

Chapter 3

Older Tourists' Travel Planning Behavior

Abstract The travel planning process comprises all the steps that occur from the perception of a travel need to the post-consumption phase. During this process, older tourists take several decisions which are interrelated and evolve over time. Core travel decisions are usually planned in advance and concern elements such as destination choice, length of the trip, type of travel organization, and travel companions. This chapter explores older tourists' travel planning behavior by investigating some crucial determinants of core travel decisions. Specifically, internal determinants include travel needs and motivations, and travel constraints, while external determinants include information sources and pull attributes of the destination.

3.1 Understanding the Travel Planning Process

The tourism product is a combination of heterogeneous elements. It has been described as “an amalgam of tangible and intangible factors” (Hall and Lew 2009, p. 33) that includes everything that tourists experience. Since travel services are intangible in nature, tourists cannot evaluate them before actual consumption and therefore travel decisions imply a certain level of perceived risks. From a tourist's perspective, the travel planning process comprises all the phases from the perception of a travel need to the post-travel phase (Horner and Swarbrooke 2016).

Tourism scholars have proposed several travel planning models in which decisions are thought to evolve in sequential phases (Mathieson and Wall 1982; Moutinho 1987; Um and Crompton 1990). One of the most widely known is the travel-buying behavior model by Mathieson and Wall (1982). According to the authors, the decision-making process involves five main steps: (1) felt need or desire for travel, (2) information collection and evaluation, (3) travel decisions, (4) travel preparations and travel experience, and (5) travel satisfaction evaluation. Moutinho (1987) elaborated to consider not only the present decision-making process, but also future travel decisions, which are influenced by the actual decision-making process. Specifically, the model consists of a flow chart with three

parts: (1) pre-decision and decision-making process, (2) post-purchase evaluation, and (3) future decision-making. Conversely, Um and Crompton (1990) proposed a framework for the destination selection process, which includes three stages: (1) composition of awareness, (2) evoked set, and (3) final destination set.

Even though these models have contributed greatly to the advancement of knowledge in travel behavior, recent research has expressed criticism toward their simplified approach and deterministic view of the decision-making process (Fesenmaier and Jeng 2000; Jeng and Fesenmaier 2002). Scholars argue that the decision to travel is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic process involving many determinants. In relation to this, the advent of low-cost flights has changed the order in which travel choices are made: tourists with a limited budget may place the availability of budget flights before decisions concerning the destination selection. Further, travel decision-making presents a hierarchical structure in which travel decisions are “temporal, dynamic, successive, multistage, and contingent processes that evolve though the course of travel planning” (Choi et al. 2012, p. 27). In other words, the decisions tourists make (for example, the destination) are not single independent choices about separate elements, but rather are complex decisions in which multiple choices are interrelated and evolve over time (Fesenmaier and Jeng 2000; Choi et al. 2012). Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000) proposed a multistage hierarchical trip decision model in which all the sub-decisions have different levels of perceived importance. Specifically, the authors identified three stages of decisions:

- (1) core decisions, which are planned in advance, are inflexible, and include, for example, the primary destination, length of trip, travel companions, accommodations, and travel budget;
- (2) secondary decisions, which are planned prior to the trip, but are still subject to possible changes, and include, for example, secondary destinations, activities, and attractions;
- (3) en route decisions, which are taken when tourists are actually on vacation and are seeking alternatives, for example, about rest stops, restaurants, and shopping places.

This model was further extended by Jeng and Fesenmaier (2002), who proposed that the travel planning process includes a sequential information search, information processing, and decision processing. Based on these premises, Choi et al. (2012) empirically tested the multidimensionality, sequential, and hierarchical nature of travel decision-making among Chinese tourists. The respondents were asked to indicate the approximate timing of different travel choice components in a multistage sequence (before purchase, at time of purchase, after purchase, after arriving at destination). The findings validated the study by Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000) and showed that destination, departure dates, trip lengths, and travel budgets were decided early in the decision-making process, in the before-purchase and before-the-trip phase.

In addition, Horner and Swarbrooke (1996, 2016) emphasized the complexity of the travel planning process by showing how the tourist decision is influenced both by internal factors, such as socio-demographic and psychographic characteristics, and external factors, such as available information, available travel services and destination characteristics.

The remainder of the chapter analyzes older tourists' travel planning process by combining the model on internal–external factors proposed by Horner and Swarbrooke (1996) and the theoretical framework proposed by Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000). The internal factors considered for the purpose of this study comprise travel needs and motivations, and travel constraints (Sect. 3.3), while external factors include information sources, pull factors, and destination choice (Sect. 3.4). Next, Sect. 3.5 reviews some of the core decisions older tourists make in their travel planning process. These are primary decisions that are usually taken in advance in the pre-trip phase (Fesenmaier and Jeng 2000) and they concern destination choice, accommodation choice, length of stay, travel organization, and travel companions.

3.2 The Travel Planning Process Among Older Tourists

Depending on several factors, such as tourists' characteristics or the availability of travel-related information, the travel planning process can vary in terms of complexity and length of time required. With regard to older tourists, Ross (2005) argues that tourists with higher needs for cultural contact, family and friends, and sociability tend to prefer to plan their trip in advance. Hence, older tourists can present a variety of problem-solving preferences regarding travel planning. Specifically, Ross (2005) found that about half of the sample preferred to plan most of the travel details before going on vacation, while about one third of the respondents preferred the freedom of a day-to-day planning approach, facing problems as they arose during the travel experience. In addition, research has shown that travel planning might be related to tourists' age in that older tourists tend to plan their trips more in detail than younger tourists (Hyde 2008).

The preparation for travel is also believed to generate meaning in itself in the life of older adults. As explained by Moal-Ulvoas and Taylor (2014, p. 549), travel preparation enables the older traveler to:

... create meaning at home in the form of learning about the future travel destination through the Internet and travel brochures, preparing his [sic] personal belongings for the trip, and projecting himself [sic] as a traveler to a specific destination.

In addition, Alén et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of knowing the time tourists spend on planning their travels for all those involved in the tourism industry in order to develop effective communication and marketing campaigns. However, despite the importance of the topic, little has been researched with regard to older tourists.

3.3 Determinants of Core Decisions: Internal Factors

3.3.1 *Travel Needs and Motivations*

People travel to respond to a certain need that has become strong enough to motivate them to act. In this sense, a travel need can be described as a sense of deficiency or deprivation perceived in the difference between an individual's ideal state and actual state, which generates an inner tension (Fodness 1994). When someone becomes aware of that need, a travel motivation arises and directs a person's behavior to satisfy that need. Recent literature has supported that travel needs and motivations continue to evolve and change over time (Tiago et al. 2016); however, some studies argue that travel motivations remain stable over time (Cleaver et al. 1999; Shoemaker 2000; Boksberger and Laesser 2008). For example, Chen and Shoemaker (2014) used empirical data collected in 1986, 1996 and 2006 among Pennsylvanian residents and found that the travel motivations of older tourists do not change dramatically across life cycle stages and generations. Specifically, five factors for travel motivation emerged: to experience new things, to socialize, to rest and relax, to engage in physical activities, and to visit casinos and tell friends. In general, the tourism literature has long recognized the importance of investigating travel motivations in order to develop successful marketing strategies to satisfy tourists' needs and expectations (Crompton 1979; Sangpikul 2008a).

Motivation has been defined as the state of need that pushes the individual toward actions that are likely to generate satisfaction (Moutinho 1987). Guinn (1980) conducted an early study about the leisure motivations of retired recreational vehicle tourists and identified five types of travel motivations: rest and relaxation, association with friends and family, physical exercise, learning experience, and self-fulfillment. Later, Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) identified two main dimensions in travel motivations: escaping and seeking. While some older individuals would be motivated to travel to escape from routine and stressful environments, some others would be motivated to travel in order to seek personal or interpersonal rewards (Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987). Escapism and seeking also emerged as key travel motivations in several subsequent studies. For example, Boksberger and Laesser (2008) segmented the older travel market in Switzerland by travel motivation. They identified three key segments—namely, time honored bon vivants, grizzled explorers and retro travelers. The authors emphasize that “exploration” and “relaxation” proved to be the core motives among older tourists, thus recalling the dimensions of escaping and seeking provided by Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987).

The tourism literature has often classified travel motivations according to push and pull factors. As argued by Boksberger and Laesser (2009), the underlying push and pull theoretical framework assumes that tourists are pushed by their own needs and motivations and pulled by the elements of destination attractiveness (Dann 1981). Push factors have been addressed in several studies about older tourists as motivations or desires for traveling (You and O'Leary 1999; Norman et al. 2001; Huang and Tsai 2003; Jang and Wu 2006; Sangpikul 2008b); they have also been

used as a segmentation variable for older tourists (Chap. 2). In contrast, pull factors refer to destination attractiveness elements rather than to internal motivations (Sangpikul 2008a), and they therefore will be addressed in a dedicated section of this chapter (Sect. 3.4.2). Based on the analysis of push and pull factors, You and O’Leary (1999) explored older British travelers and grouped them into three segments: “passive visitors,” “the enthusiastic go-getters,” and “the culture hounds.” The authors argued that these segments differed in terms of demographic characteristics, activity participation, and travel philosophy. In particular, the push factors that motivate passive visitors are visiting friends and relatives. Those that motivate the enthusiastic go-getters are relationship purposes (being together as a family), novelty seeking, knowledge enhancement, and escapism. Finally, cultural and heritage-related activities are the main push factors for the culture hounds.

Further, Norman et al. (2001) explored push factors, defined as travel benefits, among older tourists in the United States. The study revealed six underlying motivations to travel: escape, education, family, action, relaxation, and ego. The findings also pointed out significant differences in travel motivations between “neo-mature market members” (aged 50–64) and “veteran-mature market members” (aged 65+) for four push factors (escape, education, action, and relaxation). Similarly, Huang and Tsai (2003) studied Taiwanese older tourists’ travel motivations. The majority of respondents traveled to “get rest and relaxation,” followed by those who traveled to “meet people and socialize.” The next most important travel motivation factor was “to spend time with family,” followed by “visiting new places,” and “seeking intellectual and spiritual enhancement.” Telling their friends about their trip and engaging in physical activities were the least important motivations in travel decisions. In contrast, the findings of a study conducted in the Taiwanese market by Jang and Wu (2006) reveal that “knowledge-seeking” was considered the most important motivation by older tourists, especially among older women. Other motivations factors were “ego-enhancement” and “self-esteem.” These results are corroborated by Sangpikul (2008b), who explored the motivations of older Japanese tourists traveling to Thailand. Sangpikul (2008b) identified three push factors: “novelty and knowledge-seeking,” “rest and relaxation,” and “ego-enhancement.” Among them, “novelty and knowledge-seeking” was the most important motivation to travel abroad. The same push factors to travel to Thailand emerged also in a study conducted among older American tourists (Sangpikul 2008a) and, once again, “novelty and knowledge-seeking” was found to be the most important push factor for traveling to overseas destinations.

The conceptual framework of push motivations was also used by Musa and Sim (2010) in their study of older adults in Malaysia. The findings show that the main travel motivations are related to social interaction, thus supporting previous studies (e.g., You and O’Leary 1999; Huang and Tsai 2003). Specifically, “to spend time with friends or family” was the most frequently quoted reason for travel, in both domestic and foreign travel. The second most frequent motivation was “relaxation,” followed by the motivation “to give self a treat,” which could be interpreted as a kind of self-fulfillment desire (Jang and Wu 2006). Learning and religious purposes were less important among respondents.

More recently, Ward (2014) segmented older Irish tourists based on push and pull motivations. The travel motivations considered included “escaping,” “exploring,” “spiritual and social,” “physical and entertainment,” and “family focused.” These motivations differed among the clusters. The “enthusiastic travelers” were motivated mainly by exploring and socialization factors. In this sense, they are similar to the enthusiastic go-getters identified by You and O’Leary (1999). The “cultural explorers” were motivated by the exploring factor and a desire to learn. The “escapists,” which represent the largest segment, were motivated mostly by a desire to escape the daily routine, while the “spiritual travelers” presented spirituality and socialization as the dominant motivations.

Following a different approach, Horneman et al. (2002) profiled older travelers according to their demographic and psychographic characteristics and they identified significant differences in travel motivations among market segments. The most important motivations for travel included “traveling while their health is good,” “spending time with family and friends,” “visiting places” they had always wanted to see, and “having a break from routine.” Conversely, “spending money,” “being able to tell others,” “a partner’s preference for travel,” and “being adventurous” were not important motivations. The role of health as a key travel motivation for older individuals also emerged in subsequent studies. For example, a study conducted by Kim et al. (2003) on the over 50s market in Australia, which examined the motivations pushing older persons into travel, indicates that health and well-being, making new friends, companionship, and taking part in activities were the most significant factors. In recent years, several studies have pointed out that older individuals are animated by well-being motives. In particular, wellness tourism activities are pursued by individuals who want to maintain and enhance their personal health and well-being (Smith and Puczko 2014). Extant studies have shown that older tourists travel to health resorts and spas seeking the benefits of natural resources combined with recreational facilities (Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper 2009). Freire (2013) emphasized that the majority of thermal tourists are older travelers. Similarly, Kurtulmuşoğlu and Esiyok (2016) explored the motivations of thalassotherapy¹ tourists across two age groups: 54 years and under, and 55 years and over. The findings show that the older age group was more sensitive to income levels but less sensitive to distance and education than the under-54 age group. The authors concluded that emphasis placed on health-related issues and a longer life expectancy increases the demand for thalassotherapy.

Other studies identified the role of nostalgia as a travel motivation for older adults. For example, Cleaver et al. (1999) identified seven travel motivation-based clusters, namely “nostalgics,” “friendlylies,” “learners,” “escapists,” “seekers,” “status-seekers,” and “physicals.” The first four segments accounted for 83% of the analyzed market. Nostalgics tended to renew memories, to achieve family togetherness, and to revisit places that recall pleasant aspects of their past. Friendlylies were

¹Thalassotherapy is a type of thermal tourism and consists in the use of the special features of the marine environment for protective and treatment purposes.

motivated by the desire to meet new people and make new friends. Learners were moved by a desire to make new experiences, discover the world, and learn new things. Finally, escapist travelers traveled to get away from the responsibilities of daily life and to rest and relax. In a subsequent study, Sellick (2004) found that nostalgia was an important travel motive for the largest segment of older travelers. However, the cognitively younger, wealthier, healthier, and better educated older individuals were motivated to travel for discovery and self-enhancement. In another study, Tung and Ritchie (2011) identified nostalgia reenactment as one of the factors related to memorable travel experiences for older tourists.

In addition, by adopting a grounded theory approach, Hsu et al. (2007) proposed a tourism motivations model for older Chinese tourists. The model consists of two main components: (1) external conditions, such as societal progress, personal finance, time, and health; and (2) internal desires, such as improving well-being, escaping routines, socializing, seeking knowledge, pride and patriotism, personal reward, and nostalgia. In particular, Hsu et al. (2007) argue that, compared with more developed countries, Chinese have a greater emotional attachment to their roots and their nostalgic desire as a travel motivation is stronger.

In their study among older Koreans, Lee and Tideswell (2005) found that the most popular motivations for travel were to experience natural attractions, to visit new places and experience new things, to rest and relax, and to occupy free time. Most respondents also stated that they traveled to stay healthy, thus supporting previous studies (Horneman et al. 2002; Kim et al. 2003). Conversely, to meet new people or to socialize were not considered relevant motivations. In addition, older Koreans did not travel to tell other people about their trip.

The role of self-actualization as a travel motivation was addressed by Le Serre and Chevalier (2012). Self-actualization could be described as a process whose purpose is “to reduce the gap between the individual’s actual self-concept and his/her ideal self-concept” (Le Serre and Chevalier 2012, p. 263). Self-actualization recalls the self-fulfillment and self-enhancement motivations identified by Jang and Wu (2006). Le Serre and Chevalier (2012) argue that with older age, self-actualization becomes increasingly important as a travel motivation. In their study among French retirees, four travel motivations were identified and were used to profile clusters: “social motivation” (e.g., spending time with friends and building friendships), “relaxation,” “sport,” and “intellectual motivation,” which was described as the desire to increase knowledge and discover new places and things.

While exploring the motivations of baby boomers in a large European survey, Tiago et al. (2016) found that the main travel motivation was the sun or the beach, followed by visiting family and friends, and nature adventures. The secondary motivations were wellness, spa and health treatments, and city trips. Even though overall similarities in travel motivations emerged between men and women, women were slightly more inclined than men to travel in order to spend time with their families, relatives, and friends.

In addition, recent research has emphasized the connection between travel motivation, travel intention, and time perspectives, which describes the degree of emphasis a person places on the past, the present or the future (Scheibe and

Carstensen 2010). In a study conducted among older Chinese individuals, Lu et al. (2016) explored these relationships with regard to outbound travel. While several travel motivation factors emerged, “knowledge enhancement” was the most important. “Self-fulfillment,” “socializing,” “pleasure seeking,” and “sensation seeking” were rated as moderately important, and “escape” was not considered an important motive for outbound travel. The findings of this research also suggest that although time orientation is critical in determining older tourists’ inner desire to travel abroad, it is mediated by travel motivation. Specifically, an individual’s present-time orientation is a crucial stimulus of the desire to travel through sensation seeking and self-fulfillment, while future-time orientation influences outbound travel intention through self-fulfillment and knowledge enhancement.

Table 3.1 reports the main types of travel motivation emerging from the literature review.

Table 3.1 Travel motivations of older tourists

Travel motivation	Author(s) (year)		
	Eighties/nineties	2000–2009	2010–2016
Escapism/relaxation	Guinn (1980) Shoemaker (1989)	Shoemaker (2000) Norman et al. (2001) Huang and Tsai (2003) Clever Sellick (2004) Lee and Tideswell (2005) Boksberger and Laesser (2008) Sangpikul (2008b)	Musa and Sim (2010) Le Serre and Chevalier (2012) Ward (2014)
Seeking/exploration	Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987)	Lee and Tideswell (2005) Boksberger and Laesser (2008)	Chen and Shoemaker (2014) Ward (2014)
Social interaction	Guinn (1980) Shoemaker (1989) Clever et al. (1999)	Huang and Tsai (2003) Clever Sellick (2004) Lee and Tideswell (2005)	Musa and Sim (2010) Le Serre and Chevalier (2012) Ward (2014) Tiago et al. (2016) Lu et al. (2016)
Health/wellbeing		Horneman et al. (2002) Kim et al. (2003) Lee and Tideswell (2005)	Freire (2013) Kurtulmuşoğlu and Esiyok (2016)
Learning/education	Guinn (1980) Clever et al. (1999)	Norman et al. (2001) Clever Sellick (2004)	Lu et al. (2016)
Self-esteem	Clever et al. (1999)	Clever Sellick (2004) Jang and Wu (2006) Sangpikul (2008b)	Musa and Sim (2010) Le Serre and Chevalier (2012) Lu et al. (2016)
Nostalgia	Clever et al. (1999)	Clever Sellick (2004)	Tung and Ritchie (2011)

Source Author’s elaboration

3.3.2 *Travel Constraints*

As argued by Romsa and Blenman (1989, p. 180) both “perceived and real constraints modify the spatial patterns of vacations over time.” If the motivation to travel is strong enough, barriers to travel may be negotiated, even though they have the potential to influence the means of travel as well as destination choices (Gladwell and Bedini 2004). Therefore, understanding what factors prevent or limit tourists from traveling is crucial both for tourism scholars and for practitioners. However, this topic has received little attention with regard to older tourists (Hung et al. 2015; Kazeminia et al. 2015).

As reported by Alén et al. (2016), one of the first studies on the barriers to older tourists include that conducted by McGuire (1984), who identified the main barriers to leisure time of this group as being: external resources (lack of information, too much planning required, lack of money, lack of appropriate clothing and lack of transport); time factors (lack of time, need to work, interruption of normal routine, and too many other things to do); lack of approval (disapproval by family and friends, fear of making a mistake, having to make too many decisions); lack of skills or company (not knowing how to do it, lack of skills, and lack of company); and physical well-being (lack of energy, health reasons, the climate, and being too old or too dependent). These findings also suggest a relationship between socio-demographic variables and barriers to traveling for older tourists. For example, individuals who do not travel because of a lack of time usually possess a higher educational level and higher income, and those who do not travel for health reasons are usually older and less educated (McGuire 1984).

Concerns about physical well-being also emerged as the main travel barriers in subsequent studies. Fleischer and Pizam (2002) studied how travel constraints are not homogeneous among older tourist and tend to change with age. They found that among older tourists (aged 65+) the health constraint becomes prominent and reduces the length of vacation. Similarly, Kim et al. (2003) found that older Israelis considered falling ill, doctor availability, theft, personal security and peace of mind, safety, and hygiene and sanitation were the highest concerns among older tourist. In addition, in a qualitative study of British individuals aged between 57 and 81, Hunter-Jones and Blackburn (2007) explored the role of self-assessed health in travel decisions. Respondents expressed anxieties about visiting a long-haul or less developed destination, injections, flight durations, humidity, and risk as critical aspects. Some respondents also expressed concerns about health insurance. Nyaupane et al. (2008) found that younger age groups (59 years old or younger) were more likely to be constrained by time and money, whereas older individuals (aged 75 years and older) were constrained by health issues.

In addition, in their study of the Taiwanese population, Huang and Tsai (2003) identified three dimensions of travel barriers. The first is travelers’ capability, which refers to tourists’ physical ability, fear of leaving their home unattended, financial considerations, and the lack of travel companions. The second factor relates to travel direct suppliers and includes attributes such as dietary considerations, lack of information on where to go, and fear of not having a good time and wasting money.

The third factor concerns indirect travel motivation and includes items regarding fear of hassles, finding the time, and age-related problems.

In their study among older Koreans, Lee and Tideswell (2005) also found that psychological barriers (i.e., older tourists' perceptions about being "too old to travel" or friends/family members telling them so) played a major role in affecting travel intentions, whereas few constraints emerged from a physical, financial, or practical point of view.

Some studies found that concerns about safety can act as a travel barrier for older tourists. For example, Lindqvist and Björk (2000) argued that perceived safety is an important factor in older Finnish tourists' decision-making and that the perceived importance of this factor increases with aging. Safety and security represent an important concern for older Taiwanese (Jang and Wu 2006) and for older Malaysians (Musa and Sim 2010). In a recent qualitative study, Gao and Kerstetter (2016) specifically explored the travel constraints of older Chinese women. The main concerns regarding travel were "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."

Several scholars explored travel barriers in relation to occupation status, often in association with economic and time constraints. Blazey (1992) also argued that older tourists' work situation could act as a travel barrier. Specifically, older individuals who are still working are more influenced by economic and time barriers than are those who are retired. Conversely, for retired individuals, health represents a bigger barrier to traveling than it does to those who are not retired. Retired individuals are generally considered to have more available time (Fleischer and Pizam 2002; Sund and Boksberger 2007; Alén et al. 2014; Losada et al. 2016), even though economic constraints might emerge in later stages of life. In this regard, Fleischer and Pizam (2002) found that availability of time and income constraints expand until the age of 65, while after retirement, the time constraint no longer exists and income is at its peak. From then on, income decreases and becomes a constraint, thus affecting the number of vacation days taken. Chen and Shoemaker (2014) also identified time and financial concerns among perceived travel barriers.

In a qualitative study, Gladwell and Bedini (2004) explored the impact of caregiving on the leisure travel behaviors of the family caregivers of older adults. The analysis showed that physical, social, and emotional barriers to pursuing or maintaining leisure travel emerged. Analysis indicated that barriers to leisure travel for informal family caregivers fell into three distinct areas (physical, social, and emotional). Physical barriers include, for example, accessibility and architectural barriers, and the loss of energy experienced by the care recipients during travel. The social obstacles addressed include the scarcity or lack of financial, family, and human service supports. The emotional obstacles include fear of the unknown, loss of freedom, and loss of spontaneity. It seemed that the three areas of barriers were potentially hierarchical, in that emotional barriers represented the higher barrier.

Other studies also highlighted that the lack of a partner or travel companion may represent an important barrier to travel for older tourists (e.g., Huang and Tsai 2003; Lee and Tideswell 2005; Nyaupane et al. 2008; Kazeminia et al. 2015; Gao and Kerstetter 2016). The lack of a travel companion has been classified as a type of

interpersonal travel constraint. In relation to this, Hung et al. (2015) explored the travel constraints of older individuals in public and private housing and classified constraints in three dimensions: intrapersonal (feeling guilty about traveling), interpersonal (e.g., lack of travel partner), and structural (e.g., lack of time or money). Based on a literature review, Hung et al. (2015) argued that older tourists in Western countries were more susceptible to structural barriers, whereas their Asian counterparts reported more intrapersonal or interpersonal travel constraints. Similarly, based on a content analysis of older tourists’ narratives on the Internet, Kazeminia et al. (2015) argued that the most prominent travel constraint for older tourists are relation-driven or interpersonal constraints, such as not having a partner or friend to travel with. At the next level of priority are health-related constraints, followed by structural barriers.

Table 3.2 summarizes the main travel constraints emerging from the literature review.

Table 3.2 Travel constraints

Travel constraints	Studies
Time	McGuire (1984) Blazey (1992) Huang and Tsai (2003) Chen and Shoemaker (2014) Hung et al. (2015)
Money	McGuire (1984) Blazey (1992) Fleischer and Pizam (2002) Huang and Tsai (2003) Gladwell and Bedini (2004) Lee and Tideswell (2005) Sund and Boksberger (2007) Alén et al. (2014) Chen and Shoemaker (2014) Hung et al. (2015) Losada et al. (2016)
Health	McGuire (1984) Blazey (1992) Lindqvist and Björk (2000) Fleischer and Pizam (2002) Kim et al. (2003) Gladwell and Bedini (2004) Jang and Wu (2006) Hunter-Jones and Blackburn (2007) Nyaupane et al. (2008) Musa and Sim (2010) Gao and Kerstetter (2016)
Lack of travel companion	Huang and Tsai (2003) Lee and Tideswell (2005) Nyaupane et al. (2008) Hung et al. (2015) Kazeminia et al. (2015) Gao and Kerstetter (2016)

Source Author’s elaboration

3.4 Determinants of Core Decisions: External Factors

Several external factors influence older tourists' core decisions, such as traditional information sources and word-of-mouth (see Chap. 4 for e-word-of-mouth), pull factors, availability of suitable products (see Chap. 6), as well as climate, weather, visa restrictions, and vaccination requirements. Information sources and pull factors are considered particularly important in influencing travel decisions, as discussed in Sects. 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

3.4.1 *Information Sources*

When tourists feel motivated to travel, they usually start to look for information concerning several aspects of their trip, such as the destination, the accommodation, the transport, and the travel organizers, just to mention a few (Gursoy and Umbreit 2004). The information search phase can be more or less complex and detailed according to the type of travel, the occasion, and the level of involvement.

In recent years, the variety of information sources have expanded, thus increasing tourists' possibilities regarding information searches and evaluation of alternatives (Brunetti et al. 2005). A widely accepted broad classification in marketing studies distinguishes between internal and external sources. Internal sources include personal experience and retrieval of knowledge from memory (Gursoy and McCleary 2004; Gursoy and Umbreit 2004), while external sources include marketing sources, such as advertising or promotional activities. Sources can also be classified as interpersonal communication (e.g., with friends) and impersonal sources (e.g., commercial, travel guides, travel brochures).

Regarding internal sources, several authors found that family, friends, and neighbors were the most important sources of information for older tourists, indicating a preference for word of mouth (Littrell et al. 2004; Patterson 2007; Alén et al. 2015). Capella and Greco (1987), on the other hand, concluded that printed media, together with word of mouth, were most important for the over 60s. In contrast, McGuire et al. (1988) held that friends (40.6%), followed by travel agents (19.3%), were the main sources of information for older tourists; while newspapers, travel magazines, tourist offices, and airlines also constituted an important source of information for this group.

In their study of older Australians, Horneman et al. (2002) found that print material (e.g., travel guides, pamphlets, brochures), word-of-mouth recommendation, and travel agents tended to rank highly, while the Internet, clubs and associations, reward programs, and non-travel magazines were the least used. The mass media (e.g., television, radio, newspaper) tended to fall between these information sources. The authors also found that the use of information sources changed greatly

between segments. While some tourists generally used a variety of sources of information to determine their holiday type and destination in order to reduce risk, other tourists were almost “anti-information, seeking to discover firsthand” (Horneman et al. 2002, p. 33), and were particularly unfavorable toward travel agents, the mass media, and clubs as sources of travel information.

Batra (2009) conducted a survey among a sample of older foreign tourists at the Bangkok international airport. Respondents were divided in two age groups: 65–74 and 74-plus. Older respondents mentioned previous experience as their main source of information. Word of mouth was preferred by those who had higher education levels, while most of the respondents in the 65–74 age group used the Internet as a tool to find information. Similarly, recent research (Tiago et al. 2016) found that the Internet, travel agencies, word of mouth, and phone conversations are the most frequently used type of information sources among older European tourists. The role of the Internet in the travel planning process will be addressed more in depth in Chap. 4.

Additionally, the sources of information used by older tourists are strongly related to the activities carried out at the destination. It is considered that older tourists who use a greater number of sources of information to prepare for the trip tend to take part in a greater number of activities at the destination (Littrell et al. 2004). Littrell et al. (2004) classified information sources for shopping activities at the destination into two factors. The first, tourism sources, includes print material, such as tourist brochures, travel agents and tour guides, travel magazines and newspapers, and travel documents available at hotels. The second factor, interpersonal sources, relies on local people or friends for recommendations for where to shop when traveling. Littrell et al. (2004) argued that older tourists consult the same sources to shop when traveling as those used for general travel information. The relationship between sources used and activities at the destination was also explored in a recent study, in particular with regard to older tourists who travel for cultural purposes (Alén et al. 2015). As to the type of sources of information, word of mouth prevailed among the “oldest seniors” and among those who traveled to visit family and/or friends, whereas the Internet was most often used by the “younger seniors” with higher education levels and higher incomes. Retirees who traveled off-season for leisure motives had a lower education, relied mostly on travel agents as a source of information, and preferred organized trips (Alén et al. 2015).

3.4.2 Pull Factors

Pull factors refer to those elements able to attract older tourists. Available research has explored pull factors mainly in relation to tourism destinations. With regard to

destination, a variety of pull factors have been identified that affect older tourists' travel decisions. For example, Jang and Wu (2006) found that "cleanliness and safety," "easy-to-access," and "economical deal" were the most important pull factors attracting British travelers to overseas destinations. Similarly, Jang and Wu (2006) identified three pull factors: "cleanliness and safety," "facilities, event, and cost," and "natural and historical sights."

You and O'Leary (1999) identified different pull factors according to tourist clusters. For example, for passive visitors the most important pull forces were "good public transportation," "good standard of hygiene and cleanliness," "personal safety," and "opportunities to meet and socialize with people." In addition, for the enthusiastic go-getters, "nice weather" rather than opportunities for socialization represents an important pull factor. For cultural tourists (i.e., the culture hounds) the most important pull motives were "arts and cultural activities," and "historical or archeological places." Like the passive visitors and enthusiastic go-getters, destination infrastructure and facilities such as personal safety or standards of hygiene and cleanliness were equally important for this group.

Norman et al. (2001) emphasized the role of natural surroundings, good weather, tourism infrastructure, budget dining and accommodations, cultural and historical attractions, artificial attractions, people, upscale facilities and outdoor recreation opportunities. Similarly, Prayag (2012) found that "weather and climate," "beaches and watersports," and "beautiful scenery and attractions" were the three most important pull factors for visiting the city of Nice, France.

Sangpikul (2008a, b) identified four pull factors that attracted older tourists to Thailand: "cultural and historical attractions", "travel arrangements and facilities," "shopping and leisure activities," and "safety and cleanliness." The findings reveal that cultural and historical attractions was considered the most important pull factor attracting both American and Japanese respondents to Thailand.

In line with previous studies, Alén et al. (2015) found that destinations' attributes that are relevant for older tourists include hygiene and cleanliness, safety, climate, total cost, events and attractions, ease of transport, shopping areas, historical/artistic sites, natural sites/landscapes, and distance. In addition, medical coverage at the destination represents an important pull factor, especially for women of advanced age who travel for health reasons.

Recently, Lee and King (2016) explored the factors that determine the tourism attractiveness of an age-friendly destination, drawing upon an expert panel. The results identified the essential pull factors of an age-friendly destination as barrier-free public transportation facilities, barrier-free accommodation facilities, a variety of accommodation options dedicated exclusively to older tourists, barrier-free facilities along customized travel routes, and a variety of public transport options.

3.5 Core Decisions

In line with Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000), the following paragraphs review the core travel decisions relevant to older tourists: destination choice, accommodation choice,² length of stay, travel organization, and travel companions. These decisions are usually taken before the trip and are not easily subject to change.

3.5.1 Destination Choice

Destination choice represents a key decision in the travel planning process. It is influenced by several factors which include, for example, travel motivations and constraints (i.e., internal factors), information sources, and destination attractiveness (i.e., pull factors). Based on the literature review presented in the previous sections, it can be argued that older tourists prefer destinations that combine attractions (e.g., natural or cultural) with other elements such as hygiene and cleanliness (Jang and Cai 2002; You and O’Leary 1999), safety (You and O’Leary 1999; Sangpikul 2008b), accessibility (Lee and King 2016), opportunities to socialize (You and O’Leary 1999), facilities, and shopping activities (Jang and Wu 2006; Alén et al. 2015), as well as medical coverage (Alén et al. 2015). In addition, older tourists prefer destinations with a good public transport system (You and O’Leary 1999; Lee and King 2016) and a good weather (Prayag 2012). In a recent study, Lee and King (2016, p. 15) explored the characteristics of age-friendly destinations and emphasized the urgency for both the government and business sectors “to adapt their policies and strategies in accordance with the increasing average ages of travellers”.

3.5.2 Length of Stay

The literature offers a disparity of opinions regarding the length of trips among older tourists (Alén et al. 2016). Several studies have argued that older tourists’ stays tend to be longer than those of the rest of the population. For example, Romsa and Blenman (1989) argued that reduced time barriers among retirees enable older individuals to partake with a greater frequency in vacations of a short or long duration than they do for those who are still working.

However, drawing from studies by various authors, Bai et al. (1999) showed that the trips taken by older tourists are for one to three overnight stays, increasing to four or five overnight stays, and even reaching up to nine overnight stays. Blazey

²Accommodation choices, which are included among core decisions, are not presented in this chapter because they will be addressed in detail in Chap. 5.

(1992) stated that, generally, retired tourists take longer stays at the destination than do those who are not retired. Fleischer and Pizam (2002) argued that there is a positive relationship between age, income, and the self-assessed health of older tourists, and the length of stay, although the relationship becomes negative once a certain age has been reached. Regarding package tours, Huang and Tsai (2003) found that the preferred trip duration is one of 6–10 days (54.2% selecting this option). The second most popular period is 11–15 days (26.4%), followed by below 5 days, 16–20 days, and over 20 days. With regard to the length of group package tours in Taiwan and China, that is, about 6.8 nights, Wang et al. (2013) argued that as the duration of a trip increases, older tourists' involvement levels will increase.

In addition, regarding the time of year in which the trip takes place, several studies support that older tourists tend to travel off-season (Patterson 2006; Hunter-Jones and Blackburn 2007; Jang et al. 2009; Tiago et al. 2016; Lee and King 2016).

Alén et al. (2014) concluded that the length of stay at the destination is positively related to age, visiting friends and relatives, the “climate” attribute of the destination, and staying in a holiday apartment or in a second home. In addition, the findings showed that older tourists who travel alone or in tours organized by public organizations tend to stay longer at their destination than do those who travel with a companion. Further, the length of stay was shown to increase if the destination offered a wide and varied range of activities, such as shopping, organized day trips, and physical/sports activities. Losada et al. (2016) conducted a survey among Spanish tourists aged 55-plus. It was observed that, overall, trips were not very long, as more than half of the trip undertaken had a length of between one and seven days. Conversely, Kurtulmuşoğlu and Esiyok (2016) found that tourists aged 55 and over preferred to stay more than seven days when on a thalassotherapy holiday and that these tourists were more likely to seek thalassotherapy in the off-peak season.

Therefore, no consensus exists about trip length and this is possibly because older tourists are not a homogenous group in the tourism market.

3.5.3 Travel Organization

Travel types may be classified as organized trips or “package tours”, escorted or “guided tours”, and individual or “fully independent travel” (Patterson 2006). Regarding the type of trip, the tourist package is traditionally reported to be one of the preferred options for older tourists (Alén et al. 2015; Johann and Padma 2016). By comparing the under 50s and the over 50s, Anderson and Langmeyer (1982) stated that the over 50 group preferred non-hectic, preplanned, group-based, leisurely travel, and to travel in couples or as members of a package tour. Package tours are preferred mainly for convenience and safety, and for traveling accompanied (Javalgi et al. 1992). This type of travel mode is preferred by older individuals who are single, widowed, or divorced (Patterson 2006). Batra (2009)

established a connection between a preference for package holidays and lower education levels. However, older tourists also travel independently, especially those who are younger and prefer to prepare the trip by themselves (Batra 2009).

González et al. (2009) identified two profiles of Spanish tourists with opposite preferences in terms of travel organization. One group, termed “active livers,” show no interest in traveling in an organized group, or in becoming acquainted with other people or cultures at their destinations. They consider travel to be necessary for maintaining their health and balance. Conversely, the “stable passives,” who are quite inactive and indifferent to specific motivations, take simple decisions that do not require much involvement and they very often limit themselves to leisure organized by associations specializing in travels for older tourists. Similarly, Horneman et al. (2002) segmented Australian travelers and found relevant differences in terms of travel preferences among the segments. Specifically, “conservative travelers” represent a major component of older tourists (45%). They have a variety of education levels and come from the full range of incomes and age groups. Individuals in this group are motivated to travel while their health is good and they look for a reliable holiday package with quality services that meet their special requirements at the right price. Conversely, “pioneers,” who represent about 25% of older tourists, are the younger and better educated older individuals. They are still active and they seek new adventures and experiences, but they still prefer a level of assured safety and security. Pioneers like to travel independently, they make bookings themselves rather than through a travel agency, and they prefer self-learning and exploration to guided activities. In their study of older Malaysians, Musa and Sim (2010) found that the majority of respondents preferred to travel in group tour packages and to visit familiar destinations. The authors argued that this behavior can be explained by the fact that older adults in Malaysia do not have much travel experience, hence they prefer to travel in group tour packages in order to obtain organizational and psychological support when needed. In addition, Kazeminia et al. (2015) argued that aging is associated with alterations in the order of salient constraints and, thus, older tourists tend to prefer “safe” options such as packaged tours.

In a different study, Huang and Tsai (2003) asked older Taiwanese tourists to rate the attributes that most affected their selection of an all-inclusive package tour. Results showed that “convenience” (60.9%) was rated the most important attribute, followed by “unfamiliar tour sights and language problems” (18.3%), and “travel safety” (17.3%). The findings also show that these tourists look for typical all-inclusive package tours. However, they demand quality tour content and services, and they want a more elegant and less rigid itinerary than those proposed in non-personalized tours. The authors concluded that an emotional connection is important in this travel market and that older tourists want to buy from travel agents that understand their needs. Lee and Tideswell (2005) explored the travel preferences of older Koreans and how well the travel industry was catering for their travel needs. The majority of respondents hoped that people would change their stereotypical views about travel for older individuals. They also agreed that the costs of package travel should be cheaper and that travel companies should provide fully

independent tours for older adults. Similarly, they believed they would travel more often if there were more travel packages specifically developed to meet their travel interests and requirements. Tour package characteristics were analyzed in more detail in terms of services characteristics in a study conducted among experienced older tourists from Taiwan and China (Wang et al. 2013). The authors developed a scale to measure the perceptions of group package-tour service features. The importance of package characteristics differed according to older tourists' country of origin. Specifically, five factors emerged among Taiwanese tourists (i.e., tour leader and tour guide, restaurant, hotel, coach, and scenic spot), and three factors among older Chinese tourists (i.e., pre-tour briefing, restaurant, and optional tour).

Overall, while several studies support the view that conservative older tourists tend to prefer package tours, it also emerges that older tourists are demanding personalization and high quality services at a reasonable price. In addition, recent research has shown that there is a tendency for older tourists to travel fully independently, thus "demystifying the relevance of package holidays and organized trips" (Alén et al. 2014, p. 26). This could be explained by an increased variety of information sources (see Chap. 4), which makes it possible for older tourists to plan their travels independently.

3.5.4 Travel Companions

As shown in previous Sects. 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, travel companions have a great influence on older tourists' travel decisions. They can act both as a motivation or as a barrier to travel decisions. Even though the majority of older tourists tend to travel accompanied by a partner or family members and/or friends (Batra 2009; Alén et al. 2014), other tourists may prefer to travel as a member of a package tour or alone. For example, as reported by Sie et al. (2015) in the United Kingdom, older solo travelers, especially women, are an increasing niche market. Older women are technology savvy, they are inspired to plan new trips and to travel for memorable experiences, and they are willing to pay more for good value. Ross (2005) also emphasized that traveling with others can have an influence upon individual behavior.

The variable related to whether older tourists travel accompanied is strongly linked to the type of trip (i.e., independent travel or package tour). Batra (2009) showed that older tourists prefer to travel accompanied, usually by their partner or family members and/or friends, while younger travelers do not mind traveling alone if they do so as part of a group. In addition, tourists with a lower education prefer to travel with people from their own age group. Sociability needs related to family and friends (either as travel companions or domiciled at the destination) emerged as the most important factors of older tourist satisfaction (Ross 2005). Therefore, travel companions, both intended as friends and relatives or as members of an organized tour, play an important role in older tourists' travel planning behavior and affect overall satisfaction.

Companies interested in the older tourist market need to improve their understanding of the whole travel planning process. To develop successful marketing strategies and suitable product offerings, tourism organizations should be aware of how older tourists plan their travels and, in particular, how they are affected by internal and external factors.

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