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# **Gender Differences in Travel Constraints and Changed Travel Pattern after a Senior Travel Program Introduces: A Case Study of the Florence County Senior Travel Program**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purposes of this study were to explore pleasure travel constraints among adults aged 50 and over and investigate the gender differences of pleasure travel constraints. Moreover, this study investigated whether there were changed pleasure travel patterns among a specific group of older adults since an organized tour opportunity is available in their resident county, Florence County, South Carolina. The findings of this study indicated that female travelers perceived more travel constraints, however, they had a higher level of travel interest than males. Comparing the proportion of changed pleasure travel patterns with the FCPRD travel program, most of female travelers chose to participate in the FCPRD travel programs. As the FCPRD organized travel program was introduced, female travelers appeared to take more opportunities to travel than males.*

**Keywords:** *Older adult travelers, constraints, changed travel patterns, organized travel*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Travel experiences have been recognized as an important activity and life goal among the growing population of older adults (Nimrod, 2008). Even though today's older adults are active, well-educated, have discretionary income, and a high rate of awareness of travel opportunities and programs, they experience age-related changes and report travel constraints such as declined health, mobility difficulties, travel cost, anxiety to drive at night, transportation issues, lack of

companions, or lack of interest in this life stage (Blazey, 1987; Nimrod, 2008; Zimmer, Brayley, Searle, 1995). Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991) suggested three types of constraints on leisure participation: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. These constraints on leisure activity may lead to non-participation, however, research has also shown that people use various strategies to negotiate constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993). For example, Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997) found that people changed their routine and selected the most desired leisure activities to overcome structure constraints such as money and time. Travel constraints have been considerably studied in terms of socio-economic status and physical and psychological factors. However, gender has rarely been studied for travel constraints. Blazey (1987) identified that travel constraints were perceived differently by gender. Males were less likely to participate in travel programs because of lack of time, work, and busy normal routines while females reported that lack of travel transportation and lack of travel companions were travel constraints. Nyaupane and Andereck (2008) found that women had travel cost constraints. Previous research has shown that women face more constraints than men due to their family responsibilities, roles, and economic deprivation. However, there is little research conducted to explore the gender differences of travel constraints in later life and changed travel patterns when available travel program opportunities are provided in their community.

The purposes of this study were to explore pleasure travel constraints among adults aged 50 and over and investigate the gender differences of pleasure travel constraints. Moreover, this study investigated whether there were changed pleasure travel patterns among a specific group of older adults since an organized tour opportunity is available in their resident county, Florence County, South Carolina. The provided organized tour opportunity is the Florence County Park and Recreation Department travel program.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Florence County Parks and Recreation Department's senior travel program was selected. A mail survey was included in the regular mailing of FCPRD's senior travel program newsletter and sent by FCPRD. A total of 850 questionnaires were included randomly in the newsletters, and 98 surveys were returned resulting in a response rate in 11.5%. The participants had a mean age of 68; most were female (78%), Caucasian (87%), retired (72%), and in excellent or good health condition (69%). In fact, the majority of participants were female in these senior travel programs. Therefore, more females responded to this survey. The levels of education reported most frequently were and had high school (27%) and some college (21%).

A total 26 items of the perceived travel constraints were measured on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) not at all true to (4) very true. In order to measure the changed travel pattern, the respondents were also asked to indicate how their pleasure travel pattern has changed since the inception of the FCPRD Travel program: 1) I have not changed my pleasure travel patterns, 2) The majority of my pleasure travel is still done independently, but I now travel with

FCPRD occasionally, 3) I now travel for pleasure independently and with FCPRD equally, 4) The majority of my pleasure travel is not with FCPRD, but I still travel independently on occasion, 5) I now travel for pleasure exclusively with FCPRD, and 6) I no longer travel for pleasure at all. Finally, they were asked to indicate how much their pleasure travel has changed since the inception of the FCPRD travel program: 1) I take fewer pleasure travels than I did before, 2) I take the same number of pleasure travel I did before, 3) I take more pleasure travel than I did before. The data was analyzed using SPSS 19.0. First, Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation was conducted with the travel constraints to uncover the underlying factors to explain the relationships. Second, T-tests were computed to investigate for significant differences between gender and perceived travel constraint factors. Third, Chi-square tests and descriptive statistics were calculated for changed travel behaviors since FCPRD senior travel program introduced to compare the differences between male and female.

## RESULTS

Principal Component Analysis was conducted with the travel constraints. Since the sample size is relatively small, only variables with factor loadings greater than 0.6 were entered into the final model. Factors also had Engenvalues greater than 1.0, accounting for 71.6 of total variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) values were higher than 0.6 and the Bartlett's test were significant ( $p = .000$ ). Eleven variables out of 26 constraints were excluded because of low factor loading scores (less than 0.60) and cross loadings. Five dimensions were found: Factor 1, 'Travel Disturbance' (e.g., I was not sure what to do on a pleasure travel, It took too long to plan a pleasure trip), Factor 2, 'Travel Cost' (e.g., I did not have enough money to travel for pleasure), Factor 3, 'Physical Barriers' (e.g., I had a physical disability that made travel more difficult), Factor 4, 'Lack of Travel Companions' (e.g., I had no one to travel with), and Factor 5, 'Lack of Interest' (e.g., I lost interest in taking a pleasure trip). All items have 0.64 and above of factor loading. Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.43 to 0.89.

To further explore whether perceived travel constraints differ in gender, T-tests were conducted. Three factors were significant differences between gender : Travel Cost between men ( $M=1.62$ ,  $SD=0.31$ ) and women ( $M=1.92$ ,  $SD=0.38$ );  $t(91)=-2.246$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Lack of Interest between men ( $M=1.47$ ,  $SD=0.39$ ) and women ( $M=1.19$ ,  $SD=0.34$ );  $t(91)=3.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and Lack of Travel Companion between men ( $M=1.33$ ,  $SD=0.42$ ) and women ( $M=1.62$ ,  $SD=0.55$ );  $t(91)=-2.153$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Chi-square tests were calculated for changed travel behaviors since FCPRD senior travel program introduced to compare the differences between male and female. A summary of the findings is included in Table 1 and Table 2. However, the results were not significant.

Female travelers perceived more travel constraints in terms of Travel Cost and Lack of Travel Companions than male travelers, however, they had a higher level of travel interest than

males. Comparing the proportion of changed pleasure travel patterns with the FCPRD travel program, while 28% of females did not change their pleasure travel patterns, 72% of female travelers chose to participate in the FCPRD travel programs. As the FCPRD organized travel program was introduced, females (49%) appeared to take more opportunities to travel than males while 67% of males took fewer or the same number of travels.

**Table 1.**

**Older Adults' Changed Travel Patterns after the Inception of the FCPRD Travel Program**

	Male	Female
1) I have not changed my pleasure travel patterns	44.4%	28.1%
2) The majority of my pleasure travel is still done independently, but I now travel with FCPRD occasionally	27.8%	29.7%
3) I now travel for pleasure independently and with FCPRD equally	0.0%	6.3%
4) The majority of my pleasure travel is not with FCPRD, but I still travel independently on occasion	27.8%	25.0%
5) I now travel for pleasure exclusively with FCPRD	0.0%	10.9%
6) I no longer travel for pleasure at all	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 2.**

**Older Adults' Changed Level of Their Travel Patterns**

	Male	Female
1) I take fewer pleasure travels than I did before	22.2%	23.1%
2) I take the same number of pleasure travel I did before	44.4%	27.7%
3) I take more pleasure travel than I did before	33.3%	49.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

## **DISCUSSION**

This study of pleasure travel constraints and the organized travel opportunities among older adults in Florence County revealed that older adults experienced travel disturbance such as the long distance of travel destination, weather conditions, fear of traveling alone, and choices of travel activities. Consistent with previous research by Nyaupane, McCabe, Andereck (2008) and Hung and Crompton (2006), the most common constraints were perceived distance and issues of mobility. Females perceived more travel constraints than males in terms of cost and travel companions. The findings suggested that females in later life might feel more travel constraints because they may be more interested in planning and travel than males. Therefore, the opportunities of the organized travel programs in their community such as the FCPRD organized

travel program may facilitate female older adults' participation because the FCPRD program provides a variety of day and overnight travel programs with various prices. In addition, because the same community residents participated in the program, older adult participants may easily find common interests and feel more comfortable to start a conversation during travels. On the other hand, males showed a relatively lower level of travel interests; therefore, the increased opportunities were not an influence to negotiate their intrapersonal constraints for travel program participation.

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