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## **SENIOR TOURISTS' DOMESTIC TRAVEL MOTIVATION: CASE STUDY OF LANGKAWI ISLAND**

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### **Abstract**

Despite the ageing population in the country, there is a great paucity of study on senior tourists for domestic travel in Malaysia. Realizing the strong purchasing power that senior tourists have that may contribute to the growth of the tourism industry, this study attempts to ascertain the level of push and pull motivation factors for senior tourists to travel. Questionnaires were distributed to 371 senior tourists who had visited Langkawi. Descriptive statistics showed that the highest push factor was resting and relaxing whilst the highest pull factor was the availability of shopping facilities. Also, social security was the most critical factor for this group of tourists to travel, followed by the expectations, destination image, besides cost and risk. These findings could be useful for authorities and businesses to cater for the needs and requirements of senior tourists. We suggest that future research investigate senior tourist motivation in multiple settings and time samples in a year to test and further generalize findings.

*Keywords: - senior tourists, push motivation, pull motivation, tourism, domestic travel*

### **1. Introduction**

In 2020, statistically, 7.2% of Malaysians were aged 65 years old and above. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, (2016), a country can be defined as an old country when 7% of its citizens are 65 or older. In addition, it is also estimated that this percentage will rise to 15% by 2030. With the ageing inhabitants, senior tourists are an increasingly significant part of the tourism industry in Malaysia.

Senior tourists have strong purchasing power (Patterson, 2012). This can be measured based on their expenditure trends and abundance of experience (Jang & Wu, 2006). Resultantly, the study interest on the correlation between tourism and senior tourists multi-fold of late. Enhancements in tourism initiatives might entice more senior tourists to travel. On the other hand, the degree of economic growth varies by country and region, and governments that implement policies and measures based on local conditions influence the behaviour patterns of elderly tourists (Liu, Lu et al., 2017; Liu & Feng, 2016). This is because there are gaps among older tourists due to different demographics such as social lifestyles and regions. Besides, mobility issues for the elderly need to be solved (Van Hoof et al., 2018). The development of such facilities will facilitate access to the mobility of older tourists while travelling.

Yet, there is a paucity of studies that focus on the senior tourists' domestic travel motivation. The tourism literature contains limited wide-ranging studies of Malaysian elderly tourists and their motives for domestic travel. The failure to understand the behaviour of older consumers may illuminate the reason for their desire to travel. However, most researchers have found that travel motivation is not yet fully understood despite the growing number of motivational studies. As a result, further research on the causes of leisure travel is needed to develop a more inclusive model (Abd Razak & Abdul Talib 2009; Preko et al., 2019).

For instance, LADA reported the number of tourist arrivals in Langkawi in 2020 was 1,802,602. Langkawi was a secluded island where agronomy and fisheries are the main economic activities. It was not until 1987 that it became popular after the federal government acknowledged the island as a tax-free zone. LADA reported that the total number of tourist arrivals to Langkawi in 2021 was 128,452 which equals an increase of 53.15% amidst the pandemic. Transportation wise, 81,808 domestic visitors on air travel were reported, while the jetties in Kuala Perlis and Kuala Kedah recorded 32,105 visitors, followed by the Langkawi Port, which recorded 14,539 visitors. Despite the huge number of visitors, marketing initiatives aimed at older tourists are not prioritized when travelling. Therefore, in this study, we would like to analyse the levels of push and pull motivation factors for the elderly in domestic travel.

#### **1.1 Research Objectives**

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To ascertain the level of push motivation factors among senior tourists for domestic travel.
2. To ascertain the level of pull motivation factors among senior tourists for domestic travel

Langkawi was chosen as our case study as the island experiences a consistent influx of domestic tourists. The results of this study will benefit LADA because it is probable to offer further evidence to improve the infrastructure of Langkawi since LADA pushes the execution of tourism industry growth in Langkawi that profits relevant stakeholders through calculated development and operative control. What's more, findings from

this research may contribute to better knowledge and a new understanding of the senior tourists' market segmentation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Motivation**

Motivation is essential for interpreting a person's behaviour. Used to clarify what makes people do something. In particular, travel motivation in the tourism context is "a combination of traits that motivate individuals to participate in tourism activities" (Pizam et al., 1979, pp. 195–197) to achieve and expect goals. Their fulfilment (Fodness, 1994; Beerli & Marten, 2004). It is also considered one of the most prominent psychological consequences as well as the first debate in understanding tourist behaviour. Motivation has become a major theme in a variety of other research areas (Al-Haj Mohammad & Mat Som, 2011). The term "motivation" is derived from the Latin root movement of "movement" (Tran & Ralston, 2006) and is defined as an internal drive caused by human emotions and unpleasant physical pressure (Kim & Ritchie, 2012). The ability to relax is due to this dynamic (Correia et al., 2007). In other words, individuals go on vacation to relieve the anxieties that arise from unmet travel needs and motivations (Kim & Ritchie, 2012).

Comprehending people's travel motivations and desires can be confusing, as tourism standards are always related to human existence (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Nonetheless, motivation occurs when people have unfulfilled desires (Maslow, 1943), and this scenario guides people to take action to satisfy their desires. Motivation in tourism is defined as a blend of requirements and desires that influence tourists' travel decisions and is also one of the most important measures of tourist behaviour (Meng et al., 2008). Tourism motivation also provides important insights into the travel decision-making process and people's behaviour when visiting a particular destination (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Therefore, they must visit tourist destinations to meet their needs (Bashar & Abdelnaser, 2011). As a result, tourists are pushed out of their daily lives by their inner power. Besides, people travel to connect with new people and seek new places and experiences. This tourist motivation is used by destination marketing or tourism ministers to increase tourist enjoyment and attract and retain more visitors (Jang & Feng, 2007).

### **2.2 Push Motivation**

Push motivation triggers individuals to the intangible or essential desire to go on vacation. Crompton (1979) further theorised that push motivation consists of seven social-psychological motivations; including escape, self-explanation, relaxation, fame, regression, kinship building, and social interaction. These push factors are considered as the first signals and beneficial elements for explaining the desire to travel and understanding the behaviour of tourists. Push variables were defined by Boksberger & Laesser (2008) as mental preparations for human tasks related to optimal arousal at individual levels. Studies have shown that escapism, relaxation, discovery, social contact, relationship building, and status are all prevalent drivers to travel.

Authors such as Preko, et al., (2019) and Yousaf et al., (2018) additionally include some other elements that motivate people to travel such as enhancing relationships, religious needs, and sightseeing variety. The push theory of journey motivation is broadly used in tourism studies to explain why people need to journey and where they need to go (Crompton, 1979). People travel due to the fact inner forces urge them to do so. Push motivations are beneficial for comparing the urge to journey since they explain why people journey in general. Furthermore, Gnoth (1997) posits that fundamental necessities are derived from people's socio-mental needs, fee recognition, and demographic features. Therefore, people travel to meet a wide range of needs and desires, but the power of motivation can be investigated and understood from a push perspective. Also, much research has been done on the travel motives of the elderly to understand market needs and preferences and provide better services (Jang & Wu, 2006; Kim et al., 2010; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Separately, Munoz et al. (2017) claim that visiting friends and relatives (VFR) was associated with a considerable range of activities but was still generally marginalized. Visiting friends and relatives is arguably one of the earliest forms of tourism, if not the oldest in history (Cohen and Cohen, 2015). It can be argued that VFR travel is more important to the human experience than a vacation, as the bond between friends and relatives is built and maintained through mutual visits everywhere and at any time (Seaton, 2017).

According to previous literature, the focus was primarily on investigating the behaviour of older groups in North and Western countries (Le Serre et al., 2013). But there is growing interest in conducting empirical research on senior markets in the Asian region, especially in developed Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Nonetheless, further research on the senior tourists' travel behaviour in developing countries is still lacking (Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015).

### **2.3 Pull Motivation**

Pull motivation includes tourists' impressions and expectations regarding the characteristics, attractions, or attributes of a particular location. As a result, once a travel decision is made, pull motivation influences

destination selection (Crompton, 1979). External factors such as nature and historic sites, food, people, recreational facilities and advertised images of destinations are all pulling factors (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). On the other hand, in the tourism context, motivation refers to the ability of a particular attraction or destination to match a person's push motivation factor (Michael et al., 2017; Suni & Pesonen, 2017). The aspects of the attraction such as the staff responsiveness, facility, event, ease of access, low prices, and tourist perceptions, expectations, interpretations may be considered as pull factors. Swarbrooke and Horner (2005) emphasize the relevance of various consumer motivations in the tourism industry. This can be divided into those that encourage people to take leave and those that motivate them to take leave at specific destinations. The pull factor becomes more important and needs to be considered in order to attract new and repeaters in the long run. The pull factor is a tangible and intangible clue from a particular travel destination and seduces people to pursue a desire for a particular travel experience (Plangmarn et al., 2012).

Separately, the findings on tourist perceptions can be used by locals and tourist facility employees to ensure that tourists have a comfortable and unforgettable stay. For example, Breitsohl and Garrod (2016) conducted an online survey of 1,350 tourists to understand their perceptions and feelings of ethical violations in tourist areas. This study used cognitive evaluation theory and the results showed that tourists play an important role in shaping hostile sentiment towards tourist destinations. They also discovered that tourist perceptions and reviews could result in them visiting their destination again. Similarly, Spasojević and Božić (2016) emphasize extensive literature on various aspects of senior travellers, including their motivations, their actions, their potential, their finances and restrictions, and their activities during the trip. Apart from that, the most common motivations for older tourists are, among other things, related to new experiences, nostalgia, socializing, rest and relaxation, and the acquisition of physical activity (Spasojević & Božić, 2016).

#### **2.4 Senior Tourism**

The definition of senior remains controversial in the community, especially when it comes to the age of those who are called seniors. For example, older people in the United States are older people over the age of 65 (Muller & O' Cass, 2001). However, in Malaysia, the term "elderly" or "elderly" refers to people over the age of 55 (Sharif, 2015, Jaafar, 2019). Elderly people over the age of 55 usually lose their physical mobility, strength, and memory. All of this is necessary to maintain current employment until retirement. However, elderly travellers have a large market share for many reasons, including rapid advances in health science, enabling older people to live longer and leading to this increase in growth. Other sources of income, such as a solid pension plan, can allow this demographic to travel with greater purchasing power. We also found that this group has more leisure time and therefore travels longer than the other groups.

Since the early 1990s, this age group has been an important tourism market target. The cluster is said to contain everything: mature age, money, maturity, and so on. Many older people felt younger than their own. As senior groups are important targets for marketing ideas. Thus, there is a need to further investigate their interests, types of activities that suit them, as well as their tendency to participate in leisure activities, recreation and tourism. Studies show that older people can physically travel and participate in tour operator activities (Patterson & Pegg, 2009).

### **3. Methodology**

In this study, we employed quantitative analysis, using descriptive statistics. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to examine the data. A total of 371 responses were received via Google form and by hand. The back-translation method was used by engaging an English lecturer to review unintelligible or vague words. The questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section probed demographic data of the respondents. The second section contained questions based on items developed by Woo et al. (2014). The items were categorised by five push factor dimensions. The five push factors were a novelty, entertainment, relaxation, socialization, and internal motivations. The third section accommodates items on pull factors developed by Jang and Wu et al. (2006). The dimensions in the pull factor section include cleanliness and safety, facilities, and also natural and historical sights. A five-point Likert scale, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree" was employed as the rating scale.

Participation was discreet, and the content validity was verified. Before collecting actual data, a pre-test was undertaken to safeguard the questionnaire from potential question-construction issues and to assess its content validity and language. Face validity was determined by giving the measurement questions to a small focus group of six local community respondents. A pilot study was also carried out to assess the instrument's dependability. A total of 35 people responded to the survey using Google Form for this pilot study in November of 2021. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to evaluate the scale's consistency, and all items had a value of more than 0.7, ranging from 0.750 to 0.855. The result of the pilot test indicated that most of the items used to measure the variables had a mean score of more than 3.0, which was more than the average score of the five-point Likert scale.

**4. Finding and Analysis**

The questionnaires were sent to the research samples where the respondents were senior tourists aged between 55-70 years old and above. Based on the demographic data, there were 172 (49.0%) male respondents and 179 (51.0%) female respondents. Most respondents were Malay with 319 (90.9 %) responses, followed by Chinese with 19 (5.4%) responses and 13 (3.7%) respondents were of Indian descendants. The majority of respondents were married (82.6%), four (1.1%) were not married, and 57 (16.2%) were widows/widowers. In terms of profession, the majority of respondents (26.2 %) were government employees, followed by industrial workers (15.4 %). Most respondents have a monthly income of between RM 1000 and RM 2999, which comprised 163 respondents (46%). Contrariwise, only 13 (3.7 %) respondents reported an income of more than RM 7000, and 65 (18.5%) respondents receive less than RM 999 per month.

**4.1 The Push Factors**

Table 4.2 compares the mean score of push factors of senior tourists ranked in 14 orders from a total push attribute. The factor presenting the highest score in this research was resting and relaxing ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.72/ SD = 0.625). The second higher score included enjoying your life ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.70/ SD = 0.627), then follow by escaping from everyday routine ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.52/ SD = 0.774) and feeling a sense of self-fulfilment ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.34/SD = 0.743), visiting friends and relatives who live in Langkawi was ranked as the moderate ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.41/SD = 1.220).

Table 4.1 Mean and standard deviation value of the push factors (N=351)

Push Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
Resting and relaxing	4.72	0.625
Enjoy your life	4.70	0.627
Escaping from everyday routine	4.52	0.774
Feeling a sense of self-fulfilment	4.34	0.743
Visiting places I have always wanted to go	4.04	0.728
Nostalgic reminiscence	4.01	0.913
Visiting new places	3.96	0.732
Experiencing different culture	3.68	0.752
Seeing the things that I don't normally see	3.56	0.746
Meeting new people and socializing while travelling	3.56	0.876
Improving health/physical fitness	3.54	0.931
Seeing how other people live	3.47	0.692
Visiting friends and relatives who live in Langkawi	3.41	1.220
Having opportunities for doing sport	3.20	0.907

The highest mean score for senior tourists who go to Langkawi was for resting and relaxation is 4.72, with a standard deviation of 0.625. The statistic also showed that 77.5% of senior tourists strongly agreed about resting and relaxing while only 0.6% disagreed. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score was for “having opportunities for doing sports”, with 3.20 and 0.907 standard deviations. Also, the result showed that only 37.0% of senior tourists strongly agreed about nostalgic reminiscence.

**4.2 The Pull Factors**

Table 4.16 compared the mean score of pull factors of senior tourists, which has 12 questions. The factor presenting the highest score in this research was the availability of shopping facilities ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.49/ SD = 0.570). The second higher score included outstanding scenery ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.32/ SD = 0.638), overall cost of vacation ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.25/ SD = 0.576 and public transportation ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.19/ SD = 0.533). Facilities for physical activities were ranked as the moderate ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.32/ SD = 0.784).

Table 4.2 Mean and standard deviation value of the pull factors (N=351)

Pull Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Availability of shopping facilities	4.49	0.570
Outstanding scenery	4.32	0.638
Overall cost of vacation	4.25	0.576
Public transportation	4.19	0.523
Environment quality of air, water and soil	4.16	0.623

Historical sight	4.11	0.776
Standard of cleanliness	4.08	0.597
Special event and attraction	4.04	0.741
Safety and security	3.99	0.609
Nice weather	3.82	0.700
Walking paths	3.38	0.743
Facilities for physical activities	3.32	0.784

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The highest mean score for pull factors was for the availability of shopping facilities, 4.49, with a standard deviation of 0.570. In other words, 52.4% of senior tourists strongly agreed about the availability of shopping facilities. On the other hand, the lowest mean score for outstanding scenery is 4.32, with a standard deviation of 0.638. At the same time, the statistic also showed that 49% of senior tourists agreed that outstanding scenery is the pulling factor for them to visit Langkawi.

## 5. Conclusion

This research aims to determine the travel motivation of senior tourists and their preferences in the decisions of domestic destinations. The study reconfirms that senior tourists' motivations to travel are driven by both internal (push factors) and external forces (pull factors). Looking at the factors that emerged as push attributes, this study revealed that resting and relaxing appeared to be the most significant motive that prompts the senior tourists to travel to Langkawi. Other than that, push motivation factors comprised the attributes relating to the desire to undertake travel activities. Consequently, these factors allow the seniors to learn about a new culture, encounter the locals, learn from them their ways of life and meet with new people at the visited destination. This finding is consistent with that previous studies about the importance of novelty-seeking as the main motive driving seniors to visit new places (Jang and Wu, 2006; Jang et al., 2009). This finding is also consistent with that previous studies about the importance of novelty-seeking as the ultimate motive driving seniors to visit new places (Jang and Wu, 2006; Jang et al., 2009).

Apart from that, this study finding showed that visiting friends and relatives was the least motivating push factor. This outcome is contrary to Hallberg and Klevmarcken (2003), who believe that social contact is motivated by a want to spend time with family and friends, as well as a desire to meet new individuals outside of one's usual circle of acquaintance. Simultaneously, the finding demonstrated that the availability of shopping facilities was considered the most important factor that draws senior tourists to Langkawi. This finding is consistent with that of Prayag (2012) who finds that the role of destination attractions and supporting facilities as the important pulling factors for the seniors to choose a destination.

The similarities between those discovered in previous research on shopping centre attraction variables have centred on the prospect of developing a model to predict the need for attraction and the intention to visit (Ortegón-Cortázar & Royo-Vela, 2017). This is rather expected, as Langkawi was declared a duty-free port on 1 January 1987. Also, this study revealed that outstanding scenery was the second-highest of pull factor. There are similarities with Jang and Wu (2003) study in that natural and historical sights appeared to be an important motivational factor in senior tourists. This result is no surprise as well, as Langkawi is the most beautiful island in Malaysia and is a popular choice for senior tourists to vacation.

Overall, for push factors, most senior tourists travel because they need time for relaxation, revel in their life, and get away from daily routine while the lowest response is having opportunities for doing sport. Senior tourists agree due to age factors and uncertain health issues. Contrariwise, for pull factors, senior tourists seek for the accessibility of shopping facilities, exceptional panorama, and how much they pay for the retreat, whilst the least factor was facilities for physical activities. This is well-expected as senior tourists' level of well-being is suggestively declining and rigorous physical activities could be the last thing their mind while travelling.

Admittedly, there were limitations while doing this study. Firstly, the case study of Langkawi might not represent other domestic attractions. Secondly, findings from this research could not be compared with non-senior tourists' studies. Thirdly, in an ideal scenario, this study should track the same people over ten years' period. However, given the limited resources and nature of the senior tourist, it will be difficult to achieve. Hence, future research could expand investigations of senior tourist motivation in multiple settings and time samples in a year to test and generalize findings. It is also suggested that more studies should investigate the relationship between senior tourist satisfaction. This study could be repeated in 2023 to identify and confirm additional patterns and changes in the senior tourists' travel motivation.

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