

# The Influence of Tourist Sense of Escape in the Rural Complex on the Experience of Communitas: Based on SPSS25.0 and MPLUS8.0

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**Abstract**—In the era of the digital countryside, the "rural complex" is a new development model in the field of the rural tourism industry, which has important significance in the development of China's modern rural tourism industry. In this study, we analyze the antecedent and the outcome of tourist-to-tourist interaction in the rural complex. We constructed a model of the relationship between the sense of escape and self-disclosure (an important component of tourist-to-tourist interaction), the experience of communitas. SPSS25.0 was used to perform factor analysis to assess whether there was Common Method Variance (CMV) issue. Mplus8.0 was applied to carry out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the validity of the measurement model. Through structural equation model test (SEM) of 286 survey data, the results indicate that under the rural complex context, tourist sense of escape affects the experience of communitas directly, and tourist sense of escape affects the experience of communitas through tourist self-disclosure indirectly.

**Keywords**-Rural complex; sense of escape; experience of communitas; self-disclosure; tourist-to-tourist interaction

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In our research background, the experience of *communitas* refers to tourists' feelings towards the intimate, equal, positive, intrinsically motivated, and strong emotional state formed between tourists during the tourism process of the rural complex [1]. *Communitas* is used to examine the liminal experience of tourists in tourism activities, scholars pay a lot of attention to it and suggest tourists or tourism products providers, to reach the peak state of experience, they should pay attention to the achievement of a *communitas* experience in the process of tourism [2]. The rural complex is a new type of countryside based on rural geography and environment, with modern characteristic agriculture as the core industry, farmers or farmer cooperatives as the primary carrier. Rural complex as an essential means of rural revitalization, is of great significance to the sustainable development of the village. However, at present, there are many problems in the development of the rural complex. For example, the poor experience of tourists leads to low willingness to revisit and recommend. How to improve tourists experience has become an urgent problem to be solved. There is limited literature on how to enhance the experience of tourists in the rural complex. This study hopes for through tourist-to-tourist interaction perspective, to promote the tourist experience in rural complex, and help rural complex sustainable development.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **2.1 Sense of escape and experience of *communitas***

Sense of escape refers to the degree of a tourist when being destination they feel free from daily chores [3]. From the perspective of the definition of tourism, tourism is an activity that needs people to leave their usual place of residence. In recent years, people in cities have been under increasing pressure, especially for young office workers. And the rural area may be their ideal destination for tourism, since they always want to away from their usual residence, to enjoy a relaxed, slow-paced life.

In the rural complex, individuals may feel a different sense of escape, when they perceive a higher level of escape, differences arising out of the standardized socioeconomic and sociopolitical positions, roles, and status are more likely to disappear, they own the same role in the rural complex, that is tourists. They choose the same destination means that they have the same demands or more similarities and will treat each other more equally. In this condition, tourists can easily become friends and experience "interpersonal" authenticity within the "touristic *communitas*" [4].

Based on the above analysis, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Tourist sense of escape has a significant positive impact on tourists' experience of *communitas*.

## **2.2 The mediating role of self-disclosure**

Tourists not only enjoy their travel experience by seeking novelty, but also enjoy their travel experience by meeting and communicating with other travelers who are seeking similar experiences [5]. Therefore, interaction with other tourists plays a vital role in the formation of the travel experience. Self-disclosure refers to individuals' voluntary revealing of their personal information verbally [6]. According to social penetration theory, self-disclosure is a crucial component of establishing and maintaining relationships. Self-disclosure is an important component of tourist-to-tourist interaction. Many studies test self-disclosure under online text, like social media, which has not received much scholars' attention in tourism specific text.

Motivation for rural tourism is often associated with escaping urban stress and the pursuit of an experience in contrast to urban routines. What's more, they are also away from complex social relationships. The more significant the difference between destination and usual residence, the higher level of escape they perceived. In the rural complex, people constantly meet other tourists, and these tourists are strangers, and anonymity among tourists. The study has confirmed that under anonymity conditions, individuals seem to disclose more [7]. When in the rural destination environment, tourists' self-presentation concern is reliving, it is more likely to express themselves freely [8]. In other words, we suppose tourists' sense of escape in rural complex affects their self-disclosure behavior positively. *Communitas* is a concept put forward by anthropologist Turner [9]. According to the definition of *communitas*, which refers to a kind of anti-structure relationship freedom from the constraints of social structure. In this state, members are intimate, absolutely equal, uncompromising, and interlinked strong emotional relationships. Previous study confirmed that self-disclosure between tourists increased their intimacy and cohesion [7]. Self-disclosure plays a critical role in advancing relationships, the more tourists disclose, they are more likely to understand each other and forming a strong emotional connection.

Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: self-disclosure plays a mediating role between the sense of escape and tourist experience of *communitas*.

## **3 RESEARCH METHOD**

### **3.1 Participants and procedure**

We used the convenience sampling method in the rest of a rural complex named Shiguangshangqiu in Dujiangyan and randomly distributed questionnaires to tourists who had finished their journey on July 18, 2021. Shiguangshangqiu is a famous rural complex in Chengdu, as well as Sichuan province national agricultural comprehensive development rural complex pilot project. A total of 340 questionnaires were issued in this study, and 340 questionnaires were returned, of which 286 were valid, with an effective rate of 84.12%. Using a sample of 286 rural complex tourists, this study tested the relationships between sense of escape, tourist self-disclosure, and *communitas*. We adopted structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the structural validity of the three factors.

### **3.2 Measurement items**

The first part is the demographic characteristics of the interviewees, including age, gender, education level, and rural living experience. The second part is the main variables. To assess the sense of escape, we used 5 items that refers to the research of Taheri et al. [10] and make appropriate modifications to fit our research background. (e.g., This trip released tension; This trip made me alleviate boredom). To assess self-disclosure, we used the 4-item scale adapted from Lawrence et al. [11] (e.g., I often discuss my feeling about myself with other tourists). The communitas scale is revised from McGinnis et al. [12] (e.g., I feel a sense of belonging with other tourists during the trip), all items were scored with 7 points (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree).

## **4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT**

### **4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Samples.**

Among them, 115 were male, and 171 were female; The respondents of this questionnaire are distributed in all age groups, the age between 21-30 accounted the largest proportion, accounting for 57.5%. Most respondents (255) had a college education or higher, 75 leaders worked at State-owned enterprises, 141 were working at private enterprises, 70 respondents reported other occupations including institutions, civil servants and others. While 221 respondents had previously lived in the country. 118 respondents reported had traveled to rural areas 1~3 times.

### **4.2 Reliability and Validity Test**

First, we used Harman's single-factor test to assess whether there was Common Method Variance (CMV) issue. Based on the maximum likelihood method, SPSS25.0 was used to perform factor analysis. The results of the three-factor model indicated that the underlying three factors explained 51.381% of the variance, and the one-factor model explained 37.32% of the variance, less than 40% of the judgment standard [13]. Thus, CMV was not a serious concern in this study.

We used MPLUS8.0 to carry out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the structural validity of the three factors of sense of escape, self-disclosure, and tourists' experience of communitas. Table 1 shows the composite reliability (CR) was greater than 0.8, indicating that the indicators of the model construct had sufficient internal consistency. Then, we tested convergence validity, and all constructs' AVEs were greater than the lower limit of 0.5. The standard factor loadings (SFLs) for each item were greater than 0.6. Therefore, the latent construct in our study had good convergence validity. Further, the discriminant validity was tested. Table 2 shows that the square roots of all AVEs were all greater than the correlation between the constructs, indicating acceptable discriminant validity.

**Table 1.** The overall measurement model (n=286)

Construct	Item	SFL	S.E.	Z-Value	P-Value	SMC	CR	AVE
<b>ESC</b>	ESC1	.709	.035	20.391	.000	.503	.869	.570
	ESC2	.763	.031	24.865	.000	.582		
	ESC3	.791	.028	27.912	.000	.626		
	ESC4	.792	.028	27.958	.000	.627		
	ESC5	.715	.034	20.753	.000	.511		
<b>SDM</b>	SDM1	.737	.029	25.145	.000	.543	.916	.733
	SDM2	.899	.015	59.905	.000	.808		
	SDM3	.839	.020	41.297	.000	.704		
	SDM4	.936	.012	75.060	.000	.876		
<b>COM</b>	COM1	.798	.027	29.349	.000	.637	.870	.574
	COM2	.818	.026	31.790	.000	.669		
	COM3	.804	.027	29.991	.000	.646		
	COM4	.674	.037	18.149	.000	.454		
	COM5	.681	.036	18.674	.000	.464		

**Note:** ESC= sense of escape; SDM=self-disclosure; COM=communitas; CR=Composite construct reliability; SFL=Standardized factor loading; AVE=Average variance extracted.

**Table 2.** The correlations between the constructs (n=286)

	M	SD	AVE	ESC	SDM	COM
<b>ESC</b>	5.866	.965	.570	<b>.755</b>		
<b>SDM</b>	4.802	1.449	.733	.745	<b>.758</b>	
<b>COM</b>	5.512	.983	.574	.469	.746	<b>.859</b>

**Note:** The numbers on the diagonal line denote the value of the root of the AVE; other numbers represent the correlation coefficients between constructs.

### 4.3 Hypothesis testing

To test the research hypotheses, we used SEM to verify the relationships between the variables using ML estimation in Mplus 8.0. The fit index of the model proves that our SEM fits the data well, as shown by  $\chi^2=225.796$ ,  $df=74$ ,  $CFI=0.941$ ,  $RMSEA=0.085$ ,  $SRMR=0.054$ , and  $TLI=0.928$ . The results demonstrated that sense of escape ( $\beta=0.518$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) had a strong positive impact on tourist communitas, supporting H1.

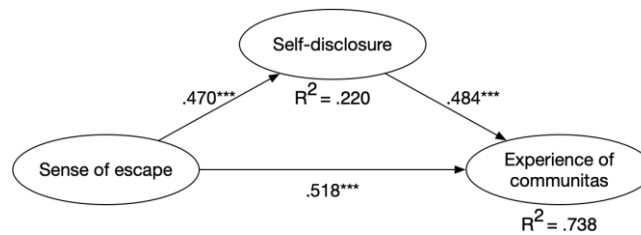
Then, we tested the mediation effect of self-disclosure. Bootstrapping estimation (bootstrap=1000) was used to test the 286 respondents' sample with a bootstrapped 95% confidence interval (CI). In Table 3, as shown by the significant indirect effects ( $\beta=.416$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with bootstrapped 95% CIs of [.294,.539], we proved the indirect mediating effects of self-disclosure between the sense of escape and communitas (path: sense of escape  $\rightarrow$  self-disclosure  $\rightarrow$  communitas). Considering that self-disclosure had a strong, direct, positive effect on tourist communitas, the connection between the sense of escape and tourist communitas was

partially mediated by the mediation effects of self-disclosure. Figure 1 shows the standardized path coefficients.

**Table 3.** Parameter estimates of mediating effects (n=286)

Path	Standardized indirect effect	Standard errors	95% confidence intervals	
			LLCI	ULCI
ESC-SDM-COM	.416	.063	.294	.539

Note: ESC: Sense of escape, SDM: Self-disclosure, COM: Communitas.



**Figure 1.** Standardized path coefficients.

## 5 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Few studies have focused on how the sense of escape of tourists in the rural complex affects the interaction between tourists and their final experience. In our study, we confirmed that the sense of escape and self-disclosure have a positively effect on tourists' communitas experience. For rural complex marketing, it is important to create a relaxing, peaceful, and slow-paced atmosphere which is different from tourists' usual residence. What's more, in order to increasing interaction among tourists, destination staff workers need to organize and set up activities to increase opportunities for self-disclosure among tourists, achieve the purpose of improving the tourist experience.

There are some limits to our study. Firstly, we only collected data from one of the rural complexes in Dujiangyan, in the future, more rural complex in different geographic location needs to be tested. Secondly, there are many other factors that may influence tourists' experience of communitas, we only considered from the interaction among tourists' perspective, more empirical research is needed to connect with this variable further. Thirdly, tourists traveled alone compared with traveling with family members or friends may behave a different in destination and had different level sense of escape; what's more, compared with usual residence, individuals' different psychological distance perception in the destination may also influence their sense of escape, in this research, we do not control these factors. Last but not least, whether tourists' experience of communitas can finally influence their actual behavior (e.g., revisit behavior) in tourism specific context need to be further explored.

**Acknowledgment.** Dujiangyan Municipal Science and Technology Planning Project Fund, 2019SF07, Research on the development path of Dujiangyan rural complex in the rural 4.0 Era: Based on the theory of planned behavior.

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