



Constraints and facilitators for senior tourism

Dominik Huber^{a,*}, Simon Milne^b, Kenneth F. Hyde^c

^a New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI), Auckland University of Technology (AUT), New Zealand

^b New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI), Auckland University of Technology (AUT), 55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland 1010, New Zealand

^c Auckland University of Technology (AUT), 55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland 1010, New Zealand

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Senior tourism
Constraints and facilitators
Life events
Biographical research

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a detailed understanding of how and why tourist behaviour changes in old age. Multiple case studies are built employing qualitative biographical interviews with 23 seniors from Freising, Germany. A model is developed that draws upon hierarchical leisure-constraints dimensions, facilitators, and the fundamentals of ecological systems theory, thereby linking constraints, facilitators and negotiation strategies with their underlying causes rooted in seniors' individual life courses. The model illustrates how intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints and facilitators (e.g. health and emotional stress, loss of travel partners) and microstructural and macrostructural factors (e.g. finances and travel regulations) explain tourist behaviour among seniors. The model incorporates strategies that seniors develop to overcome constraints to travelling, via anticipation and intervention. An understanding of the constraints and facilitators for senior tourism can assist tourism businesses and destinations to develop strategies to reduce negative effects and reinforce positive influences on seniors' participation in tourism.

1. Introduction

Seniors represent one of the most important market segments in tourism (Patterson, 2012). The senior population is of interest to the tourism industry because of its growing size and increasing participation in travel activities. Predictions from the United Nations indicate that by 2050, every fifth person on Earth (about two billion people) will be older than 60 years, a doubling of the 2013 figure (United Nations, 2013). Between 1970 and 2008, the travel propensity of seniors in Germany aged 60 to 69 years – that is, the percentage of the population who undertook a vacation trip of at least five days within a calendar year – increased from 41% to 78%. In 2008, every fourth vacation journey was undertaken by a senior. It is predicted that by the year 2020, every third traveller in Germany will be older than 60 years (Lohmann & Aderhold, 2009). This trend is not limited to Germany as various researchers have reported an increased importance of the senior tourism market in, for example, South Korea (Lee & Tideswell, 2005), Taiwan (Jang, Bai, Hu, & Wu, 2009), China (S. Chen, 2012; Hsu, Cai, & Wong, 2007), the United States (Hudson, 2010), and Australia (Horneman, Carter, Wei, & Ruys, 2002).

The term senior comes from Latin and basically means “elderly”. There is no official definition of seniors, and the literature shows great variation in the use of this term (Patterson, 2006). This study follows Faranda and Schmidt's (1999, p. 9) suggestion as to how to characterise

seniors: “Whatever the cut off chosen, decision makers must ensure that it allows them to uncover and not miss relevant opportunities and unmet needs.” Taking this point of view, the study applies a broader age definition used by the German Reiseanalyse, the largest tourism survey in Germany, which defines seniors as people aged 60 years and older.

Senior age is accompanied by physical, psychological and social changes (Brünner, 1997; Lehr, 2000) which affect the ability opportunities to participate in tourism activities. Seniors have to cope with declining body functions such as vision, hearing or mobility in their everyday lives (Boyd & Bee, 2009). Aging also has a mental and cognitive dimension and elderly people can show increasing signs of dementia or other memory defects and declining skills, for example in solving complex problems or paying attention (Moody, 2009). From a socioecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), older adults' lives are accompanied by disruptions of to their social environment with associated life course transitions due to retirement or the increased mortality of peers and spouses. On the other hand, senior age can be perceived as a period in life associated with growth and opportunities (Liechty, Yarnal, & Kerstetter, 2012).

Given the importance of these life course changes in senior age, such as retirement or the death of a spouse, this article adopts a constraints and facilitators approach to gain in-depth understanding of tourism behaviour and patterns among the elderly. Constraints are those factors that limit or prevent tourism participation, while facilitators are

* Corresponding author at: 55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland 1010, New Zealand.

E-mail addresses: dhuber@aut.ac.nz (D. Huber), smilne@aut.ac.nz (S. Milne), khyde@aut.ac.nz (K.F. Hyde).

dimensions that promote engagement in travel activities. The objective of this paper is to explore the nature of constraints and facilitators as they apply to senior tourism and to identify the strategies that seniors use to negotiate and overcome barriers to travel – an aspect that is overlooked by existing literature.

Research on the tourism behaviour of seniors is vital given the opportunities and challenges that come with the increased size of this market. By enhancing their knowledge of senior tourism, the tourism industry, destinations, and policymakers will be better prepared for the forthcoming demographic challenges. Business opportunities emerge not only due to the sheer economic significance and purchasing power of the market segment but also to its potentially positive effects on seasonality given that seniors often tend to travel during off-peak and shoulder seasons (Alén, Domínguez, & Losada, 2012; H. Kim, Woo, & Uysal, 2015).

From a managerial perspective, a better understanding of the constraints and facilitators of senior tourism can assist businesses in developing strategies to reduce the negative and reinforce the positive effects on tourism participation and activities. The development of tourism products and services that anticipate constraints to travel may facilitate the continuation of travelling into old age. This is particularly important given research showing that participation in leisure activities can have a positive effect on the well-being of seniors (H. Kim, Woo, & Uysal, 2015; Morgan, Pritchard, & Sedgley, 2015).

The majority of existing studies neglect the developmental nature of aging processes, an oversight criticised by some researchers (Oppermann, 1995; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2001). Not many studies have examined the extent to which historical and contextual life events influence the travel behaviour of seniors. In this context, Sedgley, Pritchard, and Morgan (2006, p. 43) state that “it is not possible to study older people’s leisure behaviour through ‘snapshot’ research”, which isolates one moment in time. For this reason, this study adopts a “real life events” approach using qualitative semi-structured biographic interview techniques to investigate changes in seniors’ tourism behaviour across their life course. This article contributes to the body of knowledge by presenting a model that links constraints and facilitators dimensions and negotiation strategies with their underlying causes rooted in seniors’ individual life courses to explain senior tourism behaviour.

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical framework that informs this study builds upon constraints and facilitators concepts, ecological systems theory, and the concepts of life events and life course transitions. According to Jackson (2005a), life events and the constraints and facilitators approach are closely related because transitional points in the life course – such as marriage, birth of the first child, and retirement – present new opportunities for or limitations to leisure.

2.1. Constraints and facilitators

The concept of constraints has been adopted in the tourism domain from two disciplinary angles: tourism geography and leisure. The geographer Torsten Hägerstrand (1970) developed a constraints model in the 1970s based on the presumption of the inseparability of time and space. According to Hägerstrand’s time-geographical approach, activities are constrained by time-space prisms, which build a frame of human action-space behaviour. The model distinguishes between “capability” (biological limitations), “coupling” (interpersonal dimensions), and “authority” constraints (opportunities to participate in tourist attractions).

Constraints concepts were introduced in the field of leisure in the 1980s. The initial leisure constraints discourse focused on structural barriers such as time and financial resources and defined the impact of constraints in terms of participation or non-participation in leisure

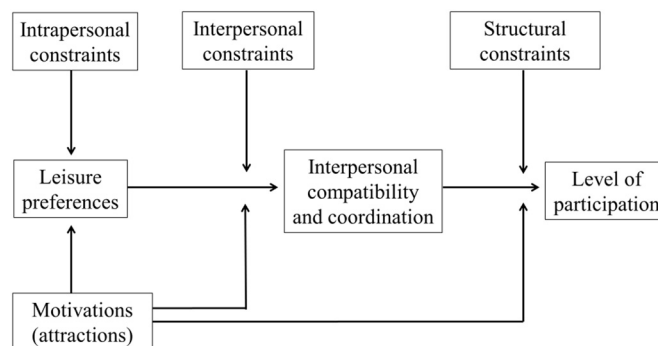


Fig. 1. The hierarchical/negotiation model.

Source: Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey (1993), (p. 9).

activities (Jackson, 2005b). Crawford and Godbey (1987) enhanced the concept by adding a preference dimension and also contributed to the discourse with their differentiation of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. Intrapersonal constraints are concerned with the psychological and physical characteristics of the individual, such as their health and self-confidence; interpersonal constraints reflect opportunities for social interactions; and structural constraints refer to the broader context outside the individual, such as time availability and financial resources (Silva & Correia, 2008). Some studies deconstruct structural dimensions into sub-categories, e.g. time, costs and place attributes (Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008).

Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991) made a substantial contribution with their work on a hierarchical model of leisure participation. In this advanced model, higher constraints levels are encountered hierarchically. After preferences are shaped, leisure activities are constrained first on the intrapersonal and interpersonal, and then (when earlier levels of constraint have been overcome) on the structural level (Fig. 1).

The hierarchical model suggests a process whereby people negotiate a way through the constraints that impinge on their leisure pursuits; Jackson and Searle (1985) suggested that constraints do not necessarily result in non-participatory behaviour but perhaps in a change of activity.

The constraints approach is not free from criticism (see, for example, Godbey, Crawford, & Shen, 2010). The most fundamental critique comes from Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997, p. 445) who argue that constraints concepts view leisure participants as “passive responders” rather than active agents, thus disregarding the dynamics in people’s lives. Other scholars identify issues related to the hierarchical nature of the model (Kerstetter, Yen, & Yarnal, 2005; Nyaupane, Morais, & Graefe, 2004).

Raymore (2002) introduced facilitators to the constraints-dominated discussion of leisure participation, proposing “that the absence of constraints does not necessarily lead to participation” (p. 39). Facilitators encourage individuals into leisure activities by helping them to form preferences by negotiating through constraints. In this sense, facilitators do not simply act as the opposite of constraints (Raymore, 2002). Woodside, Caldwell, and Spurr (2006) stress that it is the combination of constraining and facilitating factors that lead to, rather than prevent, outcomes such as overnight travel.

2.2. Ecological systems theory and life events

Ecological systems theory defines human development within the context of social system levels that range from “micro” to “macro” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The microsystem comprises the pattern of individual activities and reflects their social roles and interpersonal relations. The macrosystem describes the external environment of an individual such as their customs, lifestyle, belief systems, ethnicity, and

material resources. Both dimensions affect human development and individual behaviour. Ecological systems theory also implies a temporal perspective on travel behaviour by presuming that behaviour changes over time. This dimension is reflected by the “chronosystem”, which suggests that transitions across the lifespan affect an individual's development (Hosek, Harper, Lemos, & Martinez, 2008). Tourism researchers are increasingly paying attention to ecological systems theory. In most part, the literature adopts the theory to explain leisure or tourist constraints and facilitators (Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2009; Silva & Correia, 2008) or travel behaviour dimensions such as travel participation and companionship (Woodside, Caldwell, & Spurr, 2006; Woodside & Martin, 2008).

The final elements in this study's theoretical framework are the concepts of life events and life course transitions. Life events, such as retirement, the loss of a spouse, or illness, are markers in the life course (Moody, 2009), which portrays life as a sequence of events subject to both stability and change (Levinson, 1986). Even though the approach is rather descriptive in nature, the life course can provide a conceptual framework that assists understanding of the problems, opportunities, and tasks that individuals are confronted with as they journey through life (McGuire, Dottavio, & O'Leary, 1986). Life course transitions consist of both fixed stages and fluid processes (Grenier, 2012). Fixed stages such as retirement have a categorical dimension while fluid processes (e.g. deteriorating health) incorporate a temporal element in the emergent transition.

3. Literature review on senior tourism constraints

Extant literature provides insight into specific aspects of senior tourism behaviour, including psychological motivations (C.-F. Chen & Wu, 2009; Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016; Sangpikul, 2008; Ward, 2014), sociodemographic dimensions (Horneman, Carter, Wei, & Ruys, 2002; Lohmann & Aderhold, 2009; Romsa & Blenman, 1989), and behavioural changes over time (Nielsen, 2015). These studies indicate that the tourism behaviour of seniors is somehow different from that of other age groups, though the reasons for this remain largely unexplored.

Literature suggests that differences between age groups can be explained by the growing number of constraining factors seniors are facing (McGuire, 1983; Nimrod & Rotem, 2012). The broader body of literature investigates constraints from various angles. Several studies concentrate on specific types of constraints such as intrapersonal (Zhang, Yang, Zheng, & Zhang, 2016) and budgetary (Wang, 2014) constraints, or relationships between constraints and relevant aspects of tourism and leisure, e.g. skiing loyalty (Alexandris, Du, Funk, & Theodorakis, 2017) or destination image (Khan, Chelliah, & Ahmed, 2017). Others have examined how constraints affect certain types of tourism such as wine tourism (Cho, Bonn, & Brymer, 2017) and nautical tourism (Jovanovic, Dragin, Armenski, Pavic, & Davidovic, 2013) or specific tourism markets, e.g. youth tourism (Gardiner, King, & Wilkins, 2013) and Chinese travellers visiting the U.S. (Lai, Li, & Harrill, 2013).

Only a few researchers have examined the significance of facilitators (see Raymore, 2002) and how they provide opportunities for tourism participation. Some studies have included facilitators within a constraints-focused research design (e.g. Silva & Correia, 2008; Woodside et al., 2006). B. Kim (2015) focused on facilitators only and investigated festival tourists. The research revealed that festival attributes and intrapersonal (escaping, relaxation, fun) and structural (e.g. weather, food, money, access) facilitators are significant predictors for tourists' satisfaction. Lee and Tideswell (2005) interviewed seniors in Korea and indicate that factors such as “quality of life” and “new interests” engage seniors in travel activities.

A number of studies focus specifically on the senior population and present statistical analysis of constraints to their tourism behaviour such as tourism participation and motivations (e.g. Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Hung, Bai, & Lu, 2016; Lee & Tideswell, 2005). Some studies found that aging plays a fundamental role in producing travel barriers

(C.-F. Chen & Wu, 2009; Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2009; Wilson & Little, 2005), whereas others point out that age only plays a minor role in certain tourism behaviour dimensions and other underlying factors such as health or income are more important (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002).

The hierarchical constraints model is widely applied in senior tourism constraints research. Kazemina, Del Chiappa, and Jafari (2013) used content analysis software to examine a travel blog from *Tripadvisor.com*. The blog is a platform for people aged 50 years and older to exchange travel experiences. Their findings suggest that, apart from health issues, intrapersonal constraints have only a minor impact on travel participation; instead, they help shape tourism preferences and can be viewed rather as facilitators (e.g. high level of interest in seeing new places and experiencing new cultures). Other studies found that health issues constitute an important intrapersonal constraining factor (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Gibson, 2002). Gao and Kerstetter (2016), who researched Chinese seniors, add “limited knowledge” and “cultural shock” to the intrapersonal category.

Kazemina, Del Chiappa, and Jafari (2013) suggest that interpersonal constraints, such as the lack of a travel partner or death of a spouse, were found to be the most influential constraints factor. Similar results are reported from the U.S. (Gibson, 2002) and Chinese senior tourism market (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016).

Structural constraints refer mostly to income and costs (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008) but also to other dimensions such as “low quality service”, “lack of information” or “fewer employer paid vacations” (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016). Kazemina et al. (2013) indicate that structural constraints tend to create limitations that lead to a negotiation process rather than prevention of a travel activity.

Gao and Kerstetter (2016) and Kazemina et al. (2013) also identified negotiation strategies among seniors to overcome barriers to travel. Identified themes referred to a change of travel organisation (travelling in tours and joining travel groups), the formation of new travel groups (e.g. travelling with friends), purchasing proper health insurance, conforming to the travel preferences of others, or seeking support from children.

Even though these studies are of high value exploring constraints from different perspectives there is a research gap that explores the nature and origins of constraints and facilitators, which is important for fully understanding this phenomenon. Literature largely ignores the fact that constraints and facilitators are rooted in the real-life conditions of individuals. For this reason, it is important to advance the understanding of how constraints and facilitators are formed by distinguishing between the origins of constraints and the constraints per se (Godbey, Crawford, & Shen, 2010). Moreover, most studies on senior tourism constraints concentrate on the Asian and U.S. market and only little is known about how elderly people in a European cultural context experiences barriers to travel.

4. Methods

4.1. Data collection

This study adopted a critical realist and pragmatic theoretical perspective which is informed by the post-positivist research tradition (Jennings, 2010). The researcher is part of the research process and aims to capture reality as closely as possible by utilising multiple data collection phases and research methods and techniques.

This study used a qualitative research approach and explored the life courses and tourism behaviours of seniors in Freising, Germany, who were either still travelling or had largely ceased their tourism activities. Freising, a city of approximately 50,000 residents, is located in the federal state of Bavaria, 35 km north of Munich. It takes less than two hours by car from Freising to reach one of the most important recreational regions in Germany, the Bavarian Alps. The choice of research site was driven by theoretical, methodological, and pragmatic

considerations. Germany is assumed to exemplify the aging societies found in other industrialised countries. The study seeks a certain degree of transferability of results to other spatial settings (theoretical site-selection criteria). The research location is familiar to the researcher, which eases contact with study participants and potential gatekeepers (Creswell, 2003) who can help with access to potential research participants. Language and listening skills are fundamental to the interview process (Gillham, 2000), and the German background of the researcher was also an important consideration in the site selection (methodological/pragmatic site-selection criteria).

A multiple case study design was adopted, mirroring Yin's (2009) "holistic" analysis of single units where each case is investigated in detail as a "whole study". In this way, a complete picture of each senior's travel behaviour was drawn on in order to understand the specific travel patterns of each case. Researching multiple cases in depth increases the robustness of the investigation (Creswell, 2007).

Access to research participants was supported by the staff of the senior centre "Heiliggeistspital-Stiftung Freising". The facility is a foundation under public law that offers services such as a nursing home, 'meals on wheels', and mobile-care nursing services. The recruitment process was also facilitated by a seniors' club and two acquaintances of the researcher. The research involved a mix of participants, both known and unknown to the researcher. Involving the former is an accepted strategy in qualitative tourism studies (see, for example, Blichfeldt, 2007; Hsu, Cai, & Wong, 2007; Roberson, 2003).

A purposive snowball sampling strategy was utilised to recruit 23 interviewees. To reflect the great heterogeneity of seniors, the choice of cases was based on diverse and contrasting characteristics of the participants. Maximum variation sampling combined with attribute space analysis (Lazarsfeld, 1993) facilitated diversity in the socio-demographic profiles of the interviewees. Attribute space analysis is a typological sampling method that enables case selection based on a combination of attributes with theoretical relevance to the research, for example relationship status, employment or travel intention (see Table 1). All attributes were included in screening questions that were provided to the participants before the qualitative interview was

Table 1
Sample description (total N = 23).

| Attribute N | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----|
| Place of origin | Freising | 3 |
| | Bavaria (excl. Freising) | 8 |
| | Germany (excl. Bavaria) | 8 |
| | Europe (excl. Germany) | 4 |
| Gender | Female | 15 |
| | Male | 8 |
| Age group | 60–75 years | 16 |
| | > 75 years | 7 |
| Employment status | Retired | 15 |
| | Part-time | 7 |
| | Full-time | 1 |
| Travel intention | Traveller | 17 |
| | Non-traveller | 6 |
| Housing situation | Multi-person household | 13 |
| | Single household | 7 |
| | Assisted living | 3 |
| Marital status | Married | 9 |
| | Widowed | 8 |
| | Divorced | 5 |
| | Never married | 1 |
| Relationship status | Single | 12 |
| | Not single | 11 |
| Country of birth | Germany | 22 |
| | Not Germany | 1 |
| Parental status | Grandparent | 12 |
| | Parent | 5 |
| Property situation | No children | 6 |
| | Rented home | 11 |
| | Privately owned home | 12 |

conducted. Recruitment of participants was not finished until the attribute space showed great diversity among the cases. Most of the 23 participants of the study were female (n = 15) and in the age bracket 60–75 years (n = 16).

The study employed a biographical research design to investigate the life course and key life events, and the impact of these on the tourism behaviour of seniors. This approach is used because tourism behaviour contains historical components (Ladkin, 1999). Elder (1994, p. 5) states that "the later years of aging cannot be understood in depth without knowledge of the prior life course." Literature also suggests that life events can only be identified from a temporal distance and therefore demand a retrospective perspective (George, 2009).

Each individual's travel history was investigated through audio-recorded biographical in-depth face-to-face interviews. The interviews lasted between 20 min and 3.5 h. Data collection occurred in two phases with the same interviewees between October 2011 and September 2012, which enhanced data accuracy and quality. Phase One comprised 23 interviews to elicit narratives of the life course and travel history of each participant. The initial question about travel history was open-ended: "Could you please tell me about your first travel experience?" In order to mitigate recall errors, the research applied a life history guide (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Memory errors are a major issue in autobiographic research designs, which entail a potentially demanding recall process (Hyman & Loftus, 1998). The life history guide is a paper and pencil technique that allows the researcher to take structured notes following the life course on a constructed time line in chronological order.

This data collection method aimed to create, in part, a balanced power relationship between the researcher and the researched. The interviewee was an equal participant who identified life events, travel periods and associated relevant social relationships; the researcher's role was only to provide the impetus to reveal this information with a minimum of direction offered.

The interviews in Phase One also employed ecomaps to gain a better understanding of the social environment of the informants. Ecomaps investigate the socioecological system of a person or a family (Ray & Street, 2005). Participants were asked to draw a network with the interviewee in the centre surrounded by persons (e.g. family and friends) or groups (e.g. clubs and associations) of relevance to their current social system. Ecomaps were used as an additional source of data which provided valuable insights into the cultural contexts of the interviewees.

Qualitative interviews were also enriched by travel records and vacation photographs provided by research participants during the interviews, which stimulated their memories and increased data accuracy. Using additional data sources enhances the reliability of the research (Decrop, 1999).

The analysis of the first phase of interviews formed the basis for a second, more structured Phase Two interview with 16 of the original participants. For three participants, the researcher considered the first interviews as sufficient (due to only few tourism activities) and no further information was required. Of the remaining 20, three participants declined the request for a second interview. One subject passed away between the two phases of data collection. A travel period/tourism behaviour matrix (behaviour dimensions are based on Freyer, 2001) was prepared for each interview which was completed by the participant. This method resulted in detailed information about tourism behaviours (including travel destinations, duration, periods, and company; type of accommodation and transportation; and travel activities) in each distinct life phase (e.g. family building or retirement).

4.2. Data analysis

The data analysis was based on transcribed audio records, written notes, and the completed travel period/dimension matrices. The data material was stored, organised and coded utilising the qualitative data

analysis software NVivo (version 9.2.81.0). The analytical framework of the study consisted of four stages (Huber, Milne, & Hyde, 2017). Data analysis Stage I investigated the interviews from data collection Phase One in order to identify travel periods for each participant. Temporal changes were examined and coded through linguistic connectors such as “before”, “after”, “then”, and “later”. Stage II data analysis included interviewees in the research process as co-creators of knowledge (Sedgley, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2011): the researcher presented each interviewee with a graphical representation of their tourism history in the form of a biographical timeline which enabled the “co-researcher” to accept, reject, or correct results from the Stage I data analysis.

After data collection was completed, a descriptive within-case analysis (Stage III) was undertaken to reconstruct the travel history of each informant. This “journalistic” biographical research technique (Fuchs-Heinritz, 2009) resulted in a complete picture of each case, providing linkages between historical conditions, life events, and tourism behaviour. Stage IV analysis involved a thematic cross-case analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and used analytical coding procedures (Gibbs, 2007). This method was applied to reveal similarities and differences across cases, such as choices in tourism destinations, travel duration, or travel companions. Empirical evidence was revealed directly from the narratives of the participants or through a broader examination of the respondent’s life and travel history.

In the presentation of findings that follows, pseudonyms are used to ensure participant anonymity.

5. Findings

Most of the research participants showed a strong desire to participate in tourism. Mrs. Klein, for example, is a 72-year-old retiree whose life revolves to a large extent around her travel activities: “I could also buy new furnishings. All my friends have new furnishing. I still have the old one [...] But I rather travel around, go away.” Mrs. Schaefer, an elderly lady of 87 years, also enjoys travelling in old age but since she relies on a wheelchair, her activities are very limited. Nevertheless, she intends to travel in the future: “We [Mrs. Schaefer and a friend] will travel, as long as I can crawl, as long as I can sit in my wheelchair.” Other interviewees have largely ceased their travel activities in older age, often for a combination of reasons; for example, due to emotional stress, health, or a reduced social network and lack of travel companions.

With increased age, seniors are often confronted with life events that modify tourism activities and participation. An examination of the research participants’ life courses revealed twelve life event dimensions with significant impact on senior tourism behaviour: deteriorating health, aging as continuous life course transition, detachment from children, pets as family members, migration, the living environment, grandparenthood, illness of the spouse, the loss of a spouse, meeting a new partner, working commitments, and inheritance.

The following sections identify the constraints and facilitators to senior tourism that are often related to identifiable life events as well as habitual travel patterns. The final section reveals the strategies seniors use to mitigate the constraints to travel.

5.1. Intrapersonal dimensions

Life events affecting the psychological state or health of the individual showed a very strong impact on senior tourism participation. Health influenced travel behaviour either as a negative event with immediate impact on travel activities, or as chronic deterioration where the impact was more gradual. Eighty-eight-year-old Mrs. Schroeder, for instance, could not travel as planned to Mexico because of urgent eye surgery, while Mrs. Becker (74 years) was restricted to shorter travel activities due to problems with her intestinal system: “I have health restrictions. Since I had this intestine surgery I need to have a toilet nearby because I can’t control my sensitive bowel.”

Results show that chronic deteriorating health affects travelling in multiple ways. For some interviewees, travelling was perceived as stressful in later age, which contributed to reduced tourism activities. This is exemplified by Mr. Jimenez (68 years) whose wife is ill, causing travel to be a stressful activity for her: “When I go to Barcelona, for a week, I do that mostly without my wife. Because a week is too much for her.” Mrs. Neumann (83 years) had problems following a group excursion while she was on a ship cruise, which created a stressful situation: “We went to a bazaar, where they had 2,000 shops, but everywhere the same stuff. Nothing for me, and I couldn’t stand it because of my health and the walking and I lost them [the travel group].”

Tourism activities associated with physical stress and anticipated potential health risks, such as hiking and skiing, were often the first to be reduced or abandoned in old age. Mr. Fischer (75 years) and Mrs. Bauer (67 years) stopped their skiing activities because they became too stressful. To undertake this sort of travel in old age depended on the senior’s perception of their physical capability and health. “You need a certain strength and a sure foot to do a via ferrata [a challenging climbing route] and it became a bit too risky for me” (Mr. Fischer).

Some interviewees highlighted the importance of being mobile while on vacation. Mrs. Richter (67 years) has walking difficulties and for that reason no longer travels on bus tours: “They said I should come with them and wait in a café. But I can do that at home, as well. I don’t need to travel away to sit in a café.” Reduced energy was a factor frequently cited as a constraint on tourism activities; for example, the weight of luggage or backpacks was mentioned by several interviewees as a factor limiting travel duration, because longer trips require more luggage.

On the other hand, health also operated as a facilitator to travel when seniors stayed at resorts to address health issues and to improve their personal well-being. Mr. Hoffmann (70 years), for instance, used to stay at a health resort due to job requirements when he was an air traffic controller. After his retirement, he has continued with this habit and still goes once a year to a health resort in Bavaria.

Some participants indicated that health constraints can be anticipated and thus their perceived impact on tourism participation reduced. Mrs. Schaefer perceived travelling with a wheelchair as absolutely normal; indeed, it was almost 30 min into the interview before she mentioned that she travels with the assistance of this aid. Using a wheelchair has become a habit and constitutes no perceived obstacle to the forms of travel that she undertakes. Mrs. Schaefer stated: “We can go everywhere with the wheelchair. Everywhere!”

Some interviewees revealed that emotional stress due, for instance, to the loss of a spouse can have immediate consequences for tourism participation. Eighty-three-year-old Mrs. Neumann moved to Freising just four months before her husband passed away. After the death of her husband, she was not emotionally capable of travel: “At that time I didn’t travel at all. I didn’t travel in 2002. [...] I couldn’t. My husband was in the grave. I went to the graveyard. I was devastated, here in Freising.”

5.2. Interpersonal dimensions

Seniors often prefer to travel with others, either with their spouse or partner, friends, or a travel group. The significance of social relationships for seniors can be shown in the case of 68-year-old Mr. Mueller. Due to her mobility impairment, Mr. Mueller’s partner has limited capacity to travel. The social nature of travelling is very important to Mr. Mueller and he only considers group travels without his partner if the conditions and composition of the travel group are appropriate.

I don’t want to stay alone in a single room. [...] If there are just couples and I am the only single, I would rather stay at home. But if there are some other singles, because the husband or the wife passed away, and you stick closer together and you are not excluded, then it’s easier.

Travelling as a social practice played a significant role in helping Mr. Fischer in the recovery process following the loss of his spouse. Until her death, his spouse was the most important travel partner for Mr. Fischer. He describes the situation as follows: “When my wife passed away, in 2002, I felt a little bit... let’s say a little bit alone. All my friends had partners and you become something like a foreign object, and you are just an add-on.” Mr. Fischer then became a member of an alpine club to meet new people and to go on cycling and hiking trips. Being a widower, socialising is an important motivation to travel for Mr. Fischer. In this way, the loss of his spouse has operated as a facilitator to this widower’s travel activities.

Another case is Mrs. Neumann, whose social network deteriorated in old age for a number of reasons. She and her husband moved from their home town in Munich to Freising. The new place was senior-friendly and they shared the house with their son who looked after his parents. After six months, her husband passed away and shortly after Mrs. Neumann had to move to a retirement home. The lack of travel partners and a more limited social environment contributed to the termination of travel activities: “I don’t know anybody here in this hicksville. I am sorry to say that. And in the house [retirement home] here, there are only old people. I think it was wrong that I moved in here.”

5.3. Structural dimensions

Some categories of constraints and facilitators represent structural dimensions, such as time availability and financial resources. Mrs. Klein semi-retired when she was 60 years old but has largely maintained her previous travel patterns. The 72-year-old identified a paradox in her retirement: “You have more time [to travel] but less money. It is reversed now; before you had no time but money...”. Mrs. Klein also suggested that the meaning of and motivation to travel changes with retirement age:

If you don’t work anymore, travelling is a change of scenery. It has a different meaning. When I was still working, it was important to have my wellness trip in November or to go to a carnival in February. But I don’t need this anymore. I am relaxed now.

Mrs. Becker has increased her time away from home significantly since she retired. Her previous travel patterns were formed by frequent trips to a campsite in the Bavarian mountains, which had been her main travel destination for the past 24 years. Since she retired, she has spent half of the summer each year in the Bavarian mountains. Mrs. Becker considers the campsite as her second home and she uses her time there undertaking similar activities to what she does at home, such as reading, chatting or gardening. She returns to her home in Freising only to look after the garden or because she has other obligations.

Others reported that social obligations such as caring for family members can affect tourism participation. Mrs. Schroeder, for instance, took care of her aunt for several years and during that time it was not possible to go on holidays:

“Well, in the beginning it was difficult. Because I had a very sick aunt and I didn’t dare. Because I thought she would die in the meantime and then I needed to be there. I was the only remaining person.”

Some cases showed that ill family members who live at a distance can also induce travel activities and prompt replacement of existing travel habits. Sixty-five-year-old Mrs. Hoffmann, for example, travelled regularly to look after her parents who lived several hours away by car. At that time, she was in her late 50s: “Until my parents passed away I have been about four times a year in Hanover. Sometimes for one day, sometimes for a week or three days, it depends. You actually don’t feel like travelling somewhere else, that was enough.”

Other factors such as climate, regulations (e.g. visas), the health system, or prices for tourism products also play an important role for

some seniors in their decision-making about where and how to travel. Mr. Fischer, for instance, used a tour operator who offered special prices for a round trip through the United States: “I haven’t been in the US... and when you read the programme, from East to the West... the price mattered. Normally it would cost like 5,000 or 6,000 euros, but in this case, it was just 3,500 euros, because you stay at campsites.” He also reported that climate is an important factor for deciding on his travel destinations: “I keep an eye on the climate conditions. The season for travelling to the south is September, of course, or May. Last year we have been in Tenerife, which is bearable.”

5.4. Negotiation strategies to mitigate senior tourism constraints

Most of the seniors interviewed had developed strategies to circumvent or mitigate constraints to tourism participation. Some retired research participants with limited financial opportunities stayed in part-time employment to be able to afford their tourism activities. Seventy-three-year-old Mrs. Krueger, for example, worked at an airport in order to increase her travel budget: “It was also extra income for my travels because I thought, now I can have a larger trip.”

Deteriorating health conditions affected opportunities to participate in tourism when mobility, blood circulation, or special dietary requirements had to be considered in travel plans. Seniors adjusted their travels according to their physical abilities and had to compromise between travel preferences and capabilities. Mr. Schmidt (78 years) travelled to North America for the last time when he was 65 years old, even though his travel group continued with their hiking tours overseas. Fig. 2 illustrates Mr. Schmidt’s travel biography and shows how his tourism patterns and frequencies changed over the life course. Markers linked with the time line indicate relevant life events, while the bar charts below show different travel periods in Mr. Schmidt’s life. The figure shows that with increased age travels to the United States and Canada became too arduous for Mr. Schmidt and he changed his travel focus to the European Alps:

The backpack has about 20 k and that’s hard, the backpack is heavy. These tours would be wonderful if you would have a lighter backpack, because it’s heavy, but that’s the only way to do it. [...] Since then, I undertake mainly mountain tours in this area [the Bavarian Alps]. Something you can do within one day or maybe a couple of days.

Short ski and mountain trips increased significantly since Mr. Schmidt focused on travelling to mountain destinations closer to his home town (see dotted black line in Fig. 2).

Some interviewees mentioned that trips not only became shorter but also closer destinations gained importance. It was more comfortable travelling to closer destinations especially because this involved shorter transportation time. Seniors changed their means of transport due to declining health conditions; for example, ceasing use of the car when their advanced age affected their driving abilities. Family Braun first sold their caravan when Mr. Braun was in his 70s because this type of travelling became too stressful to manage: “We didn’t like the gypsy life anymore.” Later, the couple also abandoned the car as a means of vacation transport and travelled instead by plane, which introduced some limitations: without their car at the destination, the couple were less flexible and less independent for getting around and sightseeing. As a result of this reduced mobility, the family had shorter holidays.

6. Discussion: Senior tourism constraints and facilitators

The study adopted Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey’s (1991) and Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey’s (1993) hierarchical leisure models, and adapted these to a dynamic tourism-centred life events context. The model presented in Fig. 3 is based on the research results and conceptualises senior tourism behaviour from a constraints, facilitators, and socioecological perspective.

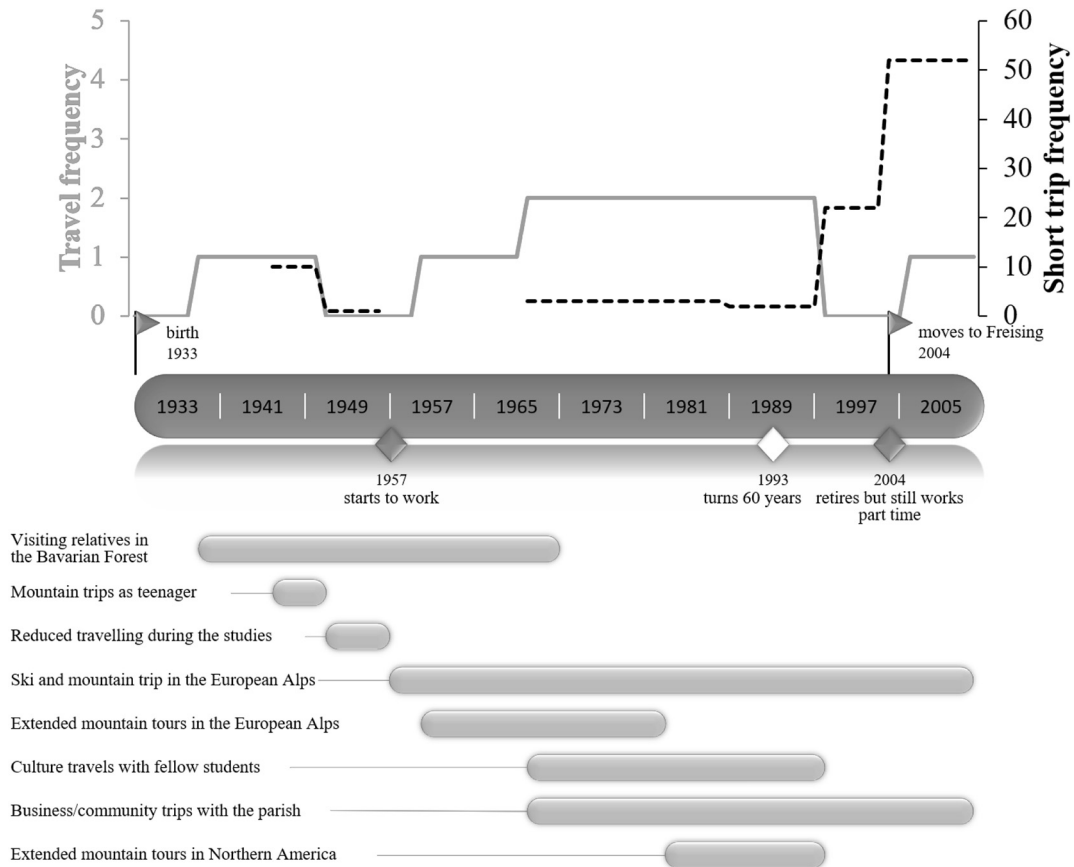


Fig. 2. Timeline of Mr. Schmidt's travel history.

It should be noted that, even though leisure and tourism show similarities in some aspects (Carr, 2002), there are significant differences between the two fields that go beyond simple geographical distances between the place of origin and the destination. Distances are not only measured in geographical terms but also in time, costs, and cultural proximity (e.g. Hofstede, 1980). Leisure is largely pursued on a daily or weekly basis while tourism is much more a peculiarity. Therefore, the decision-making process for tourism participation is often more complex and multi-layered than the choice of leisure activity.

The model presented in Fig. 3 is based on the research results and conceptualises senior tourism behaviour from a constraints, facilitators, and socioecological perspective. The model suggests that the outcome of travel participation (level of tourism behaviour) can be viewed as a function of “anticipation” and “intervention” strategies, motives to travel and constraints and facilitator dimensions on different levels. Tourism preferences are influenced by previous travel experiences and interpersonal constraints and facilitators, whereas interpersonal capabilities are affected by interpersonal constraints and facilitators.

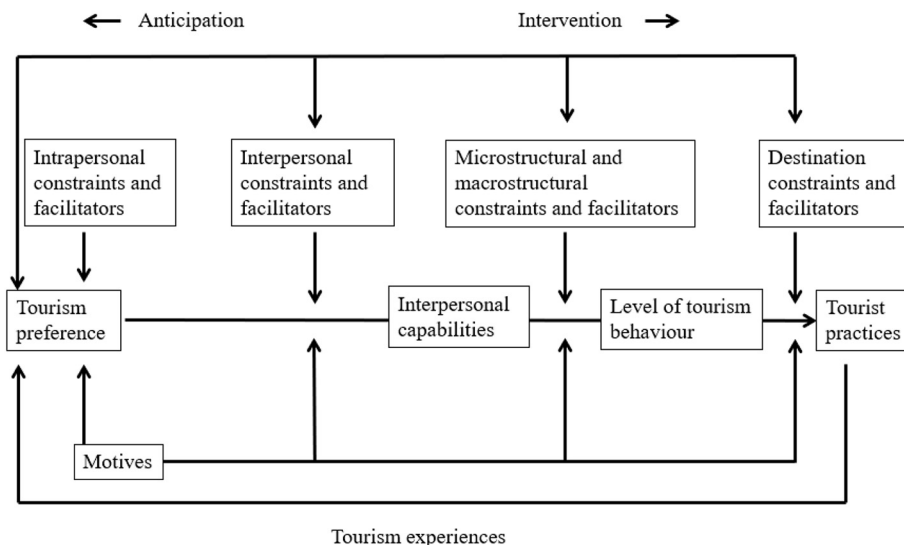


Fig. 3. Model of senior tourism constraints and facilitators.

Table 2
Interplay of life events and constraints/facilitators (VFR = Visiting friends and relatives).

| Life events | Constraints/facilitators | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Intrapersonal | Interpersonal | Microstructural | Macrostructural |
| Deteriorating health | Health, perceptions of self-skills | – | Social integration | Tourism products, infrastructure |
| Age psychology | Health, emotions, perceptions, attitudes | – | – | – |
| Illness of the spouse | Mental strain | Abilities of travel partner | Finances, social commitment | Tourism products |
| Nursing obligations | Mental strain | – | Social commitment | Tourism products |
| The loss of a spouse | Grieving/emotion | Loss of travel partner | Finances, social integration | – |
| Meeting a new partner | – | New travel partner | Finances | – |
| Detachment from teenagers | Loss of social roles | Loss of travel partners | Finances, social commitment | – |
| Grandparenthood | – | New travel partners | Social commitment | Tourism products |
| Pets as family members | – | – | Commitment | – |
| Migration, living environment, VFR | Well-being at home | Change of social environment | Distances, social environment | – |
| Working commitments | Social role, status | – | Finances, time budget | – |
| Inheritance | – | – | Finances | – |
| Broader context | | | | |
| German reunification | – | – | – | Politics |
| Health system | – | – | – | Regulations |
| Retirement pay | – | – | – | Regulations |
| Climate | – | – | – | Natural environment |
| Food | – | – | – | Culture |

Structural dimensions are distinguished in micro and macro and impact on the level of tourism behaviour once travel preferences are formed. After deciding to participate in some form of tourism, destination constraints (e.g. physical barriers to mobility) and facilitators (e.g. lower entrance fees for seniors) influence seniors' tourist practices at the tourism destination.

The following discussion is linked to the model developed. The interplay between constraints and facilitators, the ecological system, and sample life events is illustrated in Table 2. The table presents constraints and facilitators dimensions as they emerged from the interviews. Life events are complex and can impact on multiple constraints and facilitator dimensions. For example, the illness of a spouse and related care activities expose seniors not only to mental strain and stress but also have financial implications and can be time consuming. This life event may also inhibit or constrain travel, as the spouse is often the most important travel companion.

6.1. Intrapersonal dimensions

The model of senior tourism constraints and facilitators commences with intrapersonal constraints and facilitators. Findings suggest deteriorating health, emotional state, and reduced social environment as intrapersonal constraints affecting the psychological characteristics of seniors, such as the self-confidence to travel. For seniors, health conditions constitute an important factor in their travel decision-making processes and are not adequately reflected in existing constraints models. In this aspect of the model, the difference between isolated and continuous life events becomes apparent. Isolated health incidents or conditions (for example, an accident) are associated with structuring constraints. Continuously deteriorating health affects not only the biological body, but also one's state of mind as an intrapersonal dimension. Hutchinson and Kleiber (2005) concluded that:

Although coping continues to be an ongoing response to situational stressors associated with negative life events, over time people begin to come to terms with the event and even seek to integrate it somehow with the personal narrative written before it happened. (p. 144).

This explains why Mrs. Schaefer perceives travelling with a wheelchair as absolutely normal while other wheelchair users who have not yet internalised their impediment might see this as a major barrier to travel.

Health as a constraint to travel is identified by a number of studies (e.g. Fleischer & Pizam, 2002; Gibson, 2002) but this research also indicates that, in particular, mental strain due to illness, widowhood or other events affecting the emotional state can have significant impact on tourism consumption.

On the other hand, life events in old age can also engage seniors in tourism and facilitate travel activities. Tourism in later years can be associated with successful aging strategies, substituting and replacing lost roles (e.g. occupation), and activities (e.g. care giving), which can be part of a renewal process (Nimrod & Rotem, 2012).

6.2. Interpersonal dimensions

According to the original model of hierarchical leisure constraints, interpersonal dimensions describe how social relationship mechanisms affect participation in recreational activities. The variety of social processes in tourism, however, suggests a more differentiated distinction of tourism sociologies (e.g. Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997). The model distinguishes tourism-related social aspects into three categories: interpersonal travel coordination, the social aspects of the microenvironment; and social relationships at the destination.

The findings of this study suggest that interpersonal travel coordination has a paramount position in the tourism decision-making processes of seniors. Interpersonal constraints and facilitators refer to the social components and capabilities of travelling such as companionship and decision-making related to travel companions. Results show that, in particular, the travel group composition can affect tourism participation when, for example, existing travel parties break apart or new ones are formed. The importance of travel companions for senior tourism participation is well documented in literature (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016; Kazeminia et al., 2013). The findings of this study reveal that not only changes in the nuclear family affects travel behaviours but also social relationships with the wider family (e.g. grandchildren) and friends. In particular, friends, acquaintances and other new potential travel partners can play an important role in engaging in tourism activities.

6.3. Ecological systems constraints and facilitators

The constraints and facilitators model integrates an ecological systems dimension. Fig. 4 shows how the level of tourism behaviour is

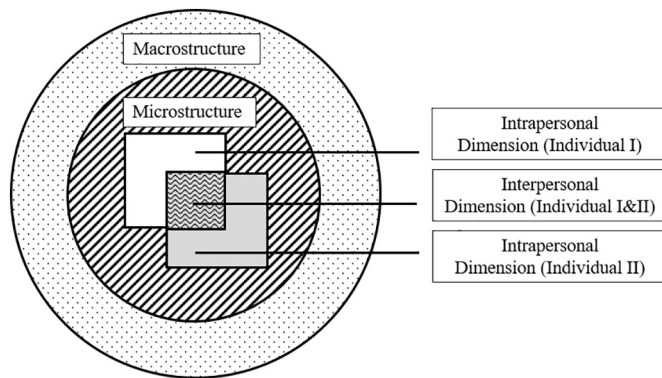


Fig. 4. Ecological constraints and facilitators.

formed from an ecological systems perspective. The individual and their social interactions, including interpersonal relationships, are located within an ecological micro- and macrosystem. Both the micro- and macrosystems have structural components that lie outside the individual and the interpersonal nature of the tourism activity.

The microenvironment encompasses the immediate setting of causal influencers that might, for example, affect social relationships (friends, family members, work-related issues) but also an individual's financial situation or time budget. For some people, senior age is relatively free from microstructural constraints (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002) and fewer family obligations and income restrictions (e.g. mortgages paid off) increase the opportunities for travelling. Fleischer and Pizam's (2002) study on senior travellers from Israel showed similar results and indicated that time and income constraints decrease by the age of 65, which allows them to take longer holidays. Others, however, experience financial constraints due to retirement, which echoes Nyaupane and Andereck (2008) who found a negative relationship between costs and seniors' tourism participation.

Social relationships in the form of social commitment were found to be of high relevance for senior tourism participation, particularly when family members (parents, spouses, children, grandchildren) require constant support, care giving or nursing. These social responsibilities not only influence participation but also the meaning of tourism itself and reasons to travel are often dominated by escape motives. Many research participants pointed out that social commitments often prohibit travelling.

The macrosystem is associated with the broader societal, cultural, and geographical context. Macrostructural constraints and facilitators are not related to individual life events because they lie outside the individual sphere of influence. It emerged from this research that political developments, regulations, cultural differences, and the natural environment can operate as macrostructural constraints or facilitators to senior tourism behaviour. Macrostructural factors relate either to the place of residence of the traveller or the potential destination. The place of residence relates to a specific social setting where travelling can be more or less practiced and provides economic and regulatory opportunities in terms of laws on holiday rights. Macrostructural components of the destination influence its attractiveness (e.g. prices, climate, proximity, and facilities) and impact on travel opportunities through factors such as visa regulations or accessibility. In particular, tourism infrastructure and products that support specific types of leisure travel such as intergenerational and accessible tourism can have an impact on tourism participation and the choice of travel destinations. Nyaupane and Andereck (2008) also suggest that place attributes such as weather conditions, traffic, and proximity can be important structural constraints and prevent travelling.

Indeed, a tourism trip can be viewed as a life event that seeks to

change, albeit relatively briefly, some elements of the immediate macrostructure, such as climate or culture. Some seniors change the macrostructure permanently through migration (e.g. Gustafson, 2002). Another emergent theme is that with increased age, the perspective on the macrostructure may change. Transitions in health and physical conditions can influence a senior's perception of the risks of travelling in politically unstable countries, the effect of climate, or the impact of unfamiliar foods.

6.4. The absence of life events

Life events influence tourism behaviour. Conversely, the absence of constraining life events may result in routine travel behaviour that is largely undisturbed over time and only subject to internal changes, such as physical conditions and altered attitudes, desires, and expectations. Indeed, the case of Mr. Schmidt (78 years old) demonstrates that the absence of constraints can result in a relatively stable tourism behaviour pattern. Compared with other subjects, Mr. Schmidt, being a Catholic priest and therefore single, experienced very few life events related to family building. He never married and has no children, which has resulted in a very specific and largely stable travel pattern across his life course, based on hiking in different settings.

This aspect refers to Crawford and Godbey's (1987) terminology of 'leisure preference' and adds to Jackson et al.'s (1993, pp. 4–5) assumption that "Participation [in leisure activities] resulting from negotiation is likely to be different from participation as it might have occurred in the absence of constraints." In the absence of other intervening factors, the impact of the travel experience itself may contribute to a larger proportion of the change in tourism behaviour.

6.5. Anticipation and intervention

Findings suggest that constraints, facilitators, and travel motives are negotiated on hierarchical levels in the course of the travel decision-making process, beginning with internal factors and then followed by factors from the interpersonal and structural dimensions. However, the hierarchical order is not absolute. Data support the idea that even when interpersonal constraints are overcome, intrapersonal factors may be renegotiated. For some of those interviewed, the social nature of tourism and travelling with friends is more important than the desire to make a specific trip. This is in line with Kazeminia et al. (2013), who emphasise the social conditions underpinning tourism decisions by building linkages between travel preferences and interpersonal constraints. Kazeminia et al. (2013) describe interpersonal constraints as being the most powerful category, affecting not only the interpersonal capability of senior travel but also leisure preferences and the level of participation.

The biographical research approach identified feedback loops, as indicated in the model, through which tourism preferences are not only affected by intrapersonal constraints and facilitators but also by other constraint and facilitator categories and by previous tourism experiences. It is well accepted in literature that tourism participation and experiences form future tourism preferences and motivation (Gilbert & Hudson, 2000; Jackson et al., 1993; Pearce & Lee, 2005).

Persistent constraints and facilitators, such as deteriorating health conditions, can be anticipated and internalised by the individual and also shape future tourism preferences. A significant inheritance, on the other hand, can operate as a facilitator, completely changing the senior's perspective on travelling in the long term. The anticipation of different constraint levels can influence the desire to participate in travel and become, to a certain extent, our own choice (Godbey et al., 2010). This may be expected in relation to negative, constraining events such as illness or the loss of a spouse.

The strategies adopted by seniors to cope with constraints and facilitators are not only based on negotiation procedures within the travel decision-making process, but also operate before and after the period of travel by intervening in underlying conditions. As a successful proactive response to constraints (Jackson, 2005b), seniors' tourism activities are often organised around barriers that can be manipulated to diminish their constraining effects. Seniors join associations and clubs to find new travel partners or they work part-time after retirement in order to maintain their tourism habits. The ability to manipulate and negotiate constraints diminishes with increased age, which provides an explanation of why, at some point, travel activities are no longer pursued.

6.6. Constraints and facilitators at the destination

Tourism adds a destination dimension to the leisure-based constraints model. Not only is tourism behaviour – which represents the framework of travel in terms of where to go, when, and for how long – subject to constraints and facilitators, but tourist practices – the specific behaviours and actions at the destination – are also subject to constraints and facilitators. This factor is not specifically identified in leisure constraints models but may be relevant in the tourism domain (H.-J. Chen, Chen, & Okumus, 2013), and in particular, in the senior context when, for example, health services can become an integral part of destination choice. Some research participants experienced mobility issues and reported difficulty catching buses or getting around. Others pointed out that finding a doctor can be problematic in “exotic countries”.

Hägerstrand's (1970) time-geographical approach provides an accepted approach to constraints and facilitators at the destination level. The deteriorating health and mobility difficulties of senior people fall into Hägerstrand's category of capability constraints and require adjustments of both transportation and destination facilities to ensure seniors' access to tourism products. Special senior prices for attractions may relate to authority facilitators, attracting seniors to participate in tourism activities at the destination.

7. Conclusions and implications

This study used innovative biographical research methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the tourism behaviour of seniors. The living circumstances of seniors are formed by a number of key life events which impact on their tourism behaviour and participation. The interplay of life events is complex and results in a variety of constraining and facilitating conditions. The findings of this qualitative research based on a purposive sample of seniors from Freising, Germany, suggest there can be personal tourism preferences that remain consistent over time. Seniors in this case study are not simply recipients of life events and constraining factors that come with negative circumstances, but also shape their own histories in order to maintain familiar and preferred travel patterns.

The results of this research suggest that tourism participation by seniors is largely formed within a framework consisting not only of constraints but also facilitators. Within this framework, seniors arrange and negotiate their tourism behaviour as active creators. The framework does not neglect the human sphere of influence since seniors with the motivation to travel attempt to manipulate constraining conditions through anticipation and intervention strategies as long as they are capable of doing so.

By adopting a constraints and facilitators approach that integrates life events and ecological systems theory, the study presents a model that advances understanding of seniors' tourism behaviour. The structure of the model conforms to Crawford et al.'s (1991) original leisure constraints concept in many aspects. Tourism behaviour is formed by

travel preferences which are constrained and negotiated at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural levels. Findings also suggest a certain hierarchy of constraints, with health, emotional stress, and interpersonal constraints holding a paramount position.

The model presented here adds to Raymore's (2002) facilitators dimension and encompasses elements of the individual ecological system. This results in a distinction between intrapersonal, interpersonal, microstructural, macrostructural, and destination constraints and facilitators. This paper contributes to theory by distinguishing structural dimensions in micro- and macrostructural constraints and facilitators. For marketing purposes and strategic tourism planning, it is important to distinguish between these structural dimensions since microstructural components are within the sphere of influence of the individual and therefore prone to intervention by tourism marketers, while macrostructural factors lie, to a large extent, outside this scope of action. The model developed also contributes to theory by incorporating senior tourism behaviours at the destination, which are subject to constraining and facilitating influences. Tourism destination constraints and facilitators is an aspect largely ignored by existing tourism literature.

The research findings show how constraints and facilitators are dynamic across the life course and operate as mediators between life events and tourism behaviour. Constraints and facilitators arise from life events (see, e.g., Hutchinson & Kleiber, 2005; Jackson, 2005a) when individuals encounter difficulties or opportunities. Life events are negotiated and their impacts manipulated in the course of their appearance, which directs how travel behaviour is affected. In this sense, life events and related transitional points can be understood as causal explanations for the constraints and facilitators that influence seniors' travel behaviour.

Life events consist of a combination of constraints and facilitators and their complex interrelations create conceptual difficulties. The interpretation of life events is heuristically useful, but the precise deconstruction of life events into constraints and facilitators is complex and problematic. Retirement, for example, has not only macrostructural and microstructural components (e.g. retirement pay regulations, individual income, and discretionary time) but also interpersonal and intrapersonal components (including changes in social relationships, social status, and role). Interestingly, differing life events can have similar effects on tourism behaviour. Divorce and widowhood, for instance, both result in the loss of the partner, with similar implications for tourism behaviour. Despite these conceptual difficulties, the model suggests a linearity which reflects the paramount position of the dimensions of health and emotional state and social relationships, both of which can relate to the cessation of seniors' participation in tourism. This result contradicts Kazemina et al.'s (2013) proposition that most prominent travel constraints are relationship-driven interpersonal constraints, followed by intrapersonal and structural constraints. Differences in findings can be explained by the sampling of Kazemina et al.'s (2013) study which bases on younger seniors aged 50–64 years, who may be less affected by impaired health and emotional stress caused by life events. Results supports the proposition that constraints and facilitators are dynamic across the life course and the order of importance of constraints is subject to change, depending on the population studied.

Understanding the constraints and facilitators of senior tourism has clear managerial implications. This study suggests that health plays a significant role in the tourism behaviour of seniors and can constrain and even block tourism participation. Hence, there are opportunities for the tourism industry to develop products that facilitate access to activities for seniors in poor health. It is important to note that this requires a holistic approach to tourism that may include the availability of specific medical services at the destination, barrier-free restaurants,

accommodation and amenities, and in particular, the improved accessibility of the transport sector. Indeed, this last feature may be considered by some travellers as the most unpleasant and stressful part of the tourism experience (Romsa & Blenman, 1989).

The research findings suggest that interpersonal dimensions hold a paramount position in the decision-making process and are an important influence on tourism participation. Social participation in old age becomes a significant factor for individual well-being, and tourism can play a vital role in the individual remaining socially active. In terms of tourism, lost travel partners need to be replaced. A common strategy employed by the participants in this study is membership of associations and clubs which not only arrange travel activities but are also viewed as a source of potential travel partners. These are places where new travel groups, patterns, and decisions are formed. Tourism businesses can focus on the development of tourism products that anticipate the importance of social dimensions in senior tourism. This may include not only products associated with tourism practices at the destinations (e.g. social activities adjusted to seniors' specific needs) but also marketing strategies that approach seniors at places of social interaction such as seniors' groups, clubs, and associations.

Another implication relates to domestic tourism markets. With increased age, domestic destinations become more popular among the elderly for a number of reasons. It is important to note that this gain is particularly relevant for economical linkages between tourism and local industries (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourism, for example, is a much undervalued tourism market but is particularly relevant for those whose leisure travel activities are constrained. Tourism businesses might start looking for future customers on their own doorstep, which has the potential to strengthen local economies.

A final word concerns limitations of the study and the applicability and transferability of the model developed. The aim of this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of seniors' tourism behaviour through the eyes of the people being studied – in this case, people older than 60 years. The study sample is based on 23 cases in Germany and does not allow for the generalisation of findings. The authors invite other researchers to apply the model in other cultural contexts so as to identify differences in constraint and facilitator categories. While biological constraints (e.g. illness and deteriorating health) and facilitators are likely to show similarities across cultures, interpersonal and microstructural aspects with regards to social interactions and relationships may represent a much more diverse condition, reflecting cultural differences in the social dimensions of tourism.

Further limitations refer to the biographical research methods employed in this study. Potential bias can occur due to recall errors or the reinterpretation of past experiences. For this reason, a number of research techniques were utilised such as the use of travel records, multiple data collection phases, the inclusion of research participants in the data collection and analysis process, and life history guides.

Godbey et al. (2010) identified a fragmentation of constraints approaches which results in a lack of standardised instruments for measuring constraints. Indeed, this study developed a constraints model grounded specifically in research on seniors in Freising, Germany. The model, however, shows a level of abstraction that, it can be argued, goes beyond this population-specific approach. Dimensions in the model are likely to apply to the general population but will be more relevant for older adults than their younger counterparts. A shift in preferences may also occur at the destination level with increased age when health services and accessibility become more significant barriers for seniors. Future research may adopt this constraints and facilitators model to investigate other population groups.

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Dr. Dominik Huber is Associate Director at the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand. His research focuses on travel behaviour of elderly people, community based tourism and biographical research methods. Currently Dominik holds a Postdoc Fellowship at the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute.



Simon Milne is Professor of Tourism at Auckland University of Technology and Director of the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute. He received his PhD in economic geography from Cambridge University in 1989 and worked at McGill University, Montreal until 1999 when he returned to New Zealand.



Kenneth F. Hyde is Associate Professor of Marketing at AUT University, in Auckland, New Zealand. His research interests include tourism behaviour and decision-making, and consumer behaviour in services. His research has been published in a number of leading journals including *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, the *Journal of Travel Research*, *Qualitative Market Research*, and the *Journal of Business Research*.