Travel life style as segmentation variable of wellness seeking for Taiwan seniors

ABSTRACT

The senior population has been continuously rising because of longer life expectancy. Recognizing the fact that we are rapidly becoming a “gray society”, several studies that explore the theoretical linkage between aging and the profession (Penalta and Uysal 1993). Asia is no exception to this trend, where the population of seniors is growing rapidly (Wang, et al, 2007).

The World Health Organization (WHO) as early as 1947 defined health in terms of wellness as “physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease” (WHO, 1958) and later provided a definition of optimal health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1964). Wellness has been described as an advanced state of physical, psychological, spiritual health and social well-being.

Participation in leisure categories (i.e., reading, social activities) relates positively to perceived wellness and its five components (Ragheb, 1993). There are many claims that leisure is associated with and contributes to wellness-related concepts, such as physical health, quality of life, and mental health (Brightbill, 1961; de Grazia, 1962; Dumazedier, 1974; Godbey, 1991; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kelly, 1982; Kraus, 1978; Neulinger, 1981).

Supernaw (1985) noted that when Americans over fifty retire, the number one thing they say they want to do is travel. Rosenfeld (1986) also indicated that older Americans travel more frequently, stay away longer, and rely more on travel agents than any other segment of the population.

Lifestyle has been utilized as one of the most effective segmentation bases within psychographic segmentation. Furthermore, the study of lifestyle has been researched and developed by many researchers in the travel industry. According to an early study (Woodside & Pitts, 1976) regarding the effects of consumer lifestyle, demographics and travel activities on foreign and domestic travel behavior, lifestyle information may be more important than demographic variables in the prediction of international and domestic travel behavior.

Considering the buying potential of the market for seniors as well as the amount of free time at their disposal, one must conclude that the growing number of elderly people may become a great source of benefits for tourism and leisure industry (Sniadek, 2006). In view of the travel industry, one segment that has caught the marketers’ attention is the elderly traveler. The travel potential of seniors cannot be ignored. The objective of study tries to find out senior segmentation of wellness
seeking with travel lifestyle in senior travel market. The conclusion could help tourism marketers in the development of senior travel.

The data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 12. First, factor analysis was used to identify a set of underlying dimensions for the travel lifestyle. Second, the resulting factor scores were then used to identify clusters of respondents with similar patterns of lifestyle. Third, Chi-square tests were used to determine if any differences were evident among different wellness seeking seniors based on the travel lifestyle clusters. Finally, Chi-square tests were also employed to test for differences in the travel-specific lifestyle clusters based on demographic details.

Our study is important for theoretical as well as practical reasons. From a managerial standpoint, this study provides useful marketing information for those interested in the senior travel market, especially in the senior tourist segmentation. From travel lifestyle, the different wellness seeking will be found out and released important travel trend for travel organizers. According to conclusion of the study, marketing managers and service providers recognize that there are highly differentiated markets of senior customers and those consumers are basically heterogeneous in their demands and wants.

Keywords: seniors, travel lifestyle, wellness

INTRODUCTION

The market for senior traveler consists of both rich and poor, healthy and ill, educated and uneducated, physically active and passive, fast aging and slow aging. An older consumer is also, because of age, more experienced, acts rationally, is very demanding even choosy, requests a great deal of information about the offered product and has sufficient time to confirm the various information. Moreover, his time spent on purchase decision is longer in comparison with young tourists.

So far research and publications concerning the travel market of wellness seeking for senior consumers is few, creating an attractive tourism and leisure offer for this group appears to be important. Such research would allow recognition of factors which would influence the prospective senior consumer, establish their strength, as well as define an appropriate conduct so that a product satisfying the needs and requirements of seniors travel could be well designed.

Senior citizens enjoy good health and physical condition longer and longer and, what is most important, they want to maintain this state of affairs. The tourist and recreational activity can particularly serve this purpose (Sniadek, 2006). Due to the fastening ageing trend and greater concerns on leisure life, the leisure and travel