

Seniors and Cruising: Motivations and Satisfaction

by

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This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Millions of vacationers are taking a cruise vacation each year and nearly one-third are senior tourists. There is little attention to this sector in the literature. This qualitative study reveals some of the motivations and satisfactions of ten retired seniors who were recently on a cruise. The interviews were transcribed to capture precise wordings of their motivations and satisfactions and then analysed by phrases. These were open, then axially coded according to a conceptual theory into three stages: a pre-cruise stage of planning and expectations, the experiences on board a cruise ship through activities and excursions, and the post-cruise stage of satisfaction. The phrases were then selective coded into three themes.

The findings reveal that the most important feature of a cruise is interaction within them, with their companions, and with others they may meet. Friends, relatives and the ship's crew add to this interaction. Second, there is a balance of opportunities and constraints incurred while achieving the goal of a cruise. Third, it was found that there are multiple sources of satisfaction from a cruise.

This study provides insight into what cruising means to seniors, the effect of interaction with others, and their internal interactions. The experience of a cruise becomes an event that leaves a memorable impression for years to come.

Key words: seniors, cruising, motivation, satisfaction

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Chapter 1 - Background

1.1 Introduction

A voyage on a cruise ship is a special type of vacation. This study examines seniors' motivations and satisfactions while experiencing this form of tourism. Chapter 1 provides a review of recent literature on cruising and some related tourism aspects. Chapter 2 reviews the methodology of the study including a conceptual model, data collection and analysis. Chapter 3 provides the findings related to the model. Chapter 4 provides an interpretation of the literature related to the three themes that evolved from the findings. Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and suggestions for future research.

For this study, "senior" is defined as a person more than fifty-nine years of age. The senior market has been selected because they appear to have different needs and attitudes than other cruisers (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Their research found that

young tourists place more importance on activities that are prestige worthy or symbolize their novelty and diversity, whereas mature tourists tend to be more practical, and emphasize the facilities of a destination site -all of which suggests a moderation of age on the relationship between type of self-congruity and travel behaviour (Sirgy & Su, 2000:348).

Self-congruity can be defined by the consistency of how a tourist sees himself (actual self-image), how he likes to see himself (ideal self-image), how he believes others see him (social self-image), and how he would like others to see him (ideal social self-image). "The relationship between self-congruity and travel behaviour is moderated by tourists' level of touring experience. Specifically, the effect of self-congruity on travel behaviour is likely to be greater for tourists with less experience than for tourists with more experience" (Sirgy & Su, 2000:349). A personal image may affect the level of satisfaction from a cruise experience.

This study examines the motivations for seniors to choose cruises, how they are affected by their interactions with others and the experience of previous cruises. There may be several motivations for selecting when and where to take a vacation, the type of vacation needed, the

leisure pleasure that may be obtained, a desire to experience new scenery or cultures, or the possibility of seeking a pampered environment. Harrison (2002) suggests that cruising is a very social type of travel that may bring about an opportunity for intimacy with fellow tourists, and sometimes develop long-standing friendships. If the cruise results in a satisfying experience for the senior, his satisfaction may have a direct effect on the meaning of the vacation for him, even after he returns home. In a study of cruise passengers, Petrick (2004a), concludes that “satisfaction is a global measure of how the provider’s performance (the service experience) makes the tourist feel” (Petrick, 2004a:399). Reinforcement of the satisfaction may happen to the vacationer when relating the experience to friends and relatives back home, which may in turn increase the meaning of that vacation.

1.2 Cruising research

Research into the cruise ship industry is important because cruising is a growing component of the tourism sector. The Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA 2004), which represents 23 cruise lines and 95% of the North American-marketed berths, states that in the two-day or more cruise market, there were 4.4 million passengers in 1995, 6.9 million in 2000, and 8.2 million in 2003 (CLIA 2004). De La Vina & Ford (2001) suggest, with the exception of economic-impact analyses, scant academic attention has been paid to the cruise ship industry. They conclude that “the cruise industry is an increasingly vital segment of the tourism sector that has escaped the rigorous examination of academic research” (De La Vina & Ford, 2001:6). Kerstetter, Yin Yen, & Yarnal (2005) also found that there is limited research on factors that impact individuals’ decisions to travel for pleasure, especially in the context of cruise travel. The CLIA (2002) explored, through a market survey, those features that are important in a vacation experience for both cruise prospects and past cruisers. They found that both types were looking for similar things on a vacation (Table 1.1).

Cruise Aspect	Percent citing
Good value for the money	83 %
Fun	83%
Break from the routine	82%
Affordable	81%
Break from Stress	80%
Comfortable accommodations	78%
Secure environment	78%
Relaxing	76%
Do what you want	75%
Easy to plan	72%

Table 1.1 Desired cruise aspects (CLIA 2002:15)

This table suggests that passengers' primary reasons for taking a cruise are value, fun, and a break from the normal routine. However, this listing does not provide an adequate understanding of the meaning and deeper motivations of cruisers, especially senior cruisers.

1.3 Seniors and cruising

The senior population in North America is facing unprecedented growth. Continued growth reported by Statistics Canada (2001) indicates the percentage of the population of Canada that are seniors has increased significantly in table 1.2.

Age cohorts	1961	2001
50 to 59	8.7%	12.4%
60 or older	11.2%	15%

Table 1.2 Percentages of seniors population
(Statistics Canada, 2001)

Both 2001 figures show a nearly 50% increase in the percentage of persons 50 years old or older since 1961. As the 50 to 59-age cohort grows older, that segment of persons will move into the 60 or over cohort over the next ten years, increasing the older segmentation to more than 20% of

the population. In addition to increasing numbers, seniors' ability to travel may increase because of their improved finances. The increase in travelling ability was an emphasis of Crandall & Fay (1995; cited in Gartner 1996), who suggested that the most noticeable social trend is the aging of the population in developed countries. The "Baby Boom" generation is becoming more mature and possesses significant disposable income. This mature market category is the one with the highest propensity and financial ability to travel.

Seniors are also in better health than previous generations at the same age, leading to a steady growth in the senior travel market. Therefore, the senior segment of the population has the opportunity and means to contribute more passengers for the cruise industry. CLIA's (2000) market profile study finds that 32% of actual passengers were 60 years or over. These mature cruisers become an important area for further market expansion. Many seniors are taking advantage of an opportunity to enjoy a low risk, fully catered, and relaxing cruise (CLIA 2002). As more persons move into the more than 60 age group, this market potential will increase.

Horneman, Carter, Wei, & Ruys (2002), emphasized that very few studies have explored the multidimensional nature of travel preferences and behaviour among senior travellers, and that fewer have applied results to the types of products and facilities most desired by seniors.

Mobily, Lemke, & Gisin (1991), examined the importance of what they called, "meaningful activity participation" among retirees. They found that a challenge for many retirees is finding meaningful uses of their time among the wide array of potential activities. They observed that "profiling the leisure repertoires of the elderly is a theoretically sound approach to the measurement of the quantitative aspects of (meaningful) activity participation" (Mobily, *et al.*, 1991:220). Javalgi, Thomas, & Rao (1992) elaborate on this finding and found that travellers age 55 and older were more likely to visit friends and relatives, tour, and cruise, and were less likely to visit cities, outdoors, resorts, and theme parks.

The selection of a cruise vacation is shaped by travel promotion that takes the senior travellers' self-enhancement goals into consideration. However, Krieger, Moskowitz & Rabino (2005) emphasize that advertising accuracy is essential with the seniors' market:

Often, vacationers base their assessment of offerings on the communication of cruise features, which in turn shape their expectations. In order to avoid frustration and disappointment, is critical for cruise providers not to promise what they cannot provide (Krieger *et al.*, 2005:108).

The image of the destination and the desire to visit, are important considerations in the selection of a cruise by a senior seeking satisfaction from a cruise experience. Elderhostel (a seniors' travel and educational organization) clients are similar to the senior cruiser, as they are interested in learning about the world around them. Brady (1987) states, "it is well known that travel itself can be a great learning experience. Part of the magic of such a program is being able to travel to different areas and learn about unfamiliar places" (Brady, 1987:73). He adds that other patterns of learning often experienced by active elders include environmental exposure and increased social development.

Education can be of benefit to seniors who normally do not have an active social life and want to expand their perspectives. Thus, seniors' learning opportunities are an important attraction of cruising. Cruising offers passengers the ability to experience new cultures by visiting different ports for shore excursions. The pleasure of experiencing a new place is enhanced when combined with socializing with new friends. Brady (1987) stated that expansion of self-concept is perhaps the most important pattern of learning and people who tour with Elderhostel report that they come to see themselves differently because of this educational experience.

1.4 Vacation selection

How people make decisions about vacations has been the subject of extensive research. However, much of this research has not looked at the decision-making process of seniors, and the role motivations and constraints play in their decisions. Are vacation decisions motivated by health concerns, physical limitations, the desire for social contact, the demand for "guaranteed"

satisfaction, minimal hassles during the trip, or some combination of these or other motivations?

For example, guided tours are popular with some seniors because the tour company handles all the arrangements (and especially luggage) as well as all decisions during the tour. All-inclusive resorts offer similar benefits with the guest needing only to show up for the activity or meal.

Cruises are similar to all-inclusive resorts but also offer the additional attractions of new destinations, changing scenery, up-to-date ships with an envelope of personal safety, and shore excursions.

A CLIA (2001) market study of cruise prospects and past cruisers found no difference when they were asked to compare cruises to other vacations. Table 1.3 provides reasons why cruisers (potential and experienced) are interested in a cruise vacation.

Leading Reasons	Percent citing
All-inclusive	78
Visit several destinations	64
Pampers you	62
Is luxurious	62
Everything is planned	59
No packing / unpacking	56
Variety of activities	56
Can dress up	56
High quality entertainment	55
Fine dining	55
Places to explore	53
Romantic getaways	52
Relaxing	52
Good for exploration	49
Fun vacation	43
Get away from stress	43

Adventurous	42
Break from daily routine	42
Exciting activities	40
Meet interesting people	39

Table 1.3 Leading reasons for choosing a cruise vacation (CLIA 2001:27)

Fodness & Murray (1999) suggest that there should be a better understanding of how potential tourists' search through specific information sources for a vacation.

The quality of purchase decisions is measured from the consumer's perspective in terms of service quality, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, positive recommendations to others, and repurchase intentions (brand loyalty). [This] is an incomplete model, however, as it is missing what is perhaps its most useful and interesting element, "why." We emphasize the need for more theoretical and empirical research on this most important issue in understanding tourist information searches (Fodness & Murray, 1999:8:14).

This "why" can be examined through motivations, perceptions, quality, and satisfaction to assess the needs of the potential senior cruiser.

1.5 Motivation

Iso-Ahola (1999) defines "motive" as:

An internal factor that arouses and directs human behaviour . . . internal stimuli refer to such things as memory of a good time in playing sports, whereas external stimuli are likened to factors in the physical and social environments, e.g., a sunny day; a good friend calling and asking to play tennis. Social interaction is both motivation for and benefit of leisure participation. (Iso-Ahola, 1999:40).

Horneman *et al.*, (2002), found that there is a general consistency in travel motivations of seniors. They conclude that "the most important motivations for travel included travelling while their health is good, and that there is an apparent tendency for seniors to travel for personal satisfaction rather than to fulfil the expectations of others" (Horneman *et al.*, 2002:30).

This statement is supportive of Surgy & Su's (2000) findings that mature tourists tend to be concerned with satisfying needs for self-consistency and self-esteem rather than social consistency and social approval.

A combination of perceptions of opportunities and constraints generally influence a person's leisure choices, including those of seniors. Losier, Bourque, & Vallerand's (1993) purpose was to test leisure participation in the elderly. It was found "that perceptions of leisure opportunities and perception of leisure constraints, will both predict leisure motivation" (Losier, *et al.*, 1993:155). Their findings suggest that the more choices one feels to have with respect to leisure activities, the more self-determined is his or her leisure motivation. Conversely, the more leisure constraints one experiences, the less self-determined feels toward leisure activities.

Perceptions of leisure opportunities and perceptions of leisure constraints were significant determinants of leisure motivations. Perceptions of leisure opportunities enhanced self-determined leisure motivation, whereas perceptions of leisure constraints undermined self-determined leisure motivation" (Losier, *et al.*, 1993:164).

They conclude that leisure motivation was a determinant of both leisure satisfaction and leisure participation in elderly individuals.

1.6 Perception

Duman & Mattila (2005), examine how cruisers perceived the value of a cruise vacation. They contend that three factors influence cruise customers' value perceptions: novelty (change from routine), control (more control over their vacation environment), and hedonics (pleasure or happiness emotional responses).

Observations on seniors' perceptions were also made by Faranda & Schmidt (1999):

One of the difficult tasks, then, facing marketers is to create appeals to older consumers which acknowledge their special needs, without violating their self-perceptions regarding age and the images they hold of themselves (Faranda & Schmidt, 1999:7).

These researchers have recognized that older consumers have special needs and perceptions that are not similar to younger purchasers and should be targeted as a separate group.

From a different perspective, Brown, Frankel, & Fennell (1991) conclude that actions (behaviour) are less important than how we feel about what we do (satisfaction). This finding

supports Shaw's (1985) conclusion "in order to understand the meaning of leisure in people's lives, it is necessary to be concerned with attitudes and perceptions surrounding particular situations rather than with types of activity *per se*" (Shaw, 1985:19).

Expectations and perceptions of a cruise experience may take several forms. One consideration is how the print and media advertising of ships and destinations contributes to the cruise experience. "It is important that the cruise line providers actually provide what they had communicated in their marketing. This type of marketing shapes the expectations of the purchaser"(Krieger *et al.*, 2005:108).

Another area that may affect vacation selection for seniors is perception about safety. Wong & Lau (2001), in a study of Hong Kong Chinese tourists, find that this market prefers to travel in groups, because they perceive group travel as safer than individual, independent travel. Also, they add, as an additional attraction of group travel, there is the opportunity for social interaction in the many activities available. They suggest that short-term exchanges with fellow passengers are quite acceptable and even desired. Wong & Lau conclude that "sticking strictly to the advertised itinerary during tours can increase participants' psychological certainty of safety and reduce risk, making the tours more pleasurable" (Wong & Lau, 2001:11).

Sonmez & Graefe (1998) conclude in a study of U.S. citizens in international travel:

Why travellers avoided certain destinations is as relevant to the study of tourist decision making as why they choose to travel to others. Perceptions of risk and safety and travel experience are likely to influence travel decisions; efforts to predict future travel behaviour can benefit from studies of tourist decision making, risk perceptions, and the influence of past travel experience (Sonmez & Graefe 1998:171).

These latter two studies address perceptions of security on cruises and also highlight participation in a group and social interaction as an attraction to travel. Participation in cruising is increasing quickly as a vacation choice for seniors. One possible reason for the increase may

be the perception of lower risk while on a cruise ship as opposed to international land destinations.

1.7 Quality

Perceptions are created in the purchaser's mind and then the actual experience provides the reality of service quality according to Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Willson, (2002).

Perceptions of service quality are derived from cognitive beliefs about the destination's attributes. Both evaluative quality of performance and affective quality of experience directly contribute to overall service quality and overall visitor satisfaction (Tian-Cole, *et al.*, 2002:77).

They conclude that perceptions of tourism service quality are derived from cognitive beliefs about the destination attributes, and that the quality of performance and quality of experience directly contributes to perceptions of overall service quality and overall visitor satisfaction. The "evaluative" quality of performance indirectly influences overall satisfaction through quality of experience, while the "effective" quality of experience indirectly contributes to overall service quality through overall satisfaction.

Schneider & White (2004) describe quality as

a user-based approach, in which the quality of a product is determined by its user . . . quality is subjective and hinges on the individual perception of the customers. The quality of a product is high when the customers say it is – and this is not always when the product conforms to the provider's technical criteria" (Schneider & White, 2004:10).

Moschis, Lee, & Mathur (1997) approached quality from a marketing viewpoint. They confirm that "people respond differently to marketing stimuli based on their needs, experiences, stage in life and other factors" (Moschis, Lee, & Mathur, 1997:285). Consumers in general, and older consumers in particular, do not respond the same way to specific strategies or company offerings and their responses tend to be influenced by the characteristics of the products or services being marketed. For example, products and services important to consumers are marketed differently than products of lesser importance. Moschis *et al.*, suggest the need for targeting each segment

with different marketing strategies and marketing programs for specific types of consumer products and services.

The difference between first-time and repeat cruisers in terms of how they assessed the quality of a cruise was researched by Petrick (2004b). He finds that repeat visitors were more likely to base their perceptions of quality on how the experience makes them feel, while first-time visitors were more like to base their perceptions on price. He also looks at overall perceived value and overall satisfaction. He identifies relationships between perceptions of monetary price, behavioural price, quality, emotional response, and reputation of the cruise line. Petrick concludes, "this knowledge could be useful in determining how to alter both first-timers' and repeaters' experiences to maximize the utilization of resources to both retain and attract clientele" (Petrick 2004b:37).

1.8 Satisfaction

Satisfaction of personal needs can also refer to personal evaluation of one's own health and leisure. Mannell (1999:240) states that measures of leisure appraisal-satisfaction are used to assess the quality of people's leisure as they evaluate it, "satisfaction has a past orientation – an appraisal of how things have gone up until the present." He summarizes that evidence has been found that what goes on in the leisure domain can influence how people feel about their lives as a whole and life satisfaction is influenced more by how satisfied people feel about what they do. Mannell concludes, "the leisure-life satisfaction link appears to vary as a function of a wide range of social experiences as reflected by differences in age, ethnicity, gender, occupation, and social status" (Mannell, 1999: 241).

Satisfaction from leisure social experiences in various types of vacations were researched by the CLIA (2002). They examine personal satisfaction by comparing the experiences of survey participants from vacations taken in the past five years. The sampling frame was based on 900

respondents from U.S. households, 23% of whom were previous cruisers. They find that virtually any vacation creates a high level of satisfaction, while cruises generate the highest level of “extremely” satisfied vacationers according to table 1.4.

Types of Vacations	“extremely satisfied”
Cruises	34%
Vacation house rental	30%
Visiting friends and relatives	29%
Package tours	25%
Resort vacations	24%
Land-based escorted tours	24%
Trips using individual reservations	23%
Vacations as part of a business trip	19%

Table 1.4 Level of satisfaction with various types of vacations.
(CLIA 2002:30)

The possibility of determining the satisfaction of a cruise ship experience appears to be influenced by the cruiser’s own experiences and needs at that particular time. For some, satisfaction may be more of a function of the passenger’s interaction with others; for others, satisfaction may be the weather, shore excursions, or the atmosphere of the ship. However, as Schneider & White assert, the quality of the cruise experience is a function of the passenger’s perception and not of objective measurements of cruise operations.

According to Petrick & Backman (2002), the contrast model most frequently used by tourism researchers was developed by Oliver (1980).

According to his model, feelings of satisfaction arise when consumers compare their perceptions of a product's performance to their expectations. Thus, if perceived performance is greater than expectations, (termed a positive disconfirmation), they are satisfied. Conversely, if one's perceived performance is less than their expectation, negative disconfirmation (or dissatisfaction) occurs (Petrick & Backman, 2002:253).

1.9 Summary

While there is considerable research in leisure motivation and satisfaction, there is only limited research on the expanding cruise ship industry and even less on the motivation and satisfaction of seniors having a cruise experience. This lack of focus on seniors in cruising research is curious because seniors represent approximately one-third of the cruise passengers. Senior cruisers can be assumed to travel for personal satisfaction, meeting their needs rather than seeking social approval. However, the determinants of expectations, perceptions and personal satisfaction on a cruise are not well understood. Part of the appeal is likely due to the fact that cruises offer an all-inclusive travel experience, the opportunity to see multiple new destinations, the provision of luxury service (at least on cruise ships patronized by many seniors), and minimal personal risk. The cruisers, not the service provider, determine their perception of quality and satisfaction, as older consumers in particular appear to be influenced by the characteristics of the services provided.

The purpose of this study is to determine what underlying meanings motivate seniors to take a cruise, what meanings they receive from their experience, and how these meanings may affect their sense of satisfaction. The conclusions may assist cruise lines to better meet the needs and expectations of senior cruisers as well as be applicable to service providers of other inclusive-type vacations, such as land-based resorts who cater to the senior market segment.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

2.1 Purpose

Chapter One reviewed literature on seniors, cruising, vacation selection, cruise motivation, satisfaction, and service quality. A scarcity of research related to seniors and their cruise vacations was revealed.

Fodness & Murray (1999) suggest their tourist information search model is incomplete as it is missing what is perhaps its most useful and interesting element, “why” (Fodness & Murray, 1999:229). “Why” may also be defined as what a cruise experience means to the senior cruise passenger. This study focusses on the meaning of the experience to a senior cruise passenger and was examined through these questions:

1. What are the motivations for and satisfaction arising from a senior’s cruise experience?
2. How was satisfaction with the cruise affected by interaction with others during and after the cruise?

The answers to these questions from interview participants provides insight into the motivations of senior cruisers as well as the satisfaction they derive from cruise tourism. As well, the answers may aid in better target marketing to this age group. The areas examined covered these topics:

1. The reasons for selecting a cruise vacation;
2. The effect of social interactions on the initial decision to take a cruise vacation;
3. The effect of interaction with others while on the cruise and post-cruise;
4. The possibility that communication while on the cruise, with friends and relatives at home enhances satisfaction;
5. The meanings of satisfactions that a senior obtains from the full cruise experience;
6. The personal meaning of having taken a cruise (dream vacation, other inner meaning);

7. The differences and similarities in participants' descriptions of their satisfactions;
8. If any special needs of the senior consumer were not met;
9. If age had any effect on the interests and satisfaction of the senior;
10. If there was a motivational consistency in repeat cruise vacations.

Appendix A contains the open-ended questions the participants were asked.

2.2 Research methodology

Cresswell (2003) comments that attitudes and behaviours can be examined using quantitative methodology while motivation and satisfaction based on personal experiences can be investigated through qualitative research. Specifically, a qualitative approach allows for posing open-ended questions to the participant through interviews rather than closed-ended and numeric data analysis. Cresswell also mentions that individuals develop varied and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences,

leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of the situation being studied. The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons (Cresswell, 2003:8).

Open-ended interviews are emergent as the questions may change and be refined as the interview progresses. Themes can be developed from the data, "based primarily on constructivist perspectives (*i.e.*, the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed with the intent of developing a theory or pattern)" (Cresswell, 2003:18).

A study by Yarnal & Kerstetter (2005) drew attention to the social interaction on a cruise ship as a group vacation context. They comment that separation from home life translated into feelings of being more in control of life and a sense of liberation, with a chance to focus on the self. They found that the group experience provided an opportunity for individuals to be less influenced by the external needs and requirements of others. They suggest that individuals' true selves may have been realized aboard the cruise ship – in a space outside ordinary life. Yarnal &

Kerstetter conclude that their study has shown that a social interactionist perspective can help increase our understanding of tourist behaviour, especially in a group context and argue, “hence future studies should adopt this perspective” (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005:377).

This study takes a constructivist approach in its methodology by employing semi-structured interviews as suggested by Guba (1990). Guba also mentions that “one of the roots of constructivism - or at least a fellow traveller - is symbolic interactionism” (Guba 1990:110).

2.3 Symbolic Interaction

Blumer (1969) developed the Symbolic Interaction (SI) method. He was convinced that an empirical science necessarily had to respect the nature of an empirical world that is its object of study. SI, in his judgement, shows that respect for the nature of human group life and conduct is a relatively distinctive approach. He identified three core principles:

- (1) People act toward things, including each other, on the basis of meanings they have for them;
- (2) These meanings are derived through social interaction with others;
- (3) These meanings are managed and transformed through an interpretive process that people use to make sense of and handle the objects that constitute their social worlds (Blumer, 1969:2).

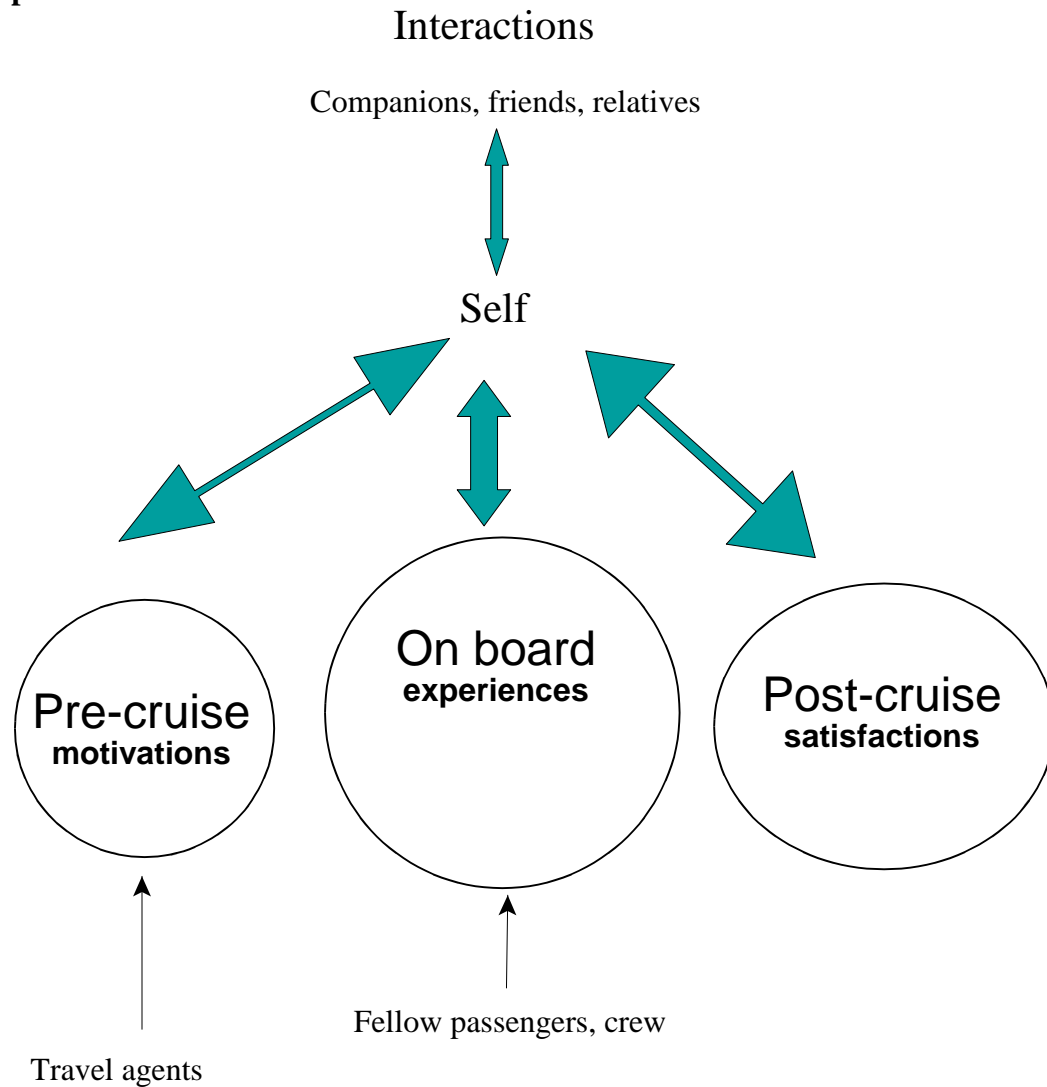
The philosophy of SI is to seek the meaning of social behaviour through identification of the underlying processes of interaction between human beings and within a human being. This emphasis on attempting to infer meaning through symbols found in interactions with others, and their reactions, is the fundamental difference from other types of sociological research such as observing evident behaviour or measuring attitudes. SI examines how individuals and groups interact to construct meaning. The human participates in the development of society by:

1. Social interactions with other people, sharing language and the mutual interpretation of symbols;
2. The influence of cultural, environmental, and historical actions of others and ourselves;
3. Adjusting our values through an internal interpretive process, which develops self-concepts;

4. Resolving actions toward others based on the meanings that those people have for us. SI is a practical study of individuals, whereby they receive information from interaction with others, interpret it, and then construct their own lines of action to fit into a group. SI gives meaning to actions in the real world, providing accounts of self, character, virtue and vice, and is empirical research. Application of SI to leisure and tourism behaviour is an essential part of improving our understanding of people that make up our society. Such meanings are the foundation of everyday research in order to get at what people are actually thinking when they make a decision to participate in the cruising experience. Utilizing the inductive SI approach, the participants' definitions of social situations and their perceptions and responses will be examined to reveal the meanings to locate insight into motivations of what is important to a senior taking a cruise vacation and how this relates to their satisfaction.

The intent of the study is to identify meanings of motivation behind the actions of a senior deciding to take a cruise, their experiences on board, and post-cruise satisfaction. The qualitative interviews undertaken in this research provide descriptions of meanings by the participants. The participants' activities are grouped into the three stages of the cruise experience as shown in the following conceptual model. The participants' responses about those activities will be interpreted to locate the meanings implicit in them.

2.4 Conceptual model



Model 2.1 Conceptual model of interactions for a cruise vacation

The proposed interactions between the cruiser (Self) and the cruiser's friends, relatives, and fellow passengers can be illustrated by dividing the activities into three stages: pre-cruise motivations, on board experiences, and post-cruise satisfactions. Perceptions for those participants who have never been on a cruise before are formed from friends and relatives who have gone on cruises, or always wanted to go on a cruise and know someone who has related their experiences to them, as well as brochures, and the Internet. Previous cruisers rely on their past experiences and compare those with other cruisers, as well as information from the Internet

for their own pre-cruise perceptions. A travel agent may assist either type of prospective cruiser. The on board experiences of satisfaction are constructed from activities, observations, discussions with fellow passengers, and excursions. Post-cruise reflections are passed along to friends and relatives, usually relaying the cruiser's satisfaction with the experience and recommending the experience to the listener. This interaction enhances the cruiser's satisfaction and makes the experience a topic of conversation to those who are interested and want to share the experience. It also allows for interpretation by the self of the information being received and its translation into guidance for future use.

2.5 Sample selection

There are many seniors in the my geographical area who have taken a cruise vacation. Access to potential subjects was obtained through seniors associations, lodges, senior community activity groups and clubs with which I was associated. Recruitment was limited to subjects who were not employed in order that participants would have a freedom of movement to take a vacation at their leisure. This basis for the study was to remove the restriction that gainful employment might have when considering a vacation. Volunteer activity by the participants should not affect the data results, as any who volunteered were engaged on an availability basis, with vacations or time away taking precedence over their volunteer work. After interviewing ten persons, when no significant or relevant new information appeared to be forthcoming, a "data saturation" approach was taken and no further interviews were performed.

2.6 Participant profiles

The participants were selected through convenience sampling on the basis of a comment in a personal discussion with the researcher that they had taken a cruise within the last two years and were over the age of 59 at that time. This age bracket will conform to the definition used by the CLIA segmenting seniors as age 60 or over (CLIA 1996:10). These discussions occurred during social gatherings in Guelph, Georgetown, and Etobicoke, Ontario. Contact was made after to

establish a convenient time for the interview. One person rejected the request because he wanted to provide only written answers to the questions without any interview. This would have restricted the search for his meanings behind the cruise experience and not allowed emergent topics to be queried as they arose. It also would not allow the interviewer to personally assess emotion behind the responses at the time they were being given to establish their validity. The interviews took place between February and May 2007. Persons who normally live alone, even though they may travel with a companion or be a member of a group are referred to as “individuals.”

2.6.1 Demographics

Participants

Age 60	Age 70	Age 80	Age 90	Total
5	4	0	1	10

Gender

Male	Female
4	6

Marital status

Married	Widowed/divorced	Total
6	4	10

Table 2.2 Participants' demographics

2.6.2 Cruise experiences

Previous cruises				
None	1 to 4	5 to10	11 and more	Average
2	3	4	1	4.6

Cruise destinations				
Alaska	Hawaii	Mediterranean	North Atlantic	West Caribbean
2	3	1	1	3

Time cruise was taken	
Within last six months	Six months to twelve months
9	1

Persons in the travel party		
One couple	Multiple couples	Individuals in a group
4	2	4

Table 2.3 Participants' cruise experiences

All participants are retired from full-time employment; one does part-time work and others perform some volunteer work in the local community. All could take a trip after planning around family commitments, and in all cases called it a vacation. None of the participants went south for a month or more in the winter.

2.7 Interviews

The semi-structured process used in the interviews prompted extended answers rather than short responses, which was the intent of the questions. Emotions also surfaced as participants were interested in providing the background for their motivations and satisfactions. It should be noted that even though some of the initial planning for their cruises happened two years ago, the recall

of details by all the participants was exceptional.

Each quotation in the findings in Chapter 3, contains the actual words of an individual participant. There is no identification of individuals as this was a condition under which the interview was granted.

2.8 Data collection

A participant was selected and handed a letter approved by the Office of Ethics, University of Waterloo, describing the details of the study and thanking them for their interest. Personal interviews took place in the participant's home where the interviewee was more comfortable and thus more likely to speak openly and at length about a cruise vacation. The interview was tape-recorded with permission and covered all aspects of the cruise vacation, from the initial thought of going on a cruise vacation to post-cruise reminiscences. The interview began with recalling the date of travel, ship, and embarkation point to help put the cruise in context and aid the respondent's focus on the cruise experience.

A semi-structured interview (see Appendix A) was conducted to collect information on perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and intent of the participant, as well as how these may have changed during the various stages of the entire vacation process. The semi-structured format permitted follow-up questions on additional issues that were relevant to the purpose of the study. The interviews were 60 to 90 minutes long and there was an awareness by the interviewer, not to lead the interviewee. Guarantees of confidentiality were provided and no individual, travel agent, or cruise line was identified in the transcription.

2.9.1 Data analysis

Each taped interview was transcribed and separated into numbered paragraphs for easier future reference. The coding process involved listing the descriptive phrases of the respondents. Sensitizing concepts were used a guide from the relevant motivational domains of the

Recreational Experience Preference scales (Manfredo, Driver, & Tarrant 1996)(see next section). Through open coding these aided in identifying motivational concepts in the original list of 59 different phrases from the participants (See Appendix B). They were allocated into the three categories (axial coding) of the conceptual stages of the theoretical model: the pre-cruise motivation, onboard cruise experiences, and post-cruise reflections. The descriptive phrases were examined for commonalities through selective coding, grouped into 29 categories based on the stages of the theoretical model, and became the headings and subheadings in Chapter 3 - Findings. The actual language of the participant (*in vivo*) was used to support the headings and subheadings.

To select themes, the descriptive phrases were again examined to obtain a constant comparison of data and conceptual categories were created to reflect the meaning of the participants (See Appendix C). These were listed, grouped and regrouped into topics, and reduced to several possible themes for each topic. These were then distilled in three themes discussed in Chapter 4 - Interpretation and Discussion.

2.9.2 Sensitizing concepts

As a guide to analysing motivations, reference was made to Manfredo, *et al.*, (1996) who summarized Recreation Experience Preference (REP) scales, conceptualized in 1970 by Driver and Tocher. Manfredo *et al.*, analysed 36 different studies (1975-1979) on REP scales. These are used when applied to determine trip-specific motivations for leisure and activity-specific motivations. Some of their domains relevant to this study on seniors on a cruise experience are:

- achievement/stimulation - reinforcing self-image, social recognition, excitement, endurance, and telling others,
- similar people - being with friends, with similar people,
- new people - meeting new people, observing other people,
- learning - exploration, geography study, general learning,

- enjoy nature - scenery,
- introspection,
- physical rest,
- escape personal-social pressures - tension release, slow down mentally,
escape role overloads,
- escape physical pressure - tranquility, privacy, escape physical stressors,
- social security,
- risk taking,
- risk reduction - risk moderation, risk avoidance (Manfredo, *et al.*, 1996:198).

2.10 Pilot test

A pilot test was performed to preview the quality of responses to the proposed interview guide. Three individuals were interviewed with different levels of cruise experiences ranging from one to seven voyages. All were more than 60 years of age, the first two males, accompanied by their wives and the last was a female who travelled solo. The first's voyage was seven days, the second four, and the third, thirty. The subjects were asked to describe his/her cruise experiences following the layout of the conceptual model from the initial thought of a vacation, selection of a cruise, their pre and post travel for the cruise, their on board experiences, and their sharing of their experiences with family and friends after the trip. Throughout the recorded interview (undertaken with permission), an interview guide was followed to reveal what activities meant to the participants, how they felt about situations they were involved in, and what satisfactions they obtained from the cruise experience.

The interviews were transcribed and coded into paragraphs of related activities. The results revealed that the interview guide needed to be improved by rephrasing some questions and rearranging the sequence. The data provided by the respondents was reasonably complete and useful for goals of this study. It also provided the opportunity to test the coding and refine the proposed motivation and satisfaction sections and subheadings and related to the three-stage

model. Data from the test interviews was not used in the data of this study.

2.11 Related personal experience

Having previously experienced two cruises as a senior, I became interested in what cruising meant to other seniors. The familiarity with the cruise scene and awareness of a different attitude to cruising by seniors provides a basis for formulating questions that would be meaningful to the respondents. The interpretation of the meanings they provided was aided by my understanding of the interviewees' answers.

2.12 Limitations

Research was limited to those persons who have been on a cruise in the last two years in order to reveal current service practices of cruise lines. While some tourism areas define seniors as young as 50 years, and most persons at present are retired from active work by 65 years, the standard of 60 years and above as the definition for a senior in this study, is based on the standard used by the Cruise Lines International Association. No comparison was made with motivations and satisfactions of other all-inclusive, resort vacations, except as emerged from the experience of the participants. There was no comparison with younger cruisers.

2.12 Summary

This study focussed on the methodology to obtain the meaning of the experience to a senior cruise passenger including his/her motivations, interactions, and satisfactions. A pilot test was conducted to clarify the specific questions to be asked of the participants. Participants were selected through personal discussions at various social activities. Ten participants were interviewed in their own homes using a qualitative, constructionivist approach, and semi-structured open-ended questions based on a conceptual model.

Data collection was completed by transcribing each recorded interview. Data analysis was undertaken by listing descriptive phrases from the participants utilizing sensitizing concepts

from the domains of the Recreational Preference Scales. The resultant phrases were open coded, then axial coded based on the three-stage theoretical model and selective coded into the headings of Chapter 3 - Findings. Data was then compared and put into conceptual categories, regrouped into topics, and resulted in the three themes discussed in Chapter 4 - Interpretation and Discussion.

Chapter 3 - Findings

Utilizing the conceptual model from Chapter Two, the data is separated into three stages: 1. pre-cruise motivations, 2. on board experiences, and 3. post-cruise satisfactions. Individual participant quotations are identified by letters *D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, and M.*

3.1 Pre-cruise motivations

3.1.1 Vacation decision

An individual's first question is, does one want to take a vacation? Motivation comes from several sources: the urge to get away from one's home environment, a simple desire for a change, time to enjoy oneself while exploring new destinations, and to escape the Canadian winter. The choice was usually determined several months in advance of departure by these seniors.

E I feel I am away from everything [while on vacation]. I am not confined. There is no traffic around, no skyscrapers, no lights all over the place.

G It meant that I could get away from my daily routines, familiar places, and the cold weather.

L It is an opportunity to see things and do things that you never got to do in the rest of your life.

Another part of seniors' life may be loneliness

J The reason I go on vacation is that it is an escape from reality for me. I don't have anything at home, you know, it is a party the whole time you are away because you have no responsibilities. Someone else is feeding you, you are having fun the whole time you are away. If life could be like that all the time it would be nice. I am generally pretty happy with vacations. I like vacations.

K Nobody outside the family, just my Daughter. I've been very lonely here, very, very lonely. So that's what I thought, oh, well, I guess I should get away. Daughter, never mind worrying about me. So I went on a trip because my family thought I needed to get away.

3.1.2 Departure date

The next question for the planning of a vacation is when can one go? The opportunity may be a seasonal occurrence, regularly scheduled each year, or a lull in activity schedules which appear on one's calendar. The participants after reviewing their commitments, select the best time in

their calendar to be on vacation. Conversely, friends may contact them suggesting a specific mutual time. Regardless, a pleasurable goal is set to anticipate the vacation.

G While I could go at almost any time, that worked out well in my schedule and hopefully with warmer weather.

H We were given a selection of dates [for the cruise] because obviously only some weeks you could go up to Alaska. There was basically one cruise that was available for the summer. We chose the one that was the most suitable for my schedule.

I So I guess you could say that a number of events came together and that's why we are going.

J I found that the cruise line had a ship going every month. We knew the weather was just past the rainy season. It wasn't too hot, it wasn't too cold.

Another participant schedules her vacations on a regular basis.

M I get itchy feet then in spring and fall. It breaks up my year. I feel if I go in the spring, then I am ready for my summer at home. If I go in the autumn, I am ready for winter. I don't like being away from Ontario in September, it is so beautiful here. Timing is the main reason, the time of the season. The group that I go with, in their brochure, they had a trip there that suited me for the time and the date and so on.

3.1.3 Destination selection

Once the decision to go on vacation is made, the next choice is where to go. This question revolves around all the opportunities available, so where would one like to go most? Some participants compared a land resort vacation to a cruise while others were more concerned with receiving good value when selecting a cruise. There are personal constraints to be considered and many make their choices carefully through discussions with friends and relatives. The Internet is most helpful in searching for new destinations before consulting a travel agent. This vacation investigation provides the perceptions, raises expectations, and builds anticipation for their selected goal.

3.1.3.1 Comparing a land to a cruise vacation

Some participants wanted more variety from their vacation time rather than being confined to one resort. Others had specific needs that exceed what a land resort may offer.

E We have been on an all-inclusive land resort a few times and it doesn't compare. The food [on the cruise] is way levels above, the service is excellent, the attention you get.

And I think you interact with more people on a cruise than you do on an all-inclusive land. And plus you meet people from different countries. The difference between an all-inclusive on an island, on certain islands there are specifics that are there for you but not the variety and changes you have on board the cruise ship.

G I have been on at least three land resorts. The grounds were well kept and lovely but were the same day after day. The facilities were clean, and the large buffets of food were good, not great. The accommodation was average, but it was a real change into a warm, sunny climate from home. They had different activities available, such as tennis, golf, and horseback riding. But just outside the grounds was the traffic and noise.

I I wouldn't go cruising to areas that we had explored by land, like around the Mediterranean. Even European rivers are so dirty. The land hotels have seven thousand people off their buses standing around waiting for their rooms. You meet a lot more people that way [on a cruise] than you do in a hotel.

This participant summarized major reasons for taking a cruise.

J Well, I like cruising because you are not in the same place every day. You get to see a lot more than you would if you were at one resort.

3.1.3.2 Cost and value

This question is, considering one's economic situation, what can one afford versus what one would like to do? And, where will one get the most value for their money? An underlying factor in this decision for many seniors is the economic effect it may have on their lives as many are on a fixed income. Aside from the basic cruise cost, there are the additional expenses for transportation to the debarkation point and return, excursions off the ship, tips, incidentals, and seasonal clothing may have to be purchased. Some of these costs may be included in a tour price.

D So, we probably wouldn't have taken a cruise at this time if they hadn't said this was their money making effort [community service group] and it's good value. After our research it was a good value. We are looking at meeting people and having experiences and as economical as possible. There was one woman [we met on board], she lived in Miami. So every time she wanted to, for \$500 she could take a weeks' cruise almost for next to nothing. She was disappointed because the only vacations she could afford to take was cruising.

E We have travelled on vacation quite a lot of places and we felt for your value, you get good value for the dollars you spend on a cruise. And being Scottish, we did want to get the best deal for our money.

I So you could say money is a factor. Being retired, we are pretty careful about what we are spending.

By searching, one can find a lower price on some cruises. With large discounts from list price

being offered by the cruise lines, careful searching can prove beneficial, especially between tourist seasons when cruise lines are repositioning their ships.

- F Well, we are always looking for good value for our money. We would never cruise at Christmas time because of the cost. Economically, when you are doing a repositioning cruise, that is a financial saving. It is quite a saving to take repositioning.*
- G I always knew I would take another [cruise] at some time whenever I could fit it into my schedule, and afford it. I could use airline points to get me there and back, saving airfare.*
- H The cruise line that was making the two for one offer was basically what we went for. Always looking to be thrifty, economical.*
- J Cruising in Hawaii was cheaper than staying in a resort in Hawaii. That's the part I like about cruising is to go and stay at one of those resorts was going to cost more than for the two of us to cruise. So that was the motivation. We went that time because it was cheaper. We usually go in January or February, it is cheaper going than in March or April.*

An elder cruiser has found that peers have a constraint to cruising.

- M I go alone because I find that people of my age, they don't want to spend their money. These are expensive, they don't want to spend the money.*

3.1.3.3 Choosing to go on a cruise

Another question is: which cruise most fits one's criteria? Some participants have a strong desire to have several cruise experiences at this time in their life.

- F Easiest and most comfortable way of travelling. Very luxurious. It was sold as soon as we saw it [advertised].*
- G I had been on two previous cruises and had a super time on each. So when the opportunity presented itself for time away in snowy and cold February, I selected a cruise.*
- J We have been on six or seven cruises. For me, I just like cruising because it is the atmosphere of the whole cruise. Just the whole experience of cruising I really like. So when my husband said which one are we going to go on, I said, "yes, I'll have my bag packed, just let me know."*
- K This is a different stage in our life and it [cruising] seems to fit in there. Well, I was on a cruise once before and really enjoyed it. So, that's my thing. I like cruising.*
- M Around about in February or March, I get itchy feet, so the cruise seemed the thing to do at that time of year. You could go to the Caribbean or wherever you wanted, or September or October, same thing, it just suited me.*

3.1.3.4 Freedom of choice

Choice appears to have a common appeal among cruisers. With different cruise lines and many

ships in each fleet, multiple destinations, many daily activities and several excursions available at every destination, each participant reads their own feelings and selects the activity that will satisfy them the most. A sense of personal control is evident in most of these examples even though all participants had contacted a travel agent instead of booking direct with the cruise line.

G It was a feeling of satisfaction that I was in control of my life and could go wherever I wished. I had the ability to have freedom of choice for a vacation. I received the group itinerary of get-together plans and receptions. Then the big decisions of what I really wanted to attend and where to make time to just sit and enjoy the weather and water. Checking the number of days at sea, you think what your mood might be on that day and try to pick out what you would really like to do, what you can afford, hoping there is sun and warmth every day. I think these [excursions] are the ice cream on top of the cruise. How nice to be free to able to make these pleasurable choices.

J The cruise was just around the islands. We flew there and we flew back from Hawaii. A lot of people do not want to do that flight, though.

M I think I make all the decisions on my own. Naturally I discuss them with my son and Daughter-in-law, and they both are very enthusiastic, they are always pushing me to keep active and keep alive and be with people, and they are very, very supportive. So I really make the decisions on my own.

3.1.3.5 Seeking new destinations

Almost every cruiser expressed an interest in seeing new destinations and excursions, especially to places where they had not been before.

D I like history, I like to see things, I like historical. I prefer history, I prefer to see something.

F [There is a] never ending choice of destinations.

H It wasn't my decision, it was my husband's decision. He desperately wanted to go to Alaska.

L I like the part that you see so many things.

M I chose to go to Alaska because I always wanted to see that part of the world.

3.1.3.6 Searching the Internet and brochures

Respondents used a variety of tools to research cruise options: the Internet, travel agency ads, cruise line brochures, and friends.

G The planning of the cruise is an exciting time. Where to go, what ship to go on, and most important, what exciting excursions to take at the various destinations. You find a list of them from the ship web page or other tour companies for each destination.

- H It was in a newspaper ad, yes. I had researched the cruise line and had a look to see what it [my cabin] was. There was more than ample room for us. It was nicely appointed and the only disappointment was that it didn't have a balcony.*
- J The most important part of the vacation is what you learn. Reading out of a book doesn't mean the same as actually seeing it. Seeing someone else's pictures is not the same as doing it yourself. So it is more of the seeing and learning part for me. You do your research before you go, but nothing personal [information] that we got from anyone else.*
- L On the Internet I checked out the various ships. There are three ships and I figured out which one likely was to go to the best places and which one has the best record. We had a lot of information on Hawaii in the past, and had never gotten there. You have the opportunity on the Internet of trying to find out about what other people thought who had taken that package.*
- M I study the brochures to find out where they are going and what is available that would suit. I have looked at so many brochures.*

3.1.4 Pre-cruise discussions

Most persons considering a cruise will chat with others to gain insight from those experiences.

For the novice cruiser, to relieve one's fears of the upcoming unknown experience, one may talk to many people about their experiences on previous cruises. Even the experienced cruiser will listen carefully as they are always on the lookout for a new destination to cruise to based on the recommendation of others.

- I In the club there are a few people who have been on cruises. In my wife's social group there had been a few cruises as well. Since that time [deciding to cruise], I have talked to twenty people. If I am in a group I will say, "have you been on a cruise? Well what did you think of it? Did anybody get sick?" This kind of thing, but we still have these reservations. So we are really doing an experiment, if you like, to see if we like it, to see if it is enjoyable. I think we want to see if we can have a good time economically. We don't really want to spend oodles of money on travel. We want to travel as economically as possible and enjoy it.*

As more persons take part in this type of a vacation, the topic of cruising is more understood and acceptable for social interaction among strangers at a social meeting. Through conversation one may find that someone else has been on a cruise that one might be interested in. This social exchange of experiences and advice can stimulate one's anticipation. Some personal satisfaction may also be derived in discussing the upcoming cruise.

G Before the cruise, a common topic among people I socialized with, was asking if one would be away during some part of the winter months. When I responded about my cruise, their eyes would light up and ask where, when, and how long. They invariably wished me well and wished they could go on one also. They inferred my cruise was a great idea. There also was the very good feeling about telling others I would be away. "Where are you going?" they would ask. Then I could proudly say, "on a cruise." Several previous cruise passengers I met commented on the exceptional, enjoyable time they had aboard their cruise ship.

H We had, over a period of probably three or four years encountered friends, acquaintances who had gone to Alaska. They [previous other cruisers] thought it was a fascinating trip. I think that there was a general opinion that the cruise lines were wonderful, that the food was wonderful.

M Oh yes, I discuss it with all my friends. Everybody knows I like travelling and they [my friends] ask "when are you going next, where are you going?"

Others may use the motivation as a subject of a social intercourse with friends and family.

Sometimes, a family referral reminds one of a dream that is still unfulfilled.

M I have a cousin in England and she has been here to stay with me. She was on her way to Alaska. Then she wrote to me and told me all about her trip to Alaska afterwards. What she wore, what you need, and guess I have always been interested in repeating her trip.

3.1.5 Companions

According to the following comments, the most important element of satisfaction was being able to socialize with other persons, whether they are a partner, friends, or family. Many specifically mention companionship which is underlying in most other couples' comments.

Consistent use of the word "we" reflects that both were in agreement about their experiences.

Verification of agreement was borne out when both spouses in a cruising couple were present during the interview with no outright correction of facts. Only a word was supplied on occasion by the other spouse, to remember a situation.

3.1.5.1 Partners

A special occasion such as a fiftieth wedding anniversary was a major reason for one trip, so this couple selected something they both wanted to enjoy together.

E We had just enjoyed cruising so much. With this one it was going to be a little bit special cause it was our 50th anniversary last year.

Another couple had been on many cruises before. Even then, they immediately knew where they

wanted to go next.

F I have no idea how many cruises we have been on, more, maybe fifteen. We heard about this cruise when we were on the cruise to Hawaii. They had little blurbs on the ship television and they were advertising the ones coming up. We saw this one, it just hit us like “That’s it, we have got to do this one.” So we just figured that this is just made for us. I would say it is always nice to share a trip. And my husband is a very easy person to share with. And we don’t always agree on everything. I can always appreciate why he is thinking a certain way and he appreciates the way I am thinking as well. So we are good travel companions.

The next participant’s husband was ill before and on this cruise, and his wife was providing a caregiver role. Initially, she had no interest in going to Alaska. He was fulfilling a dream and would not cancel the trip. After, she was glad she went.

H My husband desperately wanted to go to Alaska. I had no interest in going to Alaska, because a majority of people I knew had been to Alaska and came back sick. And I just didn’t want to go. However, he was very, very anxious to go to Alaska and see the glaciers and the other ports of call on the way up. Other times we would just like to be by ourselves tonight. We would go and have a drink. wonderful time. It more than fulfilled what I thought it was going to be like because I didn’t have a clue what it was going to be like, and yes it was a wonderful trip. It was quite amazing. I am very glad that I did it. I think my husband was more than fulfilled with that particular trip. He thoroughly enjoyed what he could of it. And was up on deck, plying me with hot coffee’s with brandies in when we were up at the glaciers, because it was so bitterly cold. And he had a wonderful time.

Another cruiser found the key of how to get the most enjoyment from a cruise.

J It wouldn’t be fun to go by yourself. At least on these kind of cruises. I know there is Club Med where you can go, but to go on this type of cruise it wouldn’t be any fun to go without anyone to share it with. You have someone to share your thoughts with.

A companion provided the company needed by this individual person. They enjoyed both joint and separate activities and found there were lots of things to do on the cruise.

K But when you are single it is hard. We went some places separately. But there is lots to do. You don’t have to sit around and mope. You could be busy all the time.

3.1.5.2 Family

One couple on one of their earlier cruises, found that with family accompanying them, the younger members of their family were interested in different activities than they usually were.

L There is a difference when we go by ourselves and when taking our family. There are twenty of them and we have done that three times. So the interesting thing with that is to see the kids involved with rock climbing, and all that type of thing. The kids make friends on a ship way better than adults. One trip we were on and we had daughters, daughter-

in-law, and granddaughters, so they are up dancing, there doing all that kind of stuff. But I have found this entertaining but have not taken part. We play shuffleboard with our friends and our family. So when we are with them it is a different, we do different things.

3.1.5.3 Friends

Some couples usually book a cruise with other friends from home, so they know each other well and could be guaranteed enjoyable companionship. This companionship seemed to give them more motivation to see new places. With close friends, additional viewpoints were available for discussion of experiences, reactions and satisfactions.

D I was able to get to places I hadn't been before, with a comfortable room, and friends.

For these experienced cruisers, it was important that the cruise was successful for the other couple who had never been on a cruise before. This motivation heightened the anticipation of the trip.

E They [our friends] had never been on one. So this really pumped us up to go on this cruise. But, we were just hoping that they would not be disappointed because they were looking forward to this so much. So that was part of the motivational thing. We were concerned about the other couple. Anyway, she was thrilled, she loved the sailing, she just loved everything about it.

Two couples, who were good friends, may have individual interests and do different activities.

Dinners were a favourite meeting time among friends to discuss the day's experiences and plan for tomorrow.

F I think we were kind of disappointed when our flights came through, and our friends were not on the same travel arrangements as we were. Their travel agent versus our travel agent here. We didn't always choose to do the same things as our travel companions were doing, because that's the way we are. We do eat together for the evening meal, but that's just so we can touch base with each other and see how their optional tour went versus ours. Not only were you glad to be with your friends for your dinner but you were always glad to hear about their day.

3.1.6 Group Involvement

Some tour groups are put together by travel agents and usually draw participants from a local geographical area who do not know each other. They may meet together once for orientation before the cruise and have one or two guides. These guides look after all the arrangements: booking transportation and cruise, baggage, provide a tour guide or hostess, group

companionship throughout the experience, and may offer special guided excursions at the various destinations. Other members may book direct with the cruise line and join a group onboard.

E They book limousine service here, pick you up, take you to the airport. She [the tour hostess] was very good. Once we got on the ship, everyone was on their own. The group we travelled with, we saw them occasionally, but not on a regular basis. We got together two evenings for cocktail parties. and once we got off, we met them all again. We just felt a comfort zone with the tour. If there is any problem, they [the guides] look after them. We recommend anybody to deal through them [a tour group].

An elderly group member thoroughly enjoys visiting with others but wants her privacy at night.

M I chat with other passengers and I get to know my group. Those people were excellent. That's what I like, you are with a group and because I was alone I get to know more people than if I went with a partner. I went once with a partner and I didn't get to know people the same. And I love people, I love being with people but I like my privacy at night. I socialize all during the day on these trips, have a wonderful time, but I like to be able to close my door in private and have a good night's sleep. It was the experience of the people that gave the most meaning to me. Of course, I was the oldest on the trip. I was then 90 years old, and that was quite an oddity.

Another type of group is composed of members who belong to the same organization, such as Kiwanis, or the Lions, etc. The individual participants find their social companions in the group of which they were a part. Instead of one person to communicate with, or four in the case of two couples, there were many different people from the same interest group around at meal times, at activities, and on excursions.

D It was not the right boat for me. If we hadn't been with other people I would have found it really hard. With the two or three other people it was better. We had great dinners because we had the friends [in the group].

I Another thing that made it was that there was six [closer friends] of us from our club, or so that worked out really well, in the sense of dinner. Cause dinner you picked your table. Also the [travel] agent himself from our club was on the cruise and he was giving us advice that you would never get out of it. And in a sense he made the trip really interesting.

The third type of group is organized by professional tour agents who specialize in arranging tours for special interest groups, such as educational tours, groups of individual persons, or business seminar groups. They know that pre-cruise contact among their clients removes some of the social barriers in advance. By setting up a web site for booked passengers in their group,

members can contact each other to exchange interests, photos, and may meet pre-cruise for those living in nearby localities. The Internet also provides communication to the widespread members to take the place of a briefing meeting. Such a group will have several hostesses to organize private group activities on board the ship in addition to the many ship activities. These are different from the other tour groups as the member is responsible for getting their own transportation to the ship and return, handling their own baggage, and booking their own excursions.

G I found a travel agent who was putting together a hostessed singles cruise group. They [the travel agency] set up a web page for the large group two months before the cruise, so there was chatter among the younger group about activities, hotels, and excursions they would take. The first afternoon I went to the group registration desk and met many of the group members. I had a warm, comforting feeling, chatting about the emails, our origins, previous cruises, excursions and countries visited. This was repeated many times through the week as we met together for cocktail parties, educational sessions, and fun mixers, in addition to breakfasts and suppers when I sat at a different table each time to meet others in the group. We had three days of excursion opportunities where there usually were a dozen or more different group members on the same day trip, socializing with each other and enjoying the sights and activities. It was amazing that such a varied set of backgrounds could socialize in such a friendly manner. Anyone would help another if a problem arose. Everyone always had time to exchange comments. There was a constant friendly attitude of the fellow members in the group, sharing our good fortune to be in that place at that time.

3.1.7 Perceptions, expectations, anticipations

There is the thrill of fulfilling a dream, the anticipation of being on a cruise ship, and the perception of living in luxurious surroundings. The experienced cruiser has a base of experience to know, to have perceptions of what is desired, and expectations that they will receive the quality of cruise they are familiar with. This is balanced by any personal constraints that may exist: economics, health, or personal situations as some examples.

E We knew what to expect, yes, and had a good idea. The two previous tours were excellent, different locations of course. So we knew the ship itself, we knew the type of [cruise] company. We were certainly looking forward to it.

F So we knew what we wanted. It was sold as soon as we saw it. Well, the day we got off and we were not on the waiting list any more, it was like we had just won the lottery, you know. We were on, we were going for sure. Before that we were just kind of waiting and hoping. But because of the anticipation of the whole thing, I think it made it even more exciting when we had to do this waiting to see if we were going to get on. And then our friends, we were doing the anticipation for them, too, and then when they got on it

was celebration time. We were positive about the whole trip, right from the first time we heard about it until we were on [the ship] and it was happening.

An individual going on a group cruise appears to discuss the events as they unfold and is tuned into the meanings.

G Observing these exchanges [on the group web-page] brought out the excitement most of them had for a vacation from their everyday lives and meeting with friends from earlier trips. This excitement was infectious to me also. I was really looking forward to the trip. I knew what to expect for the most part which was why I was going in the first place. It meant I could chat with others I had already corresponded with, in a relaxed atmosphere of luxury and full service, and basically just be myself to enjoy whatever I decided I wanted to do most to entertain myself. When the cruise ticket arrived in the mail, I had an emotional time. I hadn't thought that it was so important to me, but it was. I think it was their promise in writing to be able to get away from the daily routine, meet new people, and enjoy the quality of a cruise. Maybe it was just being able to travel, which is also related to getting away from home. I know as the departure day came closer, the anticipation of a new adventure and the excitement grew slowly. Another thing I remember is the waiting for the limo pick-up from home. The feelings of excitement were stirring around inside - some anticipation of a great experience, some concerns about what might go wrong that I had not thought about, and a feeling of relief that I was actually getting away from the weekly routine. Finally, the van came and I went with more internal stirrings keeping the adrenalin up for the customs and flight trials ahead.

Expectations can be tempered by previous experiences except for what a new destination may bring, which is the reason they are going there.

H I had no idea what I was going to see [on this cruise].

G At the embarkation hotel, arranging for a taxi and the ride [to the ship] came with a happy feeling and the anticipation of pleasure.

J We knew what the cruise part was going to be like. For the cruise, I didn't have any expectations, other than of the islands.

K Yes I was, I looked forward to being on a ship. I liked that part.

M The thrill of being in Alaska which I had dreamed about all my life.

3.1.8 Concerns

The first cruise is an experience that is approached with both anticipation and apprehension because it represents a new, unknown experience. First-time cruisers typically seek reassurances from friends who have been on cruises, although even these reassurances may not completely allay fears.

D The first thing of course you think, is that the boat cruise is an island and you can't get off of it. Around thirty years ago we had a serious problem when we were both on a boat throwing up in rough weather on the English channel, so we had been up all night. You don't think of excuses, but you think of a product which was sick to your stomach. I think we got through it okay, but we were more dead than alive. So you remember that, not the good parts. I am afraid of it [a cruise]. I am afraid of being sick. I don't really want to do it. I am doing it because it was put forward as something to do and it is a good thing and it is with people that we know and so its to a good cause. I have heard about other people going on cruises and they have fun on them. I probably wouldn't have participated in it myself. I have my doubts. I am willing to try. I will try it once. I don't like sitting on the beach, which a lot on this one. You can get off the boat and sit on the beach, or you can snorkel, or you can do all the stuff I don't do. My feelings are not that wonderful. I have never been on a cruise before. So there is a lot of Norwalk virus on these ships? I wonder why I am going then? Anyways we are going. We may love it when we come back. We don't know. But there is nothing in the information that really tells you how to stop be sick, and you can't get off the boat once you are sick. Hopefully they would have a helicopter that would take me some place. So if I am sick I will have to live with it. You must think why are we going on this thing, but these are really concerns we have. I think it is partly [due] to age. If maybe I was eight-five there is a Doctor on board, the food is prepared, maybe if you wanted a nice safe outing, that is a good way to do it [to take a vacation on a cruise].

On subsequent cruises one tries to resolve as many issues as possible in advance. Some cannot be avoided, such as airport security, so these are considerations that have to be accepted.

G If this was my first cruise, I would be apprehensive, as some of the online chat roomers' expressed. I still had a weather eye out for the potential problems, but felt that most were taken care of in the planning. I have been taught through my travels to do as much as you can in advance: reservations, payments, choices, etc. Then the problems that do occur are hopefully small and can be solved quickly so as not to affect one's attitude toward the entire trip. After all the purpose is to have fun, enjoy as much as possible, see and do new things. Concerns need to be checked out. While picking out the deck level and cabin, you research your previous experiences and try to eliminate most problems. You pick the middle of the ship to reduce the pitch in rough seas (there will be none, of course), a couple of decks above the discos to reduce sound levels, and at least a deck below the top deck swimming pools, again for noise.

With only one exception, the cruise experience was very satisfying and enjoyable for the persons interviewed. The one exception in this survey appeared to be based on a previous bad experience on a ferry boat and a dislike of oceans.

D We were throwing up in rough water on the English Channel. There is that fear of a boat tipping. I don't want to go on those boats. I don't really enjoy three-hour rides on boats, it gets boring to me looking at water. There is nothing to see on the ocean.

One older cruiser found that a companion is not what is wanted or needed to enjoy a cruise experience.

M I come home from these trips, feeling very happy, rested, and excited. I tried it once with a partner and I felt I was trying to please her all the time and I was neglecting myself. And I came home rather tired.

Most participants had to resolve some of these common constraint situations before departure.

M But it is getting my house ready, getting my cat ready, a cat sitter, a house sitter, hassle in the airport [wheel chair required]. I am too independent to be asking for help.

3.2 On board experiences

3.2.1 Activities and interests on board

This covers a wide range of interests and non interests to seniors on board the cruise ship. When compared to a daily list of many programs being conducted open to all passengers, published by the Activity Director, seniors take advantage of very few and reject some attractions outright.

Most notably missing are the physical sports, the pool contests, and bingo. There is also the use of facilities and amenities on the ship for which can be explored personally. If one is a part of a group, they may have additional interesting programs oriented to the members of that group.

D We are not gamblers so there is no interest in the gambling which I guess is a big loss for them.

K My companion, she went and did the gambling, but I am not a gambler. I won a couple of times, but I am not into that. And you could have played cards, we didn't bother with that either.

L I don't go to the Casino, that type of thing, or bingo.

M I didn't do the casino, bingo, or sit at the bar.

Dancing, walking the deck, and theatre were common.

E And we were busy. We danced every night, took dance lessons in the afternoon, and bingo.

J I get involved in the dancing, the Salsa, but my husband doesn't.

K But we went to all the shows. Many shows. They even had a cooking show. I liked it. I liked all the entertainment we could go to every night. There was something going on every night. That was good, I liked that.

M During the day I sat on the deck chairs and walked the deck. I did some dancing and the people in our group, they danced a lot. I went to the concert or program every night.

Other activities were found around the ship.

- D Thank goodness for their little library. It was quiet, people played cards, playing bridge or something. It was fun, there was the different rooms they had and the beautiful decorations, the art to go through, and nights where they had the theatre and whatever. I must admit, they certainly put on a good show. There was a track up at the top and we walked up there some. It was good exercise. They had art, they had a nice big bar with piano and orchestra, but I am not a drinker or want to sit at a bar. It was nice to sit there for a few minutes. It was a beautiful ship.*
- E In the evening you can dress up the nights when you have to dress up. We were busy line dancing, which was quite different.*
- H For many [in her group] it was a first time cruise. They hadn't experienced the gargantuan amounts of food, or what have you. The food seems to be very important.*
- I I would go out, walk around the ship, see what's exciting, get an ice cream cone, and all this other stuff. I have heard a number of people talk about, saying I would never go on a fun cruise, because it is all filled full of young people yelling and screaming. They would go on a more staid cruise line. My first thought is I wouldn't [either, but,] I probably would. But my first instinct was to say naw, I kinda like the fun atmosphere. You could go into the bars and so on, which were quite quiet and had live music on pianos and good stuff. So I enjoyed that part of it.*
- L I get up in the morning and see us come into port. I find this very interesting watching them coming in and watching the dock. I just like being on the ship and the various things you can do on there.*

Others really appreciate the sights available from the ship.

- H I think the one thing that sticks out in my mind is the glaciers from other peoples points of view: that the glaciers really couldn't be described, you had to see them to believe them. The seven day length was absolutely fine because for our route we saw everything we could see and some of the areas we travelled were quite interesting because we saw bears, whales, and our captain was absolutely amazing. Best than any other captain I have sailed with. Every time he saw something he got onto the loud speaker system and told which port, aft, forward or stern or whatever you could see this. He was incredibly good. So we got to see the wild life as well.*
- J The one thing I liked the most was the night we went by the island where there was the active volcano. That to me was cool. You saw the active volcano. There is nowhere else in the world you can get that close. This was just another island that we went by on the ship that you can't see at any other time. This was an active volcano so it was spewing lava. It was quite spectacular. They said that not every cruise do they get to see that. You are never going to see that anywhere else, to get that close. So that was the highlight of the cruise for me. That was exciting. So that [seeing the volcano at night] was the highlight of the cruise.*

3.2.2 Excursions

Many couples selected different excursions, catering to their own interests. The excursions are another basic motivation for taking a cruise: to see new destinations, cultures, history and topography. Arriving at a destination in the morning, disembarking, and standing on a strange dock or pier is always exciting. Some cruisers are spontaneous, such as catching a local taxi after bargaining for rates and sights, while others have a prearranged tour bus somewhere among the many waiting at dockside.

- D One couple did not do any shore excursions and the other [couple] picked other excursions. The shore excursions were quite enjoyable. So we were with them at dinner every night. The excursions are what I was there for. The cruise was fine but I am not a cruise person. We were on the water because we wanted to get to the excursion destinations.*
- F We were travelling with another couple, and they had always wanted to see these remote ~~Yes~~ areas we would have done it by ourselves, anyway. But they just kind of liked the sound of it too, and they had always wanted to see these remote areas.*
- G Selecting the shore excursions was interesting in order to sort out what I really wanted to do and why I was going on the cruise, besides enjoying the voyage and visiting with other passengers. It is interesting that all three [shore excursions] I selected do not involve local culture or island tours, something I normally do. I think this is because I have been on these islands previously and have toured inland. Another [person] was looking forward, thoroughly researching the excursions they would visit, to make sure they saw the important attractions in the guide books.*
- I Some people would go on the boat and stay on the boat for a week. But I couldn't do as I needed that three days of land trips, and they are excellent land trips. I needed that to break the monotony or something. But to have seven days of heavy drinking is not me. So the shore excursions were really valuable. I would say that I would like to go every five years. I don't mean I want to go to the same shore experience, I wouldn't. I did like the large cruise ship, the ocean cruise ship, in the sense of when you got to a dock you were able to get off fairly smoothly.*

This couple had been at this destination before. In addition to sharing thoughts, they provided activity support for each other.

- J If my husband could do that, that is what I would do [bike ride down the mountain]. I would love to do it. I am more of an athletic person, so riding that bike down there.*
- L Because we had been in places, sometimes we would get off and walk around the port and look at gardens and things. Because I like being on the ship too, or you walk to a beach and come back. We took five tours. After the first one was so good we took all the rest of them. They were well done. I probably wouldn't have gone [on an excursion] if my wife hadn't been along.*

Some participants find they can do excursions at a better cost from the docks.

H The excursions as always with American ships, they are very expensive. And certainly we found many things we could do just from the dockside that were a lot less expensive. We were in port every day, and I would go ashore and check it all out to see what we could do together that wouldn't be too strenuous for my husband. And I would obviously look around at the stores and various other things, then come back and get him. We would go out and do the tram car tours, or day coach tours or whatever that were easily accessible. So I got off at every stop. I think there was some disappointment shown by many people that they couldn't do any of the [distant] interior trips. And that is perfectly natural, as that ship did not connect with any of them, so you just didn't go there.

3.2.3 Meeting new people

A typical cruise for two persons would have them doing activities and excursions together most of the time: eat most meals together, dance, go to the theatre shows, and take in the sun on the top deck. Individually, they may go to observe other activities or just explore the ship. For evening dining, most passengers are assigned to a specific table in the main dining room on that cruise and meet the same strangers, while a group will have many tables in one area and intermingle among themselves. Some passengers who do not agree with the assigned strangers will choose to eat the rest of their suppers from the buffet that is always on the top deck.

Breakfast seating is not assigned in advance and tables are filled as people arrive at various times, providing an opportunity to meet and talk with other passengers. Everyone commented that dining is where they could visit with new people.

F You sit with different people then [at breakfast] and everybody is really always friendly and delighted that you have joined them. You get to know a lot of people that way. I would say these others were acquaintances, not friends beyond the cruise. [It is an] opportunity to meet new and interesting people.

H We met some very interesting other passengers. We met some very interesting people and that was one of the advantages of free style dining because you could meet different people at dinner every night.

I At breakfast we had a different group every day, which I thought was real interesting, when you could ask a lot of questions, such as "why are you on this cruise?"

J Breakfast was dining room. We met another group of people. Always found some interesting. That's one of the good things I like doing. Cause some people say, "We would never go there because you have to sit in a formal setting and talk." Well, that is part of the enjoyment of going on cruises. You meet a lot of different people and a lot of different perspectives, and how they see the world differently than we do. That is part of the going on the cruise that some people don't like cruises for that reason and some

people love them. But I like the interaction with the people.

K We met other people at breakfast. And they were all so nice, we met so many nice people. That was kind of nice.

Two couples sat at the same dinner table and had other meals in the buffet. They were interested in the people they met.

E If we went to the dining room for breakfast, that's when you would meet up with other people. There were four of us and at a table for six, they would put you there, as people came in. Then we met a lovely German young man with his mother, they were of quality. You could meet different people there, where they came from, what they had done and what have you. We found that interesting. That was a plus at the breakfast and lunches. We didn't do that every day but it was nice. We made other acquaintances, not friends that we would never get in touch with again. Except our companion [one of the other couple] has kept in touch with the German and we got a lovely letter from him.

As most ships travel with two or three thousand passengers, there are many opportunities to chat with strangers at activities, events, and in lineups. Activities organized by the ship staff are open to all passengers. Additional opportunities for meeting new people come while participating in various events with non group passengers.

E We had casual, passing by conversations with people, just sitting and in lines just talking. Over all very friendly, very friendly. We chatted with the man from Montreal, he was a nice guy. He had been on a lot of cruises too, and gave us his life story.

I On the other hand, on a ship of that nature, I would fully expect to wind up talking to other people from all walks of life. So I might see a little bit of that camaraderie in there as well. Let's say I am looking forward to walk up to somebody and ask them "why are you on this ship?"

K And I enjoyed the people, most of the people, even the group we were with were so nice, mostly Americans. But they were nice, but then I met a lot of other people, just walking down myself to the dining room. Talking with the other passengers, it was about everything that was going on. How wonderful it was, how they look after everybody, yeah, they looked after us. Families came up also. And there is so many different kinds of people. Oh my gosh, all kinds. They are all nice.

One couple may meet another couple en route or on the cruise, and communication can continue after the cruise.

J No, we didn't start out with another couple. But we met a couple in the hotel when we were getting a taxi to go to the ship. We met them every night for dinner, and went on two tours with them. It wasn't planned, we just ended up on the tours as they did. We met every night for dinner and we corresponded with them since, and we are hoping they will come and visit us. Generally we meet up with someone, another couple.

Others their attitude about social interaction with other passengers they meets on a cruise ship.

- F* Being in the same line of work [before retirement], it certainly adds to it, because they certainly knew what I did. And yes, it did enhance my overall satisfaction.
- G* I met many people [in the group], several from my home area. The constant chatting was at a loud level whenever we were together at an activity.
- K* Most were just passing through. One couple wanted my address, so I imagine I may be hearing from them. And there is so many different kinds of people. Oh my gosh, all kinds. They are all nice.
- M* I don't meet other people around the ship that much, really. Just maybe occasionally. They [the ship] do have a singles group where you can go in and visit with them. If you sit in the lounge, you meet other people. All of you are travelling and you sort of have something in common, they are travellers, you are a traveller, that is one link you have in common. Usually they ask if you have family, do you have grandchildren, and that's what the conversations are about.
- M* The one in England, she keeps writing me. But she and her sister-in-law want to keep it up [new friends from her group]. They keep sending me things. In that group, they were all such nice people. All of them.

3.2.4 Ship's Crew

The attitudes and interactions with the crew have an important bearing on the assessment by the passenger of a satisfactory cruise vacation.

- E* They were excellent. And they looked after our cabin, all the staff, the buffet, the dining room, the staff that entertained you for the shows in the afternoon and evenings, everybody was very, very good. We were very fortunate perhaps that we had an excellent waiter and assistant in our dining room, and they couldn't do enough for us. It made us feel important. And that particular night, it was really a good night because they let some of the waiters and that, mingle with the guests. Our friend was up dancing with her waiter from the dining room table. They were letting them, and that was a really good night. Everybody was mingling, everybody was happy and singing, it was like New Year's Eve really. That was a very good time.

Some passengers take the time to chat with the staff/crew. This consideration appears to bring a favourable response.

- H* The staff were wonderful. They were multi-national. I find them fascinating, so I naturally talked with them and asked them where they were from and what their marital status is, what they hope to do with their lives eventually. I got into some very, very wonderful conversations with them. Most of them were from other countries, had a wife and children, or parents or whatever to support. I found that quite fascinating. They would laugh and come around singing whilst they were serving you. It appeared to me that they were very happy in their work. They enjoyed what they were doing. I quite frankly would go for the crew first because I think it is important to the comfort of your trip, as to how the crew treats you and what their general well being is like. I think they

are very, very important. Everybody was saying how wonderful the crew were.

3.2.5 Enjoyment, excitement, fun

First timers are usually awed by the environment, the big ship, the number of people on board. Their observations are interesting.

D We enjoyed the cruise because we had never seen it before. It was just all brand new, we never had a chance to see what cruising was all about. There was lots of food, there was lots of pizzazz. I don't think we really went expecting that we were the type of people that we really love life on board the ship. But we enjoyed it.

I I was delighted to see a lot of young people on it. But that doesn't mean I was allowed to participate, in the sense that it is not your peer group. And I didn't care that much about it. I would say the excitement of it. I would take another cruise just for the overall kind of excitement, but I don't like it enough to go frequently. So that is the way I look at it.

Some interviewees preferred to stay on the ship for their enjoyment. As previous cruisers, they had a different appreciation of what was happening.

E So this we felt was also a chance to enjoy the ship itself, instead of stopping the next day at another place, getting off and back on again, like you do in the Caribbean. On that particular night it was just the excitement and unexpected, just watching all. We didn't know what to expect that something like this would happen. Our waiter did say he would be down there that night. We said "Okay." We thought that's fine. But once they got the music going, we went down, and we were dancing, and we were dancing with him and it was very good. That was unexpected because we didn't know what we were going to. We enjoyed every part of it. From the minute we left here to there.

H I am glad I went, it was fascinating. Some of the scenery was the main thing and whilst I may not do a cruise again to Alaska, I would love to go interior if there is a way of doing that. I think that would be fascinating.

3.2.6 Annoyances

There are situations that happen even in a regulated society, including on a cruise ship.

Misadventures can also provide memories and affect one's satisfaction of the experience. The advertised "all-inclusive" does have some exceptions on a cruise.

D Now I know, what it was to sit beside a pool with a thousand other people and this is what they are doing on a cruise ship. The lineups were hot, lineups are no fun. We had to live through different lineups when we got to the boat. You have to live through line ups. I mean I think I expected I that would be in those big long lineups to get something to eat, and there were big long lineups. I had no interest in the pool, the hot sun, and having all these things, the competitions. It was really crowded around the pools, it was hot. Ice cream was spilled all over the place. Even in the adult pool on the back, you wouldn't have been able to play cards, it was just solid people, flesh, and kids crying, and loud music. You could not find a spot. I do not take the sun well. I could

not sit there. I'll take the verandah, don't give me the pool, I don't want it, I don't want to put my money there. But I did it once. That was fine, I saw what it was, and I don't want it. The boat ride was a disappointment, but I picked that boat ride instead of something that we should have done elsewhere. We wanted to see Jamaica because we had never seen Jamaica, although we didn't see much of it. The one stop there, the people were at you to buy, buy, buy, to get back on the ship. And I realized that is an experience, I didn't like it, but that's what it is, that's what people talk about. And that's what it was. I have seen it and wanted to see that stuff.

I When you go into the room [cabin] itself, they are all small room. Other than going in for a nap or a shower, or going to bed. I didn't like hanging out in the room. My wife had a great time on the balcony and she had a great time as she was reading a book out there. Whereas I can't. It wasn't easy to participate because it was quite crowded around the bands. It was hard to get a deck chair when you wanted one. It wasn't impossible, but the pools were crowded.

One cruiser wanted to keep up with the world at home

I On the slightly negative side, because I like to watch the stock market and so on, there was really no news. To go on the Internet was not a practical thing to do on that ship, so we didn't do it [because of the cost]. So I can't say that I know for sure how good or bad it was. But the clear message we were getting was "You are here, you are incommunicado for the week. If you want communication [like home], don't even look for it." In a sense that is relaxing, in another sense I would like to have spent an hour a day.

Extra costs are an annoyance, whether facilities or tips.

D I would like to go to the spa but it is not included in the price. Some other stupid thing I don't want to do is included in the price. What I don't have time to do during the year but would like to do during my holiday, you have to pay over and above.

E And the money you paid to the [Travel agent] Tour, they took care of the gratuities on board the ship, which can hit some people as a big surprise at the end. I thought, oh my God, that will put you bill up, the drinks. A lot of young people wouldn't like the bills when they got them. Oh my goodness, when they get the bill they are in for a shock.

F One additional comment we discussed between us was the tipping. The cruise line debits your account automatically for ten dollars a day to cover tips for the service staff. You have to go to the Purser to have it removed. And the Maitre'd has his own envelope if you wish to donate. I think that is excessive when you do not even see some of the personnel. I prefer to give what I think to each in turn. That ship was an older ship than the other one we had been on, but anyways, that was disappointing. And we always liked one cruise line, because you could make the most wonderful sundaes and you didn't pay for them. It was just part of the buffet. Where you can get sundaes, they are not as wonderful as the other, and you do pay for them. So, those little things are a bit irritating. Maybe better for us, so we would not eat so many sundaes. We haven't travelled long enough to rate free Internet yet.

H I didn't want the bill I got at the end. I didn't think it was fair that I should be paying for what I was paying for. I disagree entirely with what cruise lines charge you for wines. Because after all, wherever you are cruising, they are actually in international waters,

therefore everything is duty free. But they do not charge you duty free prices. I think that is astronomical. The very first cruise we ever did, they charged duty free prices. This is one of the very few complaints I have. I think this is utterly ridiculous.

I I heard from another cruiser about the tip envelopes that you fill at the end of the cruise. One couple wound up filling the envelopes and also paying the tip on their bill because they didn't know. In the end, I had the first one deleted but forgot to deduct my wife's. Anyway, it saved us a lot of money. Regardless, we didn't put money in one set of the envelopes anyway. If I were doing it on a frequent basis, I would put even less down and give to the one who is doing the hard work in the room a good buck.

K But I found it was very expensive. Oh my gosh, every time you turned around. I showed the bill I got from the cruise line. I only bought one fifty dollar item. But wow, you have to pay like tips. Ten dollars a day, that goes for all of the crew. I didn't like that. Anyway, it worked out fine. I am still getting billed, because I had to leave my Visa number with the company you know. No. I didn't phone home. I thought, my goodness, it was \$18 for two minutes or something.

Then there are the unavoidable disappointments or annoyances associated with the weather or ship announcements.

F Now there are always things you may find a little irritating. But this particular ship only had one outdoor pool. It was outside and the weather was terrible. So you wouldn't want to be out there. This was September on the North Atlantic. So that pretty well answers that.

G The cruise program director was annoying with continual announcements even though all the activities were printed in detail in the daily bulletin. Between advertising the casino and the retail shops, he was constantly pushing their profit centres of individual photographs. There must have been twenty photographers all over the main deck all the time, in the dining room, and as you left the ship for an excursion. The embarkation and disembarkation were the only letdowns in satisfaction because of the delays and lineups, but this is similar on all ships. The stage shows could have been of a better quality, and they were always blowing the smoke machine which was unnecessary. The orchestra was talented but too loud, drowning out some of the singers.

H We didn't have the classes I would have liked, such as Yoga, Pilates. It was too cold to swim so we didn't go into the pool. So not a lot of activities.

M I have looked at so many pictures of Alaska, and people's photographs, and I can see all these beautiful, beautiful ice on the sides of the mountains. And, when I got there I was very disappointed. I don't know if it was the time of the year, I think its global warming, and I didn't see all that ice, at all. The glaciers were right down almost to the water's edge. That was a big disappointment. That was the only disappointment. That was beyond anyone's control.

Some passengers, even companions, can annoy others with their comments. There seems to be a trend to try to avoid an unpleasant situation when in very pleasant surroundings.

- F Oh, we had one passenger with an attitude. One couple were coming down to go into dining and they were kind of just elbowing in. This was the funniest thing because they got it in the end. They should have been in the other line up. So they got their just deserts. We tried to avoid those people.*
- H There were other people that we decided that, we have spoken to you and we do not want to go there again.*
- K There was one couple, we met them in the dining room at lunch. Oh, they were just running down everything about the whole trip. They weren't having a good time. So I said I think we had better move on. They were getting me down. My companion, in one of the conversations with others, discussed the other cruises they had been on. She was running down another cruise line she had been on in September. I don't like hearing that kind of stuff.*

Several interviewees commented on the restrictions imposed by physical limitations or constraints on their cruise activities: they were constrained in the amount of walking they could do because of physical handicaps, yet they enjoyed the cruise experience.

- L I was a jogger and ruined my knee. So I don't walk the deck or use the exercise equipment. We go in the hot tubs but not in the spa.*
- M And people in my group, they danced a lot. But I found it difficult for me with my back. But I sat watching it always. If I were younger I would have done more travelling, more around at the stops. I would have done much more. On other cruises I would have done more walking. But my walking is limited now. I am physically fit, I'm really very well for my age, I am 91, but it is the arthritis that has taken over from here and that is the only reason I don't go.*

3.3 Post-cruise satisfaction

3.3.1 Discussions at home

Even mentioning about one's experience may be unwelcome to friends or family, especially if they cannot have the opportunity to cruise because to time, finances, or other priorities.

- D I don't think anybody was really interested in our cruise [back at home]. We had just been where everyone else has been to Mexico before. Well, maybe when we returned home we told friends and relatives and showed it [pictures] to them. My brother has never taken a cruise. We had a slide show on the TV and so on. They enjoyed it and asked a lot of interesting questions and so on. I think they were happy for us, but it was probably not their thing.*

Others may welcome the opportunity to re-live their own previous cruise experiences.

- E Most people asked and we volunteered. They were all interested in how we enjoyed the cruise. Yes, we had quite a few of them ask how was the cruise, how did you enjoy it? And because of the length of the cruise, they were asking how it affected us. We enjoyed it, we enjoyed it. It was nice that people asked, it was nice that people were interested.*

F Telling others at home probably increases my satisfaction because of the memories. It is good to talk about it again, and realize that was a good cruise.

Sometimes the reminiscences should remain with you and your travel companions.

F Talking to others after the trip, you like to share your experiences, so I probably got elation. But if people don't ask, I don't talk about them. It can irritate some people. We talk to a lot of people. It is kind of something people ask us [at home], "Well, where is your next trip?"

Others may express a real interest and are happy for you.

G After the cruise, people would ask where I had been. Again, when I mentioned cruise, they would listen carefully and ask how it was. They wanted to know where I had gone possibly to check if they had been there. They shared their happiness for me. This seemed to be the general pattern of discussion. My family wanted to know more details, all wishing to go on a cruise at some time as none had been before. Each time this enhanced the good feelings I had about my experiences and made me want to book another cruise soon.

J Some want to hear all about it, some people just want certain information - did you have a good time? What was most interesting thing you saw?. Some people want to know all the details. Some people want to know did you meet anybody, where do they live, what do they do? Well they are your friends, so you know that's what they are like. So you relate this much to this person and this much to the more interested. Some of them do a lot of travelling so they want the details and other people who don't do much travelling, don't know what to ask, don't know what the details are. So I think that is the difference. And no, it doesn't matter to me whether they want to hear about it or not, to be honest. I have had a good time.

L Well you kind of know whether people are going to be interested.

And an individual may evaluate it carefully.

K When I got home and started telling my son and daughter, you know, its great, but I don't think I will be do that again, it was too long. My son said don't say that now, you might change your mind. No I haven't talked to anybody. A few neighbours came by, "I came here to ask about your trip." So that was about it. Well, I told them a few things. They laughed, they thought it was great. No, talking to others did not give me a better feeling about my trip. It hasn't changed me.

M I still long to go on cruises, oh I still want to go, and my son keeps saying to me, "Mom, aren't you going to Bermuda, or going here? My friends ask me, they say, "You go alone, how can you do that?" I say I have a wonderful time. If you like people, you have a wonderful time. It's a fun thing.

3.3.2 Satisfaction

The satisfaction of cruisers may come from several sources, usually because they do something..

3.3.2.1 Activities

According to participants, when you are at sea for a full day or two without seeing land, there are several activities that interest seniors. There is no mention of any real physical sports nor even the use of the exercise machines. Some activities include watching others enjoy themselves.

Food is always important.

- E There was nothing on the ship that was disappointing. I found it relaxing on the ship. The Atrium was all decorated for America's Thanksgiving. It was just unbelievable, that was something. Then another night it was a champagne party. The wine glasses were all upright, into a pyramid, nearly six feet high, then they started pouring champagne into the top and it ran down into all the other glasses into it filled them all. It was a great time with rounds of Champagne and what have you. That was a very good time.*
- F It is always a difficult one for me to pick the most enjoyable part of the trip. Everything is okay. I would say most things were all enjoyable. Like the food is always exceptional, great choices, the entertainment is unbelievable. It is just everything you would ever want to do. And there is actually more than you can do. And it is a beautiful ship and everything is really good. I think we are not elderly seniors but active, and we think we can do the thing that anybody else on that ship could have done if we had wanted to do. There was nothing that was too difficult for us to do.*
- G I enjoyed the cruise experience because I felt I was among friends who also wanted a fun time. Because of the daily freedom of choice from the several activities of the hostesses or the long list of activities organized by the ship hospitality crew, you could rest at any time as none were obligatory. My attitude toward the cruise remained on a high throughout, as almost everything/anything was available for your interest and use.*
- H I found that the ambience was very good. But then I did the things I wanted to do and what I was interested in, so I could be biased. I am relatively easy to please providing everything ticks over well and everything ticked over very, very well. The food was superb, the crew was very, very good.*
- J Dining was every man for themselves. It wasn't formal. It was what they call Freestyle. That's why we like freestyle, because you choose, you know, you can do different.*
- K There are so many dining rooms on every floor. Gee, so that was nice. They had hot dog stands and ice cream stands all different floors on the ship. It was nice. That's the part I like, I liked that.*
- L I like to see that, the crowds enjoying themselves [at the pool] I wouldn't hesitate for a minute to go on another fun ship, if it was with a crowd of people I knew. First of all I liked the cruise line for our age that is supposed to be for the twenty year olds. But I liked it. Cause I liked the segment of the youth, the loud bands, L and so on, but that doesn't mean I participated.*

3.3.2.2 Excursions

Some interviewees received their satisfaction from just being in a new place they had only read

about previously. Others received more satisfaction from the spontaneous decision about what to do for an excursion off the ship. Excursions provide a break in the sea voyage and for some are the major reasons to take that specific cruise. The anticipation of the experience of visiting new destinations is constantly mentioned as a motivation for taking a cruise, especially from experienced cruisers.

- D One of the most satisfying parts of the cruise was when we got to swim with the dolphins. Our satisfaction was positive. We had a good time. We saw these things and got some good pictures.*
- E I thought the least enjoyable part was that we didn't have enough time at each island we stopped at to do all the things we would have liked to do on that island.*
- F We were going to places we hadn't been to, and it was perfect. Yes, it was a good one.*
- J O.K. where can we go when we land at the next port, and that's all the planning you need to do. That's the part I like too, the only part of planning [while] you are on a cruise is which one [excursion] are you going on and when are you going. We enjoyed the tours. They were the highlight.*
- L We got to the history, and I am interested in agriculture.*

There is a difference in the participation by seniors on a cruise and that by younger voyagers. Age precluded many from the active sports on board and physical challenges on excursions. Touring facilities in a bus is popular as one is taken to the door of the establishment and picked up there at the end. Others may take a swim/snorkel boat trip, not to participate in the physical activities, but just enjoy the trip and see the sights. Seniors may have activity limitations as one senior found that he was not suited for snorkel diving.

- F So you can swim. We didn't go swimming, because on the tour we had, we just went to see.*
- I It took two months to get the pain out of my head [from a snorkel excursion]. I had to go to the Doctor and hospital when I returned home.*
- K You are well looked after and then they look after you quite well on these little buses that they pick you up in. That was good, that part. I enjoyed that part.*
- M The ship was right there and you just walked on the boardwalk to the train and it brought you right back to the ship.*

3.3.2.3 Companions and friends

Again, it was important that friends in their group were enjoying themselves.

- E I think what gave me the most satisfaction on this cruise was knowing that the people we talked into going on the cruise had the enjoyment we anticipated they would have. It made us feel good. When you take someone else you know it is important.*
- G As I was solo in a very large group, my companions did increase my enjoyment and satisfaction of the cruise experience with their friendliness. I made many new friends but no buddies. The cruise exceeded my expectations because of the friendliness from everyone I met.*

3.3.2.4 Return satisfaction

- E It was great, that was the first one. We were really impressed with it. You know, you've been away, you've enjoyed your holiday, you know, and there is satisfaction to that. We took in a lot of the shows, they were wonderful. I can say as an experience, everybody should have once in their life, a cruise. Even though some people may think that a tour like this is more expensive, a thousand dollars or whatever I don't know, but it is worth it, it is a good value. We were very happy with them. I would recommend them, we would go with them again if the destination and dates were correct.*
- F Oh yes, the cruise itself met our expectations. We were so impressed with this last repositioning one that we are number five on the waiting list for the next cruise.*
- G My impression was that we were all there to have fun, enjoy ourselves, and meet others without implications. By forgetting our daily problems, we could relax with others regardless of age differences, enjoy the sun and warm weather, live it up in the bars and dance floors on the ship and especially the camaraderie on shore in a local watering hole at the end of the day's excursion. The most satisfying part of my feelings was the sunny and warm vacation weather I had, while others at home were in the cold and shovelling snow. Another was the ability to exercise my freedom to the things that meant something to me and that I couldn't do at home. Then was being able to spend my vacation on water, on the ship, and excursions. The general satisfaction came from being able to travel wherever I want to experience new destinations and take vacations from my usual routine. The satisfaction of the cruise is a combination of the friends you have around you during the cruise, your reaction to activities on the ship, and the excursions to interesting destinations. There is another satisfaction. This came about because I made this vacation happen. I did not sit at home saying "wouldn't it be nice if."*
- H Generally speaking, their [other passengers] reactions were very positive, they were very happy with the ship.*
- L For what we saw, expectations were exceeded. Yes, we will be going on other cruises. We go on one next month, we are going to the Mediterranean. From England to the Mediterranean.*
- K Yes, I knew what I was getting into and I'd really enjoyed it, that's why I wanted to go on another one you know. Great, it was good. Oh yeah, I had a good time, I really did have a good time. But I was so glad to get home. I am a home person. It did get me away and*

it helped me here. I am lonely.

M I thoroughly enjoyed the whole trip. If you are friendly it is a wonderful way to go. On other cruises I have took part in many things like flower arranging, hair doing, but on this trip I just sort of was quite content. Maybe it was because I was older and my interests have changed a bit. And there is something for everybody on a cruise. It is wonderful for a senior to go alone if you are friendly and like people.

These positive responses tended to result in increased satisfaction from the cruise experience because the experience could be shared and enjoyed.

E It was nice that people asked, it was nice that people were interested. You know, you've been away, you've enjoyed your holiday you know, and there is satisfaction to that.

G My companions did enhance my enjoyment and satisfaction of the cruise experience with their friendliness.

K While I was there I was enjoying it. That was good while I was there, everything was fine.

J And I'd like you to know I have had a good time. And if you ever want to go, it is a great place to go.

Chapter 4 - Interpretation and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This study utilized theories and methodologies within the field of symbolic interaction. It provided the methodology and through open interviews, the study revealed the meanings of the relationships between seniors and cruising. The topic of a cruise appears to symbolize a most enjoyable experience for the interviewees. This interest in cruising is confirmed according to the CLIA (2004), “over the next three years, more than 48 million North Americans indicate an intention to cruise.” Many participants said that they were in a position to take advantage of a cruise vacation while being careful of their economic situation and seeking good value for the expense. These senior cruisers expressed a freedom of choice to decide precisely when and where to go, the satisfying experiences they expect to have on board the ship, what excursions will mean the most to them, and the overall satisfaction they anticipate by taking a cruise vacation.

The data reveals that a cruise ship is a symbol of a dream vacation. Discussion with friends and relatives confirmed that a cruise was a spectacular vacation, confirming this image and a desire of some interviewees to duplicate the experience. Another symbol is the alluring image of visiting new destinations on shore excursions and finding different cultures, topography, and experiences. This opportunity for shore excursions to new destinations is frequently mentioned as a major motivation for taking a subsequent cruise. Excursions to enrich the cruise experience are equivalent to adding educational experiences, which in turn to provide more justification for this type of vacation.

The senior generation participating in this study spans thirty years above the age of sixty. The mature market category is one with the highest propensity and financial ability to travel. Crandall & Fay (1995; cited in Gartner 1996) wrote that seniors also have better health than previous generations at the same age. As a result, there are many persons in this age cohort

taking cruises, some several times a year. They have the time available as most are retired and have no real ties except family, to restrict their vacation time. Even if health is a problem, there are usually several persons in wheel chairs or scooters on each voyage. These do not seem to impede the walking traffic on the ship or on shore, so some disability is not a factor preventing a senior from taking a cruise vacation. The oldest participant in the study verified this.

The research recorded the experiences of the participants who had taken an ocean cruise as a couple or as an individual in a group, and their experiences and interactions with other individuals before, during and after a cruise. The meanings of motivation and satisfaction in these vacationers can be outlined by three major themes:

Theme 1 - Cruising is a social experience,

Theme 2 - Cruisers face a balance of opportunities and constraints related to their goals,

Theme 3 - There are multiple sources of satisfaction provided by a cruise vacation.

4.2.1 Theme 1 - Cruising is a social experience

This theme reflects the comments of the participants regarding social interaction and the effect it had upon them. The data shows that a successful cruise for the seniors interviewed was dependent in part upon social associations or relationships. This sense of sharing with others who were having the same cruise experience appears consistently.

The first-time cruiser typically seeks reassurance and information from friends' and relatives' previous cruise experiences. Use of communication with trusted family and friends is combined with Internet and brochure research to determine where and how the most likely destination will provide the desired goal. Experienced cruisers know what to expect and said that one of the greatest sources of satisfaction from cruising is interaction with other cruisers. Constantly mentioned in the data is the interaction that takes place between the participant, their companions, friends, and the group they may be with.

In addition to the pre- and post-cruise discussions, there was a real importance to the senior that they were able to know the other persons in the group with whom they were associated. There were many examples of people acting toward each other, sharing their expectations, cruise experiences, and experiencing satisfaction within themselves. Almost all mentioned that they looked forward to sharing their day's experiences over the evening dining on board the ship. Their activities were a meaningful experience to them personally, and they wanted to share this meaning with their friends.

Harrison (2002) suggests that cruising, as a very social type of travel, may bring about an opportunity for intimacy with fellow tourists, and sometimes develop long-standing friendships. In only two cases was there a report that there was continuing contact after the cruise. There was a sharing of information between these situational meetings at that time, but there appears to be little communication after the voyage in this case. Brady (1987:73) also comments that other patterns of learning often experienced by active elders are environmental exposure and increased social development. The participants were expressive about the opportunity to meet and chat with new people that they encountered during dining and at other activities on board the ship, even though the interactions were sometimes only short contacts. Some items the interviewees mentioned for discussion among strangers include home location, previous employment, and earlier cruise experiences.

Wong & Lau (2001) in their study of Hong Kong Chinese tourists, pointed out that short-term exchanges with fellow passengers were acceptable and desired. This interaction, especially with strangers, was an expectation of participants in the pre-cruise stage and was enjoyed when it happened during dining or at activities. It became an important meaning contributing to the success of the cruise experience.

4.2.2 Summary Theme 1

Cruising is a social phenomenon characterized by substantial interaction among cruise

passengers, the ship's crew, and later, the friends and relatives back home. Cruisers take a real pleasure sharing experiences with their companions, whether they are partners, friends, members of a special interest group or sharing information with strangers they meet when dining or at other activities. The contact with, attitude, and service of the crew are also an important support for a favourable vacation. The interaction they had with others throughout the stages of the cruise experience was a source of support that developed and transformed their satisfaction of the cruise experience into a meaningful memory.

4.3.1 Theme 2 - Cruisers face a balance of opportunities and constraints related to their goals

A desire by most participants to take a vacation, even though they are retired, involves balancing numerous issues including their personal commitments at home, alternative destinations available, and other constraints. The decision-making process involves asking questions of when, where, what is the cost, and what satisfaction one will receive. In addition to selection of the vacation decision, destination, departure date, and consideration of perceptions, expectations and anticipations, there are concerns that participants have when planning, or interactions that may take place on a cruise experience. Experienced cruisers are aware of the benefits and constraints they are likely to encounter. Therefore, it is important to each participant that they select the vacation destination that they feel will provide the most satisfaction and value, within their constraints.

A cruise vacation consists of planning for travel needs to achieve a goal. There was a diligent search by most participants in this study, through the Internet, cruise brochures, and in consultation with their travel agent to find the best destination that would provide them the most satisfaction for the lowest cost. Quality and value were also discussed with their friends who had been on previous voyages. These are important constraints that are considered by most seniors that were interviewed. Getting the most return for the dollar being spent is an important

consideration mentioned by many interviewees.

Attitude also plays a role in the vacation decision. Stress at home can take many forms, such as a boring environment, loneliness, excessive demands on time from too many activities in the calendar, or pressure from neighbours or relatives. Many participants commented that the desire of a cruise vacation arose from the need to get away from the reality of daily life and into an environment where they could be pampered and not have to perform daily housekeeping tasks. A cruise provides the opportunity to live a second life that has meaning: the opportunity to be oneself without daily cares, yet live in a luxurious environment where daily needs are all provided for. Layder (1981), emphasized that the necessity of reaching into the individual's experiences to find meaning to the individual. He found that one can observe one's role relating and reacting to others in a group while also having his own personal characteristics from his real life. A similar duality between the daily work routine at home and a pampered environment on vacation was discussed by Yarnal & Kerstetter (2005) who found "that individuals' true selves may have been realized aboard the cruise ship - in a space outside ordinary life"(Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005:377). Cruising allows the opportunity for enjoyment and at the same time to be relaxed and absorbed in the environment.

Another possible constraint to an enjoyable cruise vacation is the health factor. Horneman *et al.*, (2002) discussed seniors' motivations for travel while their health is good. Some seniors may be physically restricted because of aging. This adds another perspective to be considered when planning a vacation. Horneman also discussed seniors travelling for personal satisfaction. Most seniors in this study reported that it is their own personal decision that a vacation is being taken and no one else is responsible for its outcome.

The data reveals considerable activity of seniors which appears to result in the well-being of the cruiser. This was mentioned by Brown, *et al.*, (1991), who review the active physical sports in some seniors.

Among the men, 70 and older, . . . the realities of aging (declining capacity for participation despite increased opportunity), seems to be reflected in a much smaller [than 50 to 64 year olds], although still positive correlation [with well-being]. For the oldest women [70+] physical activity, social activities, and outdoor activities are positively associated with well-being (Brown et al., 1991:377).

When the vacationer is on board the ship in comfortable accommodations, a secure environment, and relaxed, he has the freedom of choice to do what he wants (CLIA 2002:15). This satisfaction in the service experience is subject to the constraints imposed by being on a cruise ship. The daily list of activities published by the ship recreation staff provide many outlets for interaction with others. The data from the participants shows that they selected only a few, and those carefully, in order to satisfy their own needs, including sunning or walking on the deck. Selection of excursions was also made carefully by choosing the ones that had the most appeal for the individuals involved.

Mobily, *et al.*, (1991), were concerned about “meaningful activity participation” among retirees. The data records many activities within the cruise experience of these participants who are retirees. There did not appear to be a challenge to keep themselves occupied and the reverse appears from the comments that there was not enough time to do some things they wanted.

Creating appeals to older consumers and which acknowledge their special needs by catering to them is a difficult task, according to Faranda & Schmidt (1999). Again the data analysis suggests that there were few instances where a need was mentioned that was not able to be fulfilled. The main constraint was the lack of time to accomplish some additional goals that appeared possible (for example, excursions that could have spent time at more important places in the eyes of the participant).

While there is opportunity to see new destinations, there is also a risk that was considered by Sonmez & Graefe (1998). “Perceptions of risk and feelings of safety during travel appear to have a stronger influence on the avoidance of regions rather than the likelihood of travel to

them” (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998:176). There was only a little mention in the data that a cruise could be a risk to travel enjoyment. Reviewing the methods of selecting destinations, most participants selected a relatively safe itinerary. As they were not staying overnight at a destination, the security of the ship overcame any risk they may have had to consider.

4.3.2. Summary Theme 2

Interviews with these participants made clear the time of year, warmer weather, ship availability, schedule suitability, and seasons are considered when selecting the best time for a cruise of their choice. There is a prolonged search for a compromise between the desired vacation, and the costs, health, physical ability, quality, and concerns for personal security. These are constraints that must be considered within the desired outcome of the vacation. As there are opportunities through many different cruise lines and usually several excursions at each destination, a vacation can be specifically tailored to the needs and interests of the vacationer. Travel agents fulfill a real need for information, availability of destinations, transportation, and in some cases, organization of a mutual interest group. When all the arrangements are made, the expectations and anticipations provide happy thoughts prior to the time to departure.

4.4.1 Theme 3 - There are multiple sources of satisfaction provided by a cruise vacation.

One of the fascinations with cruise travel is the many different opportunities there are to enjoy if one will participate. There are perceptions, expectations, and anticipations waiting to be fulfilled by sharing pleasures with companions, meeting new people and seeing new destinations.

The satisfactions of a cruise vacation are found in activities and interests on board, excursions, enjoyment, excitement, fun, and post-cruise discussions. Experienced cruisers seek new destinations, activities, and meeting new people, all of which will provide many reflective hours of happy memories. One important feeling is the emotion a cruiser enjoys from the enhancement of their self-image before and after they have completed this dream vacation. The resulting self-image is a personal sense of achievement in that they will actually be going on a

cruise, or that they have experienced a cruise, and is something that others may envy. Accomplishing a cruise means a personal satisfaction of completing a vacation goal.

The opportunity to explore new destinations, cultures, and topographies, was one of the most common motivations for taking a cruise. The chance for a senior to broaden their learning through travel, while at the same time enjoying themselves in quality surroundings, beckoned many participants. Education through enjoyable travel was observed also by Brady (1987) who states, “it is well known that travel itself can be a great learning experience especially when being able to travel to different areas and learn about unfamiliar places” (Brady, 1987:73). Participants expressed wishes to see and learn while exploring their desire to travel and experience new destinations. The perception that the participants were able to visit destinations on their “to see” list as discussed by Duman & Mattila (2005), resulted in education in topographies and cultures and provided a satisfaction of achieving possible long-standing personal goals.

There is an important satisfaction of the cruise environment that is established by the ship according to Petrick (2004a). Quality is a comment on the provider’s performance, while satisfaction is a global measure of how that performance makes the tourist feel. Most participants appreciated the quality of service they received and some expressed a very appreciative attitude for the work and friendly attitude of the ship’s crew. Satisfaction can also be expressed as a sense by the consumer, of having received good value for the money spent, having fun, or getting a break from the routine and stress. There were several indications of this in the data.

The enjoyment on the ship appears to be a result of the confirmation of the information provided in brochures, the internet, and from discussions with friends and relatives at home. Seniors examine this information, picture themselves onboard, and hopefully experience the environment that has been promoted by the supplier. Moschis *et al.*(1997), discuss the

difference in marketing to the mature customer as well as the producer providing the marketing promises.

Marketing programs should be tailored to the specific needs of a market or segment. Decision makers should rely primarily on information about older consumers' responses to marketing offerings which are specific to the product or service being marketed as well as to the segment of interest, (Moschis et al., 1997:285).

The participants mostly agreed that the service quality was superior and met or exceeded their expectations. As Ziethaml (1990) argues, convergence between customers' expectations and perceptions is the best way to define service quality. Suppliers' reputations are enhanced or diminished by the experience of the passenger and this is communicated to prospective consumers back home.

Krieger *et al.*, (2005) commented regarding the buildup of expectations from the marketing information promised by the providers, and possible letdown from non fulfilment, was not mentioned except in rare situations in the participant data. It appears that the published marketing information does represent reality in the cruise experience. Possibly, the providers have found that consumers have higher satisfaction levels by using actual pictures of the product rather than written descriptions.

Tian-Cole, *et al.*, (2002) discuss the quality of performance and the quality of experience. They concluded that these contribute to overall service quality through overall satisfaction. The participant data reports a high quality of performance of the suppliers of services (the cruise lines) and a high quality with the resultant overall satisfaction of the cruise experience.

Senior tourists appear to approach their research of a suitable cruise from a different perspective according to Sirgy & Su (2000). They conclude that the young tourists look for social consistency and social approval while mature tourists emphasize the facilities because they are concerned with satisfying needs for self-consistency and self-esteem. The data did not support the idea that the mature tourist was concerned with satisfying anyone else except him/herself.

The participants mentioned frequently that they enjoyed, participated, and found their own satisfaction by fulfilling their needs, not others.

Other researchers have commented on leisure motivation resulting in leisure participation and a personal satisfaction. Losier, *et al.*, (1993:155) conclude that leisure motivation was a determinant of both leisure satisfaction and leisure participation in elderly individuals. Mannell (1999:239) states that satisfaction has a past orientation as an appraisal of how things have gone up to the present. Only one participant said that cruising was not a preference for a vacation because of a previous bad experience on the water. None of the survey participants reported receiving a negative response when discussing their vacation with others after returning home.

Attitudes and perceptions towards cruising have been indicated many times in the data. Shaw (1985) concludes that understanding these attitudes and perceptions are paramount to understanding the meaning of leisure in people's lives. The activities of the participants generate the attitudes and perceptions which provide the opportunity to have a foundation of meanings to study seniors and cruising.

4.4.2 Summary Theme 3

This theme found that the participants were motivated by perceptions and expectations.

Participants also commented that this vacation was a needed change from the daily routine, and they had a sense of control over when, where, and what they would experience while on the cruise. The persons who had never been on an ocean cruise before were guarded in their anticipations and expectations based on information from their friends. However, pleasurable emotional expectations were firmly expressed by those who had cruised before. They obtained satisfaction sharing their cruise experiences with companions, friends, fellow passengers, and those back home by achieving these perceptions and expectations. The participants have illustrated that adventure, excitement, and pleasure motivates them to share an experience with another. Even the individual cruisers take enjoyment from interacting with other travellers of

similar interests from all over the world as well as seeing new destinations. Every participant commented upon the interest they had in meeting other passengers and exchanging information. The result of this interaction confirms their expectations while planning their cruise. The onboard experiences and the enjoyment of the cruise will produce happy memories that will remain with them. While each cruise may be to a different destination, it is remembered vividly for the wonderful and the not-so-wonderful moments that were experienced and is available for recall over the years. Building memories to take back home usually provides a lasting satisfaction.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and future research

The purpose of this study was to identify underlying meanings that motivate seniors to take a cruise, ask what meanings they receive from their experience, and consider how these meanings may affect their sense of satisfaction. This study answers the two questions posed in Chapter 2.

5.1 Question 1 - What are the motivations for and satisfaction arising from a senior's cruise experience?

Theme two, opportunities and constraints revealed there are many underlying motivations for a senior to take an ocean cruise. There may be a latent desire to take a cruise if one has never been on one, because cruising is usually a dream to be fulfilled at some time in one's life. For the experienced cruisers, they know what to expect and usually look forward to the next opportunity to take another cruise. One participant mentioned that she had met one couple in their group who took four cruises every year because they enjoyed cruising so much. For all, the motivation of a consistently high quality of service and the desire to see new places and cultures, while residing in comfort and security on board the ship at night, supported these expectations and satisfactions of a vacation of fun and enjoyment. Theme three, sources of satisfaction, resulted from participating in activities, excursions, enjoyment, and fun. A pleasing environment combined with enhancing one's education by visiting other destinations and destinations added to the cruisers' satisfaction. Most participants feel that the food is better, the ambience is better, and it is more comfortable and luxurious than a land resort vacation, as well as you meet more and different people on a cruise.

5.2 Question 2 - How was satisfaction with the cruise affected by interaction with others during and after the cruise?

Theme one, cruising is a social experience, added to the satisfaction of the participants in several ways. Appearing in most interviewees' responses is the effect that a companion or a group has on increasing the satisfaction a cruiser receives from his/her cruise experience. In one interview,

two couples have been on a dozen or more cruises with each other. Meeting new people and exchanging information in a controlled environment, is another attraction for some cruisers. Because so many more persons are cruising and some of their friends and relatives have been one at least one cruise, satisfaction is increased after returning home and discussing the wonderful time they had. According to the CLIA (2007), 12.6 million passengers are predicted to take a cruise in 2007. This would be an increase of 4.1% more than 2006.

5.3 Conclusions

All interviewees mentioned the expectation of social interaction with their companions and the opportunity of sharing the experience with others. What was revealing about the data was the necessity, mentioned by almost all of the participants, of having a companion or a group with them to discuss their cruise experiences. There is a continual referral to meeting with friends to discuss the days' events and exchange some personal information about previous cruises and family. These appear to be very important interactions to achieve the high level of satisfaction reported by the participants.

This research provides insight into the meanings that seniors have of the cruise experience and involves research into the motivation for taking a cruise vacation. A senior's approach to a cruise vacation is different from younger generations. These senior participants are retired from the world of work and a high paced level of activity. As evidenced in the data, many participants state that a vacation is a time to get away from one environment to enjoy other vistas and absorb new cultures. In some situations cruisers' normal life may be lonely and a cruise will provide social interactions with people of similar interests in luxurious surroundings. In other situations, there is an opportunity to enjoy the companionship of close friends over a continuous period, sharing new experiences and having time for each other without being interrupted by the daily activities of routine living and housekeeping.

Seniors pursue different activities on board and on the shore excursions. Few attend the list of activities and programs published in the ship's daily program with the exception of enjoyment of theatre presentations. Only a very few were interested in the casino, bingo, and utilizing the pool. Most physical activities were limited to walking the deck, dancing, and use of vehicular transportation on excursions. Some participants were restricted by physical constraints associated with age, from participating more fully in activities.

It was also found that repeat cruisers are motivated to look forward to their next cruise. While there are discussions between previous cruisers about cruise lines and ships, if one was not up to the standard expectations, a different ship is selected for future voyages. Conversely, a superior cruise satisfaction is recommended to others, and in some cases a repeat trip was taken on the same ship.

From the findings, it may be possible to ascertain that a vacation is personally satisfying, by assessing whether the cares and worries of life at home can be forgotten and the inner self freed for the most part to enjoy the pleasures in another environment. An effort to achieve this goal may be a basic motivation behind the planning and experiencing a cruise vacation.

The constant interaction with friends through the activities on board, the excursions, and dining, provides the main feeling of satisfaction. Follow-up interaction with friends and relatives at home bolsters this good feeling. The experience of a cruise becomes an event that leaves a memorable impression for years to come.

This study has provided insight into motivations and satisfactions of senior cruisers. It may aid the service providers to better target market this age group. The findings may also assist cruise lines to better meet the needs and expectations of senior cruisers by providing information about the motivational interests and satisfactions of an important percentage of their passengers.

The approach to this study using interviews resulted in research findings that will contribute to

the knowledge of why seniors take cruises, along with some of their constraints. It has provided insight about cruisers self-image through internal interactions, the effect of interaction with others, as well as their motivations and satisfactions in cruising which usually result in a meaningful activity from such a vacation.

5.4 Limitations

This research is based on a small sample size. The few number of cruises involved do not provide data that can be generalized beyond the sample. The data are from participants whose ages range more than three decades, from early sixties to early nineties. Despite this broad age spread, there is still a potential bias in the results because seniors tend to cruise less as they get older. In other words, the experiences of those in their sixties will be more prominent because of greater numbers. Retired seniors are travelling more in their sixties, less in the seventies, and there are fewer travelling in their eighties. Possibly, inside any of these cohorts there are more definitive motivations and satisfactions to be found. The participants are from one cold environment in winter, which increases their desire to enjoy a warm climate, even for a short period. Research on cruisers living in other geographic locations may provide additional motivations and different constraints.

The quotations are in the actual words and context of the interview from transcribed comments selected by the writer without post verification from the participants.

5.5 Future research

In an earlier study, Yarnal & Kerstetter (2005) conclude that “this study has clearly shown that a social interactionist perspective strengthens our understanding of tourist behaviour, especially in a group context. Hence, future studies should adopt this perspective,” (Yarnal & Kerstetter, 2005:377). The use of symbolic interaction in the formation of this semi-structured interview approach provided a depth to the personal responses by the participants. SI is recommended for

future use in other areas of research regarding seniors to obtain a depth of meaning for their actions.

Additional research could be conducted into a direct comparison between senior cruisers and younger age groups, and, an all-inclusive land resort and a cruise vacation. Also, other areas include utilizing other lines of enquiry and larger samples to explore issues identified in this study.

It is recommended that future research into seniors' lifestyles can best be performed by a senior who has understanding of the attitudes and some experience in the area of the study.

Appendix A - Survey Questions

Pre-cruise

1. What are your reasons for choosing a cruise over other vacations?
2. What was your driving urge to take this cruise?
3. Had you discussed your cruise plans with others before leaving?
What affect did this have on your attitude?

Perceptions / Expectations

4. What were your expectations?
5. How would they affect you?

On Board

6. Did your attitude toward cruising change during the cruise?
Your perceptions?

Interactions

7. Did you chat with other passengers? Chat about what?
8. Did you make new friends?
9. Did you use the Internet or telephone to communicate with relatives or friends?
10. What effect did the ship's crew have on your cruise experience?

Dissatisfaction

11. While on board, what reasons can you give for enjoying your experience?
Lowering your enjoyment?
12. Were there passengers that you avoided?
13. Were there needs you had that were not met on this cruise?

Post Cruise

Satisfaction

14. Did your companion enhance your satisfaction of the cruise?
15. As a senior, what do you feel were the most exciting parts of your vacation?
16. Did the cruise meet or not meet your expectations – in what ways?
17. What did this mean to you?
18. What parts of the cruise experience do you feel gave you the most satisfaction?
The least?
19. When you returned home, did you relate your cruise experiences to your friends
and relatives?
20. Did retelling your experiences increase or decrease your satisfaction of your cruise
experience?
21. Why would/not go on another cruise?
22. Was the meaning of your experience affected by interaction with others during and after the
cruise?

Appendix B - Phrase listing

Stage 1 - Pre-cruise

Reasons for vacation/cruising
Needed a holiday / vacation/might like it/thought about it
See and experience new/different cultures/destinations
Difference from land/been to land resort
Referred to cruising by relatives, friends
Did research on cruise lines, destinations
Cruise because of the itinerary/departure date
This was a tour group cruise/community group
A good value/economical/careful about spending/affordable
Have enjoyed cruising / whole experience /atmosphere
Used a travel agent / poor advice
Environment change/away from daily home demands

Perceptions, expectations

Expectations / perceptions / anticipation
Freedom: make your own choices, independence, think
Never on cruise before/ Change in attitude/something to do
Aware of risk to person, possessions/protected environment
Negatives

Stage 2 - Travel and On Board

Experience excitement/exhilaration / on a high
Enjoyment / fun
Experience peace and calm
Comfortable
Not have to dress up/great to dress up
Physically relax and rest/reduce built-up tensions
Keep physically fit/exercise
Activities, keeping occupied, interests
Be with respectful people

Dissatisfaction

Confined on a ship/on an island/can't get off/want freedom
In a small cabin / no windows / depressing
Fear/previous bad ship experience
Don't want/like to be on a ship/plane/beach/water activities
Not really interested in a cruise but am going.
Lineups
Dissatisfaction

Have to pay for extras that should be free
Travel by air to embarkation a pain
Companion complaint
Not enough time when on excursion
Some needs not satisfied
Expensive, Final bill from the ship, tipping
Annoyances on board/fear
Objectionable passenger

Embarkation/disembarkation

Interactions

Doing something together/special occasion/companionship
Be with others who enjoy the same things/talking with them
New people - meeting, talking, observing others

Relatives, friends love cruising
Internet/phone to back home
Discussed with others
Kept in touch with new friends after
Contact with others was stimulating for a cruise
Crew contact
Ship programs/shows/excursions/amenities
Food
Comfort zone because of tour guide problem solving

Stage 3 -Post-cruise Satisfaction

Satisfaction
Relate trip to others at home/share experiences
Have others know you have been there
Want to take another cruise
Everyone should have one cruise in their life
Post satisfaction/enjoyment

Appendix C - Theme considerations

Conceptual categories are followed by suggested themes and final themes.

Stage 1 - Pre-cruise motivations

Want to take a vacation to get away from everything, escape, have a change, not be confined
Go where dreamed about
Do things never got to do in life before, fits the older stage in life
You have no responsibilities except to enjoy life, have fun
The cruising atmosphere really enjoy it
Want to keep moving, see different things, lots of variety and change, rather than a resort
Freedom of choice, Be myself and enjoy whatever I wanted
Meet many different people
It is a good value, careful about spending, thrifty, a good time economically
Gaining knowledge about the ships, itinerary, destinations
Other people tell me cruise lines are wonderful, food is wonderful
I am going because a friend/relative has been there

Stage 2 - On board experiences

The friendly crew are important to passengers' comfort
Companions add considerably to the cruise experience.
Constant interaction is a most interesting, and friendly experience
The activities available are unbelievable, more than you can do
The food is always exceptional
The tour excursions were the highlights [of the cruise]
The boat is an island and you can't get off, except in ports.
Long lineups, noise, and fear of ships detract from the pleasure experience.
Companions enhance the experience, but must be chosen carefully.
Avoid problem passengers as soon as they are identified.
Extra charges on board affect the passengers' satisfaction

Stage 3 - Post-cruise satisfactions

Expectations met, exceeded, more than fulfilled
Could do things I wanted to do and what I was interested in, excursions were good time
Ability to travel whenever, went to places I hadn't been, experienced new destinations
Satisfaction that others asked about the trip, referred experience to others,
Satisfaction for friends that went with us
Most meaningful are experiences of meeting new people
Friendliness of others, everyone always had time to exchange comments
The experience of meeting the people that gave the most meaning.
Camaraderie with others, enjoyed going places never been before and with friends
Atmosphere had an overall excitement
Enjoyment received from continuous experiences
Beautiful ship, lots of pizzazz
Personal satisfaction supported, but not dependent upon friends and relatives at home.
Doesn't matter to me what they think as long as I had a good time
Questions increased my good experience feelings
Personal satisfaction was reinforced by retelling experiences
General opinion that cruise lines were wonderful

An exceptional, enjoyable time
You do your own research

Initial theme suggestions

- A The cruising experience of others has a real effect on the decision to cruise
- B. Senior cruisers have the freedom to take vacations, to change environments.
- C. Seniors really like and enjoy cruising.
- D. Seniors are concerned that on a cruise they get value for their money.
- E. Social interaction with companions and other passengers has important meaning to most cruisers.
- F. The cruise experience is enhanced by a friendly crew, great dining, and interesting excursions.
- G. Cruise concerns can be fear of water, confinement in close quarters, lineups, and extra fees for services, objectionable passengers.
- H Fulfilment of personal goals and expectations
- I. Meaningful opportunity for friendly, social interactions
- J Satisfaction from review of experiences with friends, relatives.

Final Themes

- Theme 1 - Cruising is a social experience
- Theme 2 - Cruisers face a balance of opportunities and constraints related to their goals
- Theme 3 - There are multiple sources of satisfaction provided by a cruise vacation.

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