



DESTINATION SELECTION BY AGING TRAVELERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

SELECCIÓN DE DESTINO POR VIAJEROS DE EDAD: UNA REVISIÓN DE LA LITERATURA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Today, the rapid increase in the population of Golden Agers has rapidly increased the concept of "gray-pride". According to World Age Structure (2018), the population aged 55-64 was estimated at 8.84%, while the population aged 65 years and above was estimated at 9.06%. With their growing interest in adventurous activities, the tourism industry has begun to understand the importance of this 'forgotten' niche. The unique wants and needs of this group have necessitated understanding the different factors that influence travellers among Golden Agers to select a particular destination. Thus, this paper studies the impact of such different factors on aging travellers.

Design/methodology/approach: Since the paper is qualitative in nature, different studies conducted between the time period 2016 and 2020 were reviewed and classified according to the factors considered for the study.

Findings: The factors such as age, demographics and geography of the location, and activities likely to be undertaken strongly influence tourists, while factors such as facilities provided by internet and "Homestay" also had an influence.

Originality/Value: Today's Golden Age is active, energetic, and has unique needs and desires, specifically when it comes to travel. Marketers and academics alike have considered this group as a "minor niche". While, given their growing population and inclination to travel, few studies have been conducted to understand different factors and their impact on the Golden Age, a combined study of such factors has hardly been addressed.

Keywords: Golden Ager, Destination selection, Ageing travelers, Tourism.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Hoje em dia, o rápido aumento da população de Golden Agers aumentou rapidamente o conceito de "gray-pride". Segundo a World Age Structure (2018), a população entre 55-64 anos foi estimada em 8,84%, enquanto que a população entre 65 anos e mais foi estimada em 9,06%. Com o seu crescente interesse em atividades aventureiras, a indústria do turismo começou a compreender a importância deste nicho "esquecido". Os desejos e necessidades únicas deste grupo obrigaram a compreender os diferentes fatores que influenciam os viajantes entre os Golden Agers a seleccionar um determinado destino. Assim, o presente documento estuda o impacto de fatores tão diferentes sobre os viajantes envelhecidos.

Concepção/metodologia/abordagem: Uma vez que o documento é de natureza qualitativa, diferentes estudos realizados entre o período de tempo 2016 e 2020 foram revistos e classificados de acordo com os fatores considerados para o estudo.

Conclusões: Os fatores como a idade, demografia e geografia do local, e atividades susceptíveis de serem empreendidas influenciam fortemente os turistas, enquanto fatores como facilidades fornecidas pela Internet e "Homestay" também tiveram influência.

Originalidade/Valor: A Idade de Ouro de hoje é ativa, energética, e tem necessidades e desejos únicos, especificamente quando se trata de viajar. Tanto comerciantes como acadêmicos têm considerado este grupo como um "nichos menor". Embora, tendo em conta a sua crescente população e a sua inclinação para viajar, poucos estudos têm sido realizados para compreender diferentes fatores e o seu impacto na Idade de Ouro, um estudo combinado de tais fatores dificilmente tem sido tratado.

Palavras-chave: Idade de Ouro, Seleção de destinos, Envelhecimento dos viajantes, Turismo.



INTRODUCTION

Tourism can be simply stated as “the commercial organization and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest”. It can be explained in various contexts including economic, psychological, demographic, geographic, and socio-cultural contexts. It is one of the fastest-growing industries across the world because of the increasing number of people indulging in exploring different parts of the world, either for site-seeing, leisure activities, sports, shopping, or for Government travel, reunions, business, education and pilgrimage. Thus, tourism is one of the biggest sectors that contribute largely to the overall economy of the country by promoting its diversity in socio-cultural and geographical advantages, thereby leading to the enhancement of the experience of tourists.

Tourist destination, or “tourism-place” products, refers to attractions, amenities and activities, ancillary services, and point of access. Though there are different types of tourist destinations, they are majorly divided into three: coastal tourism, rural tourism, and social tourism. Along with tourist destinations, the inter-related industry is that of the hospitality industry, mainly comprising of lodging services, dining services, transportation services, and health services (Fleischer et al., 2011). So, when it comes to destination choice, different tourists analyze and customize destination attributes according to their unique needs and wants. Though tourism has always been seen to be linked with young and affluent people, lately a special “left-out” niche has gained more prominence. This “left-out” niche is of Golden Agers, which is continuously giving a boost to the concept of “gray-pride” in the tourism sector (Schewe, 1984). One of the basic reasons is that over 60s population will, by 2050, represent 21.1% of the total, as opposed to the current 11.7% (United Nations, 2013). According to the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), the over 60s will make in excess of 2 billion international trips by the year 2050, as opposed to 593 million in the last decade (Patterson, 2006). Thus, if this niche is properly served, the tourism sector will gain enormous profit.

Though there have been debates about the age group of “seniors”, or “aging population”, or “Golden Agers” being 55 years and above (Reece, 2004; Chen and Shoemaker, 2014), or 60 years and above (Prideaux, Wei, and Ruys, 2001), or 65 years and above (Jang et al, 2009), this study considers 50 years and above as the age group of “Golden Agers” (Bentley, Macky, and Edwards, 2006). Unlike the earlier aging population, the present aging population is active, healthy, and has a positive attitude towards life. They are physically, mentally, as well as financially sound, as depicted from their affluent



and fashion statement. The present paper reviews different literature between time period 2016 and 2020, so as to understand the impact of pre-defined attributes of destination on aging travelers. The destination attributes considered for the study are age, demography and geography of the place, activities likely to be undertaken, facilities provided by the Internet, and the emerging concept of “Homestay” (CED, 2009; SRTM, 2006).

The present review paper has been organized into different sections according to the attributes that have been taken into consideration. With the help of bibliometric analysis, it was found that two attributes - age, and demography and geography – are closely connected. So, it was decided that the papers under these attributes can be studied collectively.

HYPOTHESES FOR THE STUDY

H1: There is a positive impact of “age, and demography and geography” on destination selection by Aging Travelers

With respect to Golden ager, the facilities which play a major role in choosing the destination include health facilities, lodging facilities, dining facilities, and transportation facilities. Also, demographic and geographic factors play a vital role. The demographic factors include the population of the place and friendliness and warmth of people towards tourists. The geographical factors include if the place is hilly, coastal, or plain.

H2: There is a positive impact of “activities likely to be undertaken” on destination selection by Aging Travelers

According to the preferences, the people among the Golden Ager group can also choose a tourist destination on the basis of different activities such as site-seeing, sports, leisure, and recreational activities. Further, spirituality has always been an important factor impacting Aging travelers.



H3: There is a positive impact of “Internet” on destination selection by Aging Travelers

Through the Internet, Aging travelers can get the reviews of the place and choose accordingly. Also, they can locate and book hotels online according to their preferences.

H4: There is a positive impact of “Homestay” on destination selection by Aging Travelers

Aging travelers, today, have become conscious of the type of accommodation they would be using at the tourist destination. Among this accommodation type, Homestay is emerging as an attractive concept.

METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis has been conducted to study factors that affect the destination selection by ageing travelers. The major databases used for extracting the relevant Tourism paper included Web of Science, Elsevier, Scopus, Taylor & Francis Group, and ProQuest. The literature reviewed majorly constituted of paper published between 2015 and 2020. The relevant keywords were identifying by brainstorming that could help the researcher in finding useful studies. The most relevant keywords found were “aging consumers”, “golden agers”, “elderly tourism”, “aging tourism”, “senior travelers”, “aging travelers”, “senior tourism”, “tourism”, and “destination”.

The total number of studies collected from different Tourism journals was 117, but categorizing it under the factors considered for the study, 24 were rejected. While reviewing these papers, it was found that two attributes - age, and demography and geography – are closely connected. So, it was decided that the papers under these attributes can be studied collectively.



RESULTS AND FINDINGS

H1: There is a positive impact of “age, and demography and geography” on destination selection by Aging Travelers

Johann, et al. (2016) studied the impact of demographic and geographic factors affecting the destination choice of Golden Agers. Under these factors, the sub-factors (or attributes) that were considered for the study included tourists’ attractions, nature and weather, social environment, atmosphere, and economic environment. The study conducted a paired sample t-test (Johann, 2014) on the data collected from 317 respondents of coach tours of Poland. In line with previous studies conducted (Shoemaker, 2000; Horneman et al, 2002; Kim et al, 2003; Prayag and Ryan, 2011; Chen and Lin, 2012; Chen et al, 2014), this research also found that the highest-rated destination attributes by the aging people included safety, cleanliness, tourist attraction, reasonable prices, tourist information, and kindness towards foreigners.

A similar study was conducted by Utama (2016), where the study focused on factors affecting Golden Agers to select Bali as their tourist destination. Understanding two basic characteristics of this age group, that is, income and time, the author conducted a descriptive statistical analysis with 400 respondents aged 55 or over. With the help of SEM-AMOS structural model analysis, it was found that tourist destination image including psychological motivation (Ritchie et al, 1993), basic facilities (Milman and Pizam, 1995), natural attributes, economic and political conditions of the destination (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chi, 2005), affected the decision of aging people while choosing a destination. Also, it was found that external motivation affected destination image perceived by the tourists, which significantly affected tourists’ satisfaction while no impact of tourist satisfaction was observed on destination loyalty.

Wei, et al. (2017) studied the different factors which had a major impact on the destination choice of Chinese outbound tourists with the help of data from CELS over the time period May 2012 to February 2013. The factors undertaken for the study included demographic characteristics, time constraints, and subjective measure “happiness”. With the help of binary logistic regression, it was found that age had a negative relationship with destination choice when it came to senior tourists, as senior tourists didn’t prefer to travel to Europe/USA. Though education, income, and vacation time had



a positive relationship with destination choice, happiness measures didn't have any influence on the tourists' destination choice.

Hudson, et al. (2019) discussed the factors influencing aging people to find a tourist destination, with special regard to the demography and geography of South Carolina in the US. The respondents were classified into potential retirees, "current" visitors, and existing retirees. The attributes considered included air access, climate, close to family, friendliness and welcoming people, housing, infrastructure, insurance, living cost, medical and healthcare, recreational activities, restaurant, safety, shopping, sites to visit, and taxes. With the help of partial least squares path modeling (Hair et al, 2013), it was found that destination with warm climate (Abdul-Aziz et al, 2014; Wong and Musa, 2014), offering recreational activities (Humphreys & Kochut, 2013; Wong et al, 2017), close to family (De Coulon, 2016; Wong et al, 2017). Along with this, it was also discussed that Internet facilities and Homestay could be emerging factors in the near future.

H2: There is a positive impact of "activities likely to be undertaken" on destination selection by Aging Travelers

Mohamed et al (2016) studied the travel preferences among Golden Agers with the help of the binomial logit model. The data of 4170 tourists were collected through a survey from tourist hotspots and gateways at Penang. The attributes considered included nine types of information sources, six types of accommodation (Alen et al, 2012) and nine tourism activities (Lehto et al, 2008). It was found that Golden Agers preferred past experiences, mass media, travel agencies (Alen et al, 2012; Shim et al, 2005), and in-flight information as information sources, Homestay for accommodation, and relaxing activities such as site-seeing (Lehto et al, 2008; Javalgi et al, 1992).

Wijaya, et al. (2018) studied the factors influencing aging tourists of Indonesia to select an international destination. With the help of 246 respondents over age 55, the study analyzed pull and push motivation factors affecting the selection (Baniya et al, 2017; Prayag, 2012; Jang and Wu, 2006; Kim et al, 2003; Dann, 1977). In link with previous researches, it was found that among the activities, relaxation was the most preferred one (Jang et al., 2009; Jang and Wu, 2006; Johann et al., 2016; Prayag, 2012; Le Serre et al., 2013) while among the geographical factors, the most important ones



were basic facilities and hygiene factor (Kim et al, 2003), destination familiarity, local attractions, and travel facilities (Avcikurt, 2009; Prayag, 2012).

H3: There is a positive impact of “Internet” on destination selection by Aging Travelers

Vigolo (2017) in a chapter discussed the impact of the Internet and specifically, social media, on senior tourists while setting the parameters of a destination. The four major topics regarding travel destinations with respect to the Internet that were focused upon included information searching, sharing, travel booking, and travel experience. In this fast-moving world, most of the Golden Agers feel lonely and depressed, thereby experiencing self-isolation. This stands as the major reason for them opting for traveling and exploring different parts of the world. At this time, technology in the form of Google Maps assists them in selecting a particular destination that caters to their needs (Winstead et al, 2013). Along with this, online reviews help them in having a virtual tour of the place they wish to go (Gu et al, 2013; Kostoska et al, 2015; Alén et al., 2016; Viglia et al, 2016). Regarding the information they search online with respect to traveling, frequent searches are about the lodging facilities, transportation facilities (Graeufl, 2006), dining facilities, demographic features, climate, natural attractions, activities (Pesonen et al, 2015; Thébault et al., 2013) While exploring the Internet, Golden Agers have started becoming active on social media, as evident by their craze towards selfies in their daily social life (Magasic, 2016). Thus, the Internet is increasingly penetrating through the aging population when opting for a tourist destination, especially regarding trip preparation.

Wu, et al. (2018) studied the impact of demographic and geographic factors, facilities provided by the Internet, and activities likely to be undertaken by Golden Agers with respect to Chinese outbound tourists. The data for the study was collected through semi-structured telephonic interviews and a questionnaire-based survey in 2015 in Shanghai. Through this data collection process, 130 surveys were compiled, which was further analyzed with the help of multiple linear regression. While reviewing the study, the most important review cited was:

“Pearce, Wu, and Chen (2015) assessed more than 10,000 pictures posted by Chinese tourists who wrote blogs about their driving experience along the Great Ocean Road, an iconic Australian drive route. They identified that Chinese tourists were impressed with the scenic views, the encounters with local animals, the driving culture, the distinctive accommodation, local food, commercial



activities, and the historic sites. The opportunities to observe and interact with the local community and their lifestyle were also highly appreciated by the Chinese.”

The study found that Chinese tourists preferred natural attractions and historic sites while opting for a tourist destination. Along with the basic necessities, they also considered Internet facilities including proper Wi-Fi connection and mobile phone services, as their necessity while choosing a destination. The activities they were likely to undertake to include commercial activities as well as outdoor activities (Pearce, Wu, De Carlo, & Rossi, 2013; Denstadli and Jacobsen, 2011).

H4: There is a positive impact of “Homestay” on destination selection by Aging Travelers

Alen, et al. (2015) studied the motivations that influence senior tourism while choosing a tourist destination, with respect to demographic variables in Spain. The sample for the study was Spanish residents over 55 years of age selected through two sample probability sampling between March and May 2012. With the help of OVERALS and two-stage cluster analysis on 358 respondents, it was found that majority of the respondents preferred destinations with natural landscapes and historical/artistic sites (Chen, Liu, & Chang, 2013; Huang and Tsai, 2003; Jang and Wu, 2006; Lieux et al, 1994), and Homestay option (Batra, 2009; Bai et al., 1999) while choosing a destination.

Aziz et al (2018) studied the influence of accommodation on travelers’ destination selection with respect to Muslim family tourists (ITC, 2016; Jafari, 2014) in Malaysia. The responses from 392 tourists were analyzed with the help of t-test and ANOVA. It was found that the majority of the senior tourists preferred Homestay as the type of accommodation.

CONCLUSION

Golden Agers of today are more energetic and like to travel and explore different parts of the world. But as in terms of consumer behavior, their psychology differs due to which their needs and wants differ too. Due to these differences, the impact of various factors on such an aging population further differs. While reviewing the previous literature available, it was found that the factors which influence the aging population while selecting a tourist destination, mainly include age, demography and geography of the place, activities likely to be undertaken, Internet facilities, and “Homestay”.



From the overall review conducted, it was found that most of the studies discussing such tourism have focused on the influence of age, and demography and geography of place on destination selection, thereby stating the importance of these factors. These factors were found to have a positive impact on aging travelers' destination selection (Alexandris, Funk, & Pritchard, 2011; Albayrak, Caber, & Crawford, 2007; Tan, 2017; Sun, Chi, & Xu, 2013; Goldsmith & Tsotsou, 2012; Almeida and Garrod, 2018; Artal-Tur et al, 2019; Huang and Tsai, 2003; Alen et al, 2017). Further, studies related to activities likely to be undertaken by aging people were comparatively less, which stated that relaxation, leisure activities, and site-seeing were the most preferred activities by Golden Agers (You and O'Learly, 1999; Alen et al, 2017). On the contrary, it was found that Internet facilities and "Homestay" have now started forming their base among the aging population. Thus, an influence of Internet facilities and Homestay on Golden Agers was also found (Aguiló et al., 2005; Baloglu, 2001; Chen, 2009; Artal-Tur et al, 2019; Alen et al, 2017).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The present study has considered only a few factors which influence the Golden Agers while selecting a destination while there may be several other factors as well such as behavioral intentions, attitude, beliefs (Yuzhanin and Fisher, 2016), societal norms, destination marketing, tourist satisfaction, and the like. Secondly, since this is a review of the academic literature between 2016 and 2020 and the impact of the above factors considered may vary because of the rapid changes in lifestyle, tastes and preferences of the aging travelers, it gives a general outlook of the impact of factors considered on these travelers. Thus, quantitative studies concentrating on different places may present a broader picture of the influence of the factors considered (age, demography and geography of the place, activities likely to be undertaken, Internet facilities, Homestay).



APPENDIX 1:

Table 1: Summary of studies (between 2016-2020) undertaken

Attributes	Studies
Age, Demography and Geography of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johann et al (2016) • Utama (2016) • Wei et al (2017) • Hudson et al (2019) • Alen et al (2017) • Artal-Tur et al (2019)
Activities likely to be undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mohamed et al (2016) • Wijaya et al (2018) • Alen et al (2017) • Artal-Tur et al (2019)
Internet facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigolo (2017) • Wu et al (2018) • Alen et al (2017) • Artal-Tur et al (2019)
Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alen et al (2015) • Aziz et al (2018) • Alen et al (2017) • Artal-Tur et al (2019)

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