

Understanding Senior Tourists' Well-Being: The Moderating Effect of Travel Patterns

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Abstract

Retiring from work is a major personal and professional transition and has a major influence on one's life. Tourism researchers have been aware of the importance of seniors' tourism and leisure activities to enhance their well-being. The study examines the effect of tourism experience on leisure life domain, which in turn influences overall quality of life. Moreover, the moderating effect of travel patterns is also tested. A final sample of 328 was used for data analysis including Structural equation modeling (SEM) and multi-group analysis to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that tourism experience positively influences satisfaction with leisure life domain and overall quality of life. Findings also indicated that there are moderating effects of the travel patterns on the relationship between satisfaction with leisure life domains and overall quality of life. The study also provided managerial implications for tourism marketers and destination managers.

Keywords: Senior Tourist, Tourists' Well-being, Travel Patterns

JEL Classifications: I12, I39, L83

I . Introduction

Recently, the important issues for the tourism industry have revolved around the changing age demographics and well-being/health trends connected with travel behavior.

According to the census report for world population aging, there were 841

million seniors reported in 2013, which accounted for 12% of the world's population in 2013. This figure is expected to reach 21% by 2050. This rapid increase in the number of seniors applies to many countries (United Nations, 2013). In South Korea, those over 65 accounted for 11% of the population in 2010, a figure that is expected to grow to 24.3% in

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2030 and 40.1% in 2060, which would give South Korea one of the highest proportions of seniors in the world (Kim and Moon, 2011). Further, the growing number of seniors today are more independent and better educated than those of earlier generations (Adams, Leibbrandt and Moon, 2010). Retirement pensions and easily available health insurance have improved the economic standing of many seniors, which along with better healthcare and nutrition, has led to longer life expectancies (Adams et al., 2011). Hence, this phenomenon implies that seniors are becoming a more important segment of the tourism and hospitality market, one that is entitled to consideration (Bai et al., 2001; Lohmann and Danielsson, 2001; Schröder and Widmann, 2007).

More importantly, retiring from work is a major personal and professional transition and has a major influence on one's life (Gee, 1999; Nimrod, 2008; Nuttman-Shwartz, 2004). Some retirees sense a loss of meaning, while others view retirement with anticipation as a new chapter in life (Gee, 1999). It is imperative that these retired individuals endeavor to adjust to this life and change and learn to effectively manage their time. According to Nazareth (2010), senior tourists experiencing the impacts of aging leads to an increase in their attention towards nutrition, an increased use of individualized tourism, and leisure activity as a means of supporting their wellness, quality of life, and health. Additionally, gerontology researchers have been aware of the importance of seniors' tourism activities to enhance their well-being (Jang et al.,

2004; McGuire, Uysal and McDonald, 1988; Wei and Milman, 2002). However, there is no study examining how travel pattern influences senior leisure life domain and overall quality of life.

In pursuit of this purpose, the study explores the effect of tourism experience on seniors' quality of life. Moreover, the study examines the patterns of change in travel behavior of seniors and looks at how these travel patterns moderate the relationship between satisfactions with leisure life domains and overall quality of life.

II. Hypothesis Development

1. Tourism Experience and Its Influence on Quality of Life

Spending time in tourism activities can be considered an essential component of life for improving emotional and physical well-being (Janke, Davey and Kleiber, 2006) and achieving a successful retirement (Silverstein and Parker, 2002). Havighurst and Albrecht (1953) proposed activity theory explaining the seniors' leisure and tourism activities stating that an increase in time availability enabled seniors to maintain higher activity levels or roles, which are important for improving their life. A number of studies have supported activity theory by demonstrating that a retired senior's participation in an activity contributes to his or her subjective well-being (e.g., Fernandez-Ballesteros, Zamaron and Ruiz, 2001; Menec and Chipperfield, 1997; Riddick and Stewart,

1994; Silverstein & Parker, 2002). For instance, Heo et al. (2013) segmented three groups based on patterns of serious leisure involvement and examined relationships among the clusters of life satisfaction, health, and membership in serious leisure. The results suggested that the level of involvement in serious leisure had a positive impact on life satisfaction and health.

Spillover effects can further explain the overall assessment of life satisfaction. The number of recent measures of QoL stresses the multidimensional nature of the concept. In terms of the multidimensional perspective, overall quality of life is influenced by satisfaction within a number of individual's life domains (Lee et al., 2002). The spillover effects of major life domains—such as leisure, social, and finance—on overall life satisfaction are recognized in the literature (Neal et al., 1999). This perspective of QoL can be supported by bottom-up spillover theory (e.g., Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999; Sirgy, 2002; Sirgy and Lee, 2006). That is, senior tourists' overall quality of life is mostly influenced indirectly or indirectly by evaluations of specific life domains such as health life, emotional life, leisure life, and family life. Neal, Sirgy and Uysal (1999) applied the bottom-up spillover theory to examine the relationship between tourism experience and OoL and the study revealed that overall life satisfaction was influenced by satisfaction with primary life domains. The effects within the leisure life domain spill over into the most superordinate domains, thus contributing to life satisfaction. Hence, the following hypothesis is stated:

H 1: Senior's tourism experience has a positive influence on satisfaction with the leisure life domain

H 2: Satisfaction with the leisure life domain has a positive influence on overall quality of senior.

2. Travel Patterns

Successfully managing life after retirement is a significant challenge for seniors. Leisure and tourism activity patterns continuities and changes serve a significant role in the retirement adjustment process (Nimrod, 2008). With this in mind, tourism has been essential life domains used by seniors to manage additional free time by participating in various types of travel and leisure activities (McGuire, Boyd and Tedrick, 2004). However, not every senior is likely to participate in new or additional travel after his or her retirement (Iso-Ahola et al., 1994). Some may continue to participate in previous tourism activities or in reduced activities while others may start new types of travel depending on their level of constraints, such as reduced income, declining health capacity, and loss of significant partners (Nimrod, 2008; McGuire, 1984). In leisure and tourism studies, researchers paid attention to changes in older adults' tourism and leisure activity patterns by applying the theory of activity, disengagement theory, and continuity theory. Cumming and Henry (1961) stated that the seniors tend to reduce their time with society and focus more on personal growth. They also argued that social detachment led to a person's personal growth and well-being.

On the other hand, the engagement argument evolved into activity theory (Havighurst, 1961), which argued that participating in and maintaining activities contribute to participants' well-being. Active engagement in meaningful activities is an essential part of life satisfaction. For example, Blazey (1992), focusing on individuals over the age of 50, examined the association between retirement status and travel activities. The study showed that retirees were more likely to travel for longer durations with a larger number of persons in the travel party than non-retirees. Nimrod (2008) showed that the highly involved individuals engaged in a higher frequency of activities enjoyed a significantly higher life satisfaction. There are mixed findings of seniors' travel patterns and their contribution to life satisfaction.

This study will regard retirement as a transition in seniors' lives and examine retirees' travel patterns by investigating the frequency of travel participation in comparison to the pre-retirement period. Frequency implies the level of involvement. Considering changes in frequency of tourism activity participation, types of perceived post-retirement behavior that examine these types of senior travel patterns following retirement will amplify the effect of satisfaction with leisure life on overall QoL. Hence, the following hypothesis is stated:

- H3: The seniors' travel patterns have a moderating effect on the relationship between satisfaction with leisure life and quality of life QoL of senior.

III. Research Methods

1. Sample and Data Collection

An individual who is over 65 and retired is the unit of analysis in this study. A self-administered survey was utilized to collect the data in Jeju, South Korea. Jeju has two main administrative district cities: Jeju and Seogwipo. Data were collected from two senior education centers, one welfare center, and gathering/social clubs in each city. Several well-trained assistants were employed to distribute the survey questionnaire in each place to help the seniors fill out the questionnaire successfully. 70 questionnaires for each place were distributed for a total of 560 surveys in January to February of 2015. Within about two months, 420 respondents participated in the survey. Among these respondents, some were filtered based on a screening question (age and retirement). Only people who were over 65 and retired could participate in the survey. 380 respondents were filtered out at the beginning of the survey and an additional 52 responses were incomplete, so these were deleted. Next, the unusable responses that tended to answer in a certain direction or consciously misrepresent the truth were deleted. Therefore, a total of 328 responses were used for data analysis.

2. Measurement Scale

First, related literature on leisure life satisfaction, overall quality of life, and activity patterns were reviewed to generate

a list of indicators. After the items of the measurement scales were developed, the pretest of the scales were carried out prior to the creation of the final questionnaire in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the construct (Hinkin, Tracey, & Enz, 1997). The questionnaire was then distributed to retired residents of Jeju, South Korea over the age of 65. One hundred fifty responses were included in the analysis. The results of the pretest were used to refine the initial instrument scales and incorporated into the final version of the survey instrument.

To measure senior's satisfaction with tourism experiences, three items were developed based on previous literature review (e.g., Kim, Woo and Uysal, 2015). The respondents are asked to indicate their perceptions of items related to satisfaction with tourism experience using a scale ranging from "very unsatisfied" (1) to "very satisfied". Satisfaction with leisure life domain is measured with three items (Kim, Uysal and Sirgy, 2013). The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) has been widely used in gerontology and leisure studies to measure particularly senior's overall life satisfaction and quality of life. For this study, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and previous additional items from previous tourism research are adopted (Diener, Horwitz and Emmons, 1985; Sirgy, 2002). The responses to overall life satisfaction are measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied".

IV. Results

Of the 328 respondents, gender was evenly distributed, showing that 166 (50.6 %) were male while 162 (49.4%) were female. Among the respondents, 58.8% were aged between 65 and 69 and 30.2% of the respondents were between the ages of 70-75. The remaining respondents were over the age of 75. In terms of education level, 32.1% of respondents completed at least some college education, 29.6% had a college degree, 15.8% had finished high school or less, 12.2% had master degrees, and 11.0% had doctoral degrees. Income sources for 41.8% of respondents came from their pensions. The remaining 51.2% of respondents relied on their own savings (27.4%), are supported by their children (8.8%) or relatives and friends (1.8%), receive social benefits (14.0%), or have other sources of income (6.1%). Moreover, 32.6% of the respondents have been retired for 3 years, followed by 2 years (28.4%), 4 years (15.2%), more than 5 years (14.0%), or for 1 year (9.7 %).

1. Overall Measurement Model

The overall measurement model consisted of three latent constructs and twelve observed indicators. The reliability and validity of the overall model fit were examined. First, the squared multiple correlation (R^2) values were estimated to determine whether the observed indicators adequately represent the measurement model and determine the in-

Table 1. CFA Results for the Overall Measurement Model

Constructs & Indicators	Standardized loading (Li)	Reliability (Li ²)	Error/Variance extracted
<i>Satisfaction with tourism experience</i>			
I am satiated with the travel	.87	.76	.24
The travel met my expectation	.93	.86	.14
Overall, I enjoyed the travel	.91	.82	.18
<i>Satisfaction with leisure life domain</i>			
I am satisfied with my leisure life	.95	.90	.10
I am satisfied with my leisure time	.94	.88	.11
I am satisfied with spare time activity	.86	.74	.26
<i>Overall quality of life</i>			
The conditions of my life are excellent, and I am satisfied with my life	.78	.61	.39
My satisfaction with life in general was increase shortly after trip	.82	.67	.33
Overall, I felt happy upon my return from trip,	.81	.66	.34
Although I have my ups and downs, in general, I felt good about my life	.82	.67	.33
Overall, my experience with my life are memorable and have enriched my quality of life	.80	.64	.36
After trip I felt that I lead a meaningful and fulfilling life	.72	.51	.49

Note: **p<.001

indicator reliability. The examination of squared multiple correlation values indicates that the measurement scale is reliable and strong. After confirming the adequacy of the individual indicators, the composite reliability, variance extracted estimate, and average variance extracted estimate for each latent factor was examined. As shown in <Table 1>, composite reliability of each construct was above 0.70, ranging between 0.72 and 0.94. The entire AVE estimate also indicated satisfactory results of fit indices (Hair et al, 2006). Table 1 summarized the results of reliability and validity of the construct. The chi-square value of

CFA was 221.169 with 51 degree of freedom ($p<.000$) and the CFI value of .94 is acceptable and the RMSEA .06 is also acceptable. The review of goodness-of-fit incidences showed that the proposed conceptual model was a well-fitting model to the data.

2. Testing the Proposed Model and Hypotheses

In SEM, hypotheses testing were conducted to find out the relationships between the exogenous and endogenous constructs. Two types of matrices specify

the relationships: a Gamma matrix (γ) and a Beta matrix (β) (Bollen, 1989; Byrne, 1998; Mueller, 1996). The Gamma matrix comprises of the regression coefficients representing relation between the exogenous constructs and the endogenous constructs while the Beta matrix refers to the regression coefficients that link the endogenous constructs. The review of the hypothetical structural model revealed that the χ^2 value was 221.169 with 52 degree of freedom ($p < .000$). The CFI value of .95 is acceptable and the RMSEA.07 is also acceptable. The value of Normed fit index (NFI) and Non-normed fit index (NNFI) are also above .90. The results of SEM analysis of hypothesis 1 showed that satisfaction with tourism experience significantly influences satisfaction with leisure life domain ($t = 11.88, P < 0.001$). Hence, hypothesis 1 was supported. Moreover, satisfaction with leisure life domain has positive effect on overall quality of life ($t = 8.45, P < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis 2.

3. Multiple-Group Analysis

Multiple-group analysis in covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) is an important technique to ensure the invariance of latent construct measurements and the validity of theoretical models across different subpopulations (Evermann, 2010; Jones-Farmer, Pitts and Rainer, 2008).

Considering changes in the frequency of tourism participation creates two theoretical types of perceived post-retirement behavior: (1) Expanders—people who report participation in tourism activities at

a higher frequency and (2) Reducers—people who report participation in tourism activities at the same or at a lower frequency. Seniors were not equally divided into the two types of travel patterns. The first group, comprising of 37.8% of the respondents ($N = 124$), was the expanders. The other group, which made up 62.2 % of the sample ($N = 204$), was the reducers. This study used multi-group analysis to compare two different types of travel patterns (expanders and reducers) in relationship to satisfaction with leisure life domain, and overall QoL. First, an unconstrained model (baseline model) was run without constraining any factor loading across group, and fully constraint model was run while constraining all factor loading to be equal across the group. The result of a chi-squared (χ^2) comparison of unconstrained and constrained models suggested that the path between the expander and reducer groups was significantly different. Next, the equality of a particular parameter between two groups was tested by constraining a path to be equal across group. The results showed that the path from satisfaction with leisure life domain and overall quality of life significantly differed across the expander and reducer group ($\Delta \chi^2 / \Delta df = 6.38(1), p < 0.05$). The path coefficients provided the estimates of the regression coefficient for two groups and the result implies that the type of travel patterns moderates the effect between satisfaction with life domain and overall quality of life such that effect is stronger for expander group than reducer group. <Table 2> summarized the results of moderating effects of travel patterns.

Table 2. Results of the Moderating Effects of Travel Patterns

	Standard path coefficient		
	Expander (N=124)	Reducer (N=204)	X2(df) Difference
Satisfaction with leisure life domains → Overall quality of life	.56**	.24**	6.38(1)*

Note: *p<.05, **p<.001

V. Conclusion and Discussion

This study examined the relationship between the constructs of tourism experience, satisfaction with leisure life domains, overall quality of life, and travel patterns. First, the results of this study contribute to explaining the link between travel experience and leisure life satisfaction among senior tourists. The results revealed that senior tourists' tourism experience significantly influence leisure life domain satisfaction, which in turn improves their overall quality of life. This result implies that senior tourists' tourism experience is an important predictor of their quality of life. Therefore, the study attempted to fill a research gap in the tourism literature by revealing empirical evidence that senior tourists' tourism experience is strongly related to quality of life.

In addition, the travel patterns of senior tourists were determined by considering changes in the frequency of travel participation after their retirement. The study found two types of travel patterns: (1) Expander and (2) Reducer. The results revealed that the type of travel patterns moderated the effect between sat-

isfaction with leisure life domain and overall quality of life, such that the effect is stronger for those in the expander group than those in the reducer group. The findings of the study validated previous studies (e.g. Menec and Chipperfield, 1997; Silverstein and Parker, 2002) and supported for activity theory (e.g. Havighurst, 1961). Activity theory suggests that the well-being of senior citizens is encouraged by high participatory involvement in social and leisure activity. In other words, seniors who increased their leisure participation across different activities were more likely to perceive an improvement in their life satisfaction. It is plausible that their overall quality of life was greatly affected by participation of tourism.

The finding of the study suggests that tourism marketers should understand two types of senior tourists in terms of their travel patterns and treat each type differently. The study found that the effect of high involvement in tourism activity on satisfaction with life domains would amply seniors' overall quality of life. The challenge is then for destination promoters and tourism professionals to manage reducer group to engage more

tourism activity. The reducers group has some travel constraints of approval and social condition such as "I don't have companion to travel with," and "concern for family doesn't allow me travel." These may be the reasons for their reduction of participation in travel activities. An understanding of barriers to travel may lead to strategies for facilitating travel and tourism.

Since the proposed research model that examines the links between senior tourists' behavior and their quality of life was tested with a sample of residents on Jeju, South Korea, the results may not be generalizable to other populations and the strength of the relationships between the constructs

may show some variation. Thus, replications of this study in different countries should be conducted in other countries to validate and confirm the relationships structured in this study.

More recent studies have argued that there are large differences between self-perceived age and chronological age (Faranda and Schmidt, 2000). Thus, researchers have argued that self-perceived age would be a better way of analyzing and predicting the behavior of the senior market (Faranda and Schmidt, 2000; Sellick, 2004). Since this study used the biological age of 65 to define the senior citizens, a future study may consider seniors' perceived age.

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