

Chapter 11

Senior Woman Tourists' Characteristics and Concerns



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Abstract Women constitute a majority niche within the senior tourism segment, requiring more comprehensive understanding through research and by stakeholders in the tourism industry. It is essential to consider the characteristics of these tourists to determine their influence on travel planning concerns and the subsequent impact on satisfaction with the destination. In this study, based on a sample of 529 senior tourists who visited the Azores, three key components concerning the degree of importance attributed to travel-related concerns were identified, through Categorical Principal Component Analysis (CatPCA). Using a Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM), the study found that women’s education levels significantly influence their travel planning concerns. Specifically, the higher the education level, the less importance these tourists attributed to such concerns. It is important to note that the type of travel concerns among senior women can vary based on their characteristics. Understanding these differences allows professionals in this market segment to provide more personalized support, enhancing the well-being of these tourists.

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11.1 Introduction

The tourist phenomenon is specific to and inseparable from new life forms in society. With the increase in leisure time and a growing number of retirees, growth in the tourist population is understandable and unavoidable. But most surprising is its dissemination to all classes and social strata. More than proportionally, articles and publications on this topic grew [1]. That's why tourism has expanded significantly in recent years, with a particular focus on the senior tourism segment and a tendency to continue to increase in Europe and the occidental world [2]. Because of demographic dynamics, women not only live longer, but they also become widows earlier and, generally, they accumulate income with quality of life and well-being. This demographic, which includes a growing proportion of women, prioritizes maintaining both physical and mental well-being. With sufficient economic means to travel, coupled with shifting behaviours and attitudes among those aged 55 and above, this niche market has gained considerable influence in the tourism sector, in global terms and specifically in this stratum of age.

A substantial portion of the population expresses serious concerns about travel preparations and planning, but, on the other hand, at this stage of life, the elderly are increasingly less likely to go on unplanned adventures, seeking to minimize risk and unpredictability. At these ages, security is taken as a manifest value. Travel satisfaction is generally relative to subjective judgments about the quality of life after the tourism experience [3] including security and material quality of equipment in healthy ageing [4].

Many in this segment are now able to travel year-round and extend their stays at tourist destinations, benefiting from newfound flexibility after retiring from full-time professional roles and completing child-rearing responsibilities. From the perspective of the tourism industry, this demographic plays a crucial role in mitigating seasonal fluctuations in tourist activity, ensuring year-round business operations, stimulating economic growth in local communities, and supporting employment.

Understanding the specific concerns associated with trip planning among potential senior tourists will be pivotal for organizations aiming to devise personalized and effective support strategies. This approach aims to maximize satisfaction levels with tourist destinations among this discerning demographic.

Considering the characteristics of senior tourists, their concerns about the trip, and their satisfaction with the trip, the objectives of this article are the following:

- To determine whether there are factors/components associated with the degree of importance given by respondents to items related to travel planning concerns.
- To analyse whether the characteristics of senior tourists (education, health, dietary restrictions, perceptions of economic income, and perceptions of social position) have significant impacts on travel planning concerns.
- To investigate whether concerns about travel planning have significant impacts on satisfaction with the visit to the tourist destination.

- To examine whether travel frequency (and life satisfaction) significantly moderates the relationship between travel planning concerns and visiting the tourist destination.

The paper is organized into five sections. Following this introduction, the second section reviews the literature on travel planning concerns among senior female tourists who visited the Azores Autonomous Region in Portugal. These concerns include accommodation (comfort and location), accessibility conditions, and language difficulties. This section also formulates several hypotheses based on the literature review. The third section details the study's methodology, which involved data collection through a survey and the application of statistical methods, specifically Categorical Principal Component Analysis (CatPCA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS). The fourth section presents the results, focussing on the evaluation of both the measurement model and the structural model. The fifth section concludes the paper, discussing the key findings and implications of this research.

11.2 Literature Review

Senior women's tourism in Europe is a burgeoning market with distinct needs and preferences. These travellers have several key concerns when embarking on their journeys. Older women particularly value new experiences, simplicity, and reconnecting with everyday life, thereby challenging social expectations of ageing [5]. In any case, the invention of seniors refers more to a new era of our civilizational development citizenship than to people's greater longevity [6]. But the silver revolution is an undeniable fact. In this greying population, women play a decisive role. For them, travel embodies a unique sense of adventure, associated with the transformation of patriarchal values and the creation of new spaces and roles linked to femininity [7] and feelings of guilt for the pleasure felt. However, the free movement of women, including tourism, is often impeded by patriarchal representations at various levels. Safety and health remain top priorities, influencing destination choices and necessitating accessible medical care [8, 9].

Comfortable accommodation, food quality, and climate are crucial factors for senior female travellers [10]. They prioritize comfort [11], amenities, and accessibility in their travel choices [8]. Age-related mobility issues significantly influence travel planning, with older tourists emphasizing the importance of accessible [9, 12]. Language barriers and cultural differences can pose challenges, especially for those with poorer health perceptions [12]. Cost is another significant consideration when planning trips [10, 11], with the expense of the trip and the availability of a tourist guide being additional concerns [9]. Interestingly, senior female travellers are often motivated by a desire for independence and empowerment, which has led to an increase in solo travel [8].

Senior women's tourism in Europe is a growing market with distinct needs and preferences and has several key concerns when travelling. However, women's free movement, including tourist travel, is hindered by patriarchal representations at multiple scales. Trip costs and the presence of a tourist guide are additional concerns [9].

Research on senior tourists' travel concerns and motivations reveals several key factors influencing their behaviour [10, 13, 14]. Sociodemographic characteristics such as nationality, age, perceived income, and health status significantly impact travel motivations, encompassing well-being, knowledge acquisition, and social interaction [13, 14]. Travel satisfaction among seniors is influenced by age group and perceived health status [14].

Additionally, barriers to travelling for seniors are determined by their life stage and socio-cultural background, with health, economic status, and perceived available time being primary constraints [15]. These findings underscore the diversity within the senior tourism market, highlighting the need for tailored product planning and development to meet the varied needs and preferences of this expanding demographic [10].

Research indicates that frequent travellers tend to have higher life satisfaction, as travel can significantly enhance the overall quality of life [16]. Autonomy in trip planning is positively associated with overall satisfaction, moderated by factors such as previous travel experience and education [17]. While novelty-seeking enhances trip experiences and overall satisfaction, concerns during trip planning can negatively impact transaction satisfaction and the overall travel experience [18].

Health perception plays a significant role in travel concerns and satisfaction, with factors like medical care and mobility conditions varying based on age and health status [12]. Senior tourism is seen as a potential market with social implications, promoting active ageing and improving the quality of life for older adults [19]. The tourism industry should adapt services and resources to meet the specific needs of senior tourists, considering factors such as accommodation, cultural differences, and mobility [12, 20]. Understanding these aspects can help tourism operators cater to the growing senior market while fulfilling their social responsibility to ensure seniors' rights to leisure and quality of life [20].

Health, economic status, and perceived available time are significant barriers for senior travellers [15]. These constraints affect seniors' preferences for "safe" options like packaged tours [21]. However, the baby-boom generation (born 1946–1964) generally has greater purchasing power and interest in leisure travel, when compared to previous generations [22]. To address these challenges, tourism promoters, stakeholders, and destination management organizations must develop strategies to mitigate travel restrictions for elderly tourists [22]. Understanding these constraints and implementing appropriate coping strategies can help the tourism industry better cater to the needs of this growing market segment [10, 21].

Remote European regions offer potential for senior tourism development, particularly appealing to those seeking tranquillity and accessibility [23]. These findings highlight the diversity within the senior tourism market, emphasizing the need for tailored product planning and development to meet the varied needs and preferences of this growing demographic [10].

11.3 Methods

The main aim is to ascertain the factorial structure associated with items concerning travel planning concerns among senior women who visited the Azores as a tourist destination. Subsequently, a structural equation model will be employed to examine whether the specific characteristics of these senior tourists impact their travel concerns. Additionally, the study will explore whether travel frequency and life satisfaction moderate the relationship between travel planning concerns and overall satisfaction with the tourist destination.

A total of 529 senior women tourists participated in the study, with the majority (54.8%) falling within the 65 to 74 age group. Educational attainment varied, with 37.7% having higher education and 37.1% having completed only basic education. Approximately 62.6% reported good health, while 54.3% expressed average satisfaction with life. Around 48.5% indicated that their disposable income allows them to live comfortably, and approximately 40.8% perceive themselves as holding a high social position. Regarding travel behaviour, 55.1% of respondents had undertaken 2 to 4 trips in the last two years, and 45.7% stayed in the Azores for between 5 and 8 days.

The questionnaire included 13 items (P1-Flight hours, P2-Safety at the destination, P3-Climate, P4-Comfortable accommodation, P5-Location within accommodation, P6-Food/meals availability, P7-Language difficulties, P8-Cultural differences, P9-Medical assistance and health care, P10-Existence of tour guide/technician, P11-Price of the trip, P12-Mobility/accessibility conditions, P13-Hospitality of residents) measuring the perceived importance of aspects related to travel planning concerns. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). Additionally, the questionnaire collected demographic information about the tourists, including age group, education level, health status, perceived economic income (PEI), perceived social position (PSP), degree of life satisfaction (OLS), dietary restrictions (RF), travel frequency in the last two years (TF), and length of stay at the destination (LOS).

In this study, Categorical Principal Component Analysis (CatPCA) was applied using SPSS 29.0. Additionally, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) algorithm via SmartPLS 4.0 software [24].

CatPCA aims to reduce the dimensionality of the original data by identifying components that explain a significant portion of the data variance (e.g. [25]). Given the ordinal nature of the variables (items) used in this study, CatPCA was chosen for its ability to optimally quantify categorical variables and capture non-linear relationships between them.

In PLS-SEM, two main stages are involved: evaluating the measurement model and assessing the structural model [26]. When evaluating the measurement model, key considerations include internal consistency, assessed through measures like Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) and composite reliability (CR). Convergent validity is evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity

is assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, cross-loadings, and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion. The structural model evaluation employs bootstrapping in PLS–SEM to test the relative significance of the hypotheses under investigation.

11.4 Results and Discussion

CatPCA was conducted using rotation with the Varimax method and Kaiser normalization, incorporating the 13 items concerning travel planning concerns as active variables. Three components (or factors) were extracted, collectively explaining approximately 63.89% of the variance in the data. Each component retained has eigenvalues greater than 1, indicating significant variance explained and demonstrating good internal consistency, as outlined in Table 11.1.

The results obtained through CatPCA, selecting items with a factorial load greater than 0.50 as depicted in Table 11.1, suggest the presence of a factorial structure associated with concerns regarding travel planning. Component 1 (C1) integrates items (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6) related to destination comfort and safety, labelled as F1—Structural Concerns. Component 2 (C2) encompasses items (P9, P10, P11, P12, and P13) associated with local support and costs, identified as Intra/Interpersonal

Table 11.1 CatPCA results—factor loadings matrix after rotation

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
P1—Flight hours	0.543	0.141	0.092
P2—Safety at the destination	0.627	0.389	0.020
P3—Climate	0.800	0.108	0.070
P4—Comfortable accommodation	0.919	0.185	0.032
P5—Location in the accommodation	0.894	0.111	0.076
P6—Food/meals available	0.791	0.134	0.151
P7—Difficulties with the language	0.152	0.112	0.882
P8—Cultural differences	0.085	0.099	0.882
P9—Medical assistance and healthcare	0.398	0.639	0.103
P10—Existence of a tour guide/technician	−0.017	0.653	0.316
P11—Price of the trip (costs of transport, accommodation and meals)	0.236	0.705	0.034
P12—Mobility/accessibility conditions	0.06	0.840	0.095
P13—Hospitality of residents	0.243	0.693	−0.074
Eigenvalue	3.728	2,858	1.726
Variance explained	28.68%	21.94%	13.27%
Cronbach's alpha coefficient	0.836	0.792	0.669

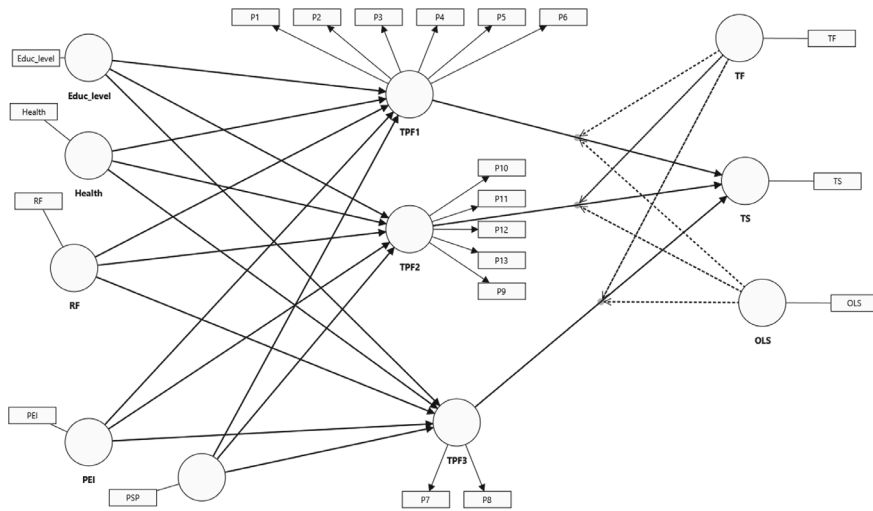


Fig. 11.1 Diagram of the final model used

Concerns. Component 3 (C3) includes items P7 and P8, categorized under Cultural Concerns.

Subsequently, detailed research hypotheses were formulated based on the identified components related to travel concerns and tested accordingly (see Fig. 11.1).

Main variable normalization. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

H1: The educational level of senior women tourists significantly influences travel planning concerns, encompassing structural (TPF1), intra/interpersonal (TPF2), and cultural (TPF3) dimensions.

H2: The health status of senior women tourists significantly impacts travel planning concerns, spanning structural, intra/interpersonal, and cultural aspects.

H3: Dietary restrictions (RF) among senior women tourists have notable effects on travel planning concerns related to structural, intra/interpersonal, and cultural aspects.

H4: Senior women tourists' perceptions of economic income (PEI) significantly affect travel planning concerns concerning structural, intra/interpersonal, and cultural aspects.

H5: Perceived social position (PSP) of senior women tourists significantly influences travel planning concerns across structural, intra/interpersonal, and cultural domains.

H6: Travel planning concerns (structural, intra/interpersonal, cultural) significantly impact satisfaction with visiting the tourist destination (TS).

H7: Travel frequency (TF) moderates the relationship between travel planning concerns (structural, intra/interpersonal, and cultural) and satisfaction with visiting the destination.

H8: Overall life satisfaction (OLS) moderates the relationship between travel planning concerns (structural, intra/interpersonal, and cultural) and satisfaction with visiting the destination.

Upon evaluating the measurement model, it was found that all Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded 0.7, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Similarly, all values for composite reliability (CR) were above 0.7, confirming the reliability of the constructs [24].

Convergent validity, assessed through the average variance extracted (AVE), exceeded 0.5 for all constructs, demonstrating that each construct adequately reflects its respective items [27]. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, where the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded the correlation coefficients between constructs [27]. Additionally, the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was below 0.85, providing further evidence of discriminant validity [24].

Based on these results, the measurement model exhibited strong internal consistency, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the model was evaluated using bootstrapping techniques, with detailed results presented in Table 11.2.

Education significantly influences travel planning concerns across structural (TPF1), intra/interpersonal (TPF2), and cultural (TPF3) dimensions, thereby supporting hypotheses H1(a, b, c). Higher levels of education among senior women tourists correlate with reduced importance attributed to these travel concerns.

The health status of senior women tourists does not show statistically significant implications for the importance attributed to travel planning concerns, as indicated by hypotheses H2(a, b, c).

Dietary restrictions among senior women tourists notably impact intra/interpersonal travel planning concerns. Increased dietary restrictions correspond to a higher importance placed on these aspects in travel planning.

Perceptions of economic income among senior women tourists significantly influence intra/interpersonal travel planning concerns. Lower disposable income correlates with greater importance attributed to these intra/interpersonal concerns in travel planning.

Perceptions of social positioning among senior women tourists significantly impact cultural travel planning concerns. Higher social status correlates with greater importance attributed to these cultural aspects in travel planning.

Cultural travel planning concerns among senior women tourists significantly influence satisfaction with the tourist destination visit. Greater importance placed on cultural aspects correlates with higher satisfaction with the visit.

Travel frequency moderates the relationship between intra/interpersonal concerns (TPF2) and satisfaction with visiting the tourist destination among senior women tourists. Higher travel frequency intensifies the relationship between intra/interpersonal concerns and satisfaction with the visit.

Table 11.2 Significance testing related to the hypotheses under investigation

Research questions	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Decision
H1a: Educ_level - > TPF1	-0.114	0.039	Yes
H1b: Educ_level - > TPF2	-0.183	0.000	Yes
H1c: Educ_level - > TPF3	-0.094	0.045	Yes
H2a: Health - > TPF1	0.074	0.146	No
H2b: Health - > TPF2	-0,024	0.640	No
H2c: Health - > TPF3	-0,058	0.179	No
H3a: RF - > TPF1	0,099	0.064	No
H3b: RF - > TPF2	0.105	0.005	Yes
H3c: RF - > TPF3	0.054	0.237	No
H4a: PEI - > TPF1	-0.009	0.898	No
H4b: PEI - > TPF2	0.097	0.036	Yes
H4c: PEI - > TPF3	-0.003	0.952	No
H5a: PSP - > TPF1	-0.066	0.425	No
H5b: PSP - > TPF2	0.051	0.307	No
H5c: PSP - > TPF3	-0.157	0.001	Yes
H6a: TPF1 - > TS	-0.054	0.400	No
H6b: TPF2 - > TS	-0,010	0.863	No
H6c: TPF3 - > TS	0,127	0.003	Yes
H7a: TF \times TPF1 - > TS	-0.062	0.357	No
H7b: TF \times TPF2 - > TS	0.153	0.018	Yes
H7c: TF \times TPF3 - > TS	-0.078	0.056	No
H8a: OLS \times TPF1 - > TS	0.008	0.881	No
H8b: OLS \times TPF2 - > TS	-0.071	0.170	No
H8c: OLS \times TPF3 - > TS	-0.095	0.036	Yes

Life satisfaction moderates the relationship between cultural concerns (TPF3) and satisfaction with visiting the destination among senior women tourists. Higher life satisfaction reduces the impact of cultural concerns on satisfaction with the visit to the tourist destination.

11.5 Conclusions and Implications

Many studies have been dedicated to both the position of women and the specificities of the search for amenities in tourist accommodation. However, few relate both issues. With this research, we seek to highlight the place of women who are a non-negligible contingent of new tourists today. Concerns and considerations regarding

travel planning suggest a declining effort to manage the opportunities and risks associated with travelling.

Elderly people are at a stage in life where they try to minimize uncertainties and increase amenities. They are particularly concerned about the structure of the trip and safety in the event of the need to seek medical and medication help. This is the search for well-being and quality of life. But it is mainly the comfort of accommodation and reception equipment that this quality is reflected in.

According to the results, according to the tourists' perception, the accommodation conditions and location proved to have an immense influence on their satisfaction with the trip and inevitably influence travel planning. Likewise, the convenience of access to healthy food and climate conditions are a cause for concern for female travellers. The concern with dietary restrictions and income availability is no longer significant, which positively correlates with the social place in the community of the tourists surveyed.

Interestingly, we are also able to say that a high level of education does not interfere much with travel concerns. Also, the tourist's health status is a minimized aspect from the beginning. The important thing is to know whether you are fit to travel, and your health status may even improve with the trip, hence the lesser concerns it raises.

When education limits action and imagination we call it training. But the educational level of the people travelling proved to be, in different contexts, a decisive factor in freeing the mind from worries and making action more agile. It's not just now that people who travel are more educated than average. However, change is inevitably due to the mass increase in travellers. Currently, it is no longer believed that education, whether a factor of cleavage or relevant segmentation, merely constitutes a still unavoidable reference for building consistent and explanatory profiles of the differences found.

Factorial models may not be the best way to explain the concerns faced in travel planning and interpersonal relationships. However, this methodology has proven to be statistically consistent in measuring the association of qualitative factors that are difficult to determine. To be coherent, conscious and, above all, unconscious cultural motivations result from a class position and acquired habits that we have highlighted in other investigations and combine harmoniously with the subjects' immediate intentions and motivations conditioned by their unshakable beliefs and values. The more we can penetrate the sphere of beliefs, the better we will know the real motivations and ways to rationalize concerns about travel planning, particularly for the female segment that we seek to highlight.

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