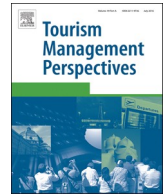




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Research paper

Understanding why: Push-factors that drive rural tourism amongst senior travellers

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the push-motives driving domestic rural tourism amongst senior travellers. An understanding of this is essential to stimulate rural tourism and to redistribute visitors from high volume destinations to other locations. Applying the push-pull framework, an online survey of Australians aged over 50 was conducted. Participants were asked where they went and what motivated their trip. Based on the trip pattern followed, two rural trip segments were identified - those who preferred the east-coast (*Eastern Staters*), and those who did not have a geographic preference but travelled to remote destinations (*Aussie Roundabouts*). Rural travel was found to be driven by three motives, however, their influence differed based on the trip pattern. *Eastern Staters* were pushed to *relax and escape*, and experience *novelty and adventure*. *Aussie Roundabouts* travelled for a *romantic getaway*.

1. Introduction

Although previous studies have considered the motives of senior travellers, these motives have been examined generally (Alén, Losada, & de Carlos, 2017; Shoemaker, 1989; Zimmer, Brayley, & Searle, 1995), from a resident group perspective (Alén et al., 2017; Boksberger & Laesser, 2008; Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Jang & Wu, 2006; You & O'Leary, 1999), from a themed experience perspective (Backman, Backman, & Silverberg, 1999; Carneiro, Eusébio, Kastenholz, & Alvelos, 2013), or in the context of visiting a specific destination (Prayag, 2012; Ward, 2014). Existing evidence is also skewed towards the North American, Asian, or European setting (Horneman, Carter, Wel, & Ruys, 2002; Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016). At the same time, tourism research has suffered from an international bias, with domestic perspectives on motives being undervalued (Farmaki, 2012; Jeuring, 2016). Accordingly, this research examines the domestic rural travel motives focusing on Australians 50-years and over.

The United Nations (2017) has identified ageing as a significant social transformation of the twenty-first century, making the senior tourism segment lucrative due to its size and growth potential (Horneman et al., 2002), and one of the most important groups of individuals in the tourism sector (Pestana, Sánchez, & Moutinho, 2019). This segment represents 33% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017a) with a large proportion being retired,

relatively healthy, and seeking active experiences. Between 2012 and 2015, the percentage of Australians, 65 years and above, who participated in exercise and recreation increased from 44.5% to 49.2%, demonstrating the importance of such activities and their ability to engage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017b). Forced superannuation savings and lower liabilities have contributed to increased spending power (Anderson & Langmeyer, 1982; Hossain, Bailey, & Lubulwa, 2007). The value of this segment within the Australian travel market is evident with four separate operators developing specific offers for them (Seniors Information Service Inc, 2019). Given the prominence of the senior market, their financial power, and proclivity to visit rural destinations (Cai & Li, 2009); an understanding of their motives within a domestic rural context is essential.

The value of domestic tourism has been well established in the literature. Domestic tourism contributes more to a destination's economy than international visitation (Jeuring, 2016) and facilitates the redistribution of wealth within a country (Ndivo, Waudo, & Waswa, 2013) by increasing employment, personal income, and tax revenue (Pratt, 2015). Within rural areas, tourism development can enhance lifestyles by attracting investment in commerce and infrastructure (Quandt, Ferraresi, Kudlawicz, Martins, & Machado, 2017). Rural tourism is of significance to a country like Australia, where only 0.18% of the land area is classified as urban (Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, 2018). According to Tourism Research Australia, in the year

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ending March, 2018, Australians 50-years and over, took 40 million domestic trips – 70% of which were to rural destinations; and only 3.9 million overseas trips. Regional NSW was the most popular in terms of visitor numbers with approximately 10 million visitors. However, when considering the average number of nights spent at the destination, senior travellers reported spending more time in Regional Northern Territory (seven nights) and regional Western Australia (six nights) compared to other regional locations in Australia. Despite the value and prominence of domestic rural tourism, this has not been adequately explored. Studies on older Australians have focused on the 'grey nomads' (e.g. Hillman, 2013; Onyx & Leonard, 2005), the drive tourism market (Prideaux, Wei, & Ruys, 2001), and the senior market without a specific travel context (Cleaver, Muller, Ruys, & Wei, 1999; Cleaver-Sellick, 2004; Horneman et al., 2002; Hossain et al., 2007; Muller & O'Cass, 2001). These studies have not examined the travel motives driving domestic rural tourism.

Through a rigorous review of the literature and in consultation with senior tourism academics, it was found that limited attention has been paid to the motives that drive senior travellers to visit domestic rural destinations. This paper addresses that gap. An online survey was conducted to understand where senior Australian travellers went and what motivated their visit. Based on the findings, the study offers two unique contributions. First, the research identifies distinct domestic rural trip patterns that senior Australians follow. Second, it uncovers the specific motives driving senior travellers to visit domestic destinations and rural places in particular. This study demonstrates that while some senior travellers may share a preference for rural travel, there are significant differences in the reason for their travel and the destinations they visit. The literature on the travel preferences and motivations of senior travellers is now presented.

2. Literature review

Research on travel motives has primarily been guided by the push and pull motivation theory (Otoo & Kim, 2018; Sangpikul, 2008). The theory postulates people are pushed into making travel decisions by internal forces relating to the individual's needs, and pulled by external forces at the destination concerning to the destination's product (Dann, 1977; McGehee, Loker-Murphy, & Uysal, 1996). Crompton (1979) further defined push-factors as socio-psychological factors that explain the desire to go on a vacation, and pull-factors as those aroused by the experiences available at the destination. Push motives provide an emotional driver for travel (Jamaludin, Aziz, & Mariapan, 2018). Examples include a desire for excitement, knowledge and education, relaxation, achievement, family togetherness, escape, safety and sight-seeing (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Shoemaker (1989) challenged the notion of homogeneity in senior travel motivation and identified three motivation clusters when studying Pennsylvania residents over 55. These were *Family Travellers* who travel to spend time with their immediate family; *Active Resters* who travel to seek spiritual/intellectual enrichment, socialise, and escape; and the *Older Set* who were older than members of the other two segments, liked staying in resorts and visiting historical sites. Replicating the study ten years later, Shoemaker (2000) found three segments of travellers: those seeking to *escape and learn* with an interest in new places and new experiences; *the retirees* who travel to break routine; and *active storytellers* who travel to spend time with others and be able to tell friends about their trip. Shoemaker (2000) concluded that the findings of this study confirmed his previous research (Shoemaker, 1989) and explained that the *Escape and Learn group* and the *Active Story Tellers* were similar to the *Active Resters* cluster, while *The Retires* exhibited similar characteristics to the *Older Set*.

Through a review of the literature on the push motives of senior travellers, Horneman et al. (2002) noted education/learning; rest and relaxation; exercise/fitness; and visiting friends and relatives were found most frequently to drive travel. They identified a trend in the

literature towards active motives with an emphasis on health and fitness. Keeping in mind a higher life expectancy has increased the average age, discretionary income and quality of life; active pursuits could be a key motivator for younger seniors (between 55 and 60) who are more active than their previous counterparts (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014). Patterson and Pegg (2009) explain this drive for active experiences as a means of feeling young and at the same time as a way of engaging younger members of the family.

Patuelli and Nijkamp (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature on the travel motives of senior travellers. They found drivers relating to experience/adventure and socialisation have grown in importance between 1988 and 2015; and identified five key themes in the literature: culture and nature, experience and adventure, relaxation wellbeing and escape, self-esteem and ego enhancement, and socialisation. More recently, Otoo and Kim (2018) conducted a systematic review of the academic literature on senior travel motives from 1980 to 2017, aiming to combine similar motives into higher-order push-motive domains. As part of their review, they identified sixty-two motives and combined these into ten push-motive domains, being: *Ego, Actualisation, Novelty, Wellbeing, Nostalgia, Knowledge, Escape, Hedonism, Rest and Comfort, Socialisation*. Through this review, they argued that research should link push-factors with travel behaviour in order to develop a more rigorous understanding of the drivers motivating senior travel.

The push-motives driving senior travel are influenced by the individual's socioeconomic status, lifestyle, demographics, market knowledge, and psychological wellbeing (Jamaludin et al., 2018; Sangpikul, 2008). For instance, escape as a push motive may originate from a negative home environment and the individual's perceived quality of life; with those satisfied being more inclined to travel (Jang, Bai, Hu, & Wu, 2009; Kim & Woo, 2014). Subjective age, which is the age one feels like, has been found to impact travel motives with those who see themselves as younger being more motivated to obtain physical stimulation, excitement and invigoration (Muller & O'Cass, 2001). Push motives may also change in importance as people get older (McGehee et al., 1996), becoming relatively homogeneous owing to deteriorating health and immobility (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014). Finally, cultural backgrounds may influence the push factors motivating travel (Vojvodic, 2015). For instance, Chinese seniors were driven to travel domestically due to a sense of patriotism (Hsu, Cai, & Wong, 2007). The French were driven by intellectual travel motives such as increasing knowledge and discovering new places (Le Serre, Legohérel, & Weber, 2013). American seniors were driven for experience/adventure; compared to Asian seniors who travelled to socialise (Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016) – with Japanese seniors even seeing travel as a means of creating new relationships (Ryu, Hyun, & Shim, 2015). This cultural influence on travel motivations re-affirms the need for tourism practitioners to identify the unique motives driving their target market, and then build marketing campaigns that address those motives.

2.1. Senior Australians' push-motives

The travel motives of senior Australians was studied first by Cleaver et al. (1999) and later by Muller and O'Cass (2001), Kim, Wei, and Ruys (2003), and Cleaver-Sellick (2004). The scope and findings of these studies are summarised in Table 1. As can be observed, for the senior Australian traveller, travel is a means of self-enhancement and predominantly motivated by the need to remain active, learn, escape, and have new experiences. This is consistent with Small (2003) whose sample of middle-class Anglo-Australian women reported that as they aged, travel was more a means of feeding the soul than their ego.

These studies, however, tend to focus on Australian residents' travel behaviour in general (Cleaver et al., 1999; Cleaver-Sellick, 2004; Kim et al., 2003), or explore the impact of age on motivation (Muller & O'Cass, 2001). They lack consistency in their definition of who is considered to be a senior traveller, are based on different geographic samples, and were conducted before the boom in internet technology

Table 1
Travel motives of senior Australian travellers.

Author and sample	Segments identified
Cleaver et al. (1999) Queenslanders, 56–93 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nostalgics travel to renew and relive memories – Friendlies travel to meet new people, make new friends and spend time with people with similar interests – Learners aim to collect new experiences, discover the world and learn new things – Escapists travel to get away from the demands of daily life – Thinkers travel to challenge their mental abilities and boundaries – Status-seekers go to places others have not and travel to brag about their experiences – Physicals travel to participate in physical challenges
Muller and O'Casey (2001) 55 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Physical stimulation – Camaraderie – Status-seeking – Nostalgia – Thinking and reflection – Escapism – Self-enrichment and discovery
Kim et al. (2003) West Australians, 50 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Active learners who focus on personal growth, and embrace new experiences and activities. – Relaxed family body who travel for rest and relaxation and to visit family and friends – Careful participant who travel to observe new experiences and focus on health and wellbeing – Elementary vacationer who travel with a partner or spouse often to embrace and observe new experiences.
Cleaver-Sellick (2004) 50 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reluctant travellers who are not motivated to travel – Discovery and self-enhancement seekers who are motivated to learn while travelling – Enthusiastic connectors who travel for many motives – Nostalgic travellers motivated by reminiscing on the past

which has transformed how we live, work, and communicate.

2.2. Rural tourism

While the multi-dimensional nature of rural tourism is difficult to unpack (Frochot, 2005), Pesonen and Tuohino (2017) parsimoniously define it as tourism outside densely populated areas. In the academic literature, rural tourists have been segmented based on benefits sought (Almeida, Correia, & Pimpão, 2014; Frochot, 2005; Kastenholz, Davis, & Paul, 1999; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007), distance travelled (Cai & Li, 2009), visit motivation (Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010; Park & Yoon, 2009; Pesonen, Komppula, Kronenberg, & Peters, 2011), and spending behaviour (Oh & Schuett, 2010).

Park and Yoon (2009) studied rural travel in Korea and identified four motive segments: *family togetherness* who valued relaxation with family; *want-it-all tourists* who had multiple motives for a visit; *learning and excitement cluster*; and *passive visitors* – the latter two self-explanatory. Devesa et al. (2010) in Spain identify four motivational typologies. These were visitors looking for *tranquillity, rest and contact with nature*; *cultural visitors*; *proximity, gastronomic and nature visitors*; and *return tourists*. Both studies identify escape and relaxation as important motivations of rural travel. Through a meta-analysis of the literature, Pesonen et al. (2011) found rural tourism was driven by the opportunity to learn, explore nature and culture, enjoy outdoor activities and the search for peace and solitude. Their research in Finland and Austria identified relaxation as the most crucial push-factor.

The role of the rural lifestyle and environment as a driver of rural tourism is unclear. Frochot (2005) and Kastenholz et al. (1999) identify the rural lifestyle, environment, and the ability to gaze on that environment, as benefits expected from rural travel. However, in contrast, Molera and Albaladejo (2007) propose visitors are not driven to rural destinations for the rural lifestyle, culture, and clean environment, but instead to enjoy family time and holiday in calm and natural settings. Despite this disparity, it is obvious the tranquillity offered by rural destinations and the ability to disconnect from one's regular routine are significant motives. This is consistent with Kastenholz, Carneiro, Marques, and Loureiro (2018) who more recently found esthetics was a key component of the rural tourism experience.

Within an Australian context, research concerning senior travellers within a domestic rural setting has been conducted focusing the Grey Nomad segment. Onyx and Leonard (2005) found that the Grey Nomads travel to escape the cold, and were motivated by the adventure of

discovering new places, experiencing beautiful sceneries, learning the history of rural towns, and the prospect to meet others. Patterson, Pegg, and Litster (2011) using an ethnographic approach found the desire to explore new places, see more of Australia, and enjoy the warmer weather as a key reason for travel. Although demographic overlaps can be observed between the Grey Nomad segment and the senior travel market, they are unique in the travel behaviour they display. For instance, Grey Nomads tend to travel independently in caravans and mobile homes (Hillman, 2013), and are time-rich typically travelling for three months or longer (Burgin & Hardiman, 2016; Onyx & Leonard, 2005). These characteristics leading both Horneman et al. (2002), and Leonard and Onyx (2009) to define the Grey Nomads as a distinct group of seniors with specific interests and needs.

Park and Yoon (2009) and Farmaki (2012) both note research is required to comprehensively understand rural travel motives as a distinct area of academic enquiry. By understanding the travel motives that drive rural travel, marketers can design products and campaigns which align with visitors' needs (Crompton, 1979). This is essential within a rural context because as travel distance increases, the attractiveness of the package also needs to increase to attract interest (Dapkus & Dapkute, 2015). Designing experiences in line with travel motives could result in greater visitor satisfaction and positive word of mouth (Devesa et al., 2010). Also, rural tourism tends to be concentrated within a few rural locations (Ndivo et al., 2013) impacting the destination's environmental sustainability (Dapkus & Dapkute, 2015) or causing over-tourism (Dickinson, 2018). Through identifying the relevant motives, products and communications can be developed to attract visitors to other destinations (Kardes, 2002), thus avoiding congestion at popular rural gateways (Oppermann, 1994) and sharing the associated benefits. Given that senior travellers are less inhibited in terms of when they can travel, addressing the motives to travel could help attract visitors during off-season travel periods (Otoo & Kim, 2018). Accordingly, this study quantitatively identifies the motives that drive senior visitors to domestic rural destinations.

3. Methodology

Data for this study was collected as part of a 25-min online omnibus survey about the lifestyles of Australians aged over 50. The survey was administered by Sydney based market research company Instinct and Reason. Participants were screened to ensure they complied with the age criteria, and quotas were applied to ensure representation by

gender and the location of their home state (state, and metro vs regional).

The topics in the omnibus were structured as follows: media and technology usage, future aspirations, happiness and concerns, shopping behaviour, lifestyle, travel, end of life planning, and demographics. This paper reports on the findings of the travel section of the questionnaire, which included the following questions:

- Question 1. Destination(s) visited most recently in Australia for an overnight leisure trip in the last 12 months (participants could select more than one destination to understand their trip pattern)
- Question 2. The three most important motives (if any) for that holiday (participants were only asked this question if they had been on holiday in the last 12 months)
- Question 3. Three experiences of interest when deciding to go on a leisure trip in Australia
- Question 4. Place in Australia that would offer those experiences (participants had to nominate one place for each experience in Question 3)
- Question 5. Destinations they would like to visit in the next two years
- Question 6. Destinations they are actively planning to visit
- Question 7. Sources of travel information
- Question 8. Method used to book a holiday
- Question 9. The number of leisure holidays taken in the last 12 months

Question 1 was used to identify the destinations visited. To avoid including a list of every possible destination, a binary list of metropolitan cities and key rural areas for each state was provided. In addition, participants could select 'other' to indicate they had visited another, potentially remote, part of each state. Travel motivations were assessed using Question 2 where participants were provided with a binary list of socio-psychological travel motives, in line with the approach used by Yoon and Uysal (2005). Consistent with Prideaux et al. (2001) who studied the motives of the senior drive market, motives were developed from past primary research experience with the segment, in consultation with industry specialists, and in view of literature on the travel motives of that segment (e.g. Cleaver-Sellick, 2004; Horneman et al., 2002). Asking the question in that order helped ensure the motives identified related to actual behaviour as opposed to anticipated behaviour. Participants were also given the option of indicating they did not know/remember the reason for travel.

A binary question format was used as it captures the direction of response more quickly, in a stable manner, and without the fatigue associated with multi-category scales (Dolnicar, Grün, & Leisch, 2011; Dolnicar, Grün, Leisch, & Rossiter, 2011). Binary questions help reduce response bias (Dolnicar & Grün, 2007), which may be experienced when respondents are from different cultural backgrounds, making it relevant in this research given the cultural diversity of the Australian population. Finally, the use of a scaled response would have forced participants to quantify the influence of different motives on their decision – which may be both difficult and impractical. Similar to their application here, binary questions have been previously used as the basis of segmentation (Dolnicar & Grün, 2007; Pesonen, 2014; Ring, Tkaczynski, & Dolnicar, 2016).

To ensure the questionnaire instrument was effective in capturing the required data, pre-testing was conducted. First, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with ten Australians over 50-years of age before fieldwork. Participants were invited to respond to the questionnaire and verbalise their thoughts as they went through the process. Based on the pilot test, refinements were made to item wording and the structure of the questionnaire. Second, consistent with Prideaux et al. (2001), when researching the motives of the senior drive market, a field test was conducted with a proportion of the target sample. The survey was administered to 5% of the final sample, and the preliminary data were reviewed to identify unexplainable skews. As no concerns were identified, the survey was administered to the complete sample.

3.1. Sample composition

The literature is inconsistent about who constitutes a senior traveller with some studies defining them as over 50 years of age, other studies note 55 years as the threshold (Carneiro et al., 2013; You & O'Leary, 1999), and some define them as people who have retired (Prideaux et al., 2001). A majority of holiday groups and hotels consider those aged 50 and over to be part of the mature market (Ward, 2014), informing their definition here.

The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of Australians over 50, via an online research-only sample provider in 2014. Well maintained online panels have been found to have representative samples (Dolnicar, Laesser, & Matus, 2009) and have been used in tourism research (Ring et al., 2016). The panel employed in this research is ISO certified and a member of local market research associations – indicating their compliance with relevant codes of practice. The data collected were reviewed to exclude false responses. As part of this process, the response time and patterns of individual participants were examined. Participants that completed the survey in an unexpectedly short time (speeders) and those who select the same response to blocks of questions (straight-liners) were excluded.

3.2. Data analysis

Data analysis consisted of three steps. First, through principal correspondence analysis, domestic travel motives were transformed into higher-order push-factors (Calantone, Di Benedetto, Hakam, & Bojanic, 1989; Kim & Prideaux, 2005; Richards & van der Ark, 2013). Second, using cluster analysis, trip segments were identified based on the rural destinations the participants had visited (Ward, 2014). Finally, using cluster membership, discriminant analysis was conducted to identify the push-factors that predicted rural vacations (Frochot & Morrison, 2000; Park & Yoon, 2009). Data were weighted to suit the age and distribution of the Australian population aged 50 years and above as per the 2011 census which was the most up-to-date data available (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Table 2 summaries the overall age distribution as per that census.

4. Results

4.1. Respondent profile

As this survey was distributed to a general panel of Australians over 50, a total sample of $n = 1011$ was achieved. Out of these respondents, 27% had not taken a domestic trip in the last 12 months, 20% had visited only metro destinations, and 52% ($n = 521$) had visited a rural location as part of their most recent trip making them eligible for this study. Table 3 provides a profile of the total sample.

4.2. Domestic travel motives

As shown in Table 4, the top-five domestic travel motives identified were: to spend time with family and friends (57%); to get away from daily routine (42%); to have fun (38%); to spend time with partner (34%); and to relax mentally (32%). This indicates the need to connect with others and escape from routine are critical instigators for seniors' domestic travel.

Table 2
Age distribution based on 2011 Census data.

Age group	% of population
50–60 years	39%
61–70 years	31%
70 years +	30%

Table 3
Sample profile (unweighted).

Attribute	Total sample n = 1011
Residence	
Metro	71%
Rural	29%
Gender	
Male	48%
Female	52%
Chronological age	
50–59	38%
60–69	36%
70–79	23%
80 +	3%
Average chronological age	63.3
Current relationship	
With a partner	67%
Single	32%
Work status	
Working full-time	35%
Home duties	5%
Unemployed	5%
Retired	51%

Principal correspondence analysis using SPSS 25.0 was conducted to classify motives into higher-order push-factors. Correspondence analysis uses the relative frequencies of categorical variables to allow the scoring of variables so that more traditional factor analysis of underlying dimensions can be undertaken. It has proven particularly useful in tourism research, for example, uncovering the cultural reasons for travel (Richards & van der Ark, 2013). Based on the analysis, six push-factors were identified, explaining 50.46% of the variance. The findings are included in Table 4.

Factor 1 comprised motives on broadening the individual's experience repertoire through new and varied experiences. Participants who fitted into this factor explained they were motivated to travel to new places, experience and learn something new, and have an adventure.

Table 4
Motives identified through correspondence analysis.

Attribute	Frequency of selection (Total sample)	Novelty and adventure	Relax and escape	Experience nature	Active health-focused	Romantic getaway	Socialisation
To learn about new things/places/cultures	12%	0.72					
To gain experience/knowledge	8%	0.66					
To visit new places	24%	0.65					
To do/experience something new	15%	0.62					
To visit natural attractions	19%	0.56					
To experience something adventurous	7%	0.47					
To have time for myself	12%		0.75				
To relax mentally	32%		0.66				
To get away from daily routine	42%		0.57				
To have fun	38%		0.50				
To engage in nature-based activities	4%			0.80			
To obtain some physical exercise	4%			0.68			
To experience nature	11%			0.62			
To engage in challenging physical activities	1%				0.73		
To improve my health	4%				0.53		
To master a skill	1%				0.53		
To engage in non-challenging physical activities	4%				0.48		
To spend time with partner	34%					0.79	
To spend time with family or friends	57%						0.67
To have social contact/meet new people	15%	-	-	-	-	-	-

Notes: Variable Principal Normalization. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in seven iterations. (Convergence = 0.000). Loadings under 0.5 not shown in table. Model explains 50.457% of variance.

Accordingly, this push-factor was identified as *Novelty and Adventure*. This measure was similar to a set of travel motives found in Table 1, of Cleaver et al. (1999) of Queenslanders aged between 59 and 63, who saw learning new things and discovering the world as a major motivational factor for this group. The notion of novelty allows the traveller to learn something new (Sangpikul, 2008), as well as experience the adventure associated with new experiences and putting one's self outside their comfort zone (Onyx & Leonard, 2005). Leonard and Onyx (2009), define this as Ulyssean ageing, where senior travellers put themselves in challenging situations to learn or experience something new.

Factor 2 related to disconnecting from one's daily routine as a means of self-care. This factor was composed of motives relating to the need for 'me' time, relaxing mentally, and getting away from the routine, and was accordingly named as *Relaxation and Escape*. This was similar to Cleaver et al. (1999) and Muller and O'Cass (2001) who respectively found getting away from the demands of life and escapism as reasons for travel. This factor demonstrates that while on holiday, disengagement is perhaps necessary to have fun. The process of freeing oneself from the constraints of work and routine appears to be a precondition for being able to relax (Hillman, 2009; Sangpikul, 2008).

Factor 3 was associated with the need to *Experience Nature* and was named accordingly. This factor encapsulates the role of nature as a means of keeping fit and comprised motives relating to experiencing and engaging in nature-based activities and obtaining physical exercise. Factor 4 related to the need to be active and challenge oneself in different ways. Motives included related to participating in challenging and non-challenging activities and improving health and was accordingly identified as *Active Health-Focused*. This factor was similar to Muller and O'Cass' (2001) segment that sought physical stimulation, and the *Physicals* identified by Cleaver et al. (1999) – both of which demonstrated a desire for physical activity while travelling.

Factors 5 and 6 had only one attribute load on them. Respectively, these push-factors were termed *Romantic Getaway* and *Socialisation*. The notion of socialisation as a push-motive for travel has been well established amongst the senior travel segment (Cleaver et al., 1999;

Hillman, 2009; Jang & Wu, 2006), with Muller and O’Cass (2001) explaining travel as an opportunity to deepen existing social relationships. However, this study also found that travel may be seen as a means of spending time with one’s significant other. This motive appears similar to You and O’Leary (1999) *Enthusiastic Go-getters* and Ward’s (2014) family-focused cluster, both of which see travel as a way of spending time with their family. In this case, the travel is motivated more by the need to spend time with one’s partner as opposed to children and extended family members. The factor weights of the analysis were used to construct independent variables for later segment prediction.

4.3. Rural trip segments

The aim of this research was to understand the motives that drive domestic rural tourism by senior Australians. Given the diverse landscape of rural Australia, consistent with the recommendation of Otoo and Kim (2018), it was considered essential to link motives with destinations visited in order to identify specific motives driving rural travel. Accordingly, a cluster analysis using SPSS 25.0 k-Means procedure was conducted focusing on rural destinations. This helped ensure that the analysis captured everyone who had visited a rural location regardless of if they visited a metro location as part of the same trip. The number of clusters was selected by the use of the SPSS 25.0 two-step cluster analysis which suggested there were three trip pattern segments with a silhouette measure of cohesion and separation of 0.5, indicating a fair result (Li & Latecki, 2012).

Three rural trip pattern segments were observed. Segment one was the largest segment (77%) and was named *Aussie Roundabouts* as they visited a wider selection of destinations across Australia without demonstrating a geographic preference. This segment, however, was more likely to visit remote destinations in Australia. Segment two represented 22% of the sample and were inclined to visit the East Coast, and accordingly called *Eastern Staters*. Finally, segment three being the smallest segment (1%) demonstrated an interest in visiting the Victorian Ski Fields. Given the size of segment three, they were excluded from further analysis. Table 5 presents the trip pattern segments.

This paper explains the motives that drive rural vacations. So, while a thorough description of each segment is beyond the scope, a brief

Table 5
Segments based on rural destination choice.

Destination	Aussie roundabouts n = 354	Eastern staters n = 160	Ski fields n = 7
Coastal parts of NSW	36.6%	55.5%	7.8%
Hunter Valley	32.6%	48.9%	18.6%
Snowy Mountains	46.1%	18.2%	35.7%
Blue Mountains	46.9%	25.4%	27.7%
Other parts of NSW	0.0%	92.3%	7.7%
Yarra Valley	60.1%	12.1%	27.8%
Victorian ski fields	14.7%	0.0%	85.3%
Coastal Victoria	65.5%	22.0%	12.6%
Other parts of Victoria	63.9%	28.4%	7.7%
Gold Coast	54.0%	38.8%	7.2%
Sunshine Coast	0.0%	89.5%	10.5%
Other coastal parts of Queensland	53.7%	36.7%	9.6%
Other parts of Queensland	25.8%	60.3%	13.9%
Other parts of South Australia	66.0%	22.2%	11.8%
Other parts of Western Australia	68.0%	18.1%	13.9%
Other parts of Tasmania	66.2%	19.6%	14.1%
Other parts of the Northern Territory	41.9%	36.9%	21.2%
Central Northern Territory	25.7%	43.6%	30.8%

Note: The destinations most visited by each segment are in bold. Locations exclude capital cities in each state and major regional cities such as Wollongong and Newcastle.

Table 6
Sample profile by segment (weighted).

Attribute	Aussie roundabouts n = 354	Eastern staters n = 160
Residence		
Metro	62%	57%
Rural	38%	43%
Gender		
Male	48%	54%
Female	52%	46%
Chronological age		
50–54	15%	10%
55–64	21%	18%
65–74	35%	40%
75+	29%	31%
Average chronological age	63.9	65.4
Current relationship		
With a partner	69%	73%
Single	30%	27%
Work status		
Working full-time	39%	24%
Home duties	5%	3%
Unemployed	5%	5%
Retired	47%	66%

profile is provided for context. Overall, 77% of *Eastern Staters* lived on the East Coast of Australia in either New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, or Queensland. *Aussie Roundabouts*, on the other hand, were more likely to live in Victoria (31%), South Australia (9%), and in Western Australia (12%). *Eastern Staters* were more also likely to be retired (66%) compared to *Aussie Roundabouts* who were still employed in some capacity (39%). This indicates that retired travellers may have a distinct travel pattern, compared to those still working who prefer more remote destinations. Table 6 below provides a sample profile for each trip pattern.

Regarding information search, the internet was found to be the dominant source of information for both segments (75% of *Aussie Roundabouts* and 73% of *Eastern Staters*). This reliance must be understood in view of this research being conducted via an online panel provider (Ring et al., 2016). *Eastern Staters*, used more sources of information (average 3.4 sources) and were more likely to source their travel information from the visitor information centres (38%), travel advertising and articles (28%), travel agents (29%), and from previous visits (45%) – indicating a reliance on promotional material and past experiences to guide decision making. *Eastern Staters* also travelled more frequently than *Aussie Roundabouts* with 34% indicating they had taken four trips or more in Australia in the last 12 months. Although this segment is small in size, they represent a large percentage of the trips taken in Australia and therefore a significant proportion of the travel market.

4.4. Identifying motives that drive rural visitation

Using SPSS 25.0, a preliminary discriminate analysis of the decision to travel to rural areas, in general, was conducted. The results indicated travel was driven primarily by the need to be *Actively Health-Focused* (discriminate coefficient = -0.21, a lower score coefficient is associated with the choice of rural travel) and a *Romantic Getaway* (discriminate coefficient = -0.14). A much richer picture emerges when rural trip pattern segments are included in the analysis process.

Three push-factors were found to predict senior Australians’ destination choice within a domestic rural context. The model generated had a predictive power of 81.9% and is illustrated in Fig. 1. This figure plots the group centroids (cluster membership or segments) against the standardized canonical coefficients (values of the independent variables on the X and Y-axis).

The findings indicate *Relaxation and Escape* (Wilks Lambda = 0.94,

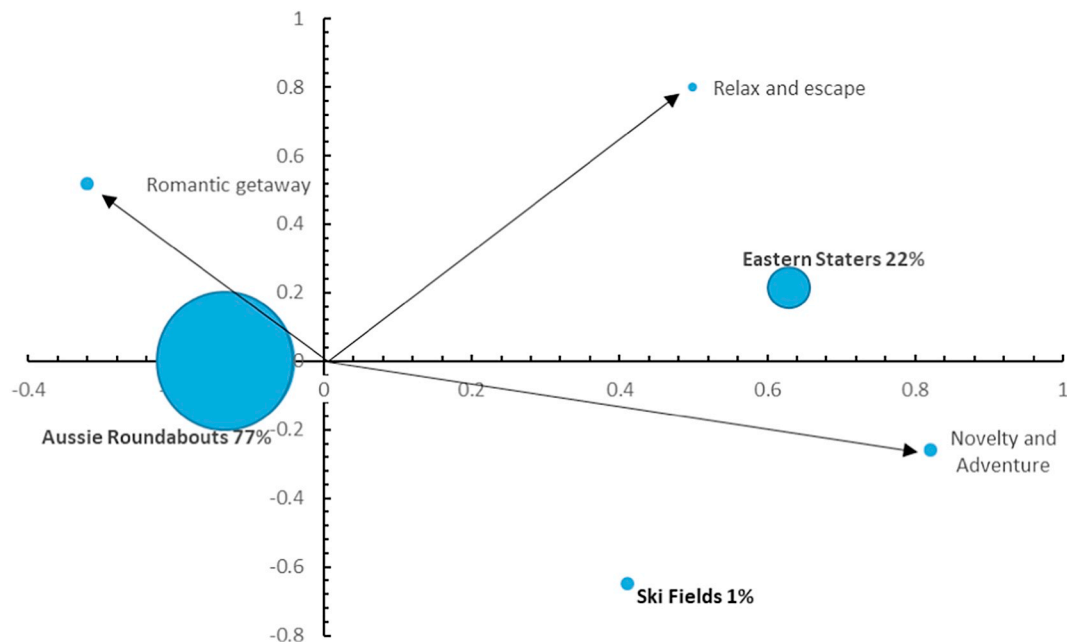


Fig. 1. Motives that predict the location of the visit.

Notes: Strength of prediction 81.9%. Cluster centroids are for Aussie Roundabouts -0.13 (X) and 0.00 (Y), Eastern Staters 0.63 (X) and 0.02 , (Y) and for Ski fields 0.41 (X) and -0.65 (Y). Sizes in the circles are proportional to the size of each segment.

X value = 0.82 , Y value = 0.80), and *Novelty and Adventure* (Wilks Lambda = 0.97 , X value = 0.82 , Y value = -0.26) were the key push-factors for *Eastern Staters*, while *Aussie Roundabouts* were more likely to be seek a *Romantic Getaway* (Wilks Lambda = 0.93 , X value = -0.34 , and Y value = 0.52).

5. Discussion

This paper applied the push-pull framework to identify the push-factors that drive senior Australians to visit domestic rural destinations. An online survey was conducted with a sample of senior Australians to understand where they went and what motivated their trip.

This study found that six higher-order push-factors motivated senior Australians to visit domestic destinations for leisure. These related to experiencing *Novelty and Adventure*, for *Relaxation and Escape*, to *Experience Nature*, to be *Active and Health-Focused*, to have a *Romantic Getaway* with one's partner, and for *Socialisation* with friends and family. While these motives are consistent with previous research on senior Australians (Cleaver et al., 1999; Cleaver-Sellick, 2004), this study uniquely found they may be driven to visit domestic destinations in order to spend time with their partner – separate from their need to socialise. While socialisation is an extroverted tendency (Jung, 1964), for some seniors, travel appears to be motivated by the need to spend time with their partner, which is more introverted and intimate. Durko and Petrick (2013) note that travelling with one's partner can enhance cohesion and satisfaction with the relationship. This motive appears to be particularly relevant within the Australian context where there has been a steady increase in the proportion of older people living as 'empty-nesters', underlined by the ageing population and a trend towards not having children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Tourism marketers need to consider how the experiences they create along with their marketing communications positions the destination as a place that would allow visitors to have such experiences with their partner.

In this study, participants were asked to identify destinations they visited on their most recent trip. This study found senior Australians who visited rural places differed in terms of where they travelled. Specifically, two key rural trip pattern segments were identified: *Eastern*

Staters who travelled on the East Coast of Australia, and *Aussie Roundabouts* who did not demonstrate a geographic preference for destinations visited but had a proclivity for remote destinations. While *Eastern Staters* represented a smaller proportion of the sample, they were found to be a significant travel market due to their frequency of travel. Further profiling these segments indicated *Eastern Staters* largely lived in the Eastern States of Australia, suggesting they may have insufficient knowledge of rural destinations in other locations. Zimmer et al. (1995) found that limited knowledge of experiences available at a destination was the key reason to avoid visiting certain destinations, and suggested travel-related education can be an effective process for encouraging the senior market to travel farther afield. Given the propensity of *Eastern Staters* to use different sources of information and the higher incidence of retirement within the segment, educating them about experiences in other parts of Australia and providing travel itineraries composed of destinations and experiences could encourage dispersal to other parts of the country. A similar approach has been taken in the State of South Australia where itineraries were created to help visitors plan their holidays and encourage domestic travellers to visit less popular destinations (South Australian Travel, 2018).

Finally, this study aimed to identify the motives which pushed senior visitors to rural destinations. Three push-factors were found: *Relaxation and Escape*; *Novelty and Adventure*; and a *Romantic Getaway*. These motives position rural travel as a means of self-betterment through which senior travellers broaden their experience repertoire and focus on their intimate relationships. Rural travel allows the individual to disconnect from the demands of routine and reconnect with one's interests, and relationships. The findings support previous work by Park and Yoon (2009) who found challenge and adventure, and relaxation was the key motives behind rural tourism, while more recently, Farmaki (2012) explained escape was a strong driver for rural tourism due to the likely contrast between the rural landscape and the individual's home environment. This has relevance within an Australian context where two-thirds of the population lives in metro areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Rural destinations marketers, for instance, could consider creating and promoting experiences around the themes of relaxation, adventure and intimacy in order to attract senior travellers. For instance, Tourism Tasmania has curated

experiences for couples that focus on reconnecting within remote surroundings (Tasmania, 2019).

Three motives, however, did not feature in the model (*Experience Nature*, *be Active Health-Focused*, and *Socialisation*). This is in contrast to Patuelli and Nijkamp (2016) who note socialisation was a growing motive for senior travel; and Prayag (2012) who found senior travellers liked to enjoy active experiences while travelling. The findings echo literature that suggests the rural natural environment may not be a key motivator for visitation (Molera & Albaladejo, 2007). It is argued that while motives such as *Experience Nature*, being *Active Health-Focused*, and *Socialisation* may motivate domestic travel, they may be relevant to visiting domestic capital cities and not rural locations. Given that travellers make destination choices by aligning push-motives with their perception of what the destination offers (Crompton, 1979), rural destinations could consider developing experiences and promotions in line with those motives in order to reposition their destination and attract senior travellers who prefer a metropolitan travel experience – thus growing the overall market.

This research found different motives drove visitation to different parts of rural Australia. Specifically, *Aussie Roundabouts* were more likely to travel for a *Romantic Getaway*, whereas *Eastern Staters* travelled to *Relax and Escape* and to experience *Novelty and Adventure*. Visitation statistics by Tourism Research Australia indicate that in the year ending March, 2018, 58% of Australians over-50 years who travelled domestically visited rural NSW or rural Queensland. Given the concentration of domestic travel within the Eastern States, distributing *Eastern Staters* to other rural areas, by developing marketing campaigns aligned with travel motives, could share the socio-economic benefits of tourism and prevent a situation of over-tourism. The contrasting push-motives driving this segment – that is *Novelty and Adventure* indicating the need for stimulation; along with *Relaxation and Escape*, suggest a perception that East Coast destinations could offer a greater variety of experiences and activities to cater for differing needs. Farmaki (2012) similarly found the activities associated with the destination were a key driver of destination choice within a rural context. By educating residents in the Eastern States about experiences they could have, non-eastern rural destinations could promote their ability to provide an experience that satisfies the motives of *Novelty and Adventure*, and *Relax and Escape* – thus capturing the attention of *Eastern Staters*. Lewis, Kerr, and Burgess (2013) note tourists' associations with a destination could result in it being popular for a particular segment while unpopular for others. Similarly, the perceived variety associated with the East Coast could be considered as a distraction, and a demotivator by *Aussie Roundabouts* who intend to spend quality time with their partner.

Based on an analysis of the segment profiles and the associated travel motives and behaviours, the data provide some support for the notion of ritual inversion (Costa & Martinotti, 2003). For instance, *Eastern Staters* who are typically retired and more likely to live in rural destinations – compared to *Aussie Roundabouts* - demonstrate a preference for popular locations. This is consistent with the motive of novelty driving their travel behaviour – potentially based on the excitement of visiting a new and different environment. Similarly, *Aussie Roundabouts* who tend to live in capital cities and are more likely to be working, demonstrate a desire to visit rural and remote locations – thus away from the buzz of their daily life. Accordingly, this research indicates that marketers should develop campaigns in view of both the life stage and location of their target audience when marketing to this segment.

6. Future research and limitations

This paper makes an important contribution to the literature by examining what is an often-ignored area of tourism marketing – that is, how senior tourists could be attracted to domestic rural destinations. In doing so, the paper identifies areas for future investigation that would help build a more comprehensive understanding of senior rural travel.

Within a domestic rural Australian context, this paper has shown there are two broad trip pattern segments – the *Eastern Staters* and the *Aussie Roundabouts*, each motivated by different push-factors. Although demographic and lifestyle differences have been identified between the two segments, further research is required to profile these groups strategically. Such a profile will help develop campaigns that effectively target the motives of these segments based on their lifestyles. For instance, this study identified a *Romantic Getaway* as a motive for rural travel. In view of the growing trend towards empty-nester households and increasing life expectancy, future research could also explore the role of travel within the relationship dynamics of senior travellers. Research may also explore how metro-only senior travellers differ from those who visit rural destinations. Understanding why seniors visit rural destinations, and why they don't could contribute to creating strategic campaigns targeting each and encouraging behaviour change.

This study is limited in its focus on push motives that drive senior Australians to a domestic rural destination. Such an approach is similar to the literature on the senior market (e.g. Jang et al., 2009) that argues that the focus on human-oriented psychological features provides a more robust basis for developing a marketing strategy. Future research could examine the pull factors associated with each segment more thoroughly. In addition, it would be interesting to see if the rural travel motives identified in this research would apply in a domestic context to senior residents in other countries, as well as in an international context to senior tourists when visiting foreign rural destinations. Given the international prominence of the over-50's segment, and the importance of tourism to many rural economies, an understanding of those with time and money to visit these areas is increasingly important to developing effective marketing strategies.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100574>.

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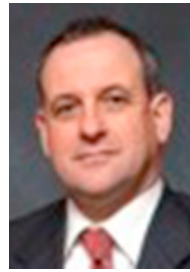
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