Using an intersectionality perspective to uncover older Chinese female's perceived travel constraints and negotiation strategies

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H I G H L I G H T S

- The intersectionality framework enhances the study of perceived constraints.
- Different intersections of social identities and culture affect constraints.
- Older Chinese females encounter eight types of travel constraints.
- The intersection of social identities and culture affects negotiation strategies.
- This study uncovered six negotiation strategies, e.g., "donkey travel".

A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This study employed an intersectionality perspective to examine older Chinese female's perceived constraints to pleasure travel and how they negotiated through constraints while accounting for multiple intersected identities of age (older), gender (females), and race (Asian-Chinese). Results showed that eight types of constraints impact their travel behavior: "limited knowledge of tourism," "health and safety concerns," "culture shock," "lack of travel partners," "low quality service facilities," "limited availability of information," "negative reputation of tour guide," and "few employer-paid vacations." Study participants also discussed how they negotiated through constraints using strategies, i.e., "word-of-mouth advertising," "group travel with friends," "donkey travel," "finding partners through square dancing," "children's support," and "being motivated to taste organic foods and breath fresh air." The findings provided a glimpse into potential modifications to constraint theory and revealed how tourism marketers can target and serve older female tourists in China by providing opportunities for them to negotiate through constraints.

1. Introduction

Research on constraints to participation in leisure activities is decades old. Much of it builds on the Hierarchical Constraints Model (HCM: Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991), and assumes that when people have the freedom and desire to participate in leisure activities, constraining factors may hinder their participation (Raymore, 2002). In some cases, these constraining factors can be negotiated and participation may occur (Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993). Scarce within the amalgamation of studies on leisure constraints is

research on constraints to traveling for pleasure (Hudson & Gilbert, 1999). Hinch and Jackson (2000), Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter (2002), Nyaupane and Andereck (2008), and Hung and Petrick (2012) are a few of the researchers who have used the HCM to study constraints to pleasure travel.

Much of the constraints research conducted in a pleasure travel context has focused heavily on situational inhibitors (e.g., lack of transportation, crowding) or socio-demographic (e.g., age, income) constraints (Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008), and has assumed that constraints are immovable, static obstacles to participation (Jackson, 2005). According to Watson and Scraton (2013), this assumption is counterintuitive. Constraints are dynamic and can change with the political, social, and material consequences of gender, race, class, and aging (Davis, 2008). Thus, researchers should use an intersectionality perspective to analyze the specific

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circumstances encountered by individuals, while maintaining an explanatory and analytical perspective that retains a focus on systems and processes (Valentine, 2007, 2010).

Using intersectionality as a guiding theoretical framework, we aim to reveal how pleasure travel constraints evolve and operate by taking multiple intersections of an individual's identity into consideration. We do this by recognizing the political, social and material consequences of age (older), race (Chinese), and gender (females) on pleasure travel constraints. Our decision to account for age, specifically individuals 50 years of age or older[1] (from now on referred to as "older adults"), when studying pleasure travel constraints was because they represent over one-fourth of China's pleasure travel market (China National Tourism Administration [CNTA], 2014), and by 2020, will represent a bit over one-third of China's population (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). In addition, the impact older adults will have on the tourism industry is expected to be unprecedented (Paxson, 2009; Sedgley, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2011).

With respect to age (older adults) and race, the United Nations (2015) projects that 78% of the world's older population will be living in less developed or developing countries by 2050; China alone is expected to be home to 437 million people aged 50 and over. Adding gender and activity participation into the mix, older Chinese females are very likely to have free time to travel due to the country's retirement policy, which requires that they retire years earlier than men (China Daily, 2015). Evidence also suggests that females spend more on travel than males (CNTA, 2011; Patterson & Pegg, 2011). Although evidence has shown that nine out of ten females want to travel after they retire, many don't (Li & Zhong, 2011), perhaps because of constraints (Um & Crompton, 1992). We, therefore, focused on older Chinese females in this study and examined their reasons for non-participation in pleasure travel.

This study had two objectives: (1) to identify older Chinese female's perception of constraints to pleasure travel and (2) to document how those who choose to travel for pleasure negotiate through constraints. The results of this study will contribute to tourism and leisure constraints scholarship in a number of ways. First, by adopting an intersectionality perspective, we will gain greater insight to travel constraints and negotiation strategies by accounting for multiple social identities of individuals (e.g., age, gender) and their mutually constitutive relations within these socially connected identities. Moreover, results from this study will reveal the role that culture, in concert with other social identities (i.e., age, gender, race), plays in the evolution of constraints. Chick and Dong (2003) and Shinew, Floyd, and Parry (2004) have demonstrated that constraints vary in different cultural contexts. In this study the sample is comprised of older Chinese females from the Han ethnic group. Second, from a practical perspective, documenting older Chinese females' perceived constraints to pleasure travel and their resultant negotiation strategies will help tourism professionals and marketers create better products and services that will meet their needs. Such action will also theoretically contribute to older Chinese females' sense of well-being (Hsu, Cai, & Wong, 2007).

2. Literature review

2.1. Intersectionality and tourism scholarship

The intersectionality perspective, which originates from feminist scholarship introduced in the early 1970s, accounts for the intersection of gender with other significant social identities, such as race (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). Intersectionality commonly refers to "the mutually constitutive relations among social identities" (Shields, 2008, p. 301). Considering the fact that there is no single identity category that satisfactorily describes how individuals respond to their social environment, Shields (2008) suggests viewing identities as intersectional and emergent in relation to one another.

Most behavioral science researchers have treated intersectionality as a "perspective" rather than as a "theory" (Bowleg, 2008; Gamson & Moon, 2004). They have revealed that individuals' social identities profoundly influence their beliefs about and experience of a single identity category (e.g., gender; Shields, 2008). As a result, individuals' social location as reflected in their intersecting identities must be at the forefront of any investigation of a single identity category, such as age and gender, which needs to be understood in the context of power relations embedded in social identities (Collins, 2000; Haukeland, 1990). Further, the intersectionality perspective requires researchers to move beyond their own comfort zone and make an effort to see things from the worldview of others (Walker, 2003). Employing the intersectionality perspective in tourism scholarship will provide invaluable insight to the study of tourists because researchers must: (a) center on inequalities and multiple identities, and (b) conceptualize individuals as gendered, raced and classed, but also as having other aspects of identity, such as being aged, sexed and sexualized, abled and disabled (Watson & Scraton, 2013).

The majority of research on older travelers has focused on segmenting the overall market based on preferences, and behavioral and decision-making patterns (e.g., Jang & Wu, 2004; Kang, Hsu, & Wolfe, 2003; Patterson, 2007). Few researchers have addressed older females and travel, and none have accounted for intersectionalities between gender, age, race, and other aspects of females' identity.

In 1988 Hawes generated travel-related lifestyle profiles for older females, suggesting that they could be segmented based on age, psychographics, and media preference characteristics. Transportation researchers have found that older females drive less and travel shorter distances than males (Collia, Sharp, & Glesbrecht, 2003), which may be due to their intersecting identities as caretakers, employees, and more (Root, Schintler, & Button, 2000). Their travel behavior may also be impacted by lower income levels, less access to private vehicles, and risk aversion (Abdel-Aty, Kitamura, & Jobanis, 1996; Mensah, 1995).

Methodologically, adopting the intersectionality perspective gives voice to marginalized groups (Choo & Ferree, 2010). Hearing from Chinese females in this study context is important as they are, in increasing numbers, beginning to travel and buy travel and travel-related products. Further, adopting the intersectionality perspective allows tourism researchers to deconstruct data at both individual (e.g., age) and collective (e.g., social location) levels, conduct their analyses more thoughtfully, and interpret their results in a more meaningful way. To the best of our knowledge, there is no empirically-based tourism research that has adopted an intersectionality perspective.

2.2. Constraints and negotiation

As early as the 1980s, researchers began to explore constraints, which were initially conceived of as barriers (Jackson & Searle, 1985; Jackson, 1988); insurmountable obstacles (Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 1985); risk (Moutinho, 1987); or inhibitors (Um & Crompton, 1992) to individuals' leisure participation. Early researchers believed that the presence of constraints resulted in

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[1] The American Association of Retired Persons considers individuals 50 years of age or older to be an "older adult." The government's retirement policy dictates who may be considered an older adult (Hayutin, 2008). In China, most women are forced to retire in their early 50s.