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TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS OF OLDER AMERICANS TRAVELING TO INDIA:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science

By

Ambika Chauhan

December 2006

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ABSTRACT

TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS OF OLDER AMERICANS TRAVELING TO INDIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by Ambika Chauhan

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the travel motivations and experiences of older American travelers visiting India. A qualitative research design was used. A total of eight participants, five males and three females, over the age of 50 were interviewed. Following data analysis, three major categories emerged. These were motivation to visit India, travel experience in India, and reflections of the trip. Three main push factors and two main pull factors emerged as travel motivators for the participants visiting India. The push factors were connecting with the host community, new experience, and spiritual seeking. The pull factors were personal safety, shopping, and cuisine. The travel experiences in India included both positive and negative factors. A review of the trip reflections indicated a strong desire to revisit India, since India offers opportunities for learning and growth.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world, enjoying vital importance in the global economy. It is an important source of revenue generation, employment creation and community development in many countries (Goeldner, Ritchie, & McIntosh, 2000; Binns & Nel, 2002). The number of international arrivals worldwide has evolved from 25 million international arrivals in 1950 to an estimated 763 million in 2004, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 6.5 percent (World Tourism Organization, 2006). Furthermore, World Tourism Organization forecasts an accelerated growth of tourism in the next few decades, projecting that Asia and the Pacific will become a prominent tourism destination of the world by 2020 (World Tourism Organization, 2006). This substantial growth in tourism activity clearly marks tourism as one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena of the past century. In order to sustain the continuing growth of the tourism industry, it is necessary for tourism professionals and marketers to understand travel behavior of tourists, the lifeline of tourism.

Travel behavior is a complex phenomenon aimed at describing travel patterns and varies based on needs and wants of tourists (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Hence, a logical next step in the process of understanding is to identify their needs and wants including, reasons for travel and choosing a specific destination. Furthermore an enhanced understanding of needs and behaviors of tourists will ensure a continued delivery of meaningful and satisfying tourism products and services (Gladwell & Bedini, 2004).

An accepted way of identifying tourist needs and wants is to segment the market based on their needs. Market segmentation is a valuable tool in planning appropriate marketing strategies (Bieger & Laesser, 2002), and is commonly used in tourism. Travel market segmentation is achieved in several ways, depending on the criteria employed. The criteria include purpose of travel, buyers' needs, buyers' behavior, price, demographic, economic, geographic, or psychographic characteristics (Middleton & Clark, 2001). Literature states that travel motivation can be used as a general tourism market segmentation tool to understand the needs and wants of a particular segment or group (Ryan & Glendon, 1998).

It is important to understand travel motivation, since motivation has been identified as an important determinant for recreational travel (Iso-Ahola, 1982). According to Crompton (1979) motivation was a critical variable in understanding why people participate in pleasure travel because it was the impelling and compelling force behind travel behavior. Scholars agree that studying travel motivation is imperative since it is the driving force for destination choice. However, they contend that it is a difficult proposition. Unlike purpose of travel, motives to travel are covert and based on individual needs and desires (Pearce & Lee, 2005). To date, most of travel motivation research has focused primarily on the purpose of travel including rest and relaxation, need for social interaction, visit family and friends, challenge, escape from the daily stress, stimulation, spiritual values, health, education and learning (Dann, 1977, 1981; Crompton, 1979; Guinn, 1980; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Fodness, 1994; Gnoth, 1997). Moreover, India has gained recognition world-wide as a tourist destination for its large

size, strategic importance in Asian politics and its old world charm. India has been a destination to international tourists for hundred of years because of the uniqueness of its culture, richness of its civilization, unparalleled hospitality of people, glorious heritage, and fascinating outdoor recreation opportunities. In order to capitalize on this potential, the Indian Government has undertaken a successful marketing strategy called *Incredible India Campaign*. As a result, India recorded 23.5 percent growth in international tourist arrivals and 33 percent in foreign exchange earnings in 2004 (World Tourism Organization, 2006).

Despite an increase in the number of research studies identifying purpose of travel for various market segments, there is limited research focusing on the “older adult” segment. Scholarly discourse is silent on the travel motivations for various market segments. In addition, an exhaustive review of literature yielded no research studies understanding the travel motivations for older adults visiting India, making the current investigation a necessity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of travel motivations of older American adults visiting India. Using a lived experience perspective, the study aimed to capture the motivations of selecting India as a travel destination and understand the travel experiences while in India. Specifically, the following questions guided the current investigation.

1. What are the motivations including push and pull factors pertaining to selecting India as a travel destination?

2. What is the travel experience when in India?

Background

The older adult market segment has been identified as the most impressive segment in tourism in terms of its projected size, financial strength, and time availability (Lieux, Weaver, & McCleary, 1994), drawing the interest of tourism researchers, providers and marketers (Shoemaker 1989; Javalgi, Thomas, & Rao, 1992). For comprehensive understanding of this segment, it is essential to understand its various surrounding components. Some of the pertinent components that will be elaborated in the following paragraphs include changing perspectives of aging and successful aging. Finally, since the study is focused on understanding the experiences of older American adults and their travel motivations in visiting India, a descriptive discussion on older American baby boomers traveling to India is presented.

Historically, being old was considered undesirable, as individuals experienced a series of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional deficit. With the increase in the number of baby boomers (born between the years of 1946 – 1964) coupled with increased life expectancy, this perception of aging is changing (Markson & Hollis-Sawyer, 2000; McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick, 2004). The construct of successful aging is replacing the formerly held antiquated beliefs about aging. Proposed by Rowe and Kahn (1998), successful aging encompasses three different components. These include low risk of disease and disease-related disabilities, high mental and physical functioning, and active engagement with life. Individuals who experience these three components are viewed as aging successfully. Within the successful aging paradigm, aging is perceived as a time of

opportunity, continued growth, and happiness marked with continuity with the past.

Furthermore, McGuire, Boyd, and Tedrick viewed getting older as a “journey or series of journeys, rather than as an arrival at a terminal point in the life span” (p.3).

Successful aging incorporates meaningful activity participation and debunks the myth that older adults are just sitting around with nothing to do. On the contrary, older adults are active and find personal affirmation through their involvement (McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick, 2004). A review of literature indicates that the most preferred activity older adults engage in is travel (McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick). Travel affords them an opportunity to be “creative in the selection of sites, the opportunity to encounter new experiences at individual pace and degree of adventure, and the occasion to benefit in multiple ways from socializing, to learning, to challenging one’s self” (McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick, p.192). In addition, having available time for longer vacation and off-season travel combined with adequate financial resources primes this segment for targeted tourism related marketing (Chon & Singh, 1995).

An increase in the birth rate in the United States of America between 1946 and 1964 has led to an increase in the number of baby boomers. Along with an increase in their proportion, their relative wealth is also growing rapidly. In 1997, there were approximately 55 million people aged 55 and older in the United States, and approximately 33 million aged 65 and older. It is expected that by the year 2030, the US older population will be doubled (Moschis, Lee & Mathur, 1997; Wuest, Emenheiser, & Tas, 2001).

The emergence of older adults can be viewed as an important segment in the tourism industry as they have a large share of discretionary incomes and more leisure time due to reduced household and work responsibilities (Anderson & Langmeyer, 1982; Blazey 1987; Chon & Singh, 1995). Businesses have begun to respond to the needs of this specific aged population by developing new products. In addition, the increasing number of older adults put more economic power in their hands, which are likely to demand products and services suitable to their needs and lifestyles (Moschis, Lee, & Mathur, 1997). Therefore, older adults are important to the tourism industry, and they will grow in importance as this segment grows in size.

Significance of the Study

As noted above, to have a leading edge in the competitive travel industry, destination marketers need to keep abreast of motivational trends and changes and enhance their understanding the older travelers. The results from this study may help to a better product development system in Indian tourism and can also recognize the personal values of the older tourists and their psychological needs.

Definition of Terms

The focus of this study was to understand the travel motivations of older American adults traveling to India. Travel motivation has been defined as “set of needs which predispose a person to act in a specific touristic goal-directed way” (Pizam, Neuman & Reichel, 1979, p. 195). Motivation is thus an inner state which energizes channels and sustains human behavior to achieve goals.

While there is no universal definition for what it means to be an “older person,” there is a common understand put forth by American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) that 50 and above are considered older (Moschis, Lee, & Mathur, 1997; AARP, 2006). Since the aging construct is multidimensional, indicating that people gradually grow old biologically, psychologically and socially, it is difficult to have a consistent definition capturing all the attributes. Therefore, it is simpler to define and categorize age merely chronologically to gain a proper perspective. In the case of travel and leisure services, 50 or 55 is the usual age threshold of identification as older for people who may have a need for variety of travel products and services (Moschis, Lee, & Mathur).

Structure of Thesis

Chapter 1, the introduction, lays the foundation for the research investigation, identifying the purpose of the study, background, significance of the study, and definitions of the terms. Chapter 2, the review of literature, presents a comprehensive analysis on prior research conducted on tourism market segmentation, motivation to travel, travel motivations of older adults, the aging phenomenon in the USA, and India as a tourism destination. Chapter 3, methods, describes in the detail the methods employed to conduct the current study including research design, selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter 4, results obtained following the analyses of the data collection are presented. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the results with limitations and concludes the study with implications to future research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The older adults segment is drawing increasing attention from researchers and tourism service providers because of the projected increase in their size and wealth. A primary area of focus centers around understanding the travel needs, behaviors, and motivations of older adults. As indicated by Middleton and Clarke (2001), the key to understand older adult's travel needs and wants is to understand their motivation. Several strategies have been employed in understanding travel motivations, which will be elaborated in this chapter. As a means of providing foundational and contextual support, this chapter reviews the following topics: travel motivation including that of older adults, aging and demographic characteristics of older American adults, market segmentation, and India as a travel destination. Finally, the chapter will justify the need for the current investigation, since a review of literature will indicate limited research on motivations of older American adults traveling to India.

Travel Motivation

Understanding the underlying motivations that impact people's travel habits and destination selection is crucial in predicting their future travel plans. However, identifying the underlying motives has been a very difficult proposition (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Most research studies attempting to understand motivations have focused primarily on purpose of travel (Pearce & Lee). Tourism scholars contend that in order to understand people's travel patterns, it is imperative to have a clear understanding of their motivation to travel.

In describing motivation, scholars have stated that it is a complex concept, encompassing psychological/biological needs and wants, including integral forces that arouse, direct, and integrate a person's behavior and activity (Dann, 1981; Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Furthermore, it is the driving force behind all actions (Crompton, 1979; Fodness, 1994). Travel motivation has been defined as a "set of needs which predispose a person to act in a specific touristic goal-directed way" (Pizam, Neuman & Reichel, 1979, p. 195). Motivation can thus be an inner state which energizes channels and sustains human behavior to achieve goals. Gnoth (1997) stressed that the concept of motivation was complex both from a cognitive and an emotional point of view. Cognition in this context referred to mental representations such as knowledge or belief, while emotion captured drives, feelings, and instinct.

A review of literature indicated that several research studies have been conducted in the area of visitor motivation. Most of the early studies were based upon Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954) (as cited in Middleton & Clarke, 2001, p. 78). Abraham Maslow purported that basic needs (e.g., physiological, safety and security) had to be met before one could progress to the next levels in the needs hierarchy (e.g., sense of belonging, self-actualization).

Maslow's theory, in its application to tourism has played a significant role in understanding tourism motivation. As a result, tourism motivation has been viewed as a combination of "push" and "pull" factors. Numerous studies in the tourist motivation literature have revolved around the concept of "push" and "pull" factors (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Fodness, 1994; Yuan & McDonald, 1990; Baloglu &

Uysal, 1996; Gnoth, 1997). The push and pull theory of travel motivation aptly explains an individual's travel patterns and behaviors.

According to Goossens (2000), push and pull factors of tourist behavior forms two sides of the same motivational coin. The psychological factor that connects both sides is the concept of emotion. Hence, push factors are those that make a person want to travel and they are mainly social-psychological motives and pull factors are external to the individual and are illustrated in the attributes of a destination. In other words, push motivations are more related to internal or emotional aspects and pull motivations, on the other hand, are connected to external, situational, or cognitive aspects of the person.

Most of the push factors are origin-related, created to satisfy a desire to travel. They capture the intangible desires of an individual traveler. Some of the intangible or psychological desires include escape, rest and relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure, and social interaction. Pull factors are those that emerge as a result of the attractiveness of a destination as it is perceived and expected by the traveler. The tangible resources of the destination are beaches, recreation facilities, and historic resources. In addition, pull factors also include travelers' perceptions and expectations of novelty, benefit expectation, novelty and marketed image of the destination (Uysal & Hagan, 1993).

Crompton (1979) identified nine motives underlying and impacting selection of destination for pleasure travel. These were escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and facilitation of social interaction, novelty, and

education. He classified the first seven motives as push factors, intrinsically derived from an individual. Novelty and education, according to Crompton were identified as pull factors, since they were attributes of a particular destination.

Dann (1981) identified seven approaches to understand travel motivation focused on individuals and their cultural conditioning. They were travel as a response to what is lacking yet desired, destination “pull” in response to motivational “push,” motivation as fantasy, motivation as classified purpose, motivational typologies, motivation and tourist experiences, and motivation as auto-definition and meaning. The author does contend that travel motivation as a concept is confusing, primarily due to various perspectives, definitions, and understandings.

According to Fodness (1994), the main push factors identified by individuals represented their psychological functions (the needs). From the perspective of travelers, the four dimensions or functional themes of a vacation included a knowledge function, a social adjustment function, a value-expressive function, and a biopolar utilitarian function (reward maximization and punishment minimization). The author’s study focused on the motives of travelers vacationing in Norway.

Push factors are internally generated drives causing prospective travelers to search for signs in objects (e.g., destinations, services, and experiences), situations, and events with an ability to decrease an existing drive (Gnoth, 1997). When considering tourism to a new destination, usually tourist motivation is dependent both on emotions (push factors) and cognitions (pull factors). According to Gnoth, drives, feelings, and instincts constitute the emotion component while cognition comprises of knowledge and beliefs.

It is apparent from the preceding paragraphs, that push and pull motivations have been extensively used to study travel motivation, justifying its appropriateness and importance in understanding travel motivation. Therefore, it provided the theoretical foundation for the current investigation. As articulated above, it was important to examine the push factors influencing a person to consider taking a vacation and the forces that attract or pull that person to select a particular vacation destination.

Approaches beyond push and pull theory studying travel motivation have been presented in the literature. They include psychocentrism/allocentrism approach, social influences on travel motivation, and categorization of travel motivations. Using personality types, the psychocentrism/allocentrism approach classifies travelers along a psychographic continuum ranging from psychocentric at one end of the continuum and allocentric at the other (Plog, 1974, 1990). The author asserted that individual character and personality revealed preferred tourism experiences. Psychocentric individuals displayed greater insecurity and a general sense of powerlessness (Plog). These individuals preferred familiar destination, including areas promoting relaxation and less demanding activities (Plog). Individually who are allocentric are self-confident and enjoy discovering new areas and visiting new and exotic destinations (Plog).

Human behavior is strongly influenced by other people. This influence termed as social influences is a strong predictor of human behavior and could be used to understand travel motivation (Moutinho, 1987). The author categorized social influences in 4 areas, including role and family influences, reference groups, social classes, and culture and subculture. It is important to understand this influence on travel motivation in order to

study overall tourism industry (Moutinho). Krippendorf (1987) asserted that travel motivation was not primarily an intrinsic drive, but resulted from influences of the social environment responsible for setting norms.

McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) indicated that travel motivations can be classified into four basic categories. These were physical, cultural, interpersonal, and status and prestige. According to the authors, physical category represented rest, recreation, participation in sports and activities, and health and fitness. Cultural category encompassed the need to understand new cultures, environments, societies, countries, and satisfy curiosity. Interpersonal comprised of a need to strengthen relationships, meet new people, visit friends and relatives, and escape. Finally, status and prestige included a need to enhance one's self-esteem and personal development.

Other research studies have attempted to understand underlying travel motivations for individuals. Iso-Ahola (1982) argued that individuals perceived a leisure activity as a potential satisfaction-producer for two major reasons. The activity provided certain intrinsic rewards, such as feeling mastery and competence, and it could also provide an escape from the routine environment. Gray (1970) identified both "wanderlust" and "sunlust" as underlying motivators for pleasure travel. Wanderlust represented a need to leave familiar surroundings and visit different exciting cultures, attractions, and cuisines. Sunlust signified a desire for better amenities, than those available locally (Gray).

Discourse on travel motivation continues to experience evolution. Currently, studies on travel motivation have indicated that an appropriate way to investigate

motivation is employing a segmentation approach. In the following section, market segmentation will be discussed with a particular emphasis on older adults and life-cycle.

Market Segmentation

A common strategy employed when identifying prospective markets is market segmentation. It seeks to determine some easily identifiable characteristics with which purchasing behavior of subgroups within the market may be predicted and targeted (Johns & Gyimothy, 2002). Market segmentation has been considered to be the very core of marketing. The strategy of segmentation has enabled marketers to avoid direct competition in an increasingly crowded marketplace. It does so by enabling them to distinguish their particular product, perhaps on the basis of price, often through styling and promotional appeal (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Morgan and Pritchard also emphasized the need for continuous monitoring and re-evaluation of segmentation. After segmenting the market into relatively homogeneous sectors, the marketer then has to identify one or more segments to target with a particular product or promotional appeal (Morgan & Pritchard).

Given that the tourism market is filled with diverse customer groups and needs, market segmentation is considered an important and logical step (Lewis, 1981; Haahti, 1986; DiMingo, 1988; Chacko, 1997; Reich, 1997; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Target market segments must be selected before tourism marketers can begin to entice their potential customers (Chacko). Several segmentation strategies have been identified in tourism literature as appropriate strategies. The tourism market has been segmented based on nationality, household income, education, trip purpose, travel party

composition, age (Mykletun, Crotts, & Mykletun, 2001) life cycle, and travel motivations (Hill, McDonald, & Uysal, 1990).

Lifecycle as a segmentation tool has been used to categorize individuals based on their stages in life and not just their chronological age. Some of the lifecycle categories included single-no children, married-no children, single with children, and married with children. Studies have found differences in travel motivations among these different categories (Hill, McDonald, & Uysal, 1990). As the current investigation focused on travel motivations of older American adults the following section will elaborate the older American adult market segment.

Older American Adults

Older adults tend to travel more frequently, travel longer distances, stay away longer, spend more money and rely more on travel agents than their non-senior counterparts (Anderson & Langmeyer, 1982). Since the aging construct is multidimensional, indicating that people gradually grow old biologically, psychologically and socially, it is difficult to have a consistent definition of older adults capturing all the attributes. Hence, there is no universal definition of older adults. It is therefore simpler to define and categorize age merely chronologically in order to gain an understanding of this cohort. In the case of travel and leisure services, 50 or 55 is the usual age threshold of identification as older for people who may have a need for variety of travel products and services (Moschis, Lee, & Mathur, 1997).

Research has shown that the older market is diverse with respect to sociodemographic characteristics, lifestyles, interests, attitudes, and consumption patterns

(You & O'Leary, 1999). Older adults tend to have large amount of discretionary income due to their increased earnings and the wealth they have collected over their lifetime (Tongren, 1980; Chon & Singh, 1995). Also, their children are mostly grown and their investments in home and family are already made therefore making them good prospects for travel (Dingman 1980, as cited in Anderson & Langmeyer, 1982). They are able to and willing to travel during off-peak seasons to other destinations. According to Gay (1999), an increasing number of older adults are beginning to seek out tours that are designed and operated specifically for the mature market. The 55 to 64 age older adults have been identified as the single most important market segment in terms of their per capita expenditures with vacation expenditures 30 percent above the national norm (Allan, 1981, Schewe, 1990).

North American older travelers account for 28 percent of all overseas trips (Chon & Singh, 1995). The older American traveler constitutes a prime market for the tourism industry both in number of trips and magnitude of expenditure (Lieux, Weaver & McCleary, 1994; Fleischer & Pizam, 2002). Most of the researchers predict that US older population over 50 cohorts is expected to be double by the year 2030 (Fintel, 1990; Moschis, Lee & Mathur 1997; Wuest, Emenheiser, & Tas, 2001). Exter (1990) prepared two scenarios for the American older segment, slow growth and fast growth. In the slow growth, it was expected that by 2010 there would be 93 million people over 50 and 105 million by 2020. In the fast growth scenario, by 2010 there would be a projection of 101 million people over 50 and 121 million by 2020. According to Rand (2001) the number of people who were 65 years and older increased more than threefold since 1950, from

approximately 130 million (about 4 percent of global population) to 419 million (6.9 percent) in the year 2000. The number is currently increasing by 8 million per year and this increase will reach 24 million per year by 2030. The most rapid growth in the older population will start after 2010, when the large post World War II baby boomers begin to reach age 65 (Rand).

As noted previously, the older adult market is of significant size and importance to tourism. The aging of the population in the western world has provided a market of affluent people with more leisure time and desire to travel (Chon & Singh, 1995; Fleischer & Pizam, 2002). Most of the developing countries can benefit from this increasing older market. With the growing interests of tourism researchers and providers in older adults travel due to their increase spare time and significant buying power, the time is right to investigate the motivations of western older tourists traveling to South Asia, including India.

Older Adult's Travel Motivation

In travel and tourism literature, there are number of researchers addressing the older adult travel market. Most of the researchers have used motivational theories to understand the travel decision-making process. Older adults possess a sphere of needs that are unique from any other segment of the society (Guinn, 1980; Wolfe, 1993). The older travelers show a strong interest in the "learning and personal growth opportunities" that travel can provide (Wolfe, 1993, p. 243). Gerontologists have proposed that as people reach their mature stage in life, they become preoccupied with self-utilization. Thus, they search for self-fulfilling activities and experiences (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002).

Research on older travelers have focused mainly on their travel behavior, the difference between senior travelers and the other age groups, and segmenting the senior market who travel for pleasure and other reasons.

Guinn (1980) studied seniors from a winter recreational vehicle tourist area in Texas and identified some motivations for travel. The motivations in order of importance were – rest and relaxation, association with family and friends, physical exercise, learning experience, and self-fulfillment. When investigating travel purchases by older travelers and their attitudes in travel planning process in two stages: preretirement planning and postretirement, respondents were found to engage in a distinct preretirement travel planning phase and a detailed postretirement information searching and travel implementation phase (Tongren, 1980). The findings revealed that travel idea might never become actual purchases if older consumers perceive travel uncomfortable. Tongren also suggested using different promotional programs for effectively targeting pre- and post retirement individuals.

A study conducted by Anderson and Langmeyer (1982) profiled the similarities and differences of the under-50 and over-50 travelers. The results revealed that both groups traveled for rest and relaxation and to visit relatives. The difference revealed was that over-50 group traveled to historic sites whereas, that under-50 was more likely to travel for outdoor recreation and visit man-made amusement parks. The over-50 spent significantly more money on the vacation travel than the under-50 group.

Javalgi, Thomas and Rao (1992) focused their study on the travel behavior of older adults and the younger people in the U.S. pleasure travel marketplace. The study

showed that the older adults traveling greater distance and for a longer period, used a travel agent for making the arrangements, preferred package travel, and higher security than the younger travelers.

According to Shoemaker (1989), the older market needed to be segmented into smaller homogeneous groups based on their motivations for travel. In the research study, there were three segments identified by the author. The first segment identified, as “Family Travelers” included those who used pleasure travel as way to spend time with their immediate families. The majority of the members in the first segment were 64 years old or younger. The second segment labeled as “Active Resters,” were those who used pleasure travel as a way to seek intellectual and spiritual enrichment, rest and relax, to escape the daily routine, and to meet people and socialize. Like the first segment, majority of the members in the second segment were also 64 years or younger. The final segment known as the “Older Set,” and the least known about segment in terms of their primary motivations for travel, members of this segment enjoyed to stay in resorts where the trip was filled with activities. The members in this group were older than 64.

Vincent and de los Santos (1990) replicated and validated Shoemaker’s (1989) research, focusing on older adults’ winter travel to Texas. Winter Texans preferred to plan their trips, took long vacations, and conducted various touristic activities. Climate and friendliness of the local people were the two most important attractions for winter Texans when choosing a winter vacation home.

Similar to Shoemaker’s (1989) and Vincent and de los Santos’s (1990) study, Lieux, Weaver and McClerary (1994) found that the older adult market could be

segmented into more refined groups. They grouped a sample of the US population of older tourists (55 and above) on the basis of reasons (motivations) to travel, to determine characteristics of each segment, and to determine if the segments had different preferences related to lodging accommodations. Three distinct segments emerged from the study: The first segment included the “novelty seekers” who primarily traveled to visit new places and experience new things. They were generally young older adults, likely to be retired with good incomes. Second group, the “active enthusiasts” were more interested in tourism. Members of this group too were young older adults, who were interested in physical activities, escaping the cold weather, and seeking warm weather activities. Most of them were retired and monetarily well off. Third group, the “reluctant travelers” were much older than the other two groups. They had lower incomes and took short duration vacations.

As the literature discussed above reveals, older adults are an important segment to the travel industry. As Schewe (1990) suggested segmenting travelers on the basis of motivations with emphasis on various items is one of the most effective methods to understand a traveler’s needs. Therefore, it is important to understand motivation of a traveler to better comprehend their behavior and choice regarding destination.

India as a Tourist Destination

Tourism should not be viewed only as a source of economic and social gains. It has the potential to play many other roles in the lives of humans including fostering appreciation for other cultures (Gupta, Lal, & Bhattacharyya, 2002). One such destination that shares a rich cultural heritage is India. India is a unique country having

such ancient cultural roots, the kinds of which are rarely seen anywhere else in the world. It can boast of more than 6000 years of civilized life with large cities, monuments, temples, great palaces, beautiful sculptures, and a host of other artistic creations. There are mountains, rivers, seashores, deserts, forests and sociological riches placing India as the best place for tourism (Roy & Tisdell, 1998; Gupta, Lal, & Bhattacharyya, 2002). Locationally, India is also well placed for tourism. It lies in the central part of Asia that allows it to benefit from the flow of international tourist traffic (Roy & Tisdell, 1998). India has always been appealing to international tourists for its oriental charm and mystery (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Chaudhary, 1996; Singh, 1997).

The importance of tourism for the country was recognized early but was not a priority sector at the time of independence in 1947. Since 1990, the focus has shifted to tourism industry and tourism has received a fair share of investment (Chaudhary, 1996). Tourism in contemporary India has emerged as a large source of foreign exchange earnings and a multi billion dollar industry generating enormous revenue in taxes and millions of jobs for the teeming population of the country (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992). It has witnessed a positive growth in foreign tourist arrivals, reaching a level of 3.92 million in 2005 against 3.46 million in 2004 (Incredible India, 2005).

The Indian Government has launched a successful marketing strategy called *Incredible India Campaign*. It portrays India as a land of natural beauty, highlighting its cultural diversity, and mystical spirituality and healing traditions. As a result, India recorded 23.5 percent growth in international tourist arrivals and 33 percent in foreign exchange earnings in 2004 (World Tourism Organization, 2006). Prior to the *Incredible*

India campaign, Tourism Ministry was solely dependant on the stray marketing efforts of its officers posted at the various overseas offices whose output levels largely influenced the tourist inflow from that country (Incredible India, 2005). The Annual Report of 2004-2005 by the Government of India stated that tourism was the third largest foreign exchange earner and employing the most manpower.

Echtner and Prasad (2003) noted that the developed countries are the main generators of tourists to the Third World countries. Like most developing countries, India's major tourism-generating markets are distant, including Western Europe and Northern America which top the list (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Chaudhary, 1996). United States of America is presently the second largest market for India. While 98.8 percent of US nationals visited India for "tourism and other" purposes, 2.6 percent came for business (India Tourism Statistics, 2004).

Though India has one of the largest tourism marketing budgets in the world to promote its enormous variety, diversity and richness of attractions, the number of tourists attracted by India are far fewer than many tiny nations in the South East Asian regions (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Roy & Tisdell, 1998). Indian tourism has faced the problem of not getting the anticipated and expected number of foreign tourists despite extensive marketing efforts (Chaudhary, 2000). The main problem identified by many researchers in Indian tourism was the lack of positive image reflected mainly on the bottleneck infrastructure and safety concerns (Kale & Weir, 1986; Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Chaudhary, 2000).

India's description in foreign media often included poor sanitary conditions, tiresome immigration, and unhelpful people (Chaudhary, 1996). According to Anand (1976), the picture of India that reached the western world was largely presented by the media. He contended that since mass communication media in the West was primarily made up of entertainment agencies, there was a greater tendency to emphasize the sensational, crude, and outlandish aspects of Indian life. The primary focus was either on triviality of disasters. While assessing Americans' perceptions about India as a possible vacation destination, Kale and Weir (1986) found twelve major factors responsible for the negative image of India in the U.S. They were poverty/beggars, political instability, not clean, climate, fear of unknown, prefer to go elsewhere, crowded/overpopulated, nothing to "see or do"; expensive, not safe, poor accommodation, and language barrier.

Bandyopadhyay and Morais (2005), in their examination of how India was represented in the American tourism brochures, magazines, and newspapers identified six predominant themes. These were cultural diversity exemplified by the liveliness and intensity of its colors, smells, and noises; the richness of the combined antiquity, diverse society, and cosmopolitan urban centers; the spirituality inherent to most aspects of Indian life and alternative wellness methods; the simplicity and poverty of premodern lifestyles; the peacefulness and serenity of the land's natural beauty; and the luxurious treatment previously available exclusively to the Maharajas (Bandyopadhyay & Morais). These findings indicate an evolution of how India as a destination image is represented in the western world.

Research studies have examined the problems India encountered in the past pertaining to their marketing strategies. Ahmed and Krohn (1992) discussed problems surrounding marketing of India as a tourist destination. Indian tourism marketers, they contended had traditionally attempted to “sell” their services rather than market them. Ahmed and Krohn recommended seven specific steps for increasing tourism to India: (1) improving the image, (2) identifying target markets; (3) strategically locating tourist offices; (4) developing promotional themes; (5) correcting attitudinal problems; (6) improving product strategy; and (7) promoting India as a convention destination. The researchers concluded that the Indian Government must attend to all seven steps before being able to significantly improve their ability to attract North American tourists. A small minority was intrigued by India, describing it as an ancient civilization, beautiful architecture and monuments, and an exotic destination (Anand, 1976; Kale & Weir, 1986).

Summary

A review of the literature on tourist motivation indicated that the concept of push and pull factors has been generally accepted as determinants of travel motivation. Push factors are those that make a person want to travel and they are mainly social-psychological intrinsic motives. Pull factors are external to the individual and are illustrated in the attributes of a destination. Together, push and pull factors assist in determining reasons why people travel to particular destinations.

Reviewing the tourist market segments, it is clear that older adults are a very important segment to the travel industry. Research indicates, that older adults tend to

have large amount of discretionary income, time since their children are mostly grown, and their investments in home and family are already made, making them good prospects for travel. Hence, the understanding of older adults' travel motivation is a crucial issue to researchers, tourism professionals, and marketers. In addition, India has gained recognition in the world as a tourist destination for its old world charm, cultural heritage, and its unique geographical position. There is a variety of attractions that India can offer its foreign tourists. In light of the significance of the older adult market and lack of travel motivational literature pertaining to this segment visiting India, this study attempted to fill a research gap by investigating the travel motivations of older Americans traveling to India.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

The phenomenon of older people traveling has been garnering much attention from scholars and professionals in the tourism industry. However, a review of literature on Indian tourism revealed no studies that investigated the phenomenon of older American traveling to India. The purpose of the study was to understand the travel motivations pertaining to selecting India as a destination and to find out from their perspectives, what their experiences in India were.

This section describes in detail the methods employed to conduct the current investigation. To obtain an insight and deeper understanding of the older American travelers' motivation, a qualitative method was deemed appropriate for the study. Scholarly literature is dominated by insightful studies on older travelers and their travel motivation (Shoemaker, 1989; Lieux, Weaver & McClerary, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Yet, a large amount of these stories do not capture the voices of the traveler. In addition, there are no studies investigating the travel motivation of older American travelers visiting India. Therefore, this investigation focused on capturing the motivation of older American travelers traveling to India in their own voices.

Research Design

Since the current study was aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of older American travelers' motivation and travel experiences when in India, a qualitative approach seemed most appropriate. Furthermore as indicated by various scholars, motivation is highly individual, making it difficult to capture using a highly structured

quantitative research design. The data collection techniques included primarily one on one interviews with extensive field notes written following each interview. Interviews followed a semi-structured format and consisted of open-ended questions that helped explore the area under investigation. A comprehensive review of literature and consultation with a panel of experts helped to formulate the questions for the interview. Please review Appendix C for the copy of the interview guide.

Research Participants

As the aim of the study was to understand the in-depth motivations and decision-making process of American older travelers traveling to India, recruitment of participants was purposive and used snowball sampling. Purposive sampling draws samples according to specific purpose. These purposes could be according to specific characteristics of people or representative of the population (Riddick & Russell, 1999). Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. Samples included older Americans who were above 50 years and who had traveled to India in the last 3 years. Attempts were made to ensure that the participants represented a breadth of diversity reflective of the older American population. Excluded from the study were Asian Indians born in the USA because they may possess obvious background motivations to travel to India, including visiting family and friends, connecting with their ethnic identity, and reconnecting with their cultural roots.

The participants were recruited from the San Francisco Bay Area, California (CA), USA. For recruiting participants, the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, tour operators, travel agents in the San Francisco Bay Area region were contacted through

telephone calls and e-mails. Word of mouth method was also used to recruit participants. Geographic Expedition, a tour operator located in San Francisco, CA sent out emails to 12 of their clients informing them of the current study. Travel Design, a travel agency located in Mountain View, CA distributed 20 flyers to his clients with information about the current study. The recipients of the emails and the flyers were individuals who had visited India in the last three years and were over the age of 50. One participant contacted by Geographic Expedition and three who had received flyers from Travel Design agreed to be part of the study. Word of mouth yielded four other participants. In total, eight participants were interviewed and provided data for the current study. All eight participants were eager to be a part of this study indicated by their enthusiasm and phrases such as “I am happy to be involved; I am looking forward to the interview.”

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview guide was developed with some general questions addressing the participants’ travel experience to India. These questions were formulated based on a comprehensive review of travel motivation literature. Furthermore, the questions were reviewed by a panel of experts to ensure appropriateness, clarity and ease of intelligibility of the questions. The panel consisted of university researchers (from San Jose State University). The finalized interview guide contained open-ended questions related to travel motivation, along with probing questions. The probes facilitated access to deeper information and essence of the experience to the participants. Following the open –ended questions, there were a series of specific questions with probes focused on

their specific motivations and travel decisions to visiting India. Probing questions allowed the researcher ways to draw out more complete stories from the participants.

Whenever possible, each participant was encouraged to elaborate their responses, allowing for a deeper reflection and thicker description of their experiences. Such techniques allow for information that is deeper and beyond the superficial occurrence (Berg, 2004). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), on many occasions during an interview, participants tend to drift away from the specific question asked, tapping into areas of the topic that may not have been previously considered. Allowing them to continue elaborating their answer can add a wealth of information to the research study and can give a new insight on the topic. As part of the probing strategy, participants were asked to share pictures of their trip. It was hoped that their pictures would trigger their memories and allow greater recollection of their experiences and incidents. In addition to the interview, the researcher observed the participants and recorded these observations as copious field notes (Patton, 2001), recorded following each interview.

The place for the interview was chosen at the convenience of the participants. Four interviews took place in the home of the participant, three interviews at the coffee shop, and one interview took place at the participants' office. All the interviews were conducted by the researcher. The researcher established an atmosphere in which the participants felt safe enough to talk freely about their experiences and feelings (Kvale, 1996). Before each interview began, participants were given a consent form to sign and a brief outline of the research study. Once the participants signed the consent form, the interviews commenced. Each interview was tape recorded. A digital recorder (Olympus

WS-100) was used for recording the interviews. The advantages of tape recorders are that they can be replayed and can be transcribed easily (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). There was no set timeframe for the interview because it depended on how long the participants took to discuss their experiences. Most of the interviews ranged between 60 and 90 minutes. Each interview was transcribed verbatim soon after the interview. The transcription yielded a total of 170 double – spaced typed pages. The profile of the eight research participants is provided below.

Profile of Research Participants

- 1) *Participant A:* Participant A, male, 63 years old visited India in 2006 for three weeks. This was his first trip to India. Participant A's main motivation to travel to India was social work. He traveled to Kolkata, Shillong, Chennai, Mahabalipuram and Bangalore in India. His travel arrangements were done by a travel agent and a local contact in India. He prefers to go to India with family or with friends.
- 2) *Participant B:* Participant B, male, 74 years old, visited India for the second time. His first trip included major tourist cities of Northern and Southern India. Second trip was to Ladakh, Amritsar and Manali. He calls himself a "little explorer." The researcher noted that he was very organized with his tour documents with writing down all minor details of his trips and keeps lots of maps of the places he has visited. His main motivation to travel to India was to see the culture, how people live, see the architecture and some landscapes. Participant B was also an intense photographer. His photographs were mostly architecture, people and landscape and have many exhibitions of his photographs. He prefers to visit India in a tour group and looks for

combinations in his package like mountains, architecture, villages, rivers, and local people. His travel arrangements were done by a tour company.

- 3) *Participant C*: Participant C, female, 61 years old visited India for the first time in 2005. Her main motivation to visit India was spiritual. She visited the ashram in Andhra Pradesh. According to participant C she always knew that she will visit India for spiritual purposes. She prefers to go with a friend with the same spiritual interest. Her arrangements were done by a travel agent.
- 4) *Participant D*: Participant D, female, 59 years old visited India for the first time in 2003. Her main motivation to visit India was spiritual. It was her guru's [spiritual teacher] birthday and she went for the celebrations to Kerala. Her grand parents lived in India for many years and that too influenced her decision to visit India. She loves to travel because she likes to be in new situations, like meeting people and share her experiences with others. Participant D was also a painter and writer and therefore any new experience feed her creativity and that's most important to her. Her travel arrangements were done by the Ashram organization.
- 5) *Participant E*: Participant E, female, 66 years old and had visited India twice. Her first trip was Northern India (1991) and second trip was to Southern India (2005). Her main motivation to visit India was to experience the cultural and historic perspective. Motivation to second visit was to see the difference between the Northern & Southern India. They had heard that there is a lot of contrast between the two regions. She felt that people should make their trip to India before they are 75 years old as the old infrastructure is not suitable in India for people very old. She

- prefers to travel with her husband and in a tour group. Her travel arrangements were done by a tour company.
- 6) *Participant F*: Participant F, male, 51 years old visited India for the first time in 2005. His main motivation to travel to India was spiritual. He was visiting the ashram in Andhra Pradesh. His spiritual life was main goal for him. He prefers to travel with close friends. His travel arrangements were done by a travel agent.
- 7) *Participant G*: Participant G, male, 53 years old visited Southern India for the second time in 2006. His first visit was to North & South India in 1995. His main motivation to travel to India was social work and also, to meet his local friend residing in India. He prefers to travel with his wife and friends. His travel arrangements were done by a travel agent and a friend in India.
- 8) *Participant H*: Participant H, male, 51 years old visited India for the first time in 2006. His main motivation to travel to India was social work. He traveled to Chennai, Mahabalipuram and Bangalore. He prefers to travel with friends. His travel arrangements were done by a travel agent and local contact in India.

Confidentiality

Prior to conducting the interviews, the research proposal was submitted for approval to San Jose State University's Human Subjects - Institutional Review Board. Once approval was granted (See Appendix A for a copy of the approval letter), recruitment for interview participants began. In addition, confidentiality of the participants was maintained. Participants were not asked to provide their names, phone numbers, or any other identifiers as a way of protecting their confidentiality. They were

asked to indicate their age since age was a criterion of inclusion in the study, per the research guidelines. Each participant was informed the purpose of the study and the interview before the actual interview took place. The participants signed a consent form and participants were able to refuse or withdraw from the participation process at any time, even post completion of the interview. Please refer to Appendix B for a copy of the consent form.

Pseudonyms were given to all participants who were interviewed to protect identity and privacy within the transcribed tapes and notes, data analysis, interpretive findings, and storage of the data. A code key was created to define all codes and pseudonyms.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study, an essential element of any research endeavor, triangulation, member checks, peer examination, and pattern matching were used. Triangulation includes looking at the same phenomenon from more than one perspective to substantiate a researcher's conclusion (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). It limits personal and methodological biases and enhances a study's generalizability and credibility. Triangulation in this study was achieved by data triangulation and investigator triangulation (Patton, 2001). Data triangulation refers to data sources. Investigator triangulation includes multiple researchers being involved in an investigation. Data triangulation included interviews and field notes. Field notes captured participants' emotions and reactions. These field notes were useful as they were able to provide additional context to the narrative provided by the participants.

Investigator triangulation used a university researcher from San Jose State University who had the expertise in the topic and helped in data analysis. Furthermore, in order to achieve enhanced credibility, the interview transcripts were coded by two coders. The inter-coder consistency was 95 percent.

Member checks as a technique has been identified as a method to enhance the credibility of the study (Patton, 2001). Participants were sent the summary of the analyses and findings to verify the accuracy of the observations and interpretations. There was 100 percent agreement among the participants about the findings and interpretations of the study. Pattern matching was employed during the analyses process with the creation of a coding schema as well as capturing the common recurrent themes.

Finally, to ensure consistency of rigor in the study, the researcher, acting as an auditor regularly viewed the data gathering and analysis process to confirm adherence to sound and ethical research practice, including confidentiality, coding, and interpretation of emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed a process consistent with qualitative research design. As indicated by Thomas and Nelson (2001), analysis is a process of making sense out of the data. Each interview was transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were read, re-read, and re-read again. All the interview transcripts were coded for emergent themes using a constant comparison method (Patton, 2001).

Data analysis progressed through open and axial coding. "Coding forces the researcher to make judgments about the meanings of contiguous blocks of text" (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2003, p. 274). The naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of the data is referred to as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding identified and developed themes in terms of their properties and dimensions. Axial coding is the process of relating categories and sub categories to each other, via a combination of inductive and deductive thinking (Strauss & Corbin).

Along with constant comparison, thematic analysis was conducted. Emergent themes were examined and using convergent and divergent techniques, categories comprising of clustered themes emerged. The simultaneous collection and analysis of data are important in qualitative research. This process helped the researcher to be systematic and organized with the material. It also avoided the researcher from getting unfocused, repetitious, and dealing with an overwhelming volume of material. Waiting until all the data is collected, the study could be left with gaps as the researcher, may not have realized that some needed evidence was not collected (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). Following data analysis, several themes emerged. Upon closer examination, the themes appeared to cluster around three broader areas coinciding with the main queries under study which will be elaborated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the travel motivations and experiences of older American travelers visiting India. Using qualitative methodology, the investigation captured the lived experience perspective of eight older American participants. Following data analysis, several themes emerged. Upon closer examination, the themes appeared to cluster around three broader areas coinciding with the main queries under study - motivation to travel, travel experience in India, and reflections of the trip. This chapter will be organized around these three broader areas.

Motivation to Visit India

Motivation to visit a destination has been determined as a critical driving force behind all actions related to travel (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Fodness, 1994). Therefore, it is imperative to understand people's motivation that impact their travel habits and selection of the destination. In the current study, several motivations to travel to India were identified by the participants. Furthermore, the participants indicated that an additional factor impacting their motivation was the perceived image of India as a travel destination.

Reasons to Visit India

The participants in the study stated that they had varying reasons to travel to India. These included but were not limited to doing social work (helping Tsunami victims and widows), personal spirituality, and cultural experiences. The following quotes capture their varying reasons.

To see mainly what the church was doing as well as see India.

Amma [spiritual teacher] was the reason that I went because she was the one I wanted to see. I really wanted to be there for my spirit and one with Amma. Also, I thought while we were there we will see Bangalore, at least I'll see a big city.

Well, I always wanted to go to India. My family has history there and I have always been interested in such a huge country and how diverse it is. And the occasion came quite accidentally. I have a guru who comes from India. Her 50th birthday was coming up. It was the perfect opportunity you know to go. I traveled by myself and a great way to meet people who have similar interests and a good way to start exploring the country.

I am always fascinated by third world countries and various ethnic cultures and so it's the cultural experience and historic perspective that interested me to go to India.

Perceived Image of India

All the eight individuals in the study discussed their perceived image of India and how it impacted their decision to visit. The perceived image identified by the participants was India as a spiritual destination, India as historical destination, India as new country, and India as cultural experience.

I wanted to go and do something spiritual because I knew it would change my life.

I expected to be surprising and a cultural experience and just kind of hang on and just kind of absorb it or not [sic] you know the surprise.

It's always fascinating. How can they [India] keep producing people value, spiritual awareness through a degree that they are to it practically, there are so many people, so clear coming out of India that that was interesting to me too. Why doesn't it happen in different places like [sic] why is it blooming there? So I wanted to be there and feel that.

Upon further probing, participants intimated that this perceived image of India was derived from reading books, websites and other promotional materials. Also, friends

and family members who had prior travel experience in India contributed to the evolution of the perceived image.

A number of people had told me [about India] and I had read a number of books about it, I expected it to be surprising and a cultural experience.

I looked in catalogues but I have been to so many Asian countries. I like Asia very much. I had to go to India.

They [grandparents] were in India and they just talked constantly about the places [in India] how beautiful it was and how much they miss them and all that stuff you know. So I kind of grew up knowing that I wanted to go and see it.

We read several books and met with friends who had been to India. My anticipation was just seeing a new country. I wanted to see of course the Taj Mahal, I wanted to see the people of India, I wanted to see the temples, palaces, things of that nature.

All of the participants had created a mental picture of what their impending trip to India would be like. Some of the mental pictures were vivid and elaborate. The construction of the mental image was facilitated by information gathered from books, websites, and conversations with people who had visited India before. Despite the constructed mental images varying from a blank picture to a more vivid complex picture, all these images lacked clarity for the participants. Following are quotes describing blank mental images participants had prior to their visit to India.

No, I didn't. I was completely open to what I would experience when I went there. That is how I left thinking that I am off on an adventure, you know, whatever happens, happens, it will be fine.

I really didn't have any expectations, you know. I just went for Karunamayi [spiritual teacher] and I expected blissful time which I did.

I was going there to get the visual sight of it and observe people.

Some other mental images created by participants included encounter with poverty and inadequate health services. When queried about the genesis of these images, participants stated that these images resulted from their perceptions of visiting a third world country. As a precautionary measure against inadequate health services, the participants felt a need to be over prepared by taking medications, shots, bug repellents, etc. The following quotes aptly capture the above sentiments.

The expectation was it will be 20 years behind what the other countries I've been to.

I thought I would see a fair amount of poverty, which turned out to be true. In one sense it wasn't a surprise but it always [sic] when you are up, when you are close to it, it's different, you know. I expected that.

Geee! I had people say to me you are just asking to get sick or you know the risk of some kind of sickness or virus or something, you get malaria pills, other pills. I remember taking something earlier on. I took the malaria pills but I had to take three different pills or something. It was just the concern of possible of health risk.

American's were talking about, make sure you take your antibiotics, make sure you take bug-repellents, and make sure. I was really fearful of that I was going to come down with something because I had a quarter of my suitcase was all these things that were incase something happens or incase you get sick. It was like oh My God! I don't know if I want to go, oh My Gosh!

Political Stability

When asked to reflect on whether prior knowledge and information about the country's political situation had any bearing on their intent to visit, all the travelers agreed that it did not have any impact. All of the travelers were aware of the political situation in India, including India and Pakistan relations. Furthermore, all of the travelers desired to visit Kashmir because of its rich natural beauty, but given the political

instability in Kashmir, they decided not to visit and hoped to visit it someday when the political situation was improved as captured by the following quotes.

I know there is lot of fighting up there between Pakistan and India, what's the valley Kashmir. I've heard that's really gorgeous up there. I'd love to visit that if there's not lot of shooting going on. I think I will stay away from war zones, you know I think things are for instance I will feel very nervous going to Pakistan and Afghanistan because of terrorist things. I didn't even think about terrorists in India.

No it won't affect my plan. There are some people who say there are problems in Syria, well there are problems all over the world. You know, when you go to Amritsar you go pretty close to the border. I knew about the Kashmir problem and also with China, the dispute with the Himalayas. I saw many Indian military soldiers in the Indus Valley. I think there is a certain agreement now with Pakistan but still very few groups go into Kashmir. I believe it's the most beautiful area to visit.

I would very much like to go to Kashmir because a lot of philosophers that I admire come from there and I would like to stand in those places and see those things but I'll wait a little bit until things calm down soon. It really impressed me that considering the diversity of the country, politically, ethnically, terms of religious beliefs, all those things. I really admire the country and the fact that it remained a democracy for so very long and people are so tolerant of one another. I have a great respect for that. So, I think it's a good model for the world. But yeah I would not walk into a situation that I may not be able to handle.

I don't think it affects the tourists. The only area that we have not been to and that I would have liked to go is, particularly in our first trip because it was further up north - is to go to Kashmir. But some months the political situation is good sometime it isn't. And my three children who are grown adults all think we are crazy because we think we go to places that we do go to and are very happy that we stay away atleast when there is out and out shooting [laughter]

It didn't concern me probably because we were in the south, southern India, south-east coast and way far away from it. So we didn't really see a lot of political or military type things. So it didn't concern me at all.

On the first trip, we were down to Mahabalipuram, the military came and did an inspection on our tour bus that we had, even though it was just us on the bus on the main road to Mahabalipuram because of the unrest between Sri Lanka and India at the time. Being somewhat addicted to CNN and newspaper and stuff here, we were aware, you know, of the problems between Pakistan and India prior

to going. So, yeah we were aware of it before we got there. I think because both those cultures there is more savor rattling than there is any action. Then we are surprised when a bombing or something actually does happen because there is a lot more bravado and threats than action. That is a lot more smarter than actually we tend to do things first. Yeah, so for myself it wasn't a concern. Again because we had our friend J with us, he would keep us clear of any trouble and he would be able to see things coming before they happen.

Travel Experience in India

All of the participants were queried about their travel experiences in India. In the narratives, they articulated both positive and negative aspects of their experience. The positive experiences were the beautiful attractions, sites and festivals, spirituality in India, interaction with the local host community, delicious cuisine, and inexpensive shopping. The emergent negative experiences included poor infrastructure, poverty, population congestion, pollution, poverty, and issues of punctuality and efficiency. Both the positive and the negative experiences will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Positive Factors

Several positive factors emerged aiding in enriching the travel experience for the participants. These included famous attractions, sites and festivals, spirituality in India, delicious cuisine, inexpensive shopping, and interaction with the local host community. Even though the primary motive for visiting India may not have been influenced by some of the positive factors articulated above, experiencing these factors enhanced the travel experience for the participants, leading a greater sense of satisfaction with the trip.

Famous attractions, sites, and festivals. Despite a variety of motivations to travel to India, all the participants were fascinated by the visual attractions. Along with the famous historical monuments, museums, and the scenic countryside, participants

indicated that watching animals moving in the middle of the road, colorful market places, street scenes, local people, local housing, posters and billboards, and ceremonies were also some of the main attractions. Few participants felt that local events and festivals also served as main attractions. This was confirmed by the several pictures taken during the trip and captured in the following quotes.

I liked it. I like the markets, I like the architecture. The positive things are a lot of them – the architecture, the food, some of the countryside is wonderful, the history. We stayed a couple of times in the castle, the converted building of an ex-Maharaja.

We looked at a lot of historical buildings, museums and things like that, which was pretty fascinating. And wondered round a lot to get a feel like you have landed and you kind of get it, get the smells.

I was surprised how beautiful the beaches were on the coast. How much it reminded me of how the south pacific will look like. It was just the warm breezes, the water is warm, water is clear and beautiful and sandy beaches.

Oh! when I saw the cows and the dogs, and the, I guess it's the steer. They are on the road, the cows, walking across and deciding to lay down in the middle of the street and the little horses coming down the street. Ah! There was something in me which loved it so much because here we are so controlled and clean.

It was really interesting. I've never seen real thatched roof housing or any of that like in museums and stuff. And the people were interesting. We see pictures of them in National Geographic books and to actually see it, it's different. You know to see that people actually do live that way you know in the thatched roof home and its enough for the environment that they are in. It was really interesting to be driving down a busy city street and have a big cow, you know, they are in the middle of the road and or the carts being pulled by cows you know or bulls whatever you know, animals with horns.

I would say it's not a destination to relax. It's a destination to see various sights. We went for a Elephant Festival. I just remember the bus traveling this road with all the elephants coming from all the surrounding towns, to see the decorations of all these elephants and how they all lined up, it was an outstanding experience. That festival was something to behold.

Oh! I was amazed [to see Taj Mahal]. First we saw way above the tree line from a distance as we were driving there. I had seen pictures and I heard things but I had no concept that it was that large. I didn't know that it was a temple and we had to take our shoes off until we got there. The fact that going to Taj Mahal and see how transparent the stone was that I could literally put my hand at the corner of the building and see the shadow, that was amazing. Definitely one of the wonders of the world. It was one of the highlights of the trip.

Spirituality. Participants' interest in Indian spirituality and religious practices were richly reflected in the narratives. The main motivation of three of the individuals to visit India was to engage in Indian religious practices. Having been exposed to Indian religious practices in the US, these individuals wanted to experience spiritual enlightenment with their spiritual leaders in India. These individuals visited an ashram and were very pleased with the simple living philosophy embraced in the ashram. This simple living included wearing cotton white clothes and engaging in morning sun salutation and meditation, which was heartily embraced by them. Participants whose primary motivation was not to engage in religious practices also experienced some aspect of Indian spirituality and religious practices. They were moved by the "belief system" in India. Further more, all of the participants were fascinated by the diversity of religious practices and spiritual beliefs prevalent in the country and the level of tolerance and respect that the citizens of India had toward all religions as evidenced by the following statements.

It was a very beautiful experience for me being in that water and that evening when I went to do meditation, and see her, my heart was so wide open. I was just so, I could feel the energy just pouring, you know, full of love and gratitude for that day.

I just kept tearing up you know because there was such absolute [thinks]. Everybody just simply took for granted that spirit was important. It didn't matter. There were little shrines everywhere, all kinds of different religions it was not as

if anyone really predominated but they were honored everywhere. The sense of being was so beautiful. Ever since I came back home I've missed that sense of being you know.

Spiritual life is number one goal. I just really felt that I was totally cleaned out psychically while I was there. It was just wonderful you know you are in energy if somebody has a very high consciousness. It's just the way she looked. I just felt the great deal of joy. Like I said I felt I didn't have to do anything or just show up and be joyful. It's just really; I mean the 12 days we were there just passed by like 2 days.

American culture, we tend to be very segregated. We found in India was it was just the opposite of that that you could be whatever religion that you want to be, just don't interfere with me and mine. There if you want to be a Hindu, that's fine. We can still do business, we can still be neighbors but don't try to convert my son or my daughter and don't even think about to convert me because my family is Muslim. I think that gives some richness to India because you have all this different flavors and at the same time that provides some the confusion which westerners don't understand.

Interaction with the local host community. A resonant theme in the narratives was that people in India were kind, friendly, hospitable, and helpful. The interactions primarily occurred with friends, shopkeepers, hotel employees, local tour leaders, taxi/auto-rickshaw drivers, and local residents. This social interaction contributed to a positive experience in India. As one of the participants put it "it was the attractive part of India...that people are very nice people." Others thought that "in smaller towns [people] are quite friendly. In small towns it's wonderful." The following narrative quotes further capture the positive aspects of social interactivity.

Once you knew people or met them or friends introduced them or whatever, then they were quite personable, very interested, very wanting to talk and conversing up whether they had come to the States or not or whatever and since I am a pastor, a lot had to do with the spiritual life, where they were in terms of their faith and I found that people are very, I don't want to use the word humble, it won't be the right word humble and not just [pause] say the opposite of pride. You know they

are very gracious in the sense that they weren't trying to prove themselves, sometimes like with the Americans.

I was very impressed by the people, and the kindness and the humbleness and how we were taken care of, oh Gosh! I was so touched in my heart so many times. So that part, that was not even the Ashram where we went.

I met people pretty much everywhere. The people on the ferry that ran that, people in the little stores everywhere, people just walking around with their kids. It was all pleasant, it was interesting, we were all interested in one another so we talked easily you know. There was this Indian woman in green sari and she didn't say anything. She just came and stood by us and so we invited her to come in the shop. She wouldn't do that she just stood there but when we came back to the ashram, she came with us, it was like she was making sure we got ourselves back ok. She came back all the way across with us. When we reached there she seemed satisfied and kind of went her own way you know. So it was nice. We were friends but we never spoke a word to each other. Worked out alright!

I never felt threatened or scared of anything or that they would grab anything from me. I think they were all pleasant and obviously in the larger cities people spoke English but people didn't in smaller towns. So the interaction with the true locals was nonexistent but everybody who spoke English were delighted that we came, answered our questions, went out of their way to make us comfortable. Had many good experiences as we could!

One other thing in general that I really liked about India was the people. The people we met - very sweet people, very loving people and very helpful people. So I feel, its almost close to 2 months that we went and I think when I come back I can remember things of traffic or pollution or the tsunami area or things but it was really the people that we met that really made the difference.

I've traveled to Ireland, prior going to India, I thought Irish were the most hospitable people I've ever come across. When I got to India I found them to be even more hospitable than I experienced in Ireland. So that's been a real plus. No matter what condition some comes across as far as things in the culture that might make you uncomfortable, hospitality overwhelms that or oversteps that. Yeah, that's a major plus.

Related to interaction with the local host community, an emergent theme was the important value of knowing a national/native individual to an enriched and safe trip experience. The stress associated with being in a foreign country, according the

participants was alleviated by knowing and having a contact with a native person as indicated by the following quotes.

I had a national at my side most of the time and when I didn't, it made me very nervous [laughter] because I realized earlier on that my English was not or I couldn't understand what they said. I'd ask a question to a waiter or a person in the front desk and they would speak back to me and I wouldn't understand what they said. Somehow between the accent and the syntax and whatever it didn't come out. It didn't make a lot of sense. Joe [name changed] wouldn't let me eat anything but chicken, so no pork, no mutton just chicken and he would say that will be too hot, I think you should get this. So, I had that kind of help that was real nice.

My hotel manager and I had become friends and he took me out around to show me Cochin, you know, all things that I wouldn't normally see.

I would like to go to India [as a tourist] but you know I would really like to know somebody who knew that country and knows what he's doing. And would just go with me that's the another way I would go. Unless you are in an organized tour because in tours you don't see very much.

Delicious cuisine: Easy access to and availability of delicious Indian cuisine permeated the participants' narratives. All the participants loved and enjoyed the Indian cuisine. During their stay in India, they specifically chose to eat Indian food the whole time and indicated that they did not miss western food. Some of the participants had prior familiarity with Indian cuisine while others did not. However, all of the participants regardless of their prior exposure to Indian cuisine enjoyed the food. This occurred at times with the assistance of restaurant and hotel staff, and recommendations of newly made local friends as indicated in the following comments.

I loved Indian food. I don't think I had anything American when I was there. So, that was fun and I really didn't miss it or need it, you know, I think that will be kind of waste.

I like Asian spicy food. That was no problem. I was quite familiar about Indian food before I went as there are so many restaurants and people in this area but still

it's a good experience to have there and not have a single western dish in whole month when I was there.

We would go [to restaurant]. They had a really nice Indian restaurant in our hotel. We would walk in and they would just come to us and we told them the first day that we don't know much about Indian food. We really like it. So we would just love, they [restaurant staff] bring us the stuff. If we liked it they would bring us some more and more.

Well, I am always interested in food. It was delicious and we tried all the different foods of Southern India which I think is very spicy and very good and spicier than anything we have here the Indian food.

Inexpensive shopping: One of the positive highlights of the travel experience identified by the participants was the joy of shopping in India. They thought that most of the items were inexpensive in Indian currency when compared to using dollars. At times, participants felt that they were being over-charged just because they looked like foreigners but they did not care, since the prices were inexpensive or reasonable. All of the participants engaged in shopping, purchasing handicrafts, clothes, jewelry for family and friends, and souvenirs. The narratives draw attention to the fact that there were several helpers in the shops to help the participants, while at the same time, they were a bit pushy as indicated by the following quote - "I am delighted that there were so many helpers in the shop to help but everybody just wants to sell you stuff. They think you will pay more for what they (local Indians) will pay and I didn't really like that too much but I knew I couldn't do very much about it. The price was so low anyway that it didn't matter." Some other quotes included:

I'd say then we did some shopping. I bought a \$100- worth of gifts for my family and friends. I mean really beautiful necklaces, silver, with you know jade and a wooden elephant for my grandson. Everything was just very inexpensive. And pretty nice stuff!

I love shopping and all that because things are so reasonable and yeah it would be a short time of shopping. I did more shopping in the ashram at the end because they had more things there to buy.

We went ofcourse to see the silk factory so to speak in Kanchi[puram] where we bought beautiful scarves although we were buying pashminas all along the whole trip. I think we could have all gone on business by the end with what we bought.

Shopping of course! [laughter]. You have to do shopping. We did some shopping. I go and get custom made sandals in Mahabalipuram and they cost me in US dollars about five dollars and eighty cents, that's unheard of. So, I am a rich white American there. If I was in their position I would look at me as a rich white American and try to get money out of me too, you know, but it's ok. I mean doing business with the sandal maker and then on the second trip introducing the sandal maker to my friends I brought the second time, its good for his business and there is no reason, its good for us, it's a great deal for us with the exchange of money. With rate of exchange so there is nothing wrong with that, you know, it's good for them, its good for us. People get excited because they can buy stuff there. It's much cheaper. So, the merchants like it, we like it. Everybody wins.

Negative Factors

Lack of infrastructure. All of the research participants stated that a lack of infrastructure in India negatively affected their travel experience. From their perspective, inadequate and ill maintained infrastructure included roads, traffic congestion, lack of and poorly maintained public amenities including washrooms and restrooms, poor hygiene, and modes of transportation.

When discussing about roads in India, few of the participants indicated poor upkeep of the roads and were quick to remark on their poor conditions. The following responses highlight the above sentiments.

The roads are all torn up, places are torn up and there is a lot of chaos just from the construction.

There were holes in the floor and you have to watch your every step.

Regarding traffic issues in India, some of the participants had knowledge prior to their visit. This primarily occurred via friends. Regardless of their prior knowledge, they indicated that coming face to face with the traffic situation in India elicited some strong reactions. These ranged from good humor and surprise to fear as the following statements indicate.

I think I've been warned a little bit about the chaos in terms of driving but that's still, you know, over the top in terms of the way people go from place to place, its just amazing, its amazing [laughter] Wow!

It was the craziest ride I have ever had in my life. When we had to stop because of the things in the way, it seemed like they would rather die than stop and if they go just really slowly, you loose if you stop. People were screaming and some people had their heads down and I was like this is amazing and I am going to watch every bit of it.

I wouldn't cross the road on my own. That was too scary!

The traffic was much heavier you know little crazier with people on bikes and motorcycles especially weaving in and out of the traffic. I had seen that in Taipei as well so it didn't surprise me as that.

A lack of access to restrooms and washrooms surfaced as a detractor to a positive travel experience for participants who chose to travel significant distances in India by road. When discussing restrooms, the participants were quick to point out their poor maintenance and lack of hygiene, illuminating their expressed discomfort or discontentment. This created awkward and distressing moments as suggested in the following comments.

I found that it is sometimes difficult to find a place to go to the bathroom. It wasn't surmountable but it was awkward sometimes. It's difficult to get used to the hygiene around that.

We meet at this pit stop out in the middle of woods at this place where they sell coconuts and then you walk out in the bushes where nobody could see you. It didn't bother me but some of the women didn't really care for that.

Another factor affecting the travel experience negatively was their experience with the transportation services including airports. The mode of transportation used was airlines, trains, buses, taxis, and auto-rickshaws. An overall theme pertaining to transportation that emerged from the current investigation indicated that largely the transportation infrastructure and services in India were inconvenient and did not meet their expectations as highlighted in the following quote - "Most of the infrastructure is old like the buses and trains."

Experiences with airlines and airports were commonly described using words like "scary," "terrifying," and "crunched." Furthermore, airport infrastructure was noted to be "old" and the services and facilities were stated to be inconsistent with international standards. The following quotes capture the above sentiments.

We found Indian Airlines very scary [laughter] so much so that while the pilot landing in Delhi seemed to have some problems. We didn't have a very smooth landing. And because of that, the person in our group was afraid of flying. It was extremely terrifying for him.

We got on Air India and it was like crunched. Everyone was sitting there and trying to read the paper and they served breakfast and it was like, I can't eat. I mean I couldn't even move and it was like oh My God! It is the way India is going to be? I wanted off so bad.

The Chennai airport was kind of somewhat as a surprise. It wasn't as nice and I guess it was almost an old. Someone had said it was an old airbase or something that was converted into an airport. So it wasn't necessarily what you would typically see. So in that sense, it was a little bit surprising the level of modernness in the airport.

Traveling by trains in India was also “a total cultural shock” and an unexpected experience, reflected in these comments “it’s again the density and confusion and congestion and not much space...everything is very plain.” It must be noted that participants also indicated the newness of the travel experience suggesting “it’s a real good experience but at the same time “it’s a culture shock to all your senses, to your sight, smells and everything.”

A common mode of transportation while in India was trains and buses for longer journeys, and taxis and auto-rickshaws for shorter distances. When reflecting on using buses to travel, participants shared the following lived experience.

One of my hardest trip was from Chennai to Delhi on a sleeper train. It was quite an experience! I think frankly I have to say, if I had a choice, I would fly.

All suitcases were piled at the back bench seat in the bus and that’s where I sat, on top of all suitcases looking down the bus. It was the craziest ride I have ever had in my life.

When traveling in taxis and auto-rickshaws the participants had a variety of experiences. The narratives richly described the experiences interacting with taxis and auto-rickshaws. Predominant themes included being overcharged, being cheated, and non-compliance with pre-set fares and agreements. In their narratives, participants stated that both taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers often did not adhere to pre-set fares. For example if the participant and the taxi driver had agreed to a particular fare prior to the commencement of the journey, when they reached their destination the taxi driver would again have an “intense negotiation of the price.” The following narrative captures the above described scenario.

We decided to go on a city tour. We chose a few things we wanted to see which we haven't seen before. So, we hired one of those tuk tuks [auto-rickshaws]. We told him what we want to do, exactly this, this, this and we told him that we don't want to go to a shop. We are not shoppers. We don't want that and he agreed to it. So, he took us to the first place, took us to the second place and third place was a shop! We said 'we don't want to go' but he said only for short while, only for short while. No. Well, he stopped his tuk tuk and wouldn't go on. We said, well, lets see, we will walk away from you. He walks from there and said no no and then he tried to start his tuk tuk and it was not starting. Then she [auto-rickshaw] wouldn't start, then she wouldn't start. So, then we said, we didn't tell you to stop here, we walked away and we didn't pay him. We felt bad about it but we felt bad that he stopped there because he agreed that he wouldn't stop there. And this is quite common unfortunately, they agree to something, say something to people, handle tourists and won't keep to the agreement and that's probably a bad experience.

Despite primarily negative experiences, participants did indicate some positive interactions with taxi drivers as well. Some taxi drivers were viewed as being helpful and knowledgeable about the local area including shopping and dining establishments – “This nice taxi driver took care of us the whole time. So anything we wanted he knew the contact.” Such encounters even led to the development of mutual rapport including invitation to the driver's house and interaction with his family as captured in the following narrative.

I remember the lady and the taxi driver he took us to his home... and his wife you know very humble, telling me about their mother and father and have pictures of them.

Poverty. The most disturbing factor that affected the participants' travel experience to India was the personal encounter with poverty. Though the participants had prior knowledge of the poverty in India, this first-hand exposure was overwhelming and in the words of a few participants “shocking.” They remarked that being Americans

and living in the USA, they were not used to seeing this level of poverty. The exposure to poverty is vividly captured in the following comments.

We went to a little rural area to visit a goat farmer and that in some ways was more overwhelming to me, in terms of just the, the level of poverty, rural area was just, all dogs and cats and cows and goats and people all mixed together and flies and dirt and crying and dark huts that are thatched homes, that was like wow! It seemed very, almost stone age in some ways you know it seemed like like it was pre [sic] even though there was concrete, you know, the main road was concrete and they concrete platforms where they had built their little huts on. I think the proximity of being that close to it and talking to those people and seeing their kids and the animals and stuff and just being in the middle of it, it was like wow! This will take a lot off to get used to.

The most shocking for people living in this area is the trash in India, especially along the rail tracks, the plastic bags, the dust, the streets, those are the negative things.

I think it is in the shock of being in United States and going to India and seeing lot of poverty in the city as well as the rural areas.

When we first got there landed in Calcutta, we were overwhelmed. We were in shock, we were over overwhelmed. No matter what someone tells you until you see, you are standing there you really, you have to experience it. Even on the second trip, when we visited some of the small villages in Mahabalipuram, I thought I had seen the worst poverty possible in Calcutta and then I got down there and saw some of the goat keepers and so it was the worst poverty I had seen in Calcutta. So, again, 10 years later I was overwhelmed and shocked when I didn't think it was possible after spending time in Calcutta.

Population congestion. Similar to the encounter with poverty, the participants stated that that they were “not prepared for the “density of population” and the “congestion” associated with it. When describing their reactions, phrases such as “a country that is densely populated”, “crowd of people”, “masses of people”, and “millions of people” were commonly used. Participants felt “overwhelmed” with the crowds, as described by the following quote.

I was overwhelmed one time by the crowd, you know and the crowd was so tight between the coliseum and the buildings that I could not move my arms.

This experience with the crowds occurred in the market place, trains, airport, and during the festivals. An interesting theme pertaining to population congestion was the idea of personal space. It was non-existent. Despite large population and a lack of personal space, narratives indicated that participants were impressed with the level of physical proximity between people, evidenced by the following quote. "I was really impressed by how close people get to one another, the personal space which is basically non-existent."

Issues of punctuality and efficiency. The narratives identified lack of punctuality and efficiency as factors affecting their travel experience in India. Upon first visiting India, participants reacted negatively to this lack of punctuality and efficiency. This differential conception of time was disconcerting to the participants initially, particularly as it presented a stark contrast to their experience in the US. However, they became accustomed to this way of being, as indicated by the transformation of their discontentment to amusement. The following comments aptly capture the above scenario.

You are coming from a place where everything works, pretty much, if the bus says if it's going to be there in certain time, it will be there within in 5 or 10 minutes. It will get you where it says. There won't be too many surprises.

We get up early and of course we are American. So when they say be there at 5, we are there at 5.

It was learning patience a little more because the trains, we were told the trains is leaving at 11:50 at night and we rushed to get there and the train didn't show up till 12:30/40 minutes later. So, just those things. Just being patient or so expecting that things will change.

The western society works on contracts and schedules and things of this sort and when we got to India. We began to understand that that culture there is all about relationship and conversation and more than it is contracts. So, they just work on a different schedule, much more flexible schedule there [laughter].

Reflections of the Trip

All participants had an opportunity to reflect on their travel experience upon return to the USA. The emergent themes in the reflections included impressions of India, willingness to revisit, political climate and safety, and the trip providing an opportunity for learning and growth. Each of these themes will be elaborated in the following sections.

Impressions of India

All the participants were glad that they had visited India. The travel experience they indicated was very different compared to other places they had visited. Terms like “adventure”, “exotic”, and “expedition” were used to characterize the trip. A predominant impression etched in their minds was the people they encountered. Observing people and interacting with them had left a powerful impression on the participants. It was getting to know the local people on a personal basis, emotionally getting involved with them, knowing their culture, and listening to their life stories that enriched their travel experience and made them understand India in a deeper manner. It must be noted that the local people also showed mutual interest in the lives of the visiting tourists. Presented below are few of the quotes that capture these sentiments.

I love India. Love for India has just gone deeper since I’ve gone back. We have no children but I would love my wife to go on one of these trips. She has yet to go to India. I would encourage anyone to go. Now I, again now I find Indian people some of the most hospitable, loving, and gentle. I love the Indian people and I love India.

Just seeing the people and the attraction of the people, I would want to go back and do more with them.

The poverty and poor infra-structure had left a last impression on the participants.

While in India it seemed that after a while they got “adjusted” to being surrounded with poverty and poor infra-structure. They were able to begin filtering the negative experience from the positive ones and coping with the surroundings. Even after returning back to the United States from their trip, visual images of both the positive and negative experiences were vivid. The following two quotes capture this sentiment very well.

The country has lot of harshness but it has lot of beauty underneath it if you really take the time out for that.

I felt that was [India] my home. Like I said I didn’t expect to feel that way but I did. I felt so comfortable there and would go back. There it was very comfortable. I felt welcome, I felt that I could just be myself and go and do what I wanted to do and there was no [sic] it was peaceful, it was peaceful. There was no sense of big government and lot of rules you know or drama or anything like that. It was life on a very fundamental comfortable level. I enjoyed it. I just can’t tell you how much.

Opportunity for learning and growth

The trip to India was a tremendous opportunity to learn and grow. Those who had an opportunity to visit various parts of India indicated that they had learned how to compare and contrast the differences between various regions in India – Northern India and Southern India, in terms of architecture, landscapes, and language and customs of people. The trip made individuals aware and appreciative of some things they may have taken for granted in the USA, including wealth, infra-structure, and other material comforts. However, the trip also illuminated their minds about the positive things they

experienced in India such as “relational culture” and interpersonal closeness. The following statements highlight the above viewpoints.

We have a man in our church from Goa, he is very distinctive looking compared to we've got some Kerela people. Some of my neighbors are Punjabis. I guess north, very north. Now I have started seeing all distinctions. I wouldn't have seen it, it was just you are from India [mild laugh].

Part of I went there to learn and it will be culturally different and so, it's not my job to tell people how to live their lives or run their businesses. I am just here to absorb it, be a part of it, and enjoy the relationships. I enjoyed the people, a lot. People were very sweet and very open and very friendly. A lot more appreciative of the differences and also there is a quite a lot of variety. I mean from region to region and its complex a lot of languages, a lot of tribal people and you get a caste system imposed on that it's very, its very diverse.

I learnt a lot of, how do I put it, grace. A lot of things that aren't material, my heart feels much more open, I feel much more connected to Indian people. I love and respect the country and the people and the animals, everything about it. I think that's what I really learnt, scenes that are really life changing and just seeing the cultures, you know, coming together. India has a lot to teach us about inner things and not material things. We have so much material, we are so spoilt.

It makes me more aware of you know what I have, how fortunate and blessed I am living here in United States, being able to have things that most people won't have.

Revisit India

A recurrent theme emergent in the narratives was unanimity among the participants in their desire to revisit India. An interesting finding was that the original primary motivation to visit India would continue to serve as the motivation to revisit. For example if participants had visited India for spiritual reasons, they would continue to visit for the same reason. However, participants did acknowledge that they would be open to engage in other experiences beyond their primary motivation such as taking tours, visiting friends, and other regions of the country. For participants who had visited India

alone, they would like to share their unique experiences and return with their spouses or friends. These sentiments are captured in the following quotes.

Yes, hopefully [to go back to India]. We are planning to go back. I think she [guru] is having another one [prayer] in October-November.

To continue to work that we have started I think to be a part of that. To support them in what they are doing. I guess we have a number of people you know who are doing. Just to go back and help support them either with English teaching classes or computer classes or seeing what they are doing with the money and then help to get, things like that. So it's just like kind of having friends there and going to visit friends instead of sightseeing or being a tourist.

To take my wife with me, to show her what I have experienced that would be high on my list for her to experience, for me to watch her experience what I have. To experience the people, several Indian friends we have here in church and outside church. And she has worked with other scientists from India and other teachers now from India. So she has some idea about the culture. I would like to take her and immerse her in that and see how, I think she would like it. She is a very hospitable person so I think there will be lot of commingling going on that way.

I'd like to take my wife. My daughter is graduating from high school so she has got lot of other things she is thinking off right now but yes, I think my family would really but have to go, again part of it would be to go through the shock, how life is. I don't know if people from India know how, how [pause] what a contrast it is. There must be other places in the world that are contrasting, but this is, this is got to be one of the most contrasting cultures to our western culture.

Additional Reflections

The narratives drew attention to other reflections articulated by the participants. These included participant perspectives on how India was becoming more westernized and the gender difference and caste system in India. Participants going to India for spiritual reasons were saddened that India was getting westernized and thought that it was loosing its culture. They stated how they observed the change –

I went there and came back here [thinks]. The western world is coming over there and the eastern world is coming over here. I noticed on the billboards and it sadden me because its lot about sex and showing your body and wearing

American clothes. I hate to see it changed too much over there because it has such a beauty. The land, you know, it's full of that vibration and I loved the bus ride and I didn't like sitting but I loved seeing the country and the people and the simpleness.

I really came away kind of wishing that India stays Indian and not try to be a western country. You know, they just don't do it very well. They don't have this sense of time and getting things done and the way they do in the United States. It's kind of sad because they are trying so hard to be western and it was so hard to find Indian kind of shirts or anything like that, you know. I think they should keep some of their own culture, you know. I mean it's nice to have electricity but you shouldn't give up who you are to have it.

Although participants agreed that there was considerable change in the social system in India but were still surprised to see gender segregation and caste system prevailing in India. The participants noticed the segregation of men and women in the ashram and at other social gatherings. They were surprised at this cultural restriction where women were still not as free as men to participate in social gatherings. It is interesting to note that primarily female travelers to India noted the gender segregation. Male travelers did not draw any attention to this phenomenon. Other participants also observed the caste system in India and it was difficult for them to accept it. The following narrative comments are indicative of the above sentiments.

The women were on the second floor and the men were on the first. That was another thing that they have men and women all separated that was really strange for me and nice but its really strange when you're in Bangalore somewhere and things are sort of separated like that way. So I am like oh Gosh! How they live like that how? There were so many questions in my mind.

I also noticed that there was a separation the women stayed in kind of an enclosed portico and men were at the throngs of people with here the elephant. I don't believe in it so I was amongst the throng of men with them, looking at the elephants and taking pictures.

The middle class and higher class, it was very hard, very hard to accept that, you know. That wasn't our culture, that's their culture and you have to understand we are in their culture. That's extremely hard especially for Americans because we are so arrogant.

To come back and understand that its still happening as well as the caste system, even though its, I guess unofficially its out-lawed or not done anymore, there is still prejudice between groups. That was hard to take. I think that was the toughest part to see that. I compare it to colors, when the white was in the 50's and 60's in United States.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the travel motivations and experiences of older American travelers visiting India. The emergent themes collapsed around three broader areas – Motivation to Travel, Travel Experience in India, and Reflections of the Trip. All participants in the study stated that they had varying reasons to travel to India. These included but were not limited to doing social work, personal spirituality, and gaining cultural experiences. Furthermore, the perceived image of India and how it impacted decisions to visit India were discussed by the interviewees. The perceived image of India was that it was a spiritual destination, a historical destination, a new country, and a cultural experience. Personal safety was identified as an important factor underlying decision to visit India, with all the participants perceiving India as a safe destination.

When queried about their travel experiences in India, the participants identified both positive and negative aspects of their experience. The positive experiences were the beautiful attractions, sites and festivals, spirituality in India, interaction with the local host community, delicious cuisine, and inexpensive shopping. The emergent negative experiences included poor infrastructure, poverty, population congestion, pollution,

poverty, and issues of punctuality and efficiency. All the participants were glad that they had visited India and indicated that their travel experience to India was different than other countries they had visited. Communication barriers between the travelers and the local people were identified as a result of many languages, dialects and accents. These were negotiated by befriending a native individual or having a native person serving as a buffer between the traveler and the local host community.

A predominant impression from the trip was encountering the people. In addition, the trip afforded a great opportunity to learn and grow. All of the participants expressed a desire to revisit India. A noteworthy finding was that the original primary motivation to visit India would continue to serve as the motivation to revisit. But participants would be open to other experiences such as taking tours, visiting friends, and other regions of the country.

A post-trip reflection by the participants was an acknowledgement that while India was becoming more westernized, gender differences and caste system were very prevalent. Becoming westernized as articulated by the participants was not meant to be completely positive. They indicated that India should strive to maintain its culture while emulating positive western amenities like good roads, infra-structure, electricity, etc.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

The current investigation focused on understanding motivations of older American travelers visiting India. The main purpose of the study was to understand both the motivations to travel to India as well as capture the experience of travel in India. Given the individualistic and unique nature of travel motivations, it was determined that a structured quantitative methodology would not be appropriate. Hence qualitative methods were employed in conducting the investigation. Informed by push and pull factors in motivation as theoretical underpinning, and social influences on travel motivation, this study sought to capture the lived experience of eight older Americans visiting India.

Specific criteria were employed to recruit research participants. They were the following: a) each traveler had to be over 50 years of age, and b) each traveler had to have visited India between 2003 and 2006. A total of eight individuals, five males and three females consented to be interviewed in the study. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted and the length of these interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. The interview guide consisted of questions eliciting their motivations to visit India and their experiences while they were on their trip to India. All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim by the investigator. The transcription yielded 170 double spaced typed pages. The qualitative transcripts were analyzed using Patton's (2001) constant comparative technique as well as thematic analysis. Emergent themes were examined and using convergent and divergent techniques, categories comprising of

clustered themes emerged. These categories coincided with the two main research questions guiding the study.

The main research queries aimed to gain a deeper understanding of motivations of older American travelers visiting India included:

1. What are the motivations including push and pull factors pertaining to selecting India as a travel destination?
2. What is the travel experience when in India?

This chapter is organized in three sections. The first section discusses the findings as they relate to the research questions. Limitations of the study are elaborated in the second section. Finally, the conclusion, implications, and areas for future research form the third section.

Discussion

Several studies have been conducted on understanding the motivation to travel to different destinations. The selection of a particular destination is contingent on various factors. A review of the literature on travel motivation indicates that a good way to understand travel motivation is to examine the push and pull factors. Studies by Dann (1977, 1981), Crompton (1979), and Fodness (1994), on tourist motivation indicate that motivations should be based on the two dimensions of push and pull factors. The understanding behind this two-dimensional approach to motivation is that people travel because they are pushed by their own internal forces and pulled by external forces of the destination attributes (Cha, McCleary & Uysal, 1995). Iso-Ahola (1982) also suggested that both approach (seeking) and avoidance (escaping) components are present in tourism

motivation in particular. The various push factors identified in literature include novelty, escape, kinship relationships, prestige, and relaxation/hobbies. The various pull factors include destination and destination attributes (Crompton). Furthermore, social influences on travel motivation (Moutinho, 1987) have been identified as a strong predictor of travel behavior, motivating an individual to travel.

Previous studies indicated that travel motivation can be a good general tourism market segmentation, particularly to understand the needs and wants of a particular group or segment (Ryan & Glendon, 1998). Currently, literature has identified the older traveler/mature traveler is the most impressive market segment in terms of its projected size, financial strength, and time availability (Lieux, Weaver, & McCleary, 1994). Because of economic and time resources, You and O'Leary (1999) stated that, "the time is ripe to investigate" the push and pull factors of travel related attributes influencing the travel and destination choice of the older adult segment. However, an exhaustive literature review yielded no studies on the travel motivational factors of older Americans visiting India. Findings from this study addressed this gap in literature and are discussed in the ensuing sections.

The results of the study identified three broader themes - motivations to travel to India, travel experience in India, and reflections of the trip. An overall analysis indicated that older American adults in the study identified "connecting with the host community," "engaging in a new experience," "spiritual seeking," "personal safety," and "shopping and cuisine" as the most unique and appealing factors motivating them to visit India. Using the push and pull factors in travel motivation (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981) as a

theoretical lens, it can be surmised that connecting with the host community, engaging in a new experience, and spiritual seeking are push factors. The reason for this determination was because all of the participants in the study indicated these factors to be intrinsic. Furthermore, personal safety, shopping, and cuisine were determined to be pull factors, congruent with the finding of Jang and Wu (2006). These findings are consistent with the push and pull theory of travel motivation (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981) and older adult's travel motivation (Shoemaker, 1989; Vincent & de los Santos, 1990; You & O'Leary, 1999). These authors identified connecting with the host community, engaging in a new experience, and seeking spirituality as an important motive to travel.

As described above, the identified push factors included connecting with the host community, engaging in a new experience, and spiritual seeking. The pull factors highlighted were personal safety, shopping, and cuisine. Each of these five factors will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Connecting with the Host Community (Social Interaction)

The most predominant emergent theme from the study was that the older American travelers wanted to connect with the local people. They wanted to meet new people, make new friends, and be together with people who shared the same interests and values. The purpose of their visit to India whether for tourism or other reasons gave the older American travelers a chance to meet the local host community or friends residing in India, allowing for interpersonal exchanges with them. All of the travelers desired simple clean accommodations closer to the local community and culture with an opportunity to have contact with the local people. This finding is confirmed by the World Tourism

Organization (2000), when it indicated that people who travel to experience culture of a destination look for rich experiences which require interaction with local communities.

Spiritual Seeking

Findings of spiritual seeking in the current study are consistent with Sharpley and Sundaram's (2005) study, where they concluded that within particular destination contexts, tourism can start to take on the characteristics of a sacred journey although it may not be spiritually motivated. There were travelers in the current study who had visited India and the Ashram of their spiritual teacher for the specific purpose of satisfying a spiritual need. However, there were others who did not travel to India for this specific reason. Despite the varying reasons to travel to India, all of the travelers experienced some aspect of spirituality and religious practices in India. The trip made all of them appreciative of the rich spiritual and religious traditions of the India and led to some form of a spiritual experience or fulfillment.

Engaging in New Experience (Novelty Seekers)

All of the travelers indicated that they were curious to visit a new country and to experience a new culture. This included those who had never visited before and those who were visiting India for the second time. For the first time visitors, it was a new experience and for the returning visitors, it was a different experience. Those returning for the second time were curious about seeing and experiencing other parts of India because they indicated that India was a huge and diverse country. Furthermore, India was perceived as a "visual experience" destination, indicating that there was a lot to see, both positive and negative things. India was not a destination facilitating relaxation –

non-active, sedentary experiences. According to World Travel Organization (2000), people not only travel to relax, recreate and visit great monuments and sites but also to satisfy their need for diversity and their curiosity on how other people live in environments different from their own. Other people's lifestyles are expressed by their religion, festivals, costumes, cuisine, arts and crafts, architecture, literature, folklore, music and dance (World Travel Organization). The findings of the current study support this assertion.

Personal Safety

Personal safety was identified as the main pull factor. All of the travelers in the study perceived India as a safe destination. Although they acknowledged that some local people did try to "cheat" sometimes or "make money" out of foreigners, none of them felt physically vulnerable or threatened for their physical safety. All of the travelers in the current study felt physically safe in India. All of the travelers were aware of the political situation in India, particularly between India and Pakistan. Almost all of them desired to visit Kashmir because of their prior knowledge of its natural beauty but did not want to travel as a result of political instability in the region. The findings in the study provide confirmatory support to previous research published by You and O'Leary (1999) and Jang and Wu (2006) indicating that personal safety is very important to older travelers. However, the results of the study were contradictory to the study conducted by Kale and Weir (1986), where they identified India as an unsafe travel destination.

Shopping and Indian Cuisine

In addition to the main pull factor of personal safety, two other pull factors emerged. They were shopping and Indian cuisine. Travelers indicated that these were important travel activities they engaged during their visit in India. Shopping included buying souvenirs, art and handicrafts, jewelry, shoes and clothes. Indian cuisine was enjoyed by all the travelers. The travelers received help from local friends and hotel staff in choosing various dishes as they maybe could have been “too spicy” and “hot” for the western travelers. Main concern raised by the travelers pertaining to the food was the hygienic standards in terms of consuming food in the open market place. Travelers indicated an increased level of comfort in eating food either in hotels or local restaurants only when recommended by their friends. They did indicate that they “missed” eating fruits as they were unsure of their cleanliness and safety. Fruits that needed to be peeled prior to consumption were deemed safe and edible. These findings pertaining to shopping and food are consistent with those of Kale and Weir (1986), Chaudhary, (1996), and Cohen and Avieli, (2004).

There are additional findings beyond the identified push and pull factors that deserve elaboration and discussion. The first notable finding was that every traveler in the study was prompted to visit to India, primarily through word of mouth. Though they were aware of India as a desirable travel destination, their main motivation to visit India occurred following a conversation with a friend who had visited India, or encounters with travelers who had returned from India. Being intrigued via word of mouth communication about India as travel destination, they began reading books and brochures

and reviewing websites. As indicated by Jang and Wu (2006), positive word of mouth transmission plays a key role in promoting a particular destination, also confirmed in the current study. Furthermore, this word of mouth influence on travel motivation is consistent with the concept of social influences on travel motivations proposed by both Moutinho (1987) and Krippendorf (1987). These authors emphasized that motivation of an individual to travel was mostly influenced by others in the social environment, confirmed by findings in the current study.

Another notable finding in the study was that the travelers preferred to use a travel agent or a tour operator in order to make their travel arrangements. These findings are supported by the research of Javalgi, Thomas, and Rao (1992) who found that older adult market segment preferred using a travel agent or a tour operator to make their travel arrangements. Furthermore, the travelers in the current study spent significant amount of time on their travel plan to visit India. All the travel arrangements were finalized by either a travel agents, tour operators, or by friends residing in India.

According to Javalgi, Thomas, and Rao (1992), though the older adults/seniors preferred travel agents and tour packages, they were also more price sensitive than their non-senior market segments. However, findings from the current study were mixed in terms of sensitivity to price. Some travelers acknowledged that they were not “overspenders.” However, at the same time some of the travelers in the current study preferred to travel in a group or with friends as they felt that it was a great way to travel with people with “similar interests”, share and discuss different experiences, while at the same time reducing the cost of travel.

The travel experience in India was impacted by a few factors, identified by the travelers. Some of these factors were perceived as being fixable by the Indian tourism industry, while others were seen as unfixable by Indian tourism. The factors that were seen as fixable included the infrastructure and the hygienic conditions. All of the travelers indicated that a lack of infrastructure in India negatively affected their travel experience. Factors responsible for their negative experience included poverty/beggars, unclean environment, and overpopulation, inadequate and ill maintained infrastructure like roads, traffic congestion, and lack of and poorly maintained public amenities including washrooms and restrooms, poor hygiene, and modes of transportation. Previous research conducted by Kale and Weir (1986) and Chaudhary (2000) have also portrayed India as an unclean, overpopulated, polluted destination, confirming the findings of the current investigation. Research conducted by You and O'Leary (1999) indicated that destinations with poor travel facilities and poor infrastructure were less likely to attract older adult/senior travelers. Literature indicates that a destinations' infrastructure can be a major pull factor in attracting tourists to a particular destination and a destination must strive to control all negative factors to position itself as a preferred tourist destination.

One of the unfixable factors identified by the travelers was the communication gap between the traveler and the local community, primarily imposed by different languages or dialects and accents. Most of the travelers acknowledged that most local people they interacted with in India spoke English, but often the accent was difficult to understand creating this communication barrier. These findings are confirmed by the

research findings of Kale and Weir (1986). Travelers felt comfortable and reassured by the presence of a local tour leader or a local person with them because these local individuals would be able to overcome the communication barrier.

Limitations

The small sample size in the current study may be considered a limitation of the study. However, given that the research design employed in the study was a qualitative one, small sample size is not viewed as a limitation. As the study aimed at capturing lived experience perspective, information- rich cases were solicited (Patton, 2001). Also given additional time, resources, and availability of additional travelers fitting the criteria to participate in the study, attempts would be made to include more participants.

However, there was saturation of themes in the eight interview transcripts reinforcing credibility and trustworthiness of the study. It must be noted that there is a gap in literature pertaining to the travel motivations of the older American traveler market segment visiting India. So this study is viewed as a starting point in the development of scholarship in this area. Another limitation of the study was the geographic distribution of the travelers. All of the travelers in the study were older Americans residing in the San Francisco Bay Area. It could be said that since the sample is small and restricted to a particular geographical area, that the findings would have poor external validity.

However, the concept of “user generalizability” can be used to address this issue (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). Furthermore, studies employing a qualitative paradigm are less focused on generalizability as much as they are primarily focused on capturing the lived experience and voices of individuals. So, what could be perceived as a limitation in

a traditional quantitative study actually presents itself as strength of this research design and the current study.

Conclusion and Implications

There were two main research queries aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of motivations of older American visitors visiting India. The first was to understand the motivations of older American travelers choosing India as a travel destination. The study findings indicated the prevalence of three main push and two main pull factors impacting the motivations to visit India. The push factors were connecting with the host community, new experience, and spiritual seeking. The two pull factors were personal safety and cuisine and shopping.

Prior research suggests that there is no single homogenous older market segment (Shoemaker, 1989). However, the current study suggests that there may be commonalities of push and pull factors permeating this market segment. As identified by other studies, various push and pull factors play an important role in travel decision making regardless of the market segment. Push and pull factors identified for older traveler market segment in this study have also been identified as important push and pull factors for other market segments (Kale & Weir, 1986; Chaudhary, 2000).

Based on the findings of the study, Indian destination developers and marketers would be well advised to understand the push and pull factors identified for this older traveler market segment and incorporate them in their policies surrounding development of India as a preferred tourist destination. Since the push and pull factors identified in this study are consistent with various market segments (Anand, 1976; Kale & Weir,

1986; Chaudhary, 2000), travel advertising and promotion for older traveler market segment need not be vastly different from that directed to other market segments.

Word of mouth was identified as a powerful means of discussing travel experiences upon returning home, confirmed by Jang and Wu (2006) and had a strong social influence on travel motivation, confirmed by Moutinho (1987) and Krippendorf (1987). Destination marketers in India must be aware and exploit the key role that word of mouth has in positively marketing a destination. Attempts should be made to remove any barriers including poor infrastructure, hygiene and other barriers that negatively impact a travel experience in India, thus negatively impacting India as a preferred travel destination. It must be noted that the tourism marketing efforts engaged by the Government of India have produced positive results in terms of India as a preferred travel destination. However, additional efforts must continue in the area of infrastructure and efficiency to continue improving India as a destination.

Future Research

This study attempted to understand the motivations and experiences of older travelers visiting India. This was an exploratory investigation. For future research, larger sample should be used as a means of increase generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, research should be conducted on older travelers traveling specifically for leisure purposes. Given the tremendous growth in baby boomers and their variability in terms of health, income, and time, it would be interesting to conduct research on various market segments of older American cohort, including ages 50-55, 56-65, and 66 and above. A comparative research investigation of both older travelers and travelers in other

market segments visiting India would yield interesting results and add to the body of knowledge about travel motivations to visit India.

Researcher's Reflection

Researchers in tourism have contended that despite the emergence of qualitative methods in the study of tourism, there is limited emphasis on capturing lived experience of individuals (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). Furthermore, they state that for qualitative studies, it is important for the researcher to be both reflexive and transparent. In order to be transparent, it is important to state that the researcher, Ambika Chauhan conducting the current investigation is an Indian. Despite being an Indian, I consciously tried to bracket my self-identity and be fully present to listen to the participants' voices and experiences. When participants referred to poor roads and infrastructure in India, I would experience emotions of frustrations. But deep down based on my own lived experience in India, I know that they were correct in their representation. I also experienced feelings of pride and joy when they made references to visiting attractions, the relational culture, and rich cultural heritage. During the interviews, several times, the participants drew attention to me being Indian, when they would say, "you know how it is," or "you would know what I mean." I strongly believe that being an Indian facilitated the development of a friendly and trusting relationship with the participants allowing them to speak about their experiences and incidents openly. During the analysis process, care was taken to listen to the voice of the participants and their emotions. This was confirmed by the results of the member checks where there was 100 percent agreement on the emergent themes.

As a final note, several participants recruited for the study did not like being called older. Even some participants in the current study had issues with the term. Since being over the age of 50 was a criteria for participation in the study, many participants expressed that they did not themselves perceive being older when being over 50 years of age. This caused apprehension on their part to participate in the study. They felt that they did not fit in the “older adult” segment. It is evident that individuals in this age bracket of between 50 and 60 years of age do not like being labeled as old. They perceive themselves to be younger than their actual age (Smith & Jenner, 1997), supporting the thought that chronological age is a nebulous concept and is very individually experienced.

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**APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER**

To: Ambika Chauhan
3655 Pruneridge Ave. Apt. # 100
Santa Clara, CA 95051

From: Pam Stacks, Ph.D. *Pam Stacks*
AVP, Graduate Studies & Research

Date: January 3, 2006

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

"Motivation of Older Americans Traveling to India: A Qualitative Investigation"

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to all data that may be collected from the subjects. The approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Pam Stacks, Ph.D. immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information. This approval for the human subject's portion of your project is in effect for one year, and data collection beyond January 3, 2007 requires an extension request.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services that the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2480.

cc: gonzalez de gonzalez

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico,
Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fresno,
Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach,
Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

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Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Lucia Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

Responsible Investigator: Ambika Chauhan

**Title of Protocol: Travel motivations of Older Americans traveling to
India: A qualitative study**

1. You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating travel motivations of older adults.
2. You will be asked to participate in an interview concerning your experiences and motivations when you visited India. Interviews will be tape recorded and field notes will be taken after the interview. Further questions from the interviewer would be based on what you say. After introducing the topic to you, the questions will be more specific and probing pertaining to your motivations and travel decisions to India. A part of probing would also include asking you to share pictures of their visit to India. This procedure may help you to recollect your experiences and incidents. Sharing pictures will be optional. The place and the time for the interview will be chosen at your convenience.
3. There are no anticipated risks. You will not be required to provide your name, phone number, and address for this study. Only age will be asked because it is the criteria for inclusion. You can refuse or withdraw from the participant process at any time. Pseudonyms will be created to protect identity and privacy within the transcribed tapes and notes, data analysis, interpretive findings and while storing the data. All documents will be kept in a locked and secured box for a period of five years in the event of re-analysis of data or study expansion. After that period, all the data will be destroyed.
4. No discernable benefits are expected other than engaging in the creation of knowledge in the field of tourism and gerontology.
5. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included.
6. There is no compensation for participation.
7. Questions about the research may be addressed to:
Ambika Chauhan, Tel: (408) 249-3376 or E-mail:
chauhan_ambika@yahoo.com
Dr. Gonzaga da Gama, Tel: (408) 924-3005 or E-mail:
gonzaga@casa.sjsu.edu

Complaints about the research may be presented to:
Jill Cody, Department Chair, Recreation and Leisure Studies Tel: (408)
924-3000 or E-mail: jcody@casa.sjsu.edu

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Questions about research subjects' rights or research-related injury may be presented to: Dr. Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research. Tel: (408) 924-2480

8. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to "not participate" in the study.

9. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions or agencies.

10. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

- The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.
- The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.

Participant Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico,
Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fresno,
Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach,
Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Tell me little bit about yourself and your traveling experience so far?
- How did you decide to take a trip to India?
- How long was the trip for?
- Who traveled with you?
- What motivated you to choose India as a destination?
- What preparations did you do before leaving for India?
- What was your experience when you reached India?
- How was your social interaction with the people of India?
- What was it about this trip that has a special meaning for you?
- Were there any barriers along the trip?
- What did you think about the political situation in India? Would it affect your planning?
- Any plans to visit India again?
- What were your last impressions of India?
- Would you like to share your photographs?