

A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING SENIOR TOURISTS PARTICIPATION IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *Abstract: Societies across the world are ageing. The global population aged 60 years or over numbered 962 million in 2017, more than twice as large as in 1980 (United Nations, 2017). However, senior tourist is a segment that has not held great importance in the tourism industry, and it is still a relatively new segment that is poorly studied and mistakenly segmented. The problem in previous studies is that ageing population has usually been generalised and subjected to stereotypes. Generally, older people are seen as poor in health and socially isolated group of society, which led to the lack of provision of diverse range of activities and tourist destination. However, this ageing generation is projected to be healthier, financially more capable and more productive than preceding generations. Previous researchers acknowledged that this group is heterogeneous and they are individuals who have specific needs and expectations. They are travellers who require tailor-made services and prefer to build trust through face-to-face interaction with service providers. They have different preferences, expectations and needs, and their focus is often based on special interest. The issue of understanding the needs, motives and tourist behaviours of the ageing people has become of fundamental importance not only in theory but also practice. Therefore designing marketing strategies and adapting the tourist products to the requirements of senior tourists are needed. The main aim of the paper is to propose a framework featuring the dynamic nature of senior tourism, highlighting the impact of fundamental dimensions of the senior tourist participation within the Malaysian context. While there is a range of factors involved, the most germane are impact on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors and perceived risks stimulating seniors' travel behaviour. The paper will contribute to a better understanding of the importance landscapes towards leisure and tourism in the growing senior market.*

Keywords: senior tourist travel participation, ageing population, proposed framework

1. Introduction

Societies across the world are ageing. According to United Nation forecasts, over 20% of the world's population is projected to be over the age of 60 by 2030. The global population aged 60 years or over numbered 962 million in 2017, more than twice as large as in 1980 when there

were 382 million older persons worldwide (United Nations, 2017). The number of older persons is expected to double again by 2050, when it is projected to reach nearly 2.1 billion.

Malaysia belongs in this category with an estimated 15% of its population classified as senior citizens by 2035. At present, the number of Malaysians aged 60 years and above is estimated to be 1.4 million and is projected to increase to 3.3 million in the year 2020 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016).

The increasing numbers of the ageing population is a potential target market for leisure, hospitality and tourist industries. The importance of the ageing segment, in general, is that the propensity to travel will increase amongst others due to:

- A more active generations in line with higher life expectancy and gradual process of ageing (Möller, Weiermair and Wintersberger, 200; Szmigin and Carrigan, 2001)
- Plenty of time and money to spend on travel (Grougiou, and Pettigrew, 2011; Tiago, de Almeida Couto, Tiago and Faria, 2016)
- Improved health condition (Hung and Lu, 2014; Meiners, Schwarting and Seeberger, 2010; Tiago, de Almeida Couto, Tiago and Faria, 2016).

However, senior tourist is a segment that has not held great importance in the tourism industry, and it is still a relatively new segment that is poorly studied and mistakenly segmented. Findings by Fon and Kitchen (2008) and Prieler, Ivanov and Hagiwara (2017) demonstrate that in Asian advertisements, older people are underrepresented. Similarly, Patterson (2007) critiqued the lack of senior models in advertising campaigns for travel products that are aimed at the older market. The younger models dominate advertisements, even for products aimed at older people and that when older people are used in advertisements, they tend to be depicted in ways which suggest negative stereotypes of old age (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2000). In the travel industry, the constant stream of images of young couples, businessman, families and backpackers in marketing materials are doing nothing to attract an older and frequently more affluent holidaymaker. It is evidence that the marketing industry discriminates older consumers in favour of younger people.

The seniors are seen as poor in health (Liew, Chong, Yeow, Kua, San Saw and Lee, 2019; Ong, Phillips, and Chai, 2013) and socially isolated group of society (Sedgley, Pritchard. and Morgan, 2011), which led to the lack of provision of diverse range activities. However, nowadays this ageing generation is projected to be healthier, more active and more productive than preceding generations. Patterson and Pegg (2009) highlighted that this group is heterogeneous and all of them are individuals who have their specific needs and expectations. The notion on the heterogeneity of ageing citizens was also suggested by Caber and Albayrak (2014). They are active travellers who require tailor-made services and prefer to build trust through face-to-face interaction with service providers. They have different preferences and interests, expectations and needs, and their focus is often based on special interest.

Despite the importance of including ageing population in tourism is growing, the senior tourism is still in its infancy and has not been relatively well researched. Moreover, the tourist organisations are facing difficulties in understanding these consumers' needs and how they

make decisions to travel. The lack of theory related to senior tourism poses a major hurdle to continued research in this field, especially with regards to the application of evolving age theories.

In conclusion the issue of understanding the needs, motives and tourist behaviours of the ageing people has become of fundamental importance not only in theory but also practice. The tourism industry is still not well aware of the mature market needs and often considers it as a homogeneous segment in terms of demography, lifestyle, health, psycho- and social behavioural patterns (Jang and Ham, 2009; Nimrod, 2008). Hence, to capture this segment of the market, marketers must adapt and expand the delivery of services in the leisure, hospitality and tourist industries, in order to meet their specially tailored services. The senior tourists can boost the destination because they can travel throughout the year and non-seasonal tourism can increase revenues and the use of infrastructure throughout the year.

This study initiates an original inquiry into the multi-faceted travelling activities and behaviour of ageing population and also aims to identify the main characteristics of the ageing consumers for the tourism industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Development of the Proposed Framework

Many studies on older persons specifically in Malaysia have not been based on systematically-gathered empirical evidence and have often implicitly placed ageing population in a more dependent, less self-aware or less consumer-oriented category (Ong and Phillips, 2007). Several research on tourism and travel have advanced that travel motivations (Eischaikul, 2012; Šimková and Holzner, 2014) and perceived risks (Chen, Htaik, Hiele and Chen, 2017; Mansfeld, 2006; Zimmermann, Hattendorf, Blum, Nüesch, and Hatz, 2012) as the major determinants that play a significant role in travel decision making. However, the literature on these determinants in the context of senior tourists in Malaysia is very limited. This study will fill this research gap by proposing a framework on the influence that motivation and perceived risks have on travelling intentions of the ageing population.

2.2 Motivation

Motivation is defined as the driving force within individuals that impels them to act (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2019). Motivation to travel among seniors can generally be classified into two categories of factors: intrinsic (push) and extrinsic (pull) motivations as proposed by Dann (1977, 1981). Similarly, in travel motivation study, demand refers to reasons (push factors) that sustain tourists' desire while supply relates to destination's characteristics (pull factors) (Mohammad and Som, 2010). Intrinsic factors are considered as socio-psychological needs that predispose a person to travel. They are internal to the person and establish the desire to travel. Extrinsic factors are ones that attract the person to a specific destination and these factors are external to the individual and are aroused because of destination attractions (Jang and Ham, 2009).

2.3 Intrinsic Motivation

Ryan and Deci (2000) highlighted that intrinsic motivation has an inherent tendency for searching internal values of novelty, capacity, exploration, and learning. Intrinsic factors in tourism identified in some studies include ego-enhancement, self-esteem, novelty and knowledge-seeking, relaxation and socialization (Guinn, 1980; Jang and Ham, 2009; Jang and Wu, 2006). Hsu, Cai and Wong (2007) added improving well-being, escaping routines, pride and patriotism and nostalgia onto the list of push factors in their study of Chinese senior tourists from Beijing and Shanghai. In a study done on travel motivations of European senior tourists, similar push factors were identified that included rest and relaxation, visits to new places and learning and experiencing new things which constitute to the concept of “Novelty Seeking” (Esichaikul, 2012). While results in a study by Sie, Phelan and Pegg (2018) found “personal development” and “learning” dimensions of intrinsic self-determined motivations were the main decision making factors for older adults to engage in educational tourism.

Given the above, it is proposed that:

Proposition 1: Intrinsic motive of senior tourists has an influence on travelling intention.

Proposition 1a: *Ego-enhancement* of senior tourists has an influence on travelling intention.

Proposition 1b: *Self-esteem* of senior tourists has an influence on travelling intention.

Proposition 1c: *Novelty and knowledge-seeking* motive of senior tourists has an influence on travelling intention.

Proposition 1d: *Relaxation* of senior tourists has an influence on travelling intention.

Proposition 1e: *Socialization* motive of senior tourists has an influence on travelling intention.

2.4 Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic (pull) factors that are of significant in tourism literatures include travel companion (Alén, Losada and Domínguez, 2016; Batra, 2009; Cleaver, Muller, Ruys, and Wei, 1999) and destination attractions (Esichaikul, 2012; Sie, Patterson and Pegg, 2016; Ward, 2014). On travelling companion, the findings of research on Halal tourism in Thailand indicate most of the tourists travel with family (28.21%) followed by friends (25.71%), spouse (14.29%), business colleagues (10.36%), alone (10%), organized tour group (6.07%), girlfriend or boyfriend (3.93%), and others (6.07%) (Sriprasert, Chainin and Rahman, 2014). According to Batra (2009), married seniors typically like to travel with their spouses and with people of their own age. Alén *et al.* (2016) stated that one of the factors stimulating seniors’ travel behaviour was travelling with a companion and the most common travel companions were their family members and/or friends. Cleaver *et al.* (1999) in their study analysed how travel motive is driven by the different travel companion preferences, namely, “by myself”, “one other”, “friends only”, and “family”.

Pearce (1998) defined destination attraction as a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor management and attention. According to Pearce (1998), destination attractions include natural environment features (e.g., World Heritage Areas), cultural features (e.g., museums and art galleries) and commercial purpose-built features (e.g., theme

parks). In a study on Caucasian ethnic USA citizens travelers, Littrell, Paige and Song, (2004) categorised travel attractions in terms of outdoor, cultural, sports and entertainment. In an attempt to identify motivation factors of foreign tourists to Jordan, heritage and natural features, food and culture features were the main attractions that the country should capitalize on (Mohammad and Som, 2010). Additionally, in a review on educational travel experiences of older adults, Sie, Patterson, and Pegg, (2016) identified historical, cultural and natural locations as the most common destination attractions.

Hence, it is proposed that extrinsic motive will have a significant effect on traveling intention:

Proposition 2: Extrinsic motive has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

Proposition 2a: Travel companion has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

Proposition 2b: Destination attraction has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

2.5 Perceived Risk

Risk in travel decision-making has become an important research area (Fuchs and Reichel, 2006; Karl, 2018; Mansfeld, 2006; Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, Kaplanidou and Zhan, 2013). Perceived risk is defined as consumer perception of the probability that an action may expose them to the danger that can influence travel decision if the danger is deemed beyond an acceptable level (Mansfeld, 2006). Physical health remains among the main constraints that prevent the older people from engaging in travel or leisure activities. Several studies show those seniors' travel possibilities increases or decreases according to their physical health status (El-Ghitany, Abdelmohsen, Farghaly, Abd El-Gawwad, and Abd El-Wahab, 2018; Fleischer and Pizam, 2002; McGuire, 1984).

According to Chen et al. (2017), a survey of international tourists visiting Myanmar revealed that tourist satisfaction can be decreased by the perceived risk of tourism destination. In an investigation by Jacoby and Kaplan (1972) to identify the various types of risk referred to in consumer behaviour literature, six types of risk emerged from this procedure. These were: physical, financial, performance, psychological, social and time risk. A study to better understand how to respond to alleviate traveller concerns and encourage travel by Simpson and Siguaw (2008), five dimensions of perceived risk were adopted namely: physical, financial, psychological, social and time risk.

In conclusion, researchers believe that dimensions of perceived risks will have a significant effect on traveling intention. The followings are proposed:

Proposition 3: Perceived risk has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

Proposition 3a: Physical risk has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

Proposition 3b: Financial risk has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

Proposition 3c: Performance risk has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

Proposition 3d: Socio-psychological risk has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

Proposition 3e: Time risk has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

2.6 Ethnicity

Malaysia is a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religion country with a population of about 31 million people who practice various religions. The fact that Malaysia practices mixed religion makes it have a unique Malaysian culture. However, many recent studies of leisure and travel make no mention or measurement of ethnicity and culture at any level of analysis despite tourism's global reach and economic significance specifically among Malaysian senior travelers.

Philipp (1993) investigated black-white racial differences in perceived attractiveness of tourism destination characteristics. Utilizing Spearman's Coefficient of Rank Correlation, blacks and whites were compared to determine the degree of association between their rankings and strong positive correlations between overall black and white rankings were found for all destination characteristics. A study by Hudson, Walker, Simpson and Hinch (2013) indicated that ethnicity (Chinese- and Anglo-Canadian) has an influence on leisure activity of downhill skiing.

Hence based on studies mentioned above it is proposed that:

Proposition 4: Ethnicity has an influence on travelling intention of senior tourist.

3. Methodology

This will be a quantitative study and a structured questionnaire will be used to elicit pertinent information. Respondents will be selected using homogenous purposive non-probability sampling technique based on Malaysian ageing population sample. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used to analyse and to gain new insights from data. The demographic profiles of the respondents will be presented through descriptive analysis. The descriptive questionnaire should include information on the respondent's gender, age group, source of income, qualification and ethnicity. The latent variables/ constructs will be measured using a 5-point Likert scale: ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The utilization of factor analysis and General Linear Model will provide useful insights into the various dimensions or constructs of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, perceived risk and travel intentions of the ageing population. The other statistical analysis tools to be employed included reliability test and crosstab. For reliability analysis, Cronbach Alpha would be used to test the internal consistency of the study. Cross tabulation can be performed to find patterns or to show the correlation change from one ethnicity group to another. Additionally, multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis will be conducted in predicting the relationship between the predictors/ independent variables (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and perceived risks) and the criterion variable/ dependent variable (travel intention). Through MLR the hierarchical causal relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable can also be observed. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed framework for this study.

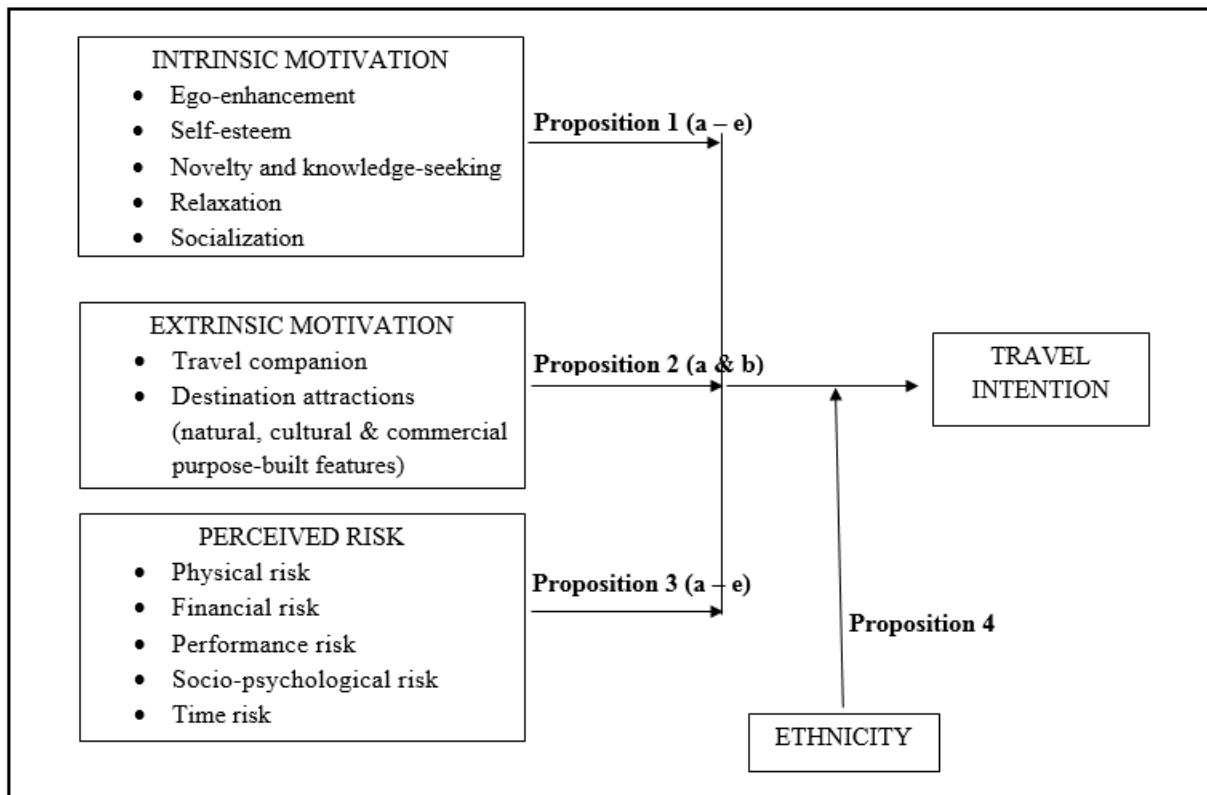


Figure 1: Proposed Framework Senior Tourist Travel Participation

4. Conclusion

Findings from this study will be able to highlight the importance of the various aspects of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) in order to better understand how ageing population decide on their travelling intention. Interesting result might reveal and it will emphasise on the hierarchical nature of the various aspects of motivation towards the ageing population travel intention. In addition it will be good to observe if there are any differences in the travelling motivation based on different ethnicity/ racial background. For example is there a variance between the preferred destination attractions among different races? Or which intrinsic motivation seems to be the most preferred internal value that different ethnicity searched for when they decide to travel?

In addition, investigating perceived risk is very important in travel decision-making since it has the ability to change decisions. Result of this study will be able to draw attention and reveal which risk dimensions might have negative effects on travelling intention. Consequently, result of this study will be able to provide specific guide and travel information to energise older travellers to reduce uncertainty and match their physical level of participation and may enhance their travel experience.

The findings of this study will make a significant contribution to the current literature. This study will provide empirical evidence supporting existing models, which will contribute to stronger motivation and perceived risks theories. This study will also suggest managerial implication, as the result will help marketers and decision makers understand the perspectives and the perception of ageing tourists to build long-term marketing strategies in order to remain competitive in the market. The result will be able to confirm that motivation and perceived risks are crucial for travel intention among ageing population, and consequently for the development of strong relationship between tourists and marketers. It is important to know the motives of tourists as they drive behaviour. Furthermore, motivation factors may serve for segmenting of the ageing tourists. Hence, marketers will be able to build unique positioning in a view to boost tourists experience and consequently to increase competitiveness.

One suggestion related to future research in this area would be to continue explore the dimensions of motivation and perceived risks through in-depth qualitative interviews to provide a more meaningful support that can be found in this study. Additionally, future research could also include international tourists to compare and evaluate the various aspects of motivation influencing travel intention among locals (Malaysians) and international tourists.

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