A Review of Senior Travel Motivation Researches in China

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Abstract. This paper reviewed the theories have been used in the research of Chinese senior travel motivation, and find that the hierarchical of needs theory, push-pull theory, and escape-seek theory are mostly applied. The previous studies mainly focused on the motivation of their personal benefits, while ignored their altruistic motive. Based on the review of related theories and motivations, this paper gives some advice for the future study.

Introduction

In recent decades, as a result of the increased disposable income, the improved health conditions, the extension of life expectancy, and the implementation of one-child policy, China is aging rapidly. Chinese aged 60 and over has already reached 222 million, accounting for 16.1% of the total population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2015). Different from the past, today the elderly is a healthy and wealthy cohort (Patuelli, R., & Nijkamp, P., 2015). With the increased discretionary time after retired, many Chinese seniors see tourism as a way of life, and senior travel has been one of the fastest growing segments of the world travel industry, which has attracted increasing attention of scholars. As a developing country, China is growing old before it has grown rich. There is a growing stream of research focusing on Chinese senior travel motivation.

This paper went through the literatures about the topic of “Chinese senior travel motivation”, as Taiwan is also one part of China, some literatures are about Taiwanese. This paper focuses on the theories and the motivations which are mostly appeared in previous studies. It is found that three theories are mainly applied, and seven motivations are mainly mentioned. The future research should also consider the altruistic motivation.

Theories

Maslow’s hierarchical of needs theory (1973) was mostly cited by the existing literature. The theory decomposes human needs into five tiers, including physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs, from bottom to top. The theory mainly focuses on the internal needs while ignored the external factors. Gray (1970) proposed the theory of push and pull, which contains the push factors from the tourist and the pull factors from the travel destination. The push factors play an important part in the generation of travel need, while the pull factors influence where to go. Iso-Ahola (1982) proposed social psychological model of travel motivation, which considers that the motivation should contain both escaping and seeking factors. The last two theories conclude both internal and external factors, and “push” equal to “escaping”, “pull” equal to “seeking”. Although they are similar, the push-pull theory is from the perspective of the objective difference between residence and travel destination. While the seek-escape theory is from the perspective of the subjective difference between residence and travel destination.

Motivations

Huang and Tsai (2003) investigated 2699 seniors in Taipei and 1245 seniors in Kaohsiung, found
that get rest and relaxation, meet people and socialization, spend time with immediate family, visit new places, seek intellectual enrichment, seek spiritual enrichment, visit museums and historical sights, and visit festivals or special events are main motivations. Jang and Wu (2006) investigated Taiwanese senior travel motivation, found that relaxation, ego-enhancement, self-esteem, knowledge-seeking, and socialization are the main motivations. Hsu et al. (2007) proposed a model of senior travel motivation through in-depth interviews, which consists of two main components: external conditions and internal desires. External conditions include societal progress, personal finance, time, and health; internal desires include improving well-being, escaping routines, socializing, seeking knowledge, pride and patriotism, personal reward, and nostalgia. Chen and Wu (2009) used factor analysis to study Taiwanese seniors’ overseas travel motivation, found that relaxation, novelty, escape, and socialization are main motivations. Hsu and Kang (2009) investigated 800 Chinese mature travelers’ motivation, found that well-being, escape, connection, engagement, indulgence, and connection are main motivations.

Zheng and Zhao (2008) investigated senior travel motivation in Guangzhou, deemed that the senior have mixed motivations. Pursuit fame, relaxation, health, socialization, knowledge-seeking, and nostalgia are main motivations. Ma (2008) examined senior travel motivation in Hebei province, presented that sight-seeing, visit family and friends, health, vacation are main motivations. Bao (2009) studied the senior travel motivation in Hangzhou, found that knowledge-seeking and novelty are the most important push motivations, while safety and cleanliness are the most important pull motivations. Zhang and Li (2009) found that aesthetic, novelty, and health are the main Chinese senior travel motivations through content analysis. Gao (2010) studied senior travel motivation in Hefei, thought that both internal and external motivations should be included. Wei and Zhang (2010) proposed that senior travel motivation mainly conclude health, visit family and friends, knowledge-seeking, religious pilgrimage, and self-improvement. Cao (2011) studied senior travel motivation in Qinhuangdao based on the push and pull theory, and found that relaxation, socialization, self-improvement, self-actualization, self-esteem and novelty are main push factors, safety, expense and sight-seeing are the top three pull factors. Fu and Zheng (2011) found that relaxation, enjoy environment, well-being, socialization, and personal affairs are the five common motivations. Yuan (2011) studied women senior travel motivation in Xi’an, found that self-improvement, health, relaxation, sightseeing, nostalgia, and religious pilgrimage are main motivations. Mo and Zheng (2014) studied the relationship between senior travel motivation and travel willingness based on the push and pull theory. Zhou and Zhang (2015) studied senior travel motivation in Chongqing, and found that socialization, novelty, self-improvement, culture and art, relaxation, nostalgia and health are main motivations.

From above studies, we can see that relaxation, novelty, health, socialization, self-improvement, knowledge-seeking, and nostalgia are main travel motivation of Chinese senior. But the previous literatures mainly focused on senior’s personal benefits, while ignored their altruistic motivation. The senior maybe want to reduce the burden on their children, to expand their grandchildren’ horizon, or want to take care of their spouse and so on. Influenced by Confucianism, Chinese have stronger altruistic motives.

Conclusion & Discussion

In conclusion, hierarchical of needs theory, push-pull theory, and escape-seek theory are mostly applied in the studies of Chinese senior travel motivation. The current research is mainly concentrated on senior personal motivation. More attention should be paid on their altruistic motivation in the future research.
References


