

« The Spiritual Benefits of Travel for Senior Tourists : a New Perspective on Senior Tourism »



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Why research the role of spirituality in the tourist behaviour of older adults ?

“Integrating elements of human development in the research work on senior consumer behaviour has been recommended (Guiot, 2006). Spirituality is such an element.

“« *The quest for the meaning of life is a fundamental characteristic of mankind* » (Frankl, 1984), and spirituality is a main path for this quest (Shafranske and Gorsuch, 1984; Mirvis, 1997).

“**Spirituality:**

“ a central concept in psychology and sociology for the past 10 years

“ receives growing interests in psychiatry, nursing and gerontology.

“**Spiritual growth** is a chronological process and the highest stages of development are observed amongst seniors. Spirituality either reaches its peak or develops intensively in the last period of life.

Definition of spirituality:

«Spirituality is the construction of the meaning of one's life. It appeals to one's ability for transcendence¹ and its objects are the inner self, alterity² and the sacred³. It is the interconnection of these objects that enables the holistic perspective on life and provides its meaning.»

¹ Transcendence corresponds to «an individual's capability to step out of his/her immediate perception of time and space and to see life from a wider, more detached angle, which leads to a more holistic and interconnected understanding of life » (Piedmont, 1997).

² Alterity should be understood in a broad sense : human (other human beings: living, ancestors and future generations) and natural (nature and the universe) .

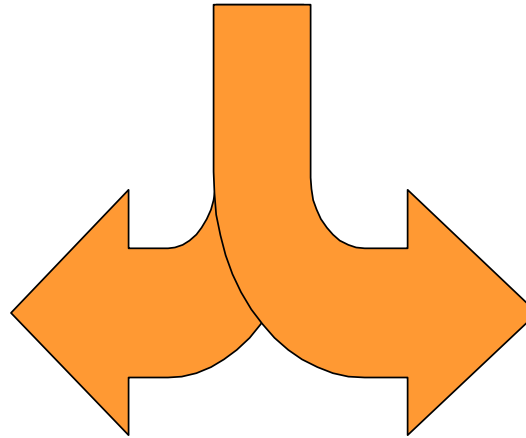
³ The sacred is «a perception, socially influenced, of either a divine being, or a sense of ultimate reality or truth » (Larson, Swyers et McCullough, 1998). It can thus be: God, gods, a supreme power, nature etc .

The spirituality of older adults :

The result of maturity:

"Spiritual development is
chronological and
sequential

"Gerotranscendence⁴



A mechanism to adapt
and defend oneself:

"Personal dignity

"Reduction of death
anxiety

For Tornstam (1994, 1999), gerotranscendence corresponds to a change of paradigm : « *the shift from a rational and materialist perspective to an increasingly cosmic and transcendent perspective* »

Research question and methodology :

“Research question :

Are older travelers motivated to travel for the purpose of spiritual development and **what kind of spiritual benefits do they draw from traveling ?**

“Methodology:

Qualitative approach : 17 in-depth interviews with retired travelers aged 60 to 85 years. Respondants are French citizen, 10 females and 7 males. Content analysis was conducted on the transcriptions of the interviews.

Findings

“ Content analysis revealed **5 categories of spiritual benefits of traveling for older adults :**

- 1. Traveling generates meaning**
- 2. Traveling enables older travelers to better know themselves**
- 3. Traveling enables older travelers to better know others and the human race**
- 4. Traveling enables older adults to better understand their relationship to nature**
- 5. Traveling enables older travelers to broaden the spectrum of their own spirituality.**

Conclusion and suggestions for future research :

“ **Contributions:**

- . A new light is shed on senior consumer behaviour
- . Testable research hypotheses are provided for the influence of spirituality on senior consumer behaviour.

“ **Main weakness:** work is strictly conceptual and requires empirical testing.

“ **Next step (work in process) :** test research hypotheses applied to the tourism market.

“ **Suggestions for future research :**

- . A new path to explore to understand more altruistic types of consumptions : fair trade products and channels, donations, green consumption ò .
- . Applicable to traditional marketing as well as societal marketing.
- . Spirituality is important for older adults and responding to their spiritual needs will contribute to their overall successful ageing.

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