



Tourists' Characteristics, Travel Motivation and Satisfaction

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Abstract. Our society is growing older and it is important to develop the senior tourism market. Consumers aged 55 and older are a fastest growing market segment and a major business opportunity. The purpose of this research is to develop and test a model to investigate the characteristics of the senior tourists that affect the factors of travel motivation and travel satisfaction. We intend to explore the existence of statistically significant differences in satisfaction between groups of senior tourists using the same categories. A path analysis is carried out in order to describe direct dependencies among a set of variables. In this study (n=537 senior tourists visiting the Azores islands) a model is proposed to identify the senior tourists' characteristics which significantly affect each of the dependent variables (motivation factors and satisfaction) and which types of effects explain the association among variables. Travel satisfaction depends both on age group and perception of health status by the senior tourists. New opportunities can be found for both public and private sectors to develop and marketing new tourism products that can attract the right senior market segments.

Keywords: Senior Tourist; Motivations and Satisfaction; Path Analysis

1. Introduction

Tourism is considered a major industry for developing countries and islands - which is the case of the Autonomous Region of the Azores -, destinations with few products to export and promote their economy and that therefore have difficulty competing in the global export markets [7]. The islands resort to sustainable tourism to preserve their nature and cultural heritage - two of the major motivations for the elderly to choose the islands as a tourist destination ([12], [19], [20]) and it is well known that tourists seek in these destinations more personal experiences and in a natural environment with the least intervention of man ([6], [22]), so it is therefore imperative to adapt tourism products to the characteristics and needs of different types of tourists, for example, senior

tourists ([4], [5], [10]). With the demographic aging worldwide, the tourism sector has been recognizing the importance of the elderly in this area, with more attention to the segment of senior tourism. Older tourists represent a growing market, with differentiated characteristics of the younger tourists and with great benefits for the tourist sector, due to their superior education, good economic conditions, greater purchasing power and free time, good health and physical conditions, low-season preference (with an impact on the reduction of seasonality) and the probability of repeating the destination ([4], [9], [12], [17]). The continuous growth of tourism in Portugal is clearly visible in national statistics [13-16] such as in the Autonomous Region of the Azores [3]. These data allow us to understand that the Azores market has become an economic potential, which, together with the phenomenon of demographic aging, contributes to the development of new products aimed at retired adults and elderly people. The statistics presented show the continuous growth of tourism in Portugal and in the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira, giving a strong contribution to the development of the national economy, job creation, wealth promotion and valorization of the national heritage. Tourism represents the greatest activity economic development of the country, as well as being an alternative to places that do not have potential in the primary and secondary sectors, but which are rich in natural resources and / or of historical value ([1], [19]).

Tourism is understood as the set of experiences that people live during a trip or stay in a place other than their habitual residence, which comprehends leisure, recreation, entertainment and participation in events, in such a way that tourism is considered to be an economic, social, cultural and geographical phenomenon ([2], [9], [21]). Senior tourism is a growing market niche, whose potentialities are recognized by the steady increase in the world's number of elderly people, whom compared to younger generations, have greater purchasing power and free time, seek information in the internet on the destinations to visit and aim mainly at health tourism, tourism of physical and psychological well-being and tourism of learning and culture ([9], [23]). In this respect, it is known that the tourist experience is a multifunctional leisure activity, influenced by the climate and the personal conditions of the tourist [10]; that is, the experience of the tourist can be affected by the individual environment, the factors related to the personality, the context of life and the degree of communication with others. Research on tourism underscores its impact on people's quality of life, since it emanates sociocultural and psychosocial value, promoting dreams, realizations, knowledge and exchange of experiences [19]. In this sense, and given the complex reality that shapes the aging process (s) and their impact on societies, senior tourism emerges as an active aging strategy, and it is therefore imperative to invest in this area [9]. In addition, Ashton et al. [2] developed a study with senior tourists, where they conclude that tourism contributes to the development of positive experiences and appreciation of the abilities of the elderly, facilitating their social integration and overcoming difficulties associated with the aging process, especially if senior tourists will get involved in leisure, recreation and entertainment activities. According to Lisbon [9], senior tourism represents a sector of new opportunities and a major socio-economic impact, and should therefore be the focus of the tourism industry and social institutions working with the elderly. Ashton et al. [2] developed a study with the purpose of analyzing the contribution of tourism