

Wellness Tourism Destination Development Strategy: Active Aging Tourists Motivation

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the active aging tourist intrinsic and extrinsic motivation toward a wellness tourism experience. Qualitative approach was employed using the in-depth interview technique for data collecting, and content analysis was used for analysing data. The findings revealed that individual passions and preferences are motivations for wellness travel. These motivations set force to drive the active aging tourist, especially those of 50-plus years, to involve in the preferred activities for new meaningful experiences. The desired experiences from different levels of activities can also bring better health to their later lives. Results offer a new motivation model for wellness experience-based tourism with a view for further research and niche-marketing practices.

Keywords: Active Aging Tourist, Wellness Tourism, Wellness Attributes, Tourism Motivation

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาแรงจูงใจภายในและภายนอกของนักท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพในกลุ่ม Active Aging หมายถึง นักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่ม “พฤกษพลัง” หรือผู้สูงอายุที่มีศักยภาพ (ในการศึกษานี้ผู้วิจัยได้กำหนดกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่มีอายุ 50 ปีขึ้นไป) ได้ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและใช้การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกในการเก็บข้อมูลโดยนำเทคนิคการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงเนื้อหาทำการวิเคราะห์ผลการศึกษาที่ได้รับจากการสัมภาษณ์ซึ่งผลการศึกษาจากครั้งนี้พบว่า กลุ่มนักท่องเที่ยวพฤกษพลังมีความชื่นชอบหลงใหลและพึงพอใจที่จะเลือกการท่องเที่ยวเพื่อสุขภาพเพื่อตัวเองและพบว่า มีแรงจูงใจที่จะได้รับประสบการณ์จากการท่องเที่ยวเชิงมีผลที่น่าสนใจและแตกต่างกันออกไป ซึ่งผลการศึกษาส่วนใหญ่พบว่า การท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพนั้นผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์ต้องการที่จะเข้าร่วมกับกิจกรรมที่ทำให้ได้รับประสบการณ์ที่มีความหมายต่อชีวิตจริง ๆ และสำหรับการออกแบบกิจกรรมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพสำหรับวัยนี้นั้น ควรที่จะจัดกิจกรรมความหนักเบาในระดับต่าง ๆ ที่สำคัญเพื่อให้เหมาะสมกับความต้องการและความสามารถทางด้านกายภาพของแต่ละคน และการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมเพื่อสุขภาพนั้นมีความประสงค์เพื่อในอนาคตข้างหน้าจะได้มีคุณภาพชีวิตที่ดีมีสุขภาพที่แข็งแรงและผลการศึกษาครั้งนี้ทำให้ได้รูปแบบของการสร้างแรงจูงใจในการท่องเที่ยวเพื่อสุขภาพเพื่อให้ได้รับประสบการณ์ที่ดีโดยเฉพาะให้กับกลุ่มนักท่องเที่ยวพฤกษพลัง และบทความนี้ได้ให้ข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับหัวข้อวิจัยเพื่อนำไปต่อยอดเกี่ยวกับการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพเพื่อที่จะเป็นประโยชน์ทั้งทางด้านวิชาการและการปฏิบัติ และการพัฒนารูปแบบการท่องเที่ยวสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวที่เป็นกลุ่มเฉพาะเจาะจงต่อไป

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Introduction

At the present, the increasing numbers in the Aging population are a promising market to ensure the socio-economic growth for future tourism products (T.-S. Chen, Hwang, & Chang, 2022; Yue, 2022). By 2050, the number in the older population segment is expected to be over two billions, and will become the largest tourist group in history (Balderas-Cejudo & Leeson, 2017; Marcekova, Simockova, & Sebova, 2016; Nations United, 2017). Therefore, for decades wellness living has been a key issue concerning aging people and can be a successful way to have good quality in later life (Kim, Woo, & Uysal, 2015; Pyke, Hartwell, Blake, & Hemingway, 2016). Hence, people in this age group want to have a good life style with quality, and travel for wellness purposes.

In relation to wellness tourism and active aging studies, a number of scholars have paid attention into various areas. For example, a study on aging tourists and their behaviour, include the needs and wants in leisure activity related to well-being (Balderas-Cejudo & Leeson, 2017; Formosa, 2019; Koskinen, 2019). In addition, an area of a study emphasised on senior/aging tourists and their behavior and importance in this segment (Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015), while in China scholars aimed to investigate the changing characteristics of the older adult population (Du & Yang, 2010).

As discussed from past studies, it was noticed that an investigation on motivations of the active aging tourist toward wellness tourism experience is still lacking. Thus, to achieve the research aim two research questions are raised as follows: What are the extrinsic motivations of the active aging 50-plus tourist group? What are the intrinsic motivations of the active aging 50-plus tourist group?

It is important to fill the research gap for number reasons. For instance, a number of researchers such as S. Q. Cutler and Carmichael (2010), Uysal, Sirgy, Woo, and Kim (2016) and Zhang, Wu, and Buhalis (2018) have confirmed that great memorable experiences can relate to one's quality of life (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Uysal et al., 2016). Firstly, the results of this study help to differentiate the meaningfulness of wellness tourism experiences and attract active aging tourists to destinations (Pullman, 2004). Because the study outcome will create tourist intention behaviour if wellness tourism product/activity meet tourist expectation

(Girish Prayag & Grivel, 2014; G. Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Chiappa, 2017). In addition, this study will be beneficial creating good reputation and brand image toward tourist perception; increasing revenue to all relevant stakeholders; and identifying crucial factors for further development at a destination (A. S. Ashton, 2014; Hankinson, 2005; Wray, Laing, & Voigt, 2010). Furthermore, the findings can give marketers and relevant stakeholders knowledge on the fundamentals of creating wellness tourism experience through the development of product/service/activity and emotional experience. In turn, it helps tourists to be motivated with the need or desire for healthy living, disease prevention, stress reduction, management of poor lifestyle habits, and authentic experience (B. Hettler, 1976; B. Hettler, 1980; Milner, 2013; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001).

Literature Review

The Concept of Wellness Tourism

Wellness is about physical health, mental and social wellbeing, and the motivations of tourists to travel is also for health where there is a need to rest, relax and to have good quality of health well-being (Aicher & Brenner, 2015; Kamata & Misui, 2015; Laesser, 2011; Snelgrove, Taks, Chalip, & Green, 2008). Alternatively, wellness refers to a state of being describing a state of positive health in the individual comprising of biological and psychological well-being (Corbin, Pangrazi, & Franks, 2000, p. 8). Different keywords are widely used when referring to travel associated with quality of life and well-being. For instance, some scholars used the word health tourism referring to two main concepts of health: wellness and medical. As stated, wellness tourism is a subset of health tourism, which can also include a religious perspective (Azara, Michopoulou, Niccolini, Taff, & Clarke, 2018; Romanova, Vetitnev, & Dimanche, 2016). Alternatively, other scholars use the word health-well-being when studying the health context; in this instance it is defined as the state of health, and is concerned with improvement to achieve quality of life (Pyke et al., 2016). While the concept of health tourism alone is defined as the provision of health facilities utilizing the natural resources of the country, in particularly mineral water and climate (Goodrich & Goodrich, 1987, p. 213). Moreover, Hall (1992) analysed health tourism within the context of adventure and sport

tourism, but not including the physical, mind spiritual perspective (Azara et al., 2018). In this study the word wellness tourism will hereafter be used throughout this paper because it has true meaningfulness and is most relevant to the study's main aim. Wellness tourism in this paper is defined as rest, relaxation, and escapism reigning supreme; it is also tourist self-awareness, as active seekers of enhanced well-being, health, and happiness (Azara et al., 2018, p. 10).

In addition, wellness tourism for the active aging 50-plus tourist, and a number of scholars have proposed different concepts related to this context (B. Hettler, 1976; B. Hettler, 1980; Milner, 2013; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). Especially, Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) asserted that there are three rings of wellness concept related to intrinsic motivation: the outer ring; middle ring, and central ring. The outer ring comprises two aspects: social contacts and environmental sensitivity. The middle ring comprises four aspects: mind (mental, activity, education); body (physical, fitness, beauty-care); relaxation (rest and meditation); and health (nutrition and diet). Lastly, the central ring is related to self-responsibility (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). Likewise, Sameer Hosany (2012) identified five dimensions and determinations of wellness tourism intrinsic motivation: emotional well-being, positive functioning, life satisfaction, social well-being, and vitality. It can be concluded that the study of motivation is being used in revealing the active aging 50-plus group behaviour, and to understand their travel decision-making before participating in a wellness tourism activity (Azman & Chan, 2010).

Mindset of the Active Aging Tourists

The word active refers to continuing participation in social, economic, culture, spiritual and civic affairs; it is not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force (WHO, 2002). There are three approaches for active ageing tourists: firstly, the needs based approach; secondly, the rights based approach, and finally, the strength based or activity based approach (Alén, Domínguez, & Losada, 2012; Hung & Lu, 2016; Stewart-Brown, 1998). Firstly, the needs based approach refers to a basic need, want, or belief playing the important motive role for the aging tourists to travel (Hung & Lu, 2016). Secondly, the rights based approach refers to the opportunity for aging tourists to be able to access all aspects of life as they grow older (Alén et al., 2012; WHO, 2002). The last concept, strength based or activity based approach, refers to actively participating in both physical and mental health

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activities while travelling (Stewart-Brown, 1998). Well-being is interchangeable with quality of life (Pyke et al., 2016). The holistic experiences for the active 50-plus is to integrate individual experiences into a holistic-health consideration (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2012).

The different motivations are the antecedents in the tourist experience because it reveals what tourists desire and their attempted activity behaviour (de Freitas Coelho, de Sevilha Gosling, & de Almeida, 2018). Notably, preventive health or health improvement are double essences of the active aging tourists' motivation to travel (Yeung & Johnston, 2017). Likewise, the individual inner motivations importantly drive the active 50-plus to fulfill what they need at this age (Milner, 2013). For instance, the need to go out associating with outside experiences and participate in some activities become important extrinsic motivations. The benefits of travel can be the lifestyles that relate to motivation and participation in more meaningful, transformational or eudemonic tourist experiences (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Hence, to take a vacation is one of the activities tourist choose to maintain and enhance their personal well-being (SRI International, 2014).

In addition, aging tourists have different preferences in terms of activities and experiences (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). They like to appreciate the natural environment, such as adventure tourism; participate with people in other cultures, or heritage destinations; visit people; learn about and acknowledge the harmonious locality of an environment; interact with the locals, try ethnic food, see unique lifestyles; and experience different desirable medical alternatives of treatments and services (health/medical/wellness tourism) (Oh, Assaf, & Baloglu, 2016).

Wellness Tourism Motivation Theory Foundation for this Study

A wellness tourism motivation theory has been developed and underpins this study in achieving the research aim. The concept proposal is created from the integration of two relevant concepts: motivation and wellness. The theory comprises two dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (J. L. Crompton, 1979; S. S. Jang & C.-M. Wu, 2006). Therefore, the individual inner motivation is important to drive the active 50-plus in fulfilling what is needed at that age; it is so-called a holistic experience (Milner, 2013; Neuhofer et al., 2012). Hence, the inner urge that drives people to go out with a willingness to associate with a new experience and explore the activity they desire becomes an extrinsic motivation

(Choe & O'Regan, 2020; Milner, 2013), while the individual inner motivation or desire that drives people to consider their well-being, or quality of life, such as the need for preventive health and health improvement, becomes an intrinsic motivation (Milner, 2013; Pyke et al., 2016; Smith & Diekmann, 2017).

It can be summarised that the extrinsic motivation comprises four important constructs (John L. Crompton, 1979; S. Q. Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; S. Jang & C.-M. E. Wu, 2006). Firstly, seeking new activity experience; perceiving experience from new technology and digitalization information; locality related activity experience; and nature and environmental experience. Whereas, the intrinsic motivation comprises four important wellness constructs, including; physical, mental, social, and emotional (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; S. Q. Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001; Romanova et al., 2016). The proposed theory is appropriated for this study for number reasons; such as the concept has been used with the senior market, especially in a study of motivation. Moreover, this concept is related to a psychology and behavioural study that links it to the aim of this study (Alen, Losada, & de Carlos, 2017). The two motivations are discussed below:

Extrinsic motivation

New activity experience

People's work stress was found to have the most effect on them, especially people of different nationalities individually need to get away on holidays and engage in the desired activities to better balance their lives (J. S. Chen, 2007; Islam & Namwong, 2019). Activity theory explains the increased free time available for active aging individuals to provide the opportunity for maintaining the essential role engagement in a meaningful activity level lined for life satisfaction (Kim et al., 2015). To fulfil the quality life and the preferred activities is to design a way of life satisfaction involving pleasurable trips (Anderson & Langmeyer, 1982; Patterson, 2018). Tourists need to try something new and unique for personal growth by gaining new experiences in life (AARP Research, 2014; Liu, 2018). Hence, a new attractive activity is one of the motivation options for the active aging tourist group (S. Q. Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Oh et al., 2016).

Therefore, new activity experience can be created based on a variety of choices, those for instance creating activity uniqueness. It refers to when tourists participate in activities they are unable to find in ordinary daily life (A. S. Ashton, Thosuwajinda, & Phetsome, 2019). For ways to create activity uniqueness, according to A. S. Ashton et al. (2019), it is proposed firstly, to be innovative and creative, such as providing new experiences based on introducing authentic and original local culture into new activities, such as trying ethnic food or learning how to cook local food. Finally, some other activities that can be participated in is soft adventure tourism, ranging in various forms of activities, for instance green tourism or sport tourism (Patterson, 2017).

New technology and digitalized information

Tourists learn of new experiences by previewing information from social media or the Internet, and search for preferred destinations around the world with specific choices prior to their actual travel (Dwyer, Edwards, Mistilis, Roman, & Scott, 2008, 2009; Tussyadiah, 2014). Information and transactions on the Internet is a strategic marketing tool in helping businesses gain competitive advantage (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006). The National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) (2017) reported that tourist behaviour trends are now more sophisticated expectations requiring deeper connection; this being affected by Internet use from websites and social networking (Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand, 2017). In the main, about 75% of international travellers currently use online information as part of the trip planning, and only about one third use travel agencies, with one-fourth relying on information from friends or family (Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand, 2017). For example, a study by Azman and Chan (2010) confirmed that the tourist decision making process is mainly based on information from travel agents or friend's recommendation, but the most important source is via the Internet. The best way to distribute a destination's information is to create trustworthy information, especially through social media or the World Wide Web, and especially government websites (A. S. Ashton, Scott, & Choibamroong, 2019; Richards, 2009). In summary, the most important information that a reviewer or tourist destination must provide is that of an attractive tourism product: the service, people, place, activity, culture, knowledge, and through storytelling of the destination (Tussyadiah, 2014).

Activity experience at a local destination

Localism has now become a resource of tourism destinations and the differentiated experience value of tourist preferences (A. S. Ashton, 2015; Phukamchanoad, Santithammakul, Yordchim, & Palapin, 2014). The activity that shows locality for tourists can be traditional local types of massage (Azman & Chan, 2010). The activity can be created from social and cultural development, for example, festivals or events that can come in different sizes, from small to mega events (Richards, 2009). Likewise, local festivals give great experience and cultural knowledge to tourists when travelling to a destination and give some value regarding the particular community's celebrations (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). Furthermore, authentic culture, for example the local bar or café: the intimate restaurant that serves local food where local people also consume is great for tourists hoping to encounter authentic culture (Richards, 2009). Hence, creativity is important in tourism because it helps to form the atmosphere; it feeds on people's desire for self-development, and is also a direct link between tourists and the host populations' culture (Richards, 2009).

Nature and the environmental experience

People and nature are definitely related, in contrast however, bad human behaviour causes global warming, air and water pollution, noise and loss of diversity; therefore there is a need to focus on sustainability and conservation of the ecology to bring back quality of life and wellness (Jena & Behera, 2017). Tourists desire to go out and appreciate nature by doing adventure activity (Oh et al., 2016), hence a poor environment can impact negatively on health and well-being (Perchinunno, Mongelli, & Rotondo, 2020). The indicators of a good environment are: clean dispersion of the municipal water supply, transfer of waste to landfills, availability of green urban areas, energy from renewable sources, and separate collection of urban waste (Perchinunno et al., 2020). In this vein, environmental well-being must be related to people with a strong pro-environmental attitude, in turn they are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviour and have a sense of responsibility to nature (Jena & Behera, 2017). For example, places or locations that influence and most satisfy the spiritual retreat tourist help them gain an authentic experience when joining the activity in a natural setting with a peaceful atmosphere, far from the usual places. Likewise, natural settings are identified as an important aspect if linking between the natural environment and culture of a village (Su, Long, Wall, & Jin, 2016).

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is holistic well-being, and comprises four dimensions: firstly; physical well-being; secondly, mental well-being; thirdly, social well-being; and finally, emotional well-being (B. Hettler, 1976; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001; SRI International, 2014). Each dimension is discussed below:

Physical wellness

Physical activity is a healthy lifestyle that is among the most important aspects for promoting physical fitness, health, and wellness (Corbin et al., 2000, p. 10). The physical activity can help delay, prevent, and manage many of the chronic diseases; especially, adults aged 50 and older are at risk (Watson et al., 2016). The goal of living independently is one shared by many people, and physical well-being is necessary to achieve it. Tourists are health conscious, especially for physical well-being, and the activities they pursue basically include regular exercise, healthy eating, visiting spas and engaging in health related actions (Azman & Chan, 2010). Lifestyle choices that can maintain or improve health and functional ability include engagement in physical activity and choices of healthy foods with adequate nutrition (B. Hettler, 1976; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). In addition, physical activity certainly helps in maintaining fitness and health with such exercises as sport, dance and other forms (Corbin et al., 2000). Exercise is a leisure time physical activity conducted with the intention of developing physical fitness (Corbin et al., 2000). Physical well-being mainly involves physical activity with a healthy lifestyle, together with nutritious and healthy food (Meiselman, 2016).

Mental wellness

Mental health refers to a state which allows individuals to realise their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to their community (Tennant et al., 2007, p. 2). Mental well-being in life can be modified through some physical activities, including forms of exercise, starting from walking (Windle, Hughes, Linck, Russell, & Woods, 2010). Likewise, mental well-being is positive psychological functioning, encompassing life satisfaction, happiness, resilience, self-esteem, being in control, and able to cope with life at any stage (Windle et al., 2010). A study on older adults carried out by Fox (1999) revealed that moderate and regular exercise helps in treating depression

and anxiety, thus improving mental well-being and enhancing mood states; activities are aerobic and resistance exercise. Similarly, regular moderate exercise may help to boost mental well-being with the condition that the activity takes place in a natural environment area, and not repeating the same experience (Thompson Coon et al., 2011). For example, walking outdoors has a positive effect on some aspects of mood, such as helping in revitalization, self-esteem, positive engagement, gaining energy, pleasure, delight; and especially decreases the feelings of frustration, worry, confusion, depression, tension, and tiredness (Thompson Coon et al., 2011).

Mental health well-being engagement in creative pursuits and intellectually stimulating activity is a proven approach to keep minds alert and interested, and includes taking short seminar courses, painting, cooking, or joining and challenging oneself with other creative activities and local people at a destination.

Social wellness

The characteristics of social well-being can vary, for example some people want and like to be accepted, some are concerned for others, friendly and socially supportive, while others feel afraid to be disconnected from society, and wish freedom from a feeling of loneliness (Meiselman, 2016). Social interactions with family, friends, or chosen peer groups, and people at a destination can be valuable for maintaining good health and a well-ness life. It has been proved that interactions with locals play an important role in constructing a rewarding experience, a deeper cultural understanding, and positively influences the social life of tourists (Su et al., 2016). There are several ways to interact with locals when travelling to visit a destination, such as mixing and befriending them when doing on-site visiting (Su et al., 2016). Moreover, it is suggested that local festivals help to create a positive social interaction with the locals and other tourists, and festivals help environmental improvement, in turn creating good social environmental outcomes (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). Also, social well-being is created by using the concept of creative tourism because destination managers are always looking for a new ways to create social activities for interaction with tourists (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002).

Emotional wellness

Emotions can become very powerful in predicting tourist attitudes and behaviour (S. Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; G. Prayag et al., 2017; Girish Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013). Feelings are the lens through which people view the world, and the ability to be aware of and direct one's feelings helps to create balance in life (Milner, 2013). Emotional well-being can refer to the emotional quality of an individual's everyday experience; the frequency and intensity of experiences of joy, stress, sadness, anger, and affection that make one's life pleasant or unpleasant (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010, p. 16489). It includes positive mood and high self-esteem (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander, 2002). The characteristics of emotional well-being can have both positive and negative effects. For instance, positive effects are such as how people feel about themselves, such as they feel that they are just as good as other people, are hopeful about the future, or are a happy person almost all the time and always enjoy life (Ostir, Markides, Black, & Goodwin, 2000). While negative effects are such as feeling depressed, feel life has been a failure, feel fearful, lonely, want to cry, and have an emotional feeling of sadness (Ostir et al., 2000). It has been proved that negativity affects an increase in fear and low self-esteem, hence leading to an increase in sadness (Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007). Moreover, emotional well-being can be potentially improved through mindfulness and self-compassion (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). Mindfulness can be referred to as an awareness of thoughts, recognition of degrees of self-judgment and rumination, and greater acceptance of oneself. While self-compassion is the ability to hold one's feeling of suffering with a sense of warmth, connection, and concern: for example how people recognise self as part of a common humanity, and have a greater self-kindness (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). Finally, emotional well-being can include being affectionate, calm, happy or sad, loved, relaxed or tense, satisfied and secure (Meiselman, 2016).

Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach was employed using in-depth interview technique for the data collection process. This process is suitable for this study because it is designed to explore the perspectives or new issues in detail on particular ideas, opinions, thoughts, experiences, behaviours, beliefs, motivations, programs, and situation of the participants

(Boyce & Neale, 2006). The criteria for selecting the participants in this study were: firstly, tourists who were aged 50 or above and aimed to travel for wellness experiences. Secondly they defined themselves as active aging persons, health experienced tourists, and finally some they were professionals health personal who provided knowledge on wellness, both Thai and international.

The study areas selected included Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Bangkok, Karnjanaburi, and Lopburi provinces. There were reasons to select these areas: they are places popular for tourists to travel to and many wellness activities are available for tourists, such as venues for good exercise, mountain cycling and local organic farmers markets. Some participants were inherently emotional about their personal actual wellness experience; their perception and direct experience about well-being in relation to wellness tourism activity certainly helped to achieve the aim of this study (G. Prayag et al., 2017).

Semi-structured interview was chosen for this study because it is flexible and allows freedom for the interviewer to ask questions and the interviewees (participants) to profoundly express their opinions (Fylan, 2005). The interview questions were separated into two parts: the first part asked about personal information, the second asked about attitudes and experience perception. Participants were asked to describe and explain about wellness, quality of later life, and healthy lifestyle during tourism activities. The first part of the interview questions asked about brief personal information, including age, gender, education level, financial status, profession, their preferred health benefits, destination and health-activity preferences, and their preferences of whom to travel with and length of travel. Moreover, the questions asked what activities they engaged in and their thoughts about wellness activities. Also asked, for instance, was how tourists perceived health activity experience while they are travelling, and what inspired them to travel for wellness activities. What were the benefits they wished to achieve from the wellness activity experience? What is their intention and preferences after all the satisfaction they have received? (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital, 2014; Prebensen, Kim, & Uysal, 2016).

After the participants were contacted and agreed to take part in the study, a letter of consent attached as a cover page to acknowledge the ethics and trustworthiness of conducting the interviews. All participants involved in this in-depth interview were voluntary

and strictly confidential; they can terminate any time without consequences. Before the actual interview take place, the interview questions had been tested by three experts within the area of this study; they reviewed and had validity checked for the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) approval (Hair et al., 2010). The interview took around 45 minutes but not over one hour, the conversation was recorded for quality of information from participants, and a content analysis technique was used to analysis data.

Participant Profiles

The forty purposive and snowball participants were reached in tourist destinations, health-activity areas, and by appointment at venues. The interview took during just before COVID-19 pandemic (July-November 2019). Tourism destinations included famous temples, marketplaces, adventure/activity venues, beaches, hotels, organic food outlets, homestay, coffee shops and restaurants, shopping malls, street food vendors and sidewalks. Health activity areas included badminton courts, fitness centres, and cycling in bike-lanes. They all were found in Chiangmai, Pattaya, Bangkok, Kanchanaburi, and Lopburi. The participants' demographic profiles and preferences are included in Table 1. A total of forty participants were interviewed, male 25 and female 15, with a minimum age of 50 years, and a maximum of 74. Most were still working, with 10 already retired. Among the participants' various professional backgrounds were for instance: lecturer; business owner; engineer; writer; tourism TV channel production person; architect/office owner; acupuncturist/naturopath; freelance and volunteer/tour operator; and housewife.

Table 1: Participant Profiles

Participant #	Gender	Age	Nationality	Working	Professions
ID 1	F	58	NZ	Yes	Acupuncturist/Naturopath
ID 2	M	63	NZ	Yes	Director, IT Company
ID 3	M	52	Swedish	Yes	Voluntary/NGO Officer
ID 4	M	53	Thai	Yes	Freelance/voluntary works
ID 5	M	52	American	Yes	Lecturer/Researcher
ID 6	F	50	Moroccan	No	Housewife/Business partner
ID 7	F	54	Thai	Yes	Local business
ID 8	M	70	Canadian	No	Diplomatic services
ID 9	M	55	Thai	Yes	Expert/Supplier
ID 10	M	50	Thai	Yes	Expert/Supplier
ID 11	M	60	Thai	Yes	Business owner
ID 12	M	60	Thai	Yes	Business owner
ID 13	M	66	Australian	No	Transporter
ID 14	M	62	Chinese/ HK.	Yes	Business partner
ID 15	M	74	Norwegian	No	Petro-engineer/consultant
ID 16	M	55	Thai	Yes	Tour guide/tour operator/Cruise organizer
ID 17	M	60	Thai	Yes	Engineer/MRT consult
ID 18	M	61	Thai	Yes	Engineer/Company owner
ID 19	M	60	Thai	No	Engineer
ID 20	M	67	Thai	Yes	Special police officer
ID 21	M	66	Thai	Yes	Business owner
ID 22	M	70	Thai	Yes	Historical and museum study; destination development.
ID 23	F	66	Thai	Yes	Teacher/Local homestay owner/Knowledge provider
ID 24	F	56	Thai	Yes	Creative advertising/Lecturer/Tour guide/Writer.
ID 25	M	50	Thai	Yes	Story writer/Creative concept interpreter & product designer
ID 26	M	71	Australian	No	Engineering/musician & teaching
ID 27	M	71	Australian	No	Engineering and drafting
ID 28	F	64	Thai	Yes	Lecturer/Researcher/Story writer
ID 29	F	55	Thai	Yes	Lecturer/Researcher
ID 30	F	50	Russian	Yes	Tourism TV channel production
ID 31	M	56	Thai	Yes	Architect/Office owner
ID 32	M	56	Thai	Yes	Architect/Office owner
ID 33	F	57	Thai	Yes	Story writer/Travel magazine Chief editor
ID 34	F	57	Thai	Yes	Story writer/Travel bookstore owner
ID 35	F	69	Thai	No	Engineering librarian
ID 36	M	68	Thai	Yes	Engineer/Company owner/Voluntary Zigong trainer
ID 38	F	55	Thai	Yes	Company's financial and accounting manager
ID 39	F	55	Thai	Yes	Accounting auditor/Office owner
ID 40	F	61	Thai	No	Supply chain/Office worker

Results

The main aim of this study was to investigate the active aging 50-plus tourist motivations towards wellness tourism. Thus, to achieve the research aim two research questions were raised: firstly, what are the extrinsic motivations of the active aging 50-plus tourist group? Secondly, what are the intrinsic motivations of the active aging 50-plus tourist group? The study findings are discussed below:

It can be summarised that the extrinsic motivation comprises four important constructs (John L. Crompton, 1979; S. Q. Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; S. Jang & C.-M. E. Wu, 2006). Firstly, seeking new activity experience; perceiving experience from new technology and digitalization information; locality related activity experience; and nature and environmental experience.

Motivation of the active aging 50-plus wellness tourist

The results revealed that motivation can be split into three distinct stages based on goal-driven motivation concept; first stage is motivation inspired by tourist past experience; the second is the desire and current interest of the tourist to have wellness in later life, and the desire to have wellness in life (S. Q. Cutler, & Carmichael, B. A., 2010). Details are explained below:

Firstly, participants' past experiences were mostly captured as their passions from the collected memorable experiences of their previous travel and tourism. Many participants had impressive past experiences at a young age and paused those for career and family settlement. After their children had grown up and became successful in their careers they have been responsibility free, and preferred to start travelling again, to see and participate in new and different activities.

For example, participants admitted that for Kiwis who want to fly away again at age 58, passion and freedom have drawn them back with more dreams and creativity to see the world where they left such experiences at a young age [ID1]. One said, "This time, I'm taking a three-month

get-away with my husband, travelling for leisure, especially to visit the music pub where we first met in Chiang Mai before getting married [ID1].” Likewise, another confirmed that “freedom, challenges, to meet new people, and to join group activities or voluntary work are all my passions to travel, from the first trip until now at 63 [ID2].” Another said, “Because I was not allowed to travel when I was young, the feeling of freedom becomes more passionate, inspiring me to travel again and again. I always try new things and have fun doing different activities with different groups of friends; running, bicycling, rafting, or other adventurous recreation [ID38].”

Sources of information and social media also motivate and drive tourists to travel for wellness. Hence, it can be concluded that passionate experiences happen after receiving information from well-known sources of information, including travel guidebooks and magazines, fiction novels, or famous people and places, consequently inspiring some participants to travel and have real experiences. Many of the participants work with a world travel magazine, being writers, journalists, editors, or tour operators. Evidence is revealed below:

“I started from reading, then travelling, and working as the editor in chief for a big-name travel magazine. I always appreciate seeing what I imagined from the books. Moving myself into the real places with the expected atmosphere has been my freedom to imagine more, to observe more, and to create more [ID33].” An architect said that, “Travel and tourism is like opening a big book which is full of amazing content. I found it exciting every time I explored the real experiences in new places I had visited, and gained impressive hospitality from the new people I had met [ID31].”

Exploring new ideas and observing people’s behaviours have been some participants’ purpose for walking tourism. Local visiting and travelling has become their passion following their careers of product design and development. A participant who loved walking exploration said:

“I travel for work only as a freelancer. Walking exploration is more a mental activity for me to find new inspiration and creativity. Culture and people are the only choices I always want to be involved with. I always walk a lot, take pictures, and talk to local people I meet, then I write on e-news or an in-flight magazine [ID25].”

Another former editor in chief of a travel magazine explained:

“My career and passion are integrated for favorite activities, including my personal interest in ‘scent exploration’.” “As a smelling tool, I enjoy seeking the nationality of each place from the herb-scent of food [ID33].” While another participant agreed: “I often travel because my career focuses on creating new extraordinary tourism-routes that bring more benefit to tourism industries. I have written travel books, run a tour company, teach tourism, and work as a tour guide and in creative advertising. My passion runs around my business opportunity [ID24].” Another said, “Bicycling has long been my business, my favorite hobby and physical exercise activity that I can do anytime, anywhere, alone or with my wife [ID9].”

Secondly, the participants’ current interests were mostly captured from the participants’ motivation to travel for wellness tourism. Overall findings revealed that the majority of things that interested participants in travel for wellness tourism were especially trying new activities, dealing with new challenges, learning new skills, and self-fulfillment with new experiences. Moreover, most of them preferred to gain more useful knowledge and to have an opportunity to share it with others.

For example, one said, “Learning and practicing new skills has now become my motivation for travel [ID4].” While another said, “I found the sports I like, bicycling, at age 47 and now at 60., I still enjoy bicycling, camping, walking tracks, and trekking. I have a small group and we take an activity trip together every weekend [ID11].” A journalist gave details of her passion: “Every year, I happily enjoy a month travelling abroad

for walking exploration or walking experience. The world belongs to diverse cultures that educate from one to another all the time. I am a journalist for magazines and books, taking long and slow travel to rest as well as to explore with respect to what people think and how they behave differently, in detail [ID34].”

Thirdly, the participants’ desire for quality of later life benefits were especially for physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being, and were the most desired to gain from their travel. The main issues were concluded as follows.

For physical wellness, it can be concluded that body fitness and consuming healthy food are the main aspects in gaining physical improvement and preventing disease, especially for ages 50-plus. In addition, some of the group took physical exercises or outdoor sports activities to ease their stress. For example, a participant mentioned, “My successful past experiences in doing outdoor health activities always encourage me to practice more until now. Finishing one mission always drives me to start the next one [ID10].” Hence sport is a tool to connect one to other people. In addition, a participant confirmed their health benefit was “Taking a month trip also gives me more time to take care myself, eat proper food and take pills three times a day, put lotion on my skin, and deep sleep every night [ID34].”

Participant ID12 confirmed: “My first time bicycling for a month made me lose 15 kg. Better physical health has me routinely bicycling since then. Bicycling has given me a peaceful mind, self-confidence, and self-fulfillment. I have planned for long and slow bicycling when visiting new places, and just to enjoy daily life travelling.” Finally, one said, “My past experiences mostly came from activities. I love doing outdoor activities with different groups of friends, which drew me to travel more often, to different places with different activities [ID4].”

Regarding mental well-being one participant said that mental wellbeing occurred while travelling to a new place with a good atmosphere. Thus, living in the mundane daily routine environment has been the important driving force for most participants to take trips for leisure and improve their health. “I love travelling and moving myself into new places or new atmospheres; just going anywhere can give mental freedom to think, to observe,

and to create more [ID33].” In addition, “My motivation for travel has always been for a way of living close to a natural environment [ID23].” Another participant told their story: “My past experience was to get away from routine stress and be in nice weather and a natural environment, especially to see beautiful mountain scenery, rare trees or islands and the sea. These are the best motivations pushing us to repeat travel again and again [ID7].” Likewise, another said, “Tourism is a tool to connect people to other things, activities, other people and places [ID3].” While one participant asserted: “Challenge was always in my past experience, but recently at age 60, I think more about being careful and safe [ID9].”

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate active aging 50-plus tourist motivation towards wellness tourism. Participants were asked about their motivation to gain experience when participating in wellness activity. The in-depth interviews were conducted by using content analysis to capture the key themes that answer to the main research aim. It can be concluded that the current motivation of the active aging tourist on wellness tourism depends on the experiences they obtain, especially from their past, social media, new activities, life challenges, and self-fulfilment, for such as gaining new knowledge and skills. Overall, tourists travel for wellness because they desire to have good quality and wellness in later life, specially they want to have physical fitness, good mental health, social wellness and emotional well-being.

Prior to setting the goal for a wellness trip, tourists may have had past experiences on previous wellness travel, and creating great memorable experience will entice them to want to return. Currently, this result is similar to the study carried by A. S. Ashton et al. (2019) with a different study context, but the same senior tourists. It studied the decision making process for international tourists to retire overseas based on prior experience with the destination, and the need to return after having a good and memorable experience (A. S. Ashton et al., 2019). This result also supports a study carried out by Hays, Page, and Buhalis (2013), contending that the experience perceived from sources of information, including social media, magazines, and any other form of information, have played an important part in motivating tourists to travel for wellness reasons.

Furthermore, the results revealed that in general some active aging 50-plus tourists have a need to explore new things and increase experiences in life. This age group has had long experience, but daily life has become mundane; hence they desire to partake in new experiences. They are keen to travel for wellness experience by participating in new activities or looking for new challenges for self-fulfilment and quality of life. These results are embedded with past literature on aging tourists participating in wellness activity for great experience (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Similarly, Oh et al. (2016) states that the aging tourist likes to appreciate a natural environment, for instance adventure tourism, with both hard and light activity. They also like to learn new things; especially, the findings in this study show that the goal of all wellness activity underpins having a better quality in later life, and to have wellness in life on the physical, mental, social and emotional levels.

Likewise, Smith and Diekmann (2017) asserted that mental or physical well-being are the current goals that motivate the aging tourism market to travel. For instance, the active aging tourist wants to visit local communities and interact with the local environment, taste different ethnic foods, and experience the unique lifestyle. It is obvious that the results from this current study confirmed that both young age to above 50 years of age have some similar motivation when determining to travel for wellness purposes. Significantly, it has shown that the desire for the 50-plus tourist is to have wellness with quality of living. Hence, if they have the opportunity to learn about new cultures, interact with locals and learn about their lifestyles, it certainly will fulfil their goal. Similarly, Su et al. (2016) confirmed that tourists will certainly want interaction with locals and try to learn about new cultures. Past studies have revealed three push factors and two pull factors that influence travel for wellness tourism. The push factors are attractive destination, relaxation and local people; the pull factors comprise culture and nature (Damijanin & Sergio, 2013).

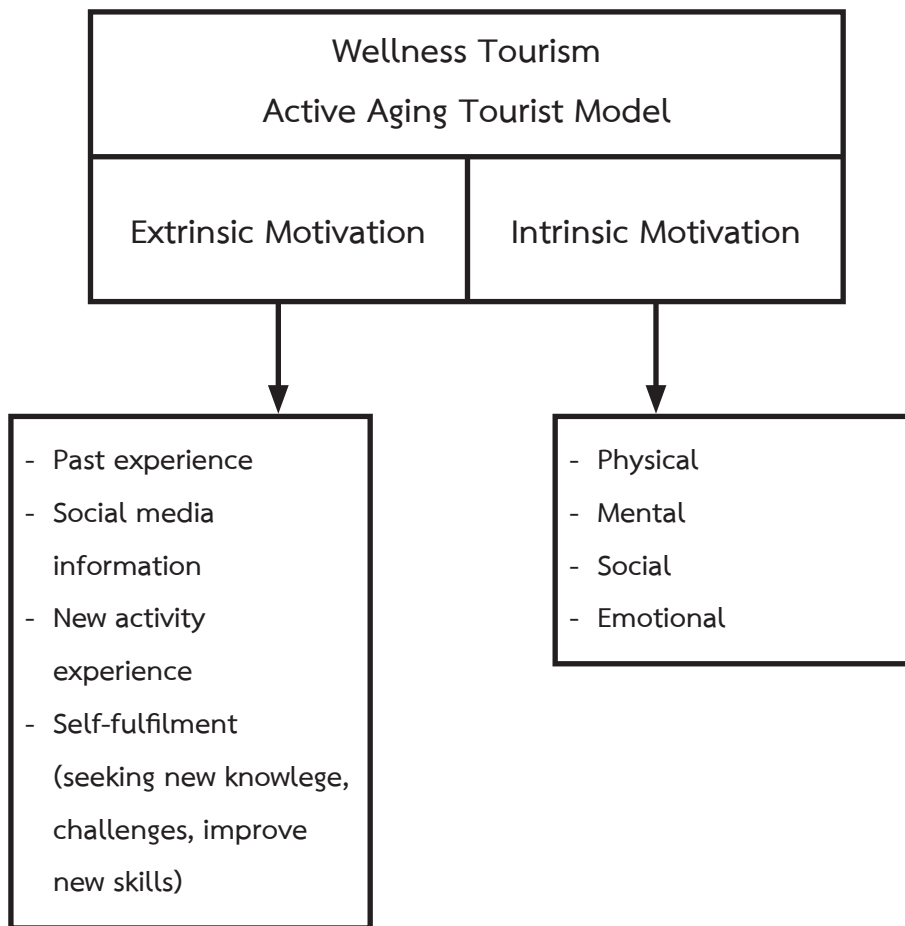


Figure 1: Wellness Tourism Active Aging Tourist Model

Contributions of the Study

The results from this study provide insight knowledge for both academic and managerial consideration. The significant findings from this study have proposed an original theoretical model of a wellness tourism motivation for the active aging 50-plus tourist. The model comprises two main constructs: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation relates to how external resources motivate tourists for wellness travelling purposes; it includes four aspects: 1) tourist past experience; 2) new technology and digitalization information; 3) new activity; and 4) challenge activity. First, past experience motivation refers to a tourist's past experience while travelling, and is a crucial experience for the need to go out

and explore more on wellness tourism activity. Second, new technology and digitalization information motivation is the information available on websites influencing tourist perception and decision to travel for their life wellness. Third, new activity experience motivation refers the activity that a tourist has never done before. For example, soft and hard adventure activity, non-competitive sport, or long distance running for charity, bush walking and cycling. Finally, challenge activity refers to the things that tourists need or desire to achieve, particularly in boosting knowledge and skills, doing something that challenges their ability, such as learning about new cultures, participating in wellness activities, or doing what they were unable or had no opportunity to do when they were young because of neither time nor money.

In addition, intrinsic motivations refer to the aspects drawn out and currently related to the quality of wellness in later life, especially: 1) physical; mental; social; and emotional. Firstly, physical wellness motivation refers to a tourist's need to promote physical fitness, especially improving and maintaining health well-being. Secondly, mental wellness motivation refers to the ability to cope with stress, self-actualise, realise one's own abilities, and be able to control and satisfy all situations in life. Thirdly, social wellness motivation refers to people's need to be accepted, valued in the society; they need an in-depth social/cultural understanding in order to have a healthy social life. Finally, emotional wellness motivation refers to the ability to control emotional quality and intense emotional experiences; negative and positive emotions, including joy, stress, depression or sadness can make a person's life happy or unhappy.

This study provides a managerial contribution for stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry when developing wellness products, services and activities for the active aging 50-plus tourist. The most important thing for life wellness in the active aging 50-plus sector is for the relevant service providers to consider developing activities that improve both the wellness of body and mind/soul and spiritual recovery. For physical wellness many stakeholders, particularly the destination hosts, service providers, business owners and travel agents, can use the managerial guidelines from this study. It has revealed insightful information on improving or increasing physical fitness, hence the need to have

activities that suit with their physical health and individual favourites. Thus, a business owner, destination host or service provider, must offer a variety of types of activities and respond to the needs of these tourists with extreme to soft adventure tourism, sports such as cycling, walking, trekking and running. Additionally, providing healthy food in a good environment will be advantageous in creating great memories, in turn inspiring destination intention, including revisiting or spreading positive words to friends and family.

For mind/soul or spiritual recovery activity, the tourist needs to have an opportunity to be accepted in the local society, hence the host destination should create activities that open such opportunities for interacting socially with the local community, perhaps in the form of volunteer tourism for such as helping society, teaching language, donating something of value, purchasing local products, or learning about the culture. Some like to take their life activities more slowly by visiting local cafés/clubs, tasting the local ethnic authentic food, sampling the produce of the locals, and enjoying healthy seasonal food. Most importantly, the food providers must consider supporting local farmers by purchasing the raw ingredients grown in the same area. Thus, slow life activity can help tourists relieve stress and have positive and warm emotions when contributing to the community knowing that all products and service were delivered by locals, including all resources and ingredients based on local culture and wisdom.

Lastly, nowadays the world has changed the way of convey a message from a host destination and business owner to the public or customers by utilising virtual tools to show authentic destinations. Furthermore, it's easy to access and connect to the various on-line information sources, at minimal cost. Hence, offering official websites can guarantee trustworthy information where people can rely on after reviewing. Hence, when tourists perceive images and information describing the destination, they will determine to travel to the place with an intention to buy products/services and participate in the desired activity. This special tourist group has more consciousness of their quality in later life, hence have their goals related to wellness, including eating healthy food, exercising and taking part in spiritual retreat activity, such as meditation for spiritual stress release.

Limitation and future research

This study faced many challenges while conducting the research project. The issues mainly concerned the timeline; conducting interviews took much longer than expected, but eventually were managed by extending enough time to allow obtaining the sufficient data required. Moreover, it was low season during the data collecting period, hence target samples were less to be found, and thus why data the collecting process took longer than planned.

For future research, the new normal of wellness tourism needs to be investigated, especially the perspective of wellness tourism from the supply side, such as how to run a business after COVID-19, and the development of online marketing as a crucial marketing tool to attract wellness tourists in the future, and the new strategy after COVID-19.

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