research

First, it is essential to apply and evaluate the newly proposed conceptual model of domestic tourism migrants' social inclusion strategies in diverse contexts. For instance, in case study locations with various types of tourism migrants, researchers should examine differences in mobility patterns and social inclusion strategies across migrant groups. Moreover, investigating whether multi-destination migrants employ distinct inclusion strategies in different destinations warrants further exploration. Second, the social inclusion strategies of migrants are not static but are shaped by a range of influencing factors. Thus, examining the longitudinal dynamics of these strategies and their determinants and how these inclusion strategies influence their subjective well-being and lived experiences is critical for fostering destination development and ensuring sustainable progress. Third, an intriguing avenue for future research lies in exploring how tourism migrants influence each other's social inclusion strategies. Previous research has demonstrated that tourists mutually affect each other's value co-creation and experiences (Rihova et al., 2018). Accordingly, the assimilation of tourism migrants into parallel or reconstructed societies may heavily depend on the participation and co-creation efforts of other migrants. Fourth, given the cultural and economic diversity within China (Chen, 2023), studying the relationships between different mobility patterns and social inclusion across various cultural and economic settings deserves academic attention. Such research may reveal distinct findings among tourism migrants from diverse backgrounds. Finally, this study prioritized abstracting and generalizing the conceptual model and did not deeply examine the influence of contextual factors on the social inclusion of specific groups. Future studies could build on this framework to conduct targeted case studies that investigate these contextual influences in greater depth. In addition, this study focuses on the impact of mobility patterns on social inclusion. R-squared is relatively small in multiple regression analysis but still meaningful in social studies due to the complexity of human behavior, and more comprehensive studies can be carried out in combination with demographic characteristics in the future.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Zengxian Liang: Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Hui Luo:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Jie Sun:** Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Formal analysis. **Zidan Mao:** Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Formal analysis.

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Declaration of competing interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Appendix. Supplementary data

The following is the Supplementary data to this article.

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Multimedia component 1.

Appendix Table 1. Social Inclusion Scale

Construct	Items
Social Acceptance	I have friends I see or talk to every week*
	I have felt accepted by my neighbours
	I have felt accepted by my family
	I have felt clear about my rights
	I have felt free to express my beliefs
Social Isolation	I have felt terribly alone and isolated
	I have felt accepted by my friends
	I have been out socially with friends
	I have felt I am playing a useful part in society*
	I have friends I see or talk to every week*
Social Relations	I have felt I am playing a useful part in society*
	I have felt what I do is valued by others
	I have been to new places
	I have learnt something about other cultures
	I have been involved in a group not just for my university studies

Construct	Items
Individual Items	I have done some cultural activity
	I have felt some people look down on me because of how I am
	I have felt unsafe to walk alone in my neighbourhood in daylight
	I have felt insecure about where I live
	I have done a sport, game or physical activity
	I have helped out at a charity or local group
	My social life has been mainly related to retired life

Note: The asterisk (*) denotes duplicate items. When the scale is used as an overall measure of social inclusion, these items are counted only once.

Appendix Table 2. Groups Descriptions

Table 1. Migrant groups and City groups Descriptions.

		Migrant groups				City groups			
		Peripatetic visitors (N=317)	Amenity migrants (N=291)	Seasonal migrants (N=395)	Full residents (N=523)	Zhuhai (N=546)	Sanya (N=525)	Lijiang (N=298)	Dali (N=157)
Descriptive statistics of clustering variables									
Months of residence per year	1 month	146	0	0	0	61	22	43	20
	2 months	92	0	0	0	23	33	22	14
	3 months	38	11	0	0	13	24	8	4
	4 months	13	41	1	0	16	25	9	5
	5 months	16	70	3	0	13	60	8	8
	6 months	8	134	3	0	31	101	9	4
	7 months	2	17	144	0	12	134	10	7
	8 months	0	16	73	0	24	48	10	7
	9 months	2	2	50	1	29	19	5	2
	10 months	0	0	63	2	39	4	13	9

		Migrant groups				City groups			
		Peripatetic visitors (N=317)	Amenity migrants (N=291)	Seasonal migrants (N=395)	Full residents (N=523)	Zhuhai (N=546)	Sanya (N=525)	Lijiang (N=298)	Dali (N=157)
Origins (China)	11 months	0	0	58	0	42	0	10	6
	12 months	0	0	0	520	243	55	151	71
	Northern	46	60	50	41	50	91	35	21
	Eastern	43	35	55	87	84	49	59	28
	Central	45	42	44	110	140	32	45	24
	Southern	37	15	35	93	111	4	41	24
	Northwest	34	17	14	33	41	35	15	7
	Southwest	19	27	26	54	21	19	55	31
	Northeast	93	95	171	103	99	295	47	21
	Overseas	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1

Demographic information and mobility patterns

Overseas experience	no	261	262	353	470	493	467	258	128
	yes	56	29	42	53	53	58	40	29
Multi-city residence	no	114	98	186	206	312	246	31	15
	yes	203	193	209	317	234	279	267	142
Frequency of return to origin	0–1	194	197	307	344	357	470	131	84
	2+	123	94	88	179	189	55	167	73
Number of weeks spent in the origin	0–4 weeks	94	28	71	381	258	88	147	81
	5+	223	263	324	142	288	437	151	76
Years of residence	0–2 years	162	119	93	109	117	171	122	73
	3+	155	172	302	414	429	354	176	84
Household size	1 person	86	52	45	123	20	63	157	66
	2+ person	231	239	350	400	526	462	141	91

		Migrant groups				City groups			
		Peripatetic visitors (N=317)	Amenity migrants (N=291)	Seasonal migrants (N=395)	Full residents (N=523)	Zhuhai (N=546)	Sanya (N=525)	Lijiang (N=298)	Dali (N=157)
Housing area (m ²)	<70	140	138	153	114	59	321	114	51
	70+	177	153	242	409	487	204	184	106
Housing area comparison	small	173	199	263	212	250	433	115	49
	general or large	144	92	132	311	296	92	183	108
Social inclusion									
Mean value	SIS	3.58	3.49	3.40	3.62	3.51	3.40	3.75	3.64
	SI	3.69	3.49	3.40	3.74	3.43	3.43	4.01	3.91
	SR	3.13	2.93	2.70	3.13	2.83	2.70	3.53	3.37
	SA	4.08	3.91	3.84	4.17	4.01	3.83	4.25	4.23

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