

UNDERSTANDING ELDERLY AS TRAVEL COMPANIONSHIP IN SILVER HAIR COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This article combines between Theory of Person Centred Therapy and Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Theory in assuming the role of independent and active elderly as a traveller companionship. The person-centred traveller companionship signifies the relevant policies and practices needed as person centric elderly as traveller companionship. According to secondary data of travel group portal, The United States of America (USA) leads in the total numbers of travel group which contributes to uniqueness criteria in becoming an individual traveller companionship. The criteria's of travel buddies from US and their services offered would be the main theme in determining the relationship between independent and active elderly as person-centred traveller companionship which contribute towards the performance of the travel organization. The data from interviews demonstrates significant values as the criteria being a person-centred for elderly traveller companionship. It represents the main theme and the result of the interviews identify the quality of services required as person-centred for elderly traveller companionship to amend policy and practices needed as person centric elderly as traveller companionship.

Key words: Person Centred Therapy, traveller companionship.

INTRODUCTION

This paper begin with the brief definition of elderly travel companionship, the main criteria of elderly as travel companion, the prerequisite of elderly as travel companion, details on mobile system as trip assistance, the travel demand model, the "meetup" online group, the need of personalized travel companionship, the secondary data of travel companionship, the criteria of western traveller, Maslow hierarchy of needs and person centred therapy, the person-centred therapy's session, review from previous travel companionship, interviewing elderly as travel companionship on their experience, seeking travel companion from elderly in Malaysia, criteria of travel companion and services offered and finally the conclusion.

DEFINITION OF ELDERLY TRAVEL COMPANIONSHIP

A person-centred for elderly traveller companionship is an elderly as personal traveller companion for elderly assume as personal travel buddy during the period of travelling from where the journey started until reached the destination and accompanying elderly during their journey back home. The person-centred for elderly traveller companionship role's in accompanying elderly doing their activities during the travelling period. This is including booking, travel documentation, visiting places, touring and sightseeing, taking care personal belonging, medication or in case of emergency during the travelling period which will be discussed throughout the whole article.

THE MAIN CRITERIA OF ELDERLY AS TRAVEL COMPANION

Elderly or senior citizen is defined as the elderly aged 60 years and above; however, in Malaysia senior citizen is elderly aged above 55 years could be revised (Sharif, 2015; Jaafar, 2019). Presently, in United Kingdom, the retirement age is 65, while the European Commission uses 60, and United States of America Bureau of Census, 60 (Kinsella, 2001). Elderly of aged above 55 has reduced their mobile and physical ability and ability to remember things, which are important to sustain their current job until reaching the maximum age. However, it is common among members from this community whereby only elderly able to understand among elderly. This paper will identify the need of elderly as a travel companionship and what is the significant role in performing this task.

THE PREREQUISITE OF ELDERLY AS TRAVEL COMPANION

A elderly traveller companionship should be excellent in health, independent, extremely informative, expert in using latest technologies devices, mobile gadget and application, fast actions, effective and efficient doing task. The traveller companionship should embrace good relationship with the locals of places they visited. This is considered a value added encompass by elderly traveller companionship. The elderly traveller companionship should prepare all the contingency in case of emergency for example contact person including personal doctor, specialist, nearest police station and contingency, embassy office, immigration office and nearest hospital.

DETAILS ON MOBILE SYSTEM AS TRIP ASSISTANCE

Youngsters or traveler addict in 21st century required a mobile system with travelling applications installed. The example of e-traveler buddy application for example “Travel Companion” assists a traveler through various guidance functions, offers personalized reminders and recommendations, which are based on the traveler's current location and the information that is being collected from the traveler's cell phone camera (Lilitsis, 2018). The Airbnb and separated online booking and trace of location application could be obtained from Google maps, local e-hailing booking application for example “grab” and local online food booking application for example “food panda”, and online accommodation booking application for example “Agoda and Expedia” should be installed in their mobile as traveller companionship.

THE TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL

The travel modeling paradigm identify those who intend to travel should be accompanied with other household and non-household members (Garikapati, 2019). In the context of this study, household members are separate from less inclusive category of family. Non-household members are individuals, does not involved in-house activities with the household members; including students and roomers; and visitors whose visit is anticipated to less than half month period (Garikapati, 2019). The activity-based model signifies progress in operational model development and practical implementations in replacing the traditional trip-based (Hanwen, 2007). Travel in group becomes significant as they found their travel buddies elsewhere or nearby their place, over the social media or in web portal. The desired for interactions with other people exist in active travel generation, it stimulates interest among the group (Axhausen K. W., 2005(2)).

THE ONLINE COMMUNITIES GROUP

“Meetup” is a platform of finding and building local communities (Heiferman, 2017). There are only a few developers that offer travel demand modeling software packages that run on personal computers (Srinivasan, 2008; Balmer, 2008; Heiferman, 2017). Membership software provides associations, clubs and other membership organizations with functionality they require to provide their services to their members. “Meetup” is a platform to meet new people, learn new things and find support together. It emerges as a networking connection among the travel addict from the desired interest among the group. (Heiferman, 2017). “Meetup” has similarities in activity-based model which signifies progress in operational model development and practical implement in replacing the traditional trip-based. “Meetup” proceed as a travel demand model which is a set of application program with travelling database assembled and programmed by expertise in travel planning and forecasting.

THE NEED OF PERSONALIZED TRAVEL COMPANIONSHIP

The elderly feels more comfortable and confident to be accompanied with the other elderly of same interest as personal traveler companionship. The mutual trust and relationship between the traveler companionship and the elderly benefit both parties. The person-centred or personalized traveller companionship attends to the uniqueness and details of each individual user's need during travelling. Personalized travel companion works effectively and efficiently determine the quality of the services in terms of time and accuracy to meet up, details of things to do or visit together and responsibility with the need of to their buddy or traveller within 24 hours and 7 days a week. This including the accurate time and safely reach the destination after the trip, back home safely and on time, served right food for elderly, on time and safely transport services, hotels booking and medication management for elderly. The personalized travel companion should inform the elderly family member from time to time for security purposes.

THE SECONDARY DATA OF TRAVEL COMPANIONSHIP

The statistical from table 1 below demonstrates US as leading country in this sector. This study has identified that US travelers incorporate with an excellent information and good relationship with the local of which country they visited. Among them and there are approximately 432,000 members and 8,452 members has shown their interests. From the total population of 432,000, there are 474 group members were formed from 274 cities across 26 countries all over the world. (Heiferman, 2017) The breakdown of total of group associated with the country shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: “Meetup” Travel Companionship group by Countries

Country	Total of group	Country	Total of group	Country	Total of group
US	312	New Zealand	5	Thailand	1
India	35	Australia	3	Middle East	1
UK	23	UAE	2	Hong Kong	1
Australia	16	Malaysia	2	Indonesia	1
Singapore	11	China	1	Vietnam	1
Europe	11	Philippine	1		

The secondary statistical data from the web portal exhibit the travel companionship network has created a connection among members who love to travel and find travel companion all over the world. The statistical data of bar chart from the “Meetup”

portal shown in figure 1 below demonstrates three (3) types of group appears as the Pioneer, Moderate and Passive traveler group. Figure 1 on the next page exhibit that the USA remain the pioneer Traveler Group whereas country like India, UK, Australia, Europe and Singapore exhibit the moderate need of travel companion. Asian country like China, Philippine, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam exhibit the most needs of Travel Companion for their travel activities. The US group traveler addict and US elderly dominates within their community and they creates a circle of influencing among moderate traveler and passive traveler group country.

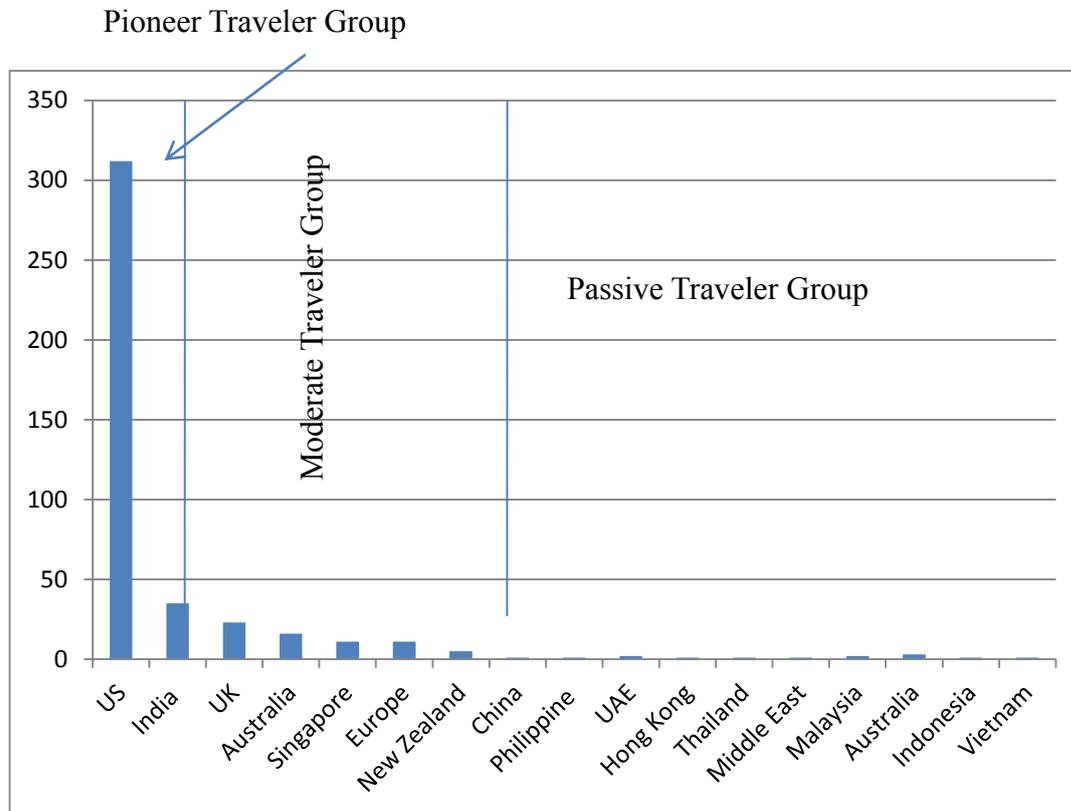


Figure 1: "Meetup" Travel Companionship group by Countries

THE CRITERIA OF WESTERN TRAVELER

The criteria of pioneer travel group of western traveler demonstrates the value added in social skill, relationship and communication. It improves social and communication skills despite ensures peace of mind and broadens your horizons and even boosts up your confidence. It gets a real-life education and creates memories for lifetime. Among the unique criteria possess by western traveler could be divided into economic, political and social aspects (Mujani, 2012):

Mujani (2012) constantly state that the significant of social aspect were including:

- i. Brief, detail and accurate in its descriptions of the places they visited
- ii. Involved and benefited the time with local, places where traveler lived in, the people that the traveler travelled with, the sights traveler saw and the events that they witnessed and relationship created with anybody that traveler can work with.

Mujani (2012) includes the knowledge of economic aspect where:

- iii. Aware and trying to understand the society and economy of the destination including the lifestyle of visited places, commercial activities, local and foreign merchants, merchandise, markets, the currency, kinds of plantations and taxes on visitors or traveler. Getting the information with the population, kinds of local food and fruit.

Mujani (2012) also includes that the economic development and political aspect of the area visited would improvise social and communication skills including:

- iv. The industry activity places that the traveler visited. The currency, market-places, food, trade and merchandise, industry and the political background. The political situation that may affect the country, people and surrounding.
- v. Agricultural sector, commercial ports, the import and export trade, trade routes and natural products and the population of some cities.

MASLOW HIERARCHY OF NEEDS AND PERSON CENTERED THERAPY

Travellers' needs or motivations are organized hierarchically according to Maslow's hierarchy in travel motivation. From the lowest ranking of pyramids, a relaxation needs are the lowest level, followed by safety and security, relationship, self-esteem and development in the middle level and fulfilment needs which is the highest level (Huang, 2009). The person centered therapy or "Rogerian Therapy" belief that every human being strives for and has the capacity to fulfill his or her own potential (Raskin, 2005). To reach the goal, by facilitating personal growth and development, eliminate feelings of unhappiness and increase self-esteem. Person-centered travel companion services is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs where individuals are constantly seeking self-actualization, a state where an individual achieves recognition of and comfort with who he or she is (Patterson, 1969). The self-actualized individual has arrived at a point where he or she can do great work and contribute to family, friends, society, education, and science at the highest possible level. Maslow theorized that lower-tier needs had to be met first before moving to the next above level until the fourth and final tier before achieving a level of self-actualization is that of esteem and self-worth (Hanley, 2002). With this, it would change the way that people receive treatment of person-centered therapy, and how it could benefit the traveler.

THE PERSON-CENTERED THERAPY'S SESSION

The person-centered travel companionship works well because it focuses on the needs of elderly including discussing the past and the travel companion will listen and respond in appropriate manner. This approach assumes that the past issue is impeding the individual's ability to deal with the present (Lilitsis, 2018). In order for a person to effectively cope with and overcome current obstacles, they must be given a short brief in sharing experience. It's not always easy to talk openly with those who know us best. They may not be able to listen to past pain with an open mind like a travel companion does. Listening, elderly who have required the services before are often surprised and maybe even a bit put off by the fact that the therapist does not ask questions unless they're seeking clarification of what the client has stated. The person-centered therapist believes that the power of therapy stems from experience of previous elderly, forming his or her own insights and making his or her own decisions based on that.

Raskin (2005) state that the elderly who need person centered travel companion should acquire six (6) elements applicable in therapy session as mentioned below:

- i. The travel companion must indicate that they value knowing the elderly and establishing a person centered travel companion relationship based upon authenticity.
- ii. The person centered travel companion recognizes the incongruence between featured-image and the present reality, responding with empathy instead of judgment.
- iii. The person centered travel companion is genuine and empathic. He or she does not allow professionalism to cloud the ability to demonstrate authentic feelings while still maintaining an ethical demeanor.
- iv. The person centered travel companion accepts the elderly for whom and where he or she is, recognizing that growth is a process.
- v. The person centered travel companion can remain detached, while still expressing empathy and understanding toward the elderly and his or her experiences.
- vi. The elderly recognizes that, even though he or she is uncomfortable with his or her present state, the therapist accepts and respects who he or she is and what he or she is experiencing.

REVIEW FROM PREVIOUS TRAVEL COMPANIONSHIP

Here are two (2) reviews made by elderly on their travelling companion experiences. These including the values show by each travel companion in terms of criteria needed as an elderly travel companion.

ELDERLYS REVIEWS I

"I have choosing the right travel companion suitable for me". "She is educated, young-old around 53 years old and experience in travelling, despite she is IT savvy, she is fast action and efficient". Travelogue footage helps me to choose the right person for my travel companion despite the recommendation from friends" "I'm not sure I have the adequate words to express how much she has helped me. She is supportive, and has given me choices even in selecting places to eat and area to visit together." "Sharon is a fantastic travel companion. She listens, appreciates and understands and every advice and task he gives me to do is very personal and specific to me and my needs. She makes me feel comfortable and relaxed and I feel completely comfortable staying with her." "She is on time and promptly replied on any circumstances which I disagreed or seek for option, and she could consult and reject with good reason". "Every day within the travelling period, she is ready to served me and follow my advice"

ELDERLYS REVIEWS II

"I am cynical with second candidates, despite her educational background, she doesn't show her confident and commitment to her job, where she is not well prepared or planned with the journey. Even though she is computer and mobile phone savvy and she has moderate knowledge on the country she wanted to visit with me. "She is very educated, young-old around 48 years old and experience in travelling, she is fast action and efficient". travel-buddies footage helps me to find the potential for my travel companion" She is supportive, and has given me choices even in selecting places to visit together." "Mary is a reasonable travel companion. She sometimes disagrees and refuses to comment, advice and task given by me. However she makes me feel

comfortable talking with her.””She is moderately on time and promptly replied on any circumstances which I disagreed or seek for option over the whatapps”. “Every day within the travelling period, she is quite ready to served me and follow my advice”

INTERVIEWING ELDERLYS AS TRAVEL COMPANIONSHIP ON THEIR EXPERIENCE

Coaching and mentoring are used today by most companies to develop their new employees. The elderly might ask to share an experience of becoming a coach of someone; among the structured interview should be conducted by the elderly to seek their travel companion:

- i. How did he or she convince his or her health status to potential as travel companionship?
- ii. How did he or she convince his or her experience as a travel companionship?
- iii. How did he or she distinguish between person centered travel companion and travel companion?
- iv. How he or she convinces his or her unique value added compared to the other travel companion?
- v. How does he or she plan the journey? What are the important questions he or she might ask you as their travel companion?
- vi. How honest, obedient and responsible he or she towards you as his or her travel companion?
- vii. How does he or she convince you in terms of punctuality during the journey?
- viii. How does he or she convince you in terms of minimizing the distance during the journey?
- ix. How does he or she prepare the emergency situation in case of health problem?
- x. How does he or she prepare the emergency situation in case of sudden cancellation due to unavoidable circumstances?
- xi. How does he or she convinced the authority on entrance or exit the boundaries or immigration check point in case of sudden problem?
- xii. In case of short of cash during the journey, what is his or her reaction to overcome the problem?

As an elderly or representative from family member, keep your response direct, brief, and simple. Don't include unnecessary comments. Don't add superfluous details or exaggerations just to enhance your image. Put emphasis on how much you think your guidance helped that person, but don't be too conceited about it. Justify their answer by providing your examples.

SEEKING TRAVEL COMPANION FROM POTENTIAL ELDERLY IN MALAYSIA

The potential personal elderly travel companion could be obtain from the list of government and private pensioner aged from 55 to 60 years old; caregivers and officer of public, private and NGOs' home care; facilitator, senior student and participant from University of Third Age's (U3e-UPM); facilitator from PAWE and Desa Bina Diri; local traveler group apps such as "datemyage.com", "gogaffl.com" and "itourism" travel companion apps. The services include the travelling companion with personalized services they offered during travelling. It is a compulsory to create a virtual connection thru Whatsapps video call or from any social media. This is to established the relationship or create a mutual relationship between the travel companion and the elderly. Understanding and reviewing the services offered based on previous travelogue footage is a compulsory. Customer experiencing is an indication of dissatisfaction or suggestion to ensure the services offered has been obtained from the infrastructures and physical facilities in the room or hall (V.K., 2006). In achieving timely responses from participant on participant satisfaction through product service systems, a comprehensive management of learning centre data system is significantly in order to access timely and updated information (Romero, 2007) before identifying the factor in customer satisfaction.

CRITERIAS OF TRAVEL COMPANION AND SERVICES OFFERED

In searching the travel companionship portal, it is important to ensure that the travel companionship portal is registered and well known. Ensure that the company has been registered with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia. Is the portal is well known or recognized worldwide such as triptogether.com? The potential customer could request the health history record of the potential registered candidates of travel companion form the portal.

What are the criteria in searching the elderly travel companionship?

- i. Verified all members are personally confirmed by the portal
 - ii. Excellent health status, independent and informative (request health record from them or from the portal)
 - iii. Their expertise and background were verified (request vitae or personal background)
 - iv. Their experience thru travel track record were verified (request from them or from the portal)
 - v. Prepare for further video interview (if intend to know further)
- These could be elaborated in terms of their value added being a travel companion or travel companionship. These would leads to the criteria of their candidates which required serving the elderly as traveller:

Table 2: The new criteria's of travel companionship

No.	Criteria of Elderly Traveler buddy
1	Responsible, good sense of humor
2	Fast respond, spontaneous and polite
3	Punctuality and excellent in time management
4	A great navigator and helpful
5	Excellent in defending on issues or problem
6	Educated and capable
7	Excellent in health status and self hygiene
8	Excellent in travel experience
9	Excellent in financial management
10	Excellent in communicating skill
11	Highly availability
12	Highly compromised

- Travel insurance for seniors is basically insurance that is specially designed to provide protection to older individuals (Henderson, 2007). The general list of coverage that should be included in your travel insurance would be:
 - i. If you have a pre-existing medical condition, it's best to look for a plan that covers this. In some cases, you may need to provide a waiver to get this coverage.
 - ii. Seniors are more susceptible to medical emergencies than younger travelers. A comprehensive medical coverage, plus transportation during a medical emergency should be included.
 - iii. Trip delays or cancellations could leave older travelers financially and medically vulnerable especially during times of stress.
 - iv. Your luggage may contain medication and other valuable items other than your clothing and cherished personal items.
 - v. Check if your insurance provider has toll-free hotlines or numbers to contact in your travel destination for during emergency situations.
 - vi. In the unfortunate event that the insured senior encounters any serious mishaps or fatality.
- Below are the services offered by the elderly as travel companionship for elderly as a person centered travel companion. Challenges are from the technological devices, gadget and the environmental aspect where in today's tech-filled airports and cities, the elderly would face the entire trip from home, getting to the airport, to showing up at the right hotel, going out for sightseeing and visiting, buying online, using online cash or manual as shown in table 3:

Table 3: The services offered by elderly travel companionship

No	The main services	Services item	The acquired devices
1	Travel companion program	Assistance with airport check-in and ticketing; Carrying luggage; Assistance with getting through security or customs; Assistance with ground transportation	Intelligent or Android mobile phone with e-transport and e-booking for travel ticket and hotel.
2	Companion Care Services in hotels or premises	Bathing; Dressing and Feeding Regular Visits, Conversation, and Company; Medication Reminders; Meal Preparation; Light Housekeeping; Laundry Services; Shopping and Transportation; Live-In Services; 24-Hour Care in the hotels	Intelligent or Android mobile phone with e-food delivery and e-booking for travel ticket and hotel.
3	Traveler buddy on sightseeing, windows shopping, as visitor or tourist.	Preparing for buying online or physical buying process; sightseeing and windows shopping. Arrangement for transporting item.	Intelligent or Android mobile phone with e-hailing. Internet with google map installed
4	Medication or treatment in case emergency	Identification on sudden or emergency cases during journey or in the hotel. Calling nearest hospital. Arrangement for hospitalization or medication.	Intelligent or Android mobile phone with Internet with google map installed

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the criteria needed being an elderly as personal travel companion and their services offered. The criteria of western traveler demonstrates the value added in social skill, relationship and communication. As it improves social and communication skills and broadens horizons and even boosts up your confidence by real-life education and creates memories for lifetime. As Mujani (2012) constantly state that the significant of social aspect, the knowledge of economic aspect, the economic development and political aspect of the area visited would improvise social and communication skills. In conclusion there were three (3) fundamental criteria and values needed including values in services offered by the elderly as person centered travel companion; the new criteria's of person centered or personal elderly travel companion with the services offered by them; the necessities including the travel plan, medication and travel insurance for seniors and the special services offered by elderly travel companionship. The article has proposed the local potential personal elderly travel companion that could be obtain from the list of government and private pensioner aged from 55 to 60 years old; caregivers and officer of public,

private and NGOs' home care; facilitator, senior student and participant from University of Third Age's (U3e-UPM); facilitator from PAWE and Desa Bina Diri; local traveler group apps such as "datemyage.com", "gogaffl.com" and "itourism" travel companion apps.

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