

Study on the Influence of Educational Background on Silver-Haired People's Motivation to Travel: A Group Difference Analysis based on Nostalgia, Culture and Socialisation

Miao Chen*

School of management, Liaoning University of International Business and Economics, Dalian
116041, China

*15067262589@163.com

Abstract

With the acceleration of the aging society, the tourism market of silver-haired people has great potential, but their internal motivational differences have not been fully analyzed. This study focuses on the differential influence of educational background on the travel motivation of the elderly group, and explores how it plays a role in travel decision-making behaviours based on the three dimensions of cultural motivation, nostalgia motivation and social motivation. Through a questionnaire survey of 43 Chinese silver-haired people and multiple response analysis, the study found that: (1) both cultural and social motivation had a significant positive effect on travel intentions, but the intensity of the effect was group-differentiated; and (2) educational background had a significant moderating effect: the high-education group was more concerned with cultural immersion and nostalgic experiences, while the low-education group relied more on social connections. Research suggests that ignoring educational differences will lead to homogenisation of market strategies. Therefore, it is suggested that the industry should segment the market according to educational background and design differentiated products and services.

Keywords

Elderly Tourism, Educational Background, Tourism Motivation, Market Segmentation.

1. Introduction

The United Nations predicts that the world's population aged 60 or over will grow by 56 per cent to 1.4 billion by 2030, and the global silver-haired population is projected to more than double to nearly 2.1 billion by 2050 [1]. Currently, the focus of the tourism industry remains on young consumers, as they have plenty of money and unlimited energy. On the contrary, more and more silver-haired people are retired and have more time. Therefore, the silver-haired people as a huge potential consumer are also a target group that cannot be ignored.

Motivation refers to the underlying psychological or mental force that drives a person to take certain actions [2]. For tourism researchers, exploring motivations helps identify the needs of tourists and enables them to accurately match the types of tourism motivations that correspond to different destination attributes. Motivation is the underlying psychological or mental force that drives a person to take certain actions[3]. There are now studies proving that different tourism motives (nostalgia, social and cultural) will satisfy the silver-haired people's tourism needs in different ways: nostalgia can increase tourists' perceived value, satisfaction, and destination loyalty intention; social motives can increase the old sticklers' satisfaction with life and alleviate the feeling of loneliness; and cultural motives can satisfy the tourists' pursuit of cultural connotations and the formation of bonds with their grandchildren.

Similarly, a large number of studies have been conducted that consider the older age group as a whole or focus primarily on the effect of age stratification on the motivation of silver-haired people to travel, ignoring the differences in motivation due to the stratification of educational background. Javalgi, Thomas, and Rao found that travellers aged 55 years and older were more likely to go on boat excursions, sightseeing tours, and visits to friends and relatives, and were less likely to visit cities, resorts, and theme parks [4]. Backman, Backman and Silverberg found that older travellers (65+) were more likely to stay longer at their destination, plan trips in advance and visit friends and relatives than younger older travellers (55-64) [5]. Traditionally, the older traveller market has been considered a large, homogenous group defined solely on the basis of age, however, such criteria can lead to misperceptions and stereotyping [6]. Some research findings have shown that many silver-haired people believe they are 7 to 15 years younger than their actual age [7]. Therefore, instead of differentiating silver-haired people's motivation to travel based on age, this piece of research focuses on the link between educational background and older consumers' motivation to travel.

Therefore, this research intends to clarify the psychological motivation of silver-haired people to participate in tourism activities (out of nostalgia motivation, knowledge-seeking motivation or social motivation) and to analyze the differences in the motivation of silver-haired people with different educational backgrounds to travel by using the empirical research method. This study deepened the refined perspective of research on elderly tourism motivation, making up for the deficiency in existing literature that ignored the role of educational background. It systematically revealed the differential impacts of this motivation on three core motivations: nostalgia, culture, and society. At the same time, it innovatively applied the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to clarify the psychological basis of elderly tourism motivation: nostalgia maps to the need for autonomy (emotional memory, self-integration), culture maps to the need for competence (spiritual vitality, knowledge value), and society maps to the need for connection (counteracting loneliness, strengthening ties). This not only provides theoretical support for understanding the deep driving forces of elderly tourism, but also enriches the empirical basis of SDT in specific consumption behaviors (tourism) and specific groups (the elderly).

2. Theoretical Basis

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is the core theoretical foundation of this study because of its profound explanatory power of the intrinsic motivation of human behaviour. Under SDT, three basic needs are considered to be the driving force behind an individual's motivation: (a) autonomy, people feel a sense of choice and endorsement of an activity (b) competence, people feel efficacious or self-confident about an activity, and (c) relatedness, the need to experience social interactions or the desire to feel connected with others[8][9]. And the silver-haired people's motivation for travelling can be accurately mapped to the SDT framework. Nostalgia motivation embodies the need for autonomy, and nostalgia tourism (e.g., revisiting hometowns and visiting childhood places) is a way for silver-haired people to take control of their emotional memories and realise self-integration, whereas silver-haired people can rebuild their emotional autonomy through nostalgia travel. Cultural motivation reflects the need for competence, and cultural tourism (e.g., study and historical sites) can acquire knowledge and meet the need of silver-haired people to maintain their mental vitality. Social motivation reflects the need for connectedness, and travelling together (e.g., community tours, reunion trips) strengthens bonds to combat loneliness.

3. Research Hypotheses

Miyon Kim & Chulwoo Kim believe that combining criteria such as lifestyle and motivation with socio-demographics and applying these results will produce more useful market segments.

They explored the lifestyle dimensions of older adults through a self-administered questionnaire and verified that socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, marital status, education, health, and economic status) play a crucial role in explaining differences in older adults' lifestyles and motivations to travel. The relevant data were analysed and it was concluded that respondents with less than a high school education accounted for a higher proportion of relatively inactive traditionalists (who had the highest mean scores on the Appearance Awareness factor) and passive conformists (who had the lowest mean scores on the six factors of the six socio-demographic characteristics studied). However, more educated respondents accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the Modern Enthusiasts group (with the highest mean scores on all six factors), while those with less than a high school education accounted for only 18.8 per cent of the respondents[10].

Thus, there is a significant difference in the influence of educational background on travel motivation, leading to the following theoretical hypothesis:

H1 Educational background positively influences nostalgic motivation

H2 Educational background negatively affects social motivation

H3 Educational background positively influences cultural motivation

4. Research Method

4.1. Research Design.

In order to answer the research questions, a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part utilised the scale used by Miyon Kim & Chulwoo Kim in their study of the relationship between lifestyle dimensions and socio-demographic characteristics of the elderly. The research information was obtained by asking the respondents about their age, educational background, economic income, and other basics. The second part then contains nine situations (three for each motive) about the motives for travelling, and the respondents were asked to rank these motives and select the mental idea that most closely matches their own.

4.2. Research Process

Recruitment of silver-haired people with an age range of 55 years old and above who have travelled in the past on the Internet and random sampling offline, parks are the best place for a large number of silver-haired people to have leisure and relaxation, and the silver-haired people in senior citizen universities usually have a better ability to understand and learn, so these two locations are the places for this research, and the silver-haired people who meet the requirements are invited to carry out questionnaire surveys.

4.3. Data Analysis

After collecting the questionnaires, they were screened. As a result, a total of 51 questionnaires were collected, of which 43 were usable. It was decided to exclude 8 questionnaires because 7 of them took less than 30 seconds to answer and were obviously filled in casually, while the other one was not considered because it had not had any travelling experience. All results were statistically analysed in this study using IBM SPSS Statistics 27, mainly using multiple response statistical analysis.

In the first step, irrelevant variables were excluded, and then the set of variables was defined, setting the specific count values for the travel motivation ranking questions from the first to the ninth percentile. Finally, frequency and crossover analyses were conducted.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Results based on the Top Three Motives

Travel motivation of the silver-haired people whose educational background is "no schooling": social motivation > nostalgic motivation > cultural motivation.

Travel motivation of the silver-haired people whose educational background is "primary school": social motivation > nostalgia motivation > cultural motivation.

Travel motivation of silver-haired people with "junior high school" education background: social motivation > nostalgia motivation > cultural motivation

Travel motivation of silver-haired people with education background of "high school/junior college/vocational high school": cultural motivation>nostalgia motivation>social motivation

Travel motivation of silver-haired people with education background of "college": nostalgia motivation>cultural motivation>social motivation

Travel motivation of silver-haired people with education background of "university and above": nostalgia motivation>cultural motivation>social motivation

5.2. Crosstab Analysis

This study investigated the relationship between educational background and tourism motivation, so educational background was classified as "no schooling", "primary schools", "junior high school", "senior high school/junior college/vocational high school", "high school/junior college/vocational high school", "high school/junior college/vocational high school", and "no schooling". /Vocational high school", "College", "University and above".

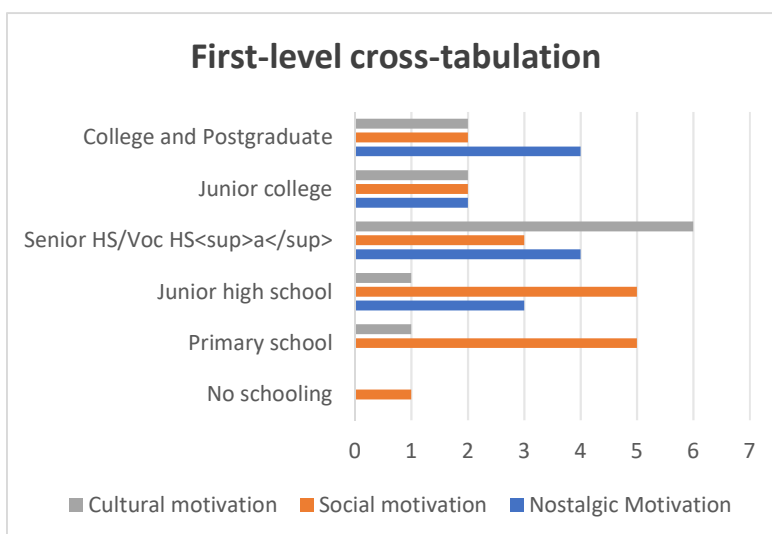


Fig.1 First-level cross-tabulation

The cross-tabulation analysis of the first priority (Fig. 1) reveals distinct motivational patterns among the elderly population based on their educational backgrounds. Individuals with "no formal education," "primary school," or "junior high school" education predominantly exhibit social motivations. Those with "senior high school/vocational school/technical secondary school" education demonstrate primarily cultural motivations. Elderly individuals with "associate degree" education display relatively balanced motivational distributions, while those with "bachelor's degree or higher" education are primarily driven by nostalgic motivations.

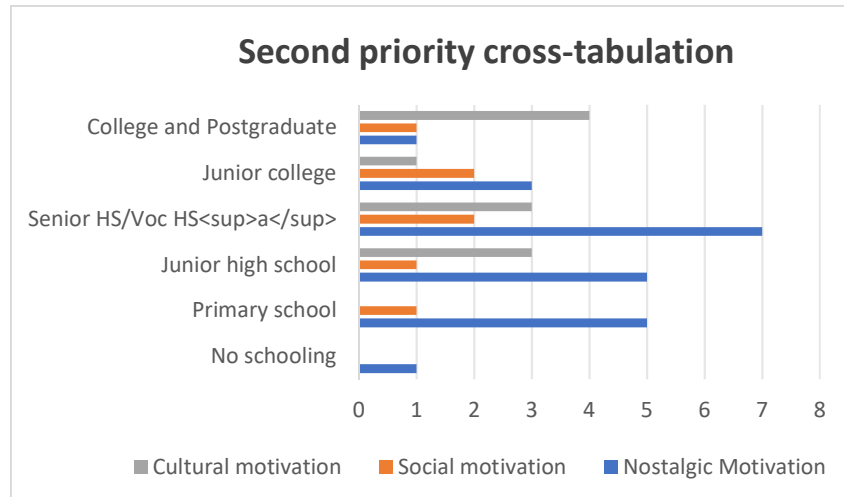


Fig.2 Second priority cross-tabulation

According to the second-order contingency table (Fig. 2), the proportion of nostalgia motivation among the elderly with educational backgrounds of "no schooling", "primary school", "junior high school", "high school / technical secondary school / vocational high school", and "college" is the highest; while among the elderly with an educational background of "university or above", the cultural motivation accounts for the largest proportion.

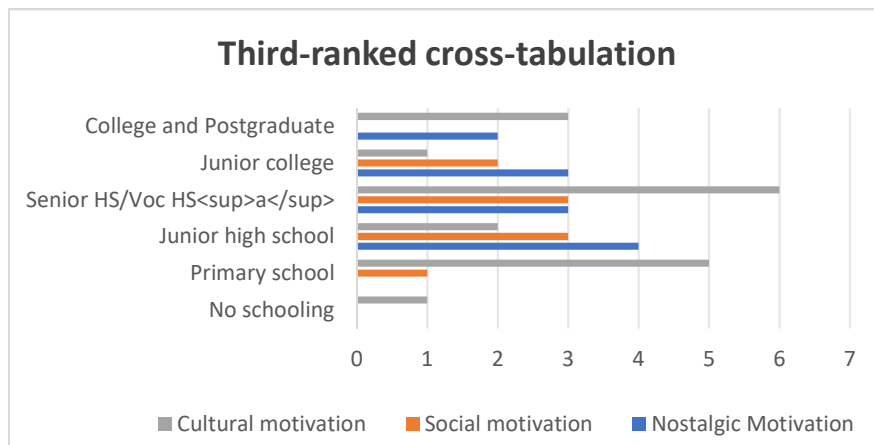


Fig.3 Third-ranked cross-tabulation

According to the third-order contingency table (Fig. 3), the cultural motivation of the elderly with an education background of "no schooling" and "primary school" accounts for the largest proportion; the nostalgic motivation of the elderly with an education background of "junior high school" is the highest; the cultural motivation of the elderly with an education background of "high school / technical secondary school / vocational high school" is the largest; the nostalgic motivation of the elderly with an education background of "college" is the highest; and the cultural motivation of the elderly with an education background of "university or above" is the greatest.

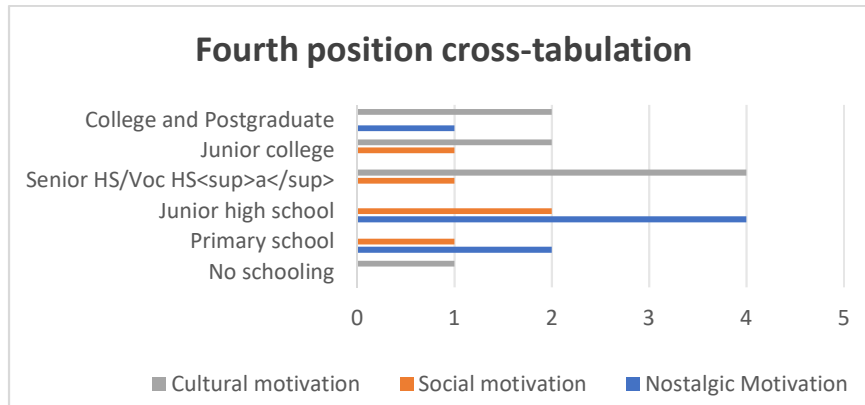


Fig.4 Fourth position cross-tabulation

According to the fourth-order contingency table, the cultural motivation of the elderly with "no education" is the highest; the nostalgic motivation of the elderly with "primary school" and "junior high school" education backgrounds is the highest; the cultural motivation of the elderly with "high school/technical secondary school/vocational high school", "dual degree" and "university and above" education backgrounds is the highest.

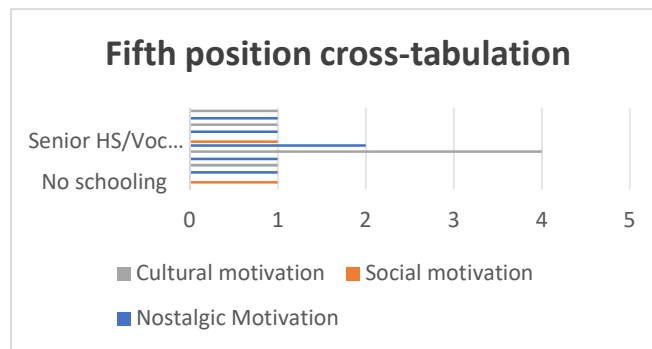


Fig.5 Fifth position cross-tabulation

According to the fifth-order cross-tabulation, the social motivation of the elderly with "no education" as their educational background accounts for the largest proportion; the nostalgic motivation and cultural motivation of the elderly with "primary school" as their educational background are relatively average; the cultural motivation of the elderly with "junior high school/technical secondary school/vocational high school" as their educational background accounts for the largest proportion; the nostalgic motivation of the elderly with "college" and "university and above" as their educational background accounts for the largest proportion; the nostalgic motivation and cultural motivation of the elderly with "dual-education" and "university and above" as their educational background are both relatively average.

6. Conclusion

From the questionnaire results of this study, the nostalgia motivation of the elderly with an educational background of "high school / technical secondary school / vocational high school" is relatively moderate, while the nostalgia motivation of the elderly with an educational background of "college" and "university and above" is stronger. Therefore, it proves that H1, which states that educational background positively affects nostalgia motivation, is valid.

The social motivation of the elderly with an educational background of "junior high school and below" is the strongest, while the social motivation of the elderly with an educational

background of "high school / technical secondary school / vocational high school", "college", and "university and above" is the weakest. Therefore, it proves that H2, which states that educational background negatively affects social motivation, is valid.

The cultural motivation of the elderly with an educational background of "junior high school and below" is the weakest, while the cultural motivation of the elderly with an educational background of "high school / technical secondary school / vocational high school" is the strongest, and the cultural motivation of the elderly with an educational background of "college" and "university and above" slightly decreases, but is significantly stronger compared to the elderly with an educational background of "junior high school and below". Therefore, it proves that H3, which states that educational background positively affects cultural motivation, is valid. This research provides precise guidance for the tourism market: Based on differences in educational background, enterprises can design products specifically. For the elderly with high educational attainment, in-depth cultural experiences (such as research on intangible cultural heritage, special lectures) should be developed; for those with lower educational attainment, they should focus on social-oriented group tours (such as neighborhood tours, interest club tours), relaxing nostalgic tours (such as traditional food experiences), and family intergenerational tours. At the same time, enhance service applicability: Provide professional explanations and interactive learning for the former; optimize social spaces and ice-breaking activities for the latter. This will precisely unleash the tourism consumption potential of the elderly population, effectively promoting the development of the silver economy towards higher quality and greater diversity.

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