

# 12

## Tourism and the Individual

**By the end of the chapter, the reader will be able to:**

- Define propensity and intensity
- Analyse barriers to travel and know how to disaggregate interest as a discrete barrier
- Understand the role of the leisure paradox in influencing travel over one's life span
- Apply generational cohort theory to explain differences in travel by generations

### Introduction

Tourism is a socially selective activity. While we may think that everybody has an opportunity to travel this is clearly not the case. Further, even among those who do travel, social, personal and demographic factors exert a significant effect on both propensity to and intensity of travel. This chapter examines a range of factors that influence tourism propensity and intensity among individuals. It begins with a definition of these terms and then explores barriers to participation, the traditional leisure paradox and how it affects tourism, and finally the role of generational cohort theory and tourism activity.

#### ■ Propensity and intensity

Propensity relates to the participation rate, or the percent of individuals within a population who travel. It is defined as the share of the population that makes at least one (holiday) trip of a specified number of overnight stays during a given reference period (Eurostat, 2010). Like all things in tourism, though, this simple

definition is not absolute, for propensity can be measured in a number of ways. Usually, the reference period is one calendar year or 12 months, depending on when the survey was completed. The length of stay to be considered can vary, with some European statistics looking at trips of four nights or longer (Eurostat, 2010), while others consider any overnight pleasure trip (Eurostat, 2017). The UNWTO, being an organisation that is interested in international travel calculates propensity on the basis of the number (or percentage) of international travelers as a proportion of a market's total population.

Intensity or frequency is a simpler concept for it relates to the average number of trips taken over the given period of time. Again, though, the denominator can vary using either the entire population, and, therefore, calculating non-travellers as part of the intensity figure, or by focusing only on those who travelled.

## Non-travel

One of the myths of tourism, especially in a developed society, is that everybody travels or at least has the potential to travel. Yet, one does not need to look very far to see the inherent flaw in this assumption. Some people may not be physically robust enough to travel. Some people may simply not want to travel. Others may not have any travel companions. Others still may not be able to afford to travel. In Europe, about 62% of the population took either a domestic or international trip in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017). Propensity varied significantly by country of origin, though, ranging from a low of a 24% participation in Romania to a high of 91.4% in Finland. A study of Hong Kong (McKercher, 2009) showed propensity varied from the mid 60 percentile to the low 70 percentile depending on the state of the economy. Smith and Carmichael (2005) concluded that one in three Canadians do not travel.

Our conceptualization of why people do not travel grew out of leisure constraints theory. This theory postulates that everyone wants leisure but due to a variety of reasons not everyone can have it. It argues further that if constraints can be removed, then participation in leisure activity will follow. Crawford and Godbey (1987) and Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) proposed that leisure constraints could be classified into one of three categories of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural barriers, and saw leisure participation as a function of the ability to negotiate each of the constraints.

Intrapersonal constraints represent psychological states or attributes that reflect preferences. They include such items as lack of interest, religion, reference group attitudes and perceived skill. Interpersonal constraints relate primarily to the lack of travel partners, while structural constraints lie somewhat beyond the

individual's own control and can include time, cost, lack of opportunity, family commitments and the like. Leisure constraints theory argues that these three classes of constraints are hierarchical in nature, with intrapersonal issues needing to be resolved before interpersonal constraints can be considered. Interpersonal constraints must also be resolved before structural barriers can be addressed. However, in a more recent retrospective piece, Godbey et al. (2010) identified an intertwining relationship between the three dimensions, which challenges the linear hierarchical proposition associated with the model.

The model has been tested a number of times in a leisure context and found to be valid (Godbey et al., 2010). Jackson et al. (1993) evaluated this model from a tourism context, while it has also been used by a number of other researchers (Nyaupane and Andereck, 2008; Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter, 2002) with modest success. Intuitively it makes sense and some empirical evidence seems to support the existence of such barriers. For example, when considering intrapersonal constraints, Lee and Tideswell (2005) and McGuire (1984) found that societal pressures and in particular reference group approval from family and friends precluded many seniors from travelling. March (2000) came to similar conclusions examining propensity among Japanese women, where they are expected to be very travel active in their 20s, but once they marry are expected not to travel. Lack of travel partners has long been identified as a core intrapersonal constraint, especially among people with disabilities (Smith, 1987).

The impact of structural constraints has attracted most attention in the literature. Tourism Research Australia (2011a, 2011b) identifies income as the primary driver for both domestic and inbound tourism while Eurostat (2010) found a strong correlation between household income and overall travel propensity. The inability to speak foreign languages precludes some people, especially seniors from travelling abroad (Chen and Wu, 2009). Many others have identified work commitments as a factor that inhibits travel (Dickinson, 2014; Losada et al., 2016; Nickerson, 2000; Smith et al., 2011).

Reported constraints vary by age and life stage (Kattiyapornpong and Miller, 2009; Smith et al., 2011). Figure 12.1 shows the types of barriers that people at different life stages identified as reasons for not travelling. The intrapersonal constraint of social acceptability really only comes into play amongst the elderly, especially elderly singles and couples with low incomes who feel they are too old to travel. Instead, they feel that they have an obligation to stay at home and look after their grandchildren. Older working families, those in their 50s with children still living at home, identified structural constraints of family obligations and cost factors as inhibiting their ability to participate in tourism, while middle aged affluent couples and families cited work commitments as their main reason to not travel. Interestingly, Smith et al. (2011) also conducted a study of non-tourism