

Understanding Motivations of Older Adventurers

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Abstract

Globally the population is ageing, people are living longer and birth rates continue to decline. While an ageing population is viewed as a positive societal achievement, reporting of the exponentially ageing demographic is predominantly negative. For example, the increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), increased burden on the health system and the drain on the system (Freeman *et al.*, 2016; Coughlin, 2017; Honore, 2018). Authors suggest that this negative reporting is at best demotivating and worst self-prophesying (Sun, Norman and While, 2013; Lamont, Swift and Abrams, 2015; Robertson *et al.*, 2015; Pikhartova, Bowling and Victor, 2016; Coughlin, 2017). While, governments, academics and health professionals recognise the health benefits of physical activity (PA) for older adults and specifically the benefits of outdoor activity, reports indicate a decline in PA as people age (Taylor, 2013; Chastin *et al.*, 2015; Bauman *et al.*, 2016; Ding *et al.*, 2016). Consequently, there is a need for relevant, innovative approaches to PA engagement that address the physical, social and mental health needs of participants (Devereux-Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2016; Forberger *et al.*, 2017). Outdoor adventure activities (OAA) has the potential to address these needs and can be adapted to suit the abilities and interests of the older person (Buckley, 2018). Currently, there is a gap in research exploring motivations of older adults' to participate in OAA globally (Sugerman, 2001; Naidoo *et al.*, 2015; Hickman *et al.*, 2018) specifically, there is a lack of research in this area in the Republic of Ireland. Exploration of the why, what, where, how, the physiological and psychological benefits that older adults get through engagement in OAA will provide data that can be used to understand older adults' motivations, decrease negative stereotyping and perhaps motivate others.

Initial exploratory research was conducted in three states; stage 1, looked at perceptions of older adults OAA. Stage 2, included a small number of providers (n=4) and their perceptions of older adults and adventure activity. Stage 3, the current stage, represents an exploration of the motivations of older adventurers to engage in their activities.

Introduction

This work is concerned with the potential of OAA as an innovative approach to enhancing the physical, mental and social health of the ageing demographic. As a first step, an exploration of older adventurers, ≥ 50 years of age, motivations will provide data to show the relevance, interests, and benefits that accrues as a result of engagement in their chosen activities.

Challenge, risk, and uncertain outcomes are components of everyday life. One might say the adventure of life is to journey into the unknown on a daily basis. Yes, there are some certainties although for the most part we journey daily into the unknown accepting the challenge and the risk. The challenge, risk, social connectedness, physical and mental health benefits of outdoor adventure should not present barriers just because of a person's chronological age (Sugerman, 2001).

Each one of us have choices to make that can assist or hinder the process of living and maintaining quality of life (QoL). One such choice is whether or not to engage in regular PA. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that global inactivity is one of the leading causes of NCDs and mortality (Kohl *et al.*, 2012; Ding *et al.*, 2016). This is particularly true as people age with reports suggesting that the over 50s are the least physically active demographic throughout Europe (Rechel *et al.*, 2013; Franco *et al.*, 2015). Why is this and what can be done to change it?

The choices we make are influenced by many factors including education, environment, experience, economic and social networks. In addition to the many external influencing factors is the influence of our own thoughts and behaviours or intrinsic motivations. Understanding what motivates individuals or groups to engage in certain behaviours is fundamental to ensuring provision of relevant activities (Gagné, 2014). It is well documented that exercise adherence is sustained through provision of relevant, stimulating, group activities that provide for the desires and interests of the target group (Capalb, O'Halloran and Liamputtong, 2014). Leisure based adventure activities in natural environments have the potential to provide stimulating, group activities relevant to older people (Boyes, 2013; Kluge, 2013; R. Buckley, 2018). Conversely, research also suggests that negative perceptions and stereotypes are self-prophesying and do nothing to motivate or encourage self-efficacy, participation or older adults

health (Dionigi, 2015; Robertson *et al.*, 2015). This paper will discuss ageing, the impact of negative stereotyping, motivation, the potential of OAA and present some initial, exploratory research providing the views of older people and a number of industry providers.

The growing ageing demographic across Europe and America represents a market that needs to be targeted by all businesses (Coughlin, 2017). This also applies to tourism and adventure activity providers, with adventure seeking 'baby boomers' increasing in numbers and projected figures of two million over 60s travelling by 2050 (Patterson and Pan, 2007). The relevance of understanding the motivations of older adults to participate in activities and the positive portrayal of their engagement cannot be underestimated. Through positive portrayal of older adults' engagement and the normalisation of adventure activities increased participation may be encouraged. Dionigi (2015) suggests that the effects of positive stereotypes of aging are somewhat under researched and calls for further research applying a narrative approach with a view to breaking down stereotypes that currently exist. Other authors corroborate the relevance of presenting a positive outlook on ageing and its potential (Coughlin, 2017; Honore, 2018). From a PA perspective, rather than focusing on the health benefits of PA, perhaps focusing on the enjoyment, fun, and social aspects achievable through leisure based outdoor adventure activity will promote increased participation (Zubala *et al.*, 2017).

There is much evidence to demonstrate that self-belief is impacted on by those around you, the environment and in particular the impact of repeated negative discourse. This study has implications for the practices of organisations facilitating outdoor adventure experiences, as well as implications for successful aging in older adults (Sugerman, 2001). However, it is unlikely that older adults will take up PA unless the relevance and value of it exists. Another influencing factor is how activities are presented to older people. For example, if the activities are continuously portrayed and facilitated as being for young adrenaline fueled, risk takers, adventure providers are unlikely to attract the older cohort.

The participative approach applied to this research will investigate the motivations, physiological and psychological benefits of participation in OAA by older adults. This data will

contribute to dispelling the predominant negative perceptions of ageing and present ageing and activity in a positive way.

Ageing – positive and negative perceptions

An older person, like any athlete can adjust intensity, duration, difficulty and type of activity based on their fitness, ability and environment. The notions of selection, optimisation and compensation is referred to in gerontology as Selective Optimisation with Compensation (SOC). The premise of this model is that successful ageing across the life course is a process including these three components. SOC is a process oriented approach based on personal goals. Success is subjective and based on individual goals thus avoiding the imposition of universal values or standards. SOC recognises heterogeneity as people age and does not impose social constructs that may not apply to this diverse group of people. The emphasis is on the strategies that people use to master specific personal goals. The focus is on the goal rather than the outcome (Baltes and Carstensen, 1996). For example, an ageing diver wishing to continue their sport maintains strength, flexibility and fitness to continue to dive. The focus is not on the outcomes but rather on the goal of continuing to dive. The application of SOC is discussed by Janke et al (2012) in the context of people with chronic arthritis applying strategies to continue engaging with their leisure activities. They conclude, that helping adults find ways to self-manage their health through leisure activities is crucial.

Education in this regard through welcoming facilitation of the exponentially growing ageing demographic by adventure providers makes social and economic sense. The ageing demographic is growing exponentially and represent an important market across all industries (Coughlin, 2017; Bausch, 2018). The real challenge is motivation and understanding the what, how, who and why of the factors influencing behaviour.

Recognition of negative is also important, Cruikshank (2003) argues that negative views of ageing are more cultural than biological and that the dictates of this social construct must be resisted. The negative impact of socially constructed views of ageing and older people present a

barrier, are restrictive from a business perspective and are not conducive to motivating older peoples' engagement with activities (Robertson *et al.*, 2015; Coughlin, 2017). Unfortunately, there is no shortage of negative discourse regarding ageing and the deleterious impact of senescence, sarcopenia and general decline (Freeman *et al.*, 2016). While it is important to recognise that biomedical, psychosocial, and socioeconomic determinants all impact on the health and wellbeing of an ageing population in different ways (Bülow and Söderqvist, 2014), it is equally important to advocate the positive aspects of ageing and the socioeconomic potential of the ageing demographic (Coughlin, 2017). It is therefore appropriate to commence emphasise the good news, people are living longer than ever before a fact of life to be embraced and welcomed by societies as one of the great achievements of mankind (Honore, 2018). It is therefore vital that societies take an interdisciplinary approach to ensuring QoL as people age. On an individual basis older people achieving super human physical feats are being reported in the media. Examples of this can be seen in the work of Alex Rotas, a photographer who through images and text chronicles the achievements of exceptional older masters' athletes. As she suggests, the usual image of an older person slumped in a chair in front of a TV is not conducive to the quality of the additional years (Rotas, 2014).

The notion of quantity of years versus quality is debated throughout the literature in the context of longevity and QoL throughout those additional years (Lunenfeld and Stratton, 2013; Beard *et al.*, 2016; Honore, 2018). Throughout the gerontology literature, social networks, PA, meaningful engagement and independence are all considered relevant contributors to successful ageing (Martinson and Berridge, 2015; Heinz *et al.*, 2017). While academic debate, research and theorising on successful ageing is important it is vital that fun, facilitation and facilitators are recognised for their capacity to positively and negatively impact on older adults' engagement in activities (Coughlin, 2017; Honore, 2018). Boyes (2013) argues, outdoor adventure participation can be relatively low cost, community based, has many preventative health benefits, builds communities and embraces the environment. He also emphasises the relevance of fun, pleasure, leadership and social engagement. It is not the intention of this paper to suggest that we can all achieve successful ageing and QoL through outdoor adventure or that engagement in PA is the panacea for all the challenges associated with the exponentially

ageing demographic. On the contrary, the author recognises that understanding the heterogeneity and the need for a societal attitude change regarding the perceptions of ageing. The notions of 'aren't they great for their age' or 'impressive for an older person' must be removed from the lexicon and replaced with a normalisation and acceptance that participation and engagement in PA across all levels is expected and normal as we age (Honore, 2018).

Methodology

The methodology for this research evolved in three stages over the last two years. Initially exploring older adults', N=40, perceptions and interest in adventure activities followed by a scoping exercise to get the views of providers, n = 4, as to their provision, or not, for older adults. The providers are long standing facilitators of OAA in the Republic of Ireland and as such are key informants.

Stage 1 - adopted a mixed methods approach using a questionnaire and semi structured interviews (appendix 1) to assess perceptions, attitudes to and interest of older adults aged 50 – 89, in outdoor adventure activity (n=40). Stage 2 - applied the same mixed methods approach of questionnaire and semi structured interviews (appendix 2) to assess the perception of outdoor adventure activity providers (n =4) to older people and adventure activity. The questionnaires were designed to provide respondents with the opportunity to comment on the answers chosen in the more quantitative type of questions (Appendices 1 & 2). While the number of providers interviewed is small this scoping exercise did raise some interesting points regarding the views of the respondents. The questionnaires contained open and closed questions designed using a seven point Likert Scale to measure the value respondents placed on adventure, challenge, competition, recreation, physical activity, nature and risk in an outdoor adventure context. This approach is the methodology used in much of the literature with regard to motivations, leisure, perceptions, ageing, adventure and physical activity (Sugerman, 2001; Heo *et al.*, 2013; Jordan, Funk and Mikihiro, 2014; Robertson *et al.*, 2015; Pomfret and Bramwell, 2016). The results indicate that the respondents are interested, and value the benefits associated with participation adventure activities. However, were of the view

that provision of outdoor adventure activities was not as prevalent as it could be. While only a small number of providers responded (n=4) it was evident that negative perceptions and poor understanding of the motivations, desires and abilities of older people with regard to outdoor adventure existed.

After completing stages 1 and 2, a broad range of questions emerged in the task to refine the overall research question; 1. The need to address the negative perceptions of ageing, 2. the need for an increased understanding of the motivations and interests of why older people participate in outdoor adventure activity, 4. The need to elucidate the relevance, value and potential that older people attribute to their chosen outdoor adventure activity, 5. To explore how older people perceive the physical, mental and social health benefits of their chosen activities. These were considered and the final choice was to explore of the motivations of older adventurers to participate in outdoor adventure activities.

Through my previous work with older adults I had first-hand experience of the abilities, desires and the beneficial impact of PA interventions on older people. My personal adventure experience, the initial exploratory research and comments from providers and the older adults corroborate the assertion that negative perceptions prevail. My preliminary research, adventure experience and observations of active older adults pointed towards an exploration of the why, what, who and where of older adults and adventure? It was evident that research into the motivations of older adventurers and their perceptions needed to be conducted.

Once stages 1 and 2 were complete and the research question refined, an appropriate methodology was chosen pertinent to addressing this question. It was clear from stages 1 and 2, that an exploration of the why and how of peoples' motivation in adventure could not be addressed by a survey, questionnaire, or semi structured interviews alone. It was evident throughout the research that respondents were distracted filling in the questionnaire, and that a preference to just talk about adventure, their experience of facilitation, relevance and subjective nature of outdoor adventure prevailed. While the approach in stage 1 and 2, facilitated relevant quantitative and some qualitative data based on interviews it was clear that

a more qualitative, participative, observational, discursive approach would reveal richer data and information.

Marchall & Rossman (2006) suggest qualitative research methods represent a broad approach to the study of social phenomenon. Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly (2009) corroborate this, stating that qualitative research methods represent a multifaceted approach to investigate culture, society and behaviours. In effect, qualitative research explores the meaning, emotions, and practices that emerge through interactions and interdependencies between people (ibid). Qualitative, interpretative research, offers insights into the question of 'why' people engage in particular activities or behaviors (Rosenthal, 2016). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) describe qualitative research as a critical, complex set of interpretative approaches attempting to make sense of daily life.

This study does not aim to provide a quantitative answer, rather it seeks to explore, interpret and apply meaning to participant engagement and behaviour. As this research represents an exploration of the what, how, who, impact and why of the motivation of older adventure activity participants a qualitative approach was relevant. In order to fully understanding the feelings, emotions, atmosphere and value, adopting a participative ethnographic approach to provide a lived in experience of the phenomenon seemed appropriate.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1995) outline the features of Ethnographic Research as having; an emphasis on exploring a social phenomenon; working with unstructured data; detailed investigation of a small number of cases; analysis of data using explicit interpretations of meanings and functions of human actions. While there is some international research available, there is a dearth of this type of research into older adventurers' motivations in a Republic of Ireland context. Ethnography is the study of a culture, social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities (Hogan, Dolan and Donnelly, 2009). The central aim of this approach is to provide both emic and etic perspectives thus presenting a rich, rounded insight into people's views and actions, as well as observations of the environment and the location they occupy. In recent years, qualitative methods such as ethnography and auto-ethnography have emerged in the adventure literature

in an attempt to probe the adventurers' perspective and their subjective views of activity in the natural world (Kennedy, MacPhail and Varley, 2018; Buckley, 2018). The research methodology thus adopts an ethnographic approach while applying both emic and etic typologies to explore the phenomenon of motivations of older adventurers. The emic and etic typologies provide both an insider and outsider view advocated by Nielsen (2012).

This research is further refining the research question with a view to undertaking the primary research for a PhD throughout summer 2019. In qualitative research ongoing refinement of the research question while primary work is progressing is common. Agee (2009) suggests, qualitative questions evolve. First versions of questions are tentative and exploratory giving researchers a tool for articulating the primary focus of the study (Creswell, 2007). The data in ethnographic research is collected within the community using a number of methods including field notes of detailed observations, interviews supported with visual images, audio recordings and video (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Reeves, Kuper and Hodges, 2008). For the purposes of this research, the community being older outdoor adventure enthusiasts, aged ≥ 50 and regular participants in the activities of hill walking or scuba diving.

While there is no universally accepted age that is considered old in or throughout societies in most contemporary western countries 60 or 65 is the generally accepted age of retirement with numerous countries and societies regarding old age as being anywhere from the mid-40s to the 70s (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018). The age of ≥ 50 , was chosen as this is an age when most people begin to contemplate retirement, have raised their families may have extra time and available funds. Other studies looking at ageing address this age range. For example, Janke, Davey and Kleiber, 2006, looking at change as people age, Pikhartova, Bowling and Victor, 2016 and stereotyping in older adults. In addition, Donoghue, O'Connell and Kenny, (2016) as part of the Irish longitudinal study on ageing (TILDA) analysed the psychological impact of walking and social activities on psychological health for those ≥ 50 . Jenkin *et al.*, (2018) examined the barriers to sport participation for those ≥ 50 and The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (2016) in a study suggested that the over 50s are not doing adequate amounts of exercise.

Table 1, provides the age ranges of the respondents interviewed for this exploratory phase.

Table 1 - Age in Years					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	50-59	10	25	25	25
	60-69	15	37.5	37.5	62.5
	70-79	9	22.5	22.5	85
	80-89	6	15	15	100
	Total	40	100	100	

Ageing - the tourism, leisure, adventure potential

Adventure tourism is a global growth area as is the ageing demographic and their growing interest in increasingly active leisure time pursuits (Pomfret and Bramwell, 2016; Patterson *et al.*, 2017). The Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, are more adventurous than previous generations, seek more adventurous experiences and desire active participation in their leisure (Cochran, Rothschild and Rudick, 2009; Naidoo *et al.*, 2015; Forbes, 2017).

Patterson (2017) argues that Baby Boomers have diverse interests and focus on wide ranging experiences such as adventure. For tourism and adventure activity providers the global ageing population represents an evolving, exponentially growing market as a result of the changing demographic, and their increasing interest in active leisure breaks (Patterson and Pan, 2007; Patterson *et al.*, 2017). They also argue that the hotel and tourism sector has not fully embraced this changing demographic and suggest that the industry needs to adapt to provide appropriate experiences and opportunities for this cohort. This is a gap that is also evident in Ireland.

Population ageing will continue with suggestions that the over 65s will represent one third of the global population by 2050 (Nielsen, 2014). Proactive provision for the cohort seems even more relevant when one considers that the older population makes more trips as domestic tourists, travel for health benefits, for longer and travel out of the usual seasons (Bausch, 2018). The same can be said for outdoor adventure tourists. Reports suggest that they stay longer,

spend more and travel to remote destinations (IAAT, 2018). The combination of these factors make the older adventurer an attractive proposition for adventure tourism businesses. The Adventure Tourism sector is estimated to be valued at €1.2 billion, with 90% of the business coming from 'soft adventure' and is one of the fastest growing and most exciting sectors within the Irish tourism industry (IAAT, 2018). Failing to take cognisance of one of the exponential and unprecedented demographic changes that defines social change has the potential to damage the future of the adventure tourism industry. By failing to proactively target and provide for the changing demographic the adventure tourism marked is missing out on an opportunity to attract an evolving market. It is noteworthy that today's older generation do not see themselves as old and desire active tourism product that match their needs. It is essential that providers do not underestimate the current older populations physical abilities and desire for adventure (Glover and Prideaux, 2009).

Tourism and leisure activities are continuously changing based on societal demands and are increasingly reported to impact on psychological and physical wellbeing (Janke, Davey and Kleiber, 2006; Nimrod, 2007; Heo *et al.*, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2014). Benefits related to health and wellbeing are also true for outdoor adventure activities and facilitation of activities specifically for the older adventurer is relevant to promoting affordable, sustainable PA engagement, thus enhancing self-esteem, fitness and most likely QoL (Boyes, 2013; Kluge, 2013; Hickman and Stokes, 2017; Buckley, 2018). The physical and psychological benefits of outdoor activity is recognised and increasingly there is a drive to encourage outdoor PA. The ESRI (2019) released a report recommending the prescribing of activity in blue and green zones to improve population health. By facilitating and educating older adults as to the benefits of adventure activities regarding their social, physical and mental health, the outdoor adventure tourism sector will add to their business and contribute to the wellbeing of the ageing demographic.

Findings from exploratory research – stages 1 and 2

Stage 1: Older People’s Perceptions - adventure, risk, challenge, nature, benefits

At stage 1, initial exploratory research was undertaken to assess older adults’ perception and importance of aspects of activities in relation to adventure, risk, physical activity, outdoors and natural environments. Interestingly, the respondents are interested in adventure, accepting of risk and greatly value the physical and social benefits of outdoor adventure activity.

Each respondent completed a questionnaire followed by a semi structured interview. The questionnaire consisted of closed and open questions with a number of questions applying a seven point Likert Scale ranging from low importance (LI) to most important (MI) asking participants to rate what would encourage them to participate in outdoor adventure activity. Table 2, demonstrates the respondents’ ratings of the various components of adventure.

	N=40	Adventure	Risk	PA	Outdoors	Recreation	Nature
Ireland	SI-MI	83	23	93	95	88	95
	Low imp	15	73	3	0	3	3
	Neutral	3	5	5	5	10	3

It is clear from the above table that adventure, physical activity, being outdoors, recreation and natural environments were important to the respondents. Although respondents/participants stemmed from a wide-ranging age cohort, what is evident from this exploratory research is that the cohort is encouraged by adventure, physical activity, the outdoors, recreation and nature.

The key themes emerging are that the respondents recognise risk and want it managed, they enjoy natural environments, enjoy adventure but believe that it is not provided for their age group. In addition, they value the social aspects and the potential benefits of physical activities outdoors. Older adults’ attraction to natural environments is also reported in the literature. Kim *et al.* (2014) and Szanton *et al.* (2015) suggest that there is a preference among older adults to engage in PA outdoors. The beneficial impact of activity in natural environments is corroborated by Ryan *et al* (2010) who concluded in their analysis of five studies a positive correlation between vitality of older adults and natural environments. Interestingly, throughout the

interviews even the most ardent of adventurers were explicit about minimising of risk and the importance of fun, positive experience and social connections through adventure. The notion of minimising risk through managed fun, educational positive experiences with outdoor adventure is also supported in the literature (Cater, 2006; Boyes, 2016). Sugerman (2001) in a study involving 784, older adventure respondents suggested that the natural environment, the feeling of renewal, fun, learning, maintenance of abilities and social connectedness were benefits cleaned from outdoor adventure engagement. Conversley, 23% of respondents liked the idea of risk as part of encouragement to participate in adventure activities demonstrating the heterogeneity of the cohort.

While it was evident that an interest in adventure prevailed some barriers also existed which came to light during the interviews. For most of us negative stereotyping and other peoples' belief in us has consequences. While there are exceptions, it is fair to say that others negative views represent a barrier and can often be self-propheying. As mentioned previously, the literature on ageing corroborates the deleterious impact of negative discourse on older peoples' participation and abilities (Robertson *et al.*, 2015). An example of the perception of others to older adults and potential barriers to activity participation is prevalent in the quote below:

"I walk every day, cycle most days and it is always an adventure, I know there are risks, but I love it and don't want to stop, I get great encouragement from my friends at the club. The only people that want me to stop walking and cycling are my family." (89-year old, female)

The above quote is representative of the acceptance of risk by the respondent. However, others perceptions of her abilities could be a barrier to participation. While understandable that family members want to protect their family member is it acceptable to impose barriers to healthy activities?

The following presents the views of community dwelling, highly functional older people from the Republic of Ireland aged ≥ 50 , N = 40, to adventure activity and their perceptions of adventure provision. Older people, like most people will avail of services and products and are designed to meet their needs and desires and not just designed and presented a particular way

because they are a chronological age (Coughlin, 2017). Interestingly, from an adventure activity perspective some of the respondents felt that they are not encouraged as a group to participate in adventure activity:

"I really believe that outdoor adventure activity is not adequately provided for older people. I would engage if there was a group activity and a bit of fun. I do not mind adventure but not risk." (59-year-old, female)

"I think that outdoor activity clubs see age as a barrier to people participating in their activities." (60-69-year-old, female)

While there may be a lack of awareness regarding what is available in adventure terms, the research demonstrated the group perceived a negative attitude amongst providers regarding older adventure participants. Importantly, the cohort themselves did not see their age as a barrier as is evident from the quotes included. That said, participation in outdoor adventure is negatively impacted as a result of perceptions of others. Acceptance of age, facilitation, facilitators and fun came up in different ways as the following demonstrate:

"I love nature, I would do more adventurous and outdoor activities if they were encouraged and there was a leader. I know there are risks, there are risks attached with everything. Risk does not put me off. It is just not seen as normal for us to be doing adventure activities, people that run things are afraid we will get hurt." (86-year-old female)

"I engage in organised group outdoor activities a couple of times a year at the Bealtaine Festival and outdoor fitness activities organised by St. James hospital. I would do more if it was more readily available." (60-69-year-old, male).

As is evident in the above, encouragement, leadership and organisation are important. Risk is expected but not necessarily seen as a deterrent.

Another theme that emerged was the ability to continue being active regardless of physical challenges.

"I love adventure; risk or age will not stop me. I got a knee replacement in early 2017, and went to Austria climbing that summer. I also love to be out on my motorbike." (70-79-year-old female)

"I have a pacemaker, two replaced knees and I continue to scuba dive. But only to 30 meters. This limitation is a result of the device limitations and not a reflection on my ability to dive deeper." (76-year-old male scuba diver)

It can, and often is argued that not all older people have the physical capacity or interest in PA. However, the research is clear that social engagement, physical activity, being outdoors and continued interests all contribute to healthy active ageing (Heinz *et al.*, 2017).

Social connectedness, building relationships and being with likeminded people were consistent themes:

“People will stay with the club, they are a great group, social activities are important. Most people know their limits. However, we have one guy in his 80s and he is like a Gazelle on the mountains.” (71-year-old, Male, group chairman of South Dublin walking group)

“Engaging in adventure activities with a group your own age is great, you compete and engage at this level and are under no pressure. It is about building relationships and meeting new people.” (71-year-old, Scuba Diver, male)

From a tourism perspective group activity for the cohort is important. There are active age groups that travel together, have particular requirements and would welcome proactive engagement from the industry. When asked a direct question relating to hotels providing for their needs as an older group of adventurers the following was the response:

“No, we do our own thing. If we need local guides, we will get them through Mountaineering Ireland or another trekking group. It would be great if hotels had links with local adventure companies, this tends to be random in the form of leaflets and not particularly well organised. It would be much better if we had access to local adventure companies through the hotels.” (71-year-old, Male, group chairman of South Dublin walking group)

The ageing market is exponentially growing and are a heterogeneous group with varied interests (Eurostat, 2017; Patterson *et al.*, 2017; Bausch, 2018) and evidence from this exploratory research suggests that respondents are interested in outdoor adventure. In addition, there is an awareness of benefits of outdoor physical activity and an apparent willingness to engage if facilitated.

Stages 1 and 2, while exploratory, indicated that the cohort are willing to participate in adventure activities. However, felt that providers could be more proactive in facilitating and delivering adventure activities to older adults. The providers interviewed, indicated that

negative perceptions regarding the abilities and potential of ageing and older people may exist. Consequently, there is a need to demonstrate through research the interests, desires and rationale amongst older outdoor adventurers to participate in adventure activities. This will be addressed in stage 3 of this research. An exploration of the motivations of older adults to outdoor adventure activities will demonstrate clearly the abilities, interests and behaviours of older adventurers. This information may contribute to reducing negative perceptions and encouraging other potential older adventurers to take up activities.

The following section provides the findings of Stage 2 of this research.

Stage 2: Scoping exercise – providers’ perceptions

Finding innovative ways to engage the ageing population in appropriate levels of PA should be a public health priority (Stathi, 2014). Perhaps the activities may need to be adapted, less risky, shorter time, reduced intensity, modified tracks, or more suitable equipment provided. However, perhaps not! as Coughlan (2017) and Honore (2018) argue, today's older people do not see themselves as old and they demand products that meet their abilities and not preconceived, stereotypical notions that exist around chronological age and older people. Introducing the option of adventure activities to previously inexperienced older adults by adapting them to suit the skills, experience and fitness levels is achievable (Cochran, Rothschild and Rudick, 2009). In addition, engaging in PA outdoors is reported to yield greater physical and mental health benefits, and encourage sustained participation above that of indoor PA (Gladwell *et al.*, 2013; Calogiuri and Chroni, 2014).

Apart from the those that travel specifically for adventure, many older people first experience a new adventure activity while travelling as there is an opportunity to attempt something new in a safe, fun environment with likeminded people (Patterson and Pegg, 2009). If the experience is negative or there is a sense that older participants are being treated as “special needs” groups successful, sustainable engagement is not likely (Coughlin, 2017). Patterson and Pegg (2009) conclude that tourism offerings have a limited shelf life and suggest that tourism offerings focus on functional and subjective age needs of the discerning ageing market. Proactive, positive

promotion and facilitation of outdoor adventure activities to older adults is more likely to enhance participation. However, as this initial scoping exercise demonstrates some negative perception exist.

One manager operating a large wet and dry outdoor adventure and accommodation facility in the west of Ireland recognised the potential benefits for older adults and the business. However, felt that the adventure activities at this facility are “adrenaline fueled, which is probably not ideal for older people” clearly demonstrating the existence of negative stereotyping and a lack of understanding of the real potential. Somewhat contradictory to this the same provider suggested that the majority of the center’s adventure business is the “softer adventure” activities. The facilitation of older adults’ initial experience and the approach of the facilitator is crucial to continued participation. Adventure activity providers need to understand the motivations, desires and needs of older adventurers in order to provide initial and ongoing experiences that are relevant to this cohort.

Innovation and perhaps a leap of faith is needed on the part of providers to proactively engage older people. However, as the following comments made during preliminary exploratory research indicate there are fears:

“The active retired is a small market and the risks are high. They would have to be treated as a special needs group in relation to water-based activities. Programme management would be challenging.” (48-year-old owner manager of a wet and dry adventure activity centre on the east coast)

While the research was exploratory and no inference should be applied it demonstrates stereotypical views of ageing and older peoples’ abilities. It also demonstrates a lack of understanding with regard to the market size and potential. This is also evident in the following remark from the same provider:

“I will work with any group. However, I am not really chasing that cohort. Risk and reward has to be balanced, is it worth the risk for a small amount of money or to have to get somebody air lifted?”

This comment, demonstrates that presumptions can be made about the abilities of older people. Equally, it displays a lack of understanding that the ageing demographic are fast

becoming a dominant market, are time rich and seek increasing active leisure experiences (Coughlin, 2017; Patterson *et al.*, 2017). Yet, as this early exploratory research demonstrates some providers in the Republic of Ireland have concerns and fears about specifically marketing to this group:

“The perceptions of the older population to water based adventure activities may be a problem, we would be concerned that if we invested in marketing or targeting this group we would not get a return on our investment.” (50-year-old owner/manager of water based facility with B&B style accommodation)

Older people are discerning and will be quick to make decisions not to engage based on how they perceive or how they are being treated. Honore (2018) and Coughlan (2017) corroborate Patterson and Pegg’s (2009) assertion that the older population want activities and products that address their desires and abilities. As one diver suggested:

“I love that part of the country, town and the group of us enjoy the diving. However, because of the business owner’s attitude we will not be going there again.” (54-year-old diver)

The group is made up of 16 dive buddies all over the age of forty that travel up to 10 times per year throughout Ireland and overseas. While the owner’s attitude had nothing to do with age this example serves to demonstrate the decisiveness of the older cohort.

Stage 3 – Exploring motivation to participate in outdoor adventure activity?

A number of sub questions arise through exploring motivations, such as, why do older adventurers continue to participate, what are the physical, social and mental health benefits? what are the motivational forces? is the motivation based on the physical and psychological benefits or simply the passion for the activity? Does the passion for the activity impact on the desire to remain physically active? Through a participative approach these questions will be addressed and contribute to understanding the motivations of older adventurers.

There are many theories used to explain human motivation, with theorists taking particular approaches based on their discipline. While potentially confusing, each theory provides specific perspectives and insights that inform future research (Cook and Artino, 2016). Motivation is

described as the reasons why people do something, the stimulus to take action, initiate, guide and maintain behaviors (Ryan and Deci, 1985; Reeve, 2014). Choice, relevance and value in addition to facilitation, facilities and fun are recurring themes throughout the literature and this initial primary research to encourage participation. Advancing understanding of the reasons that direct an individual to behave in a certain way is important as the knowledge can be used to engage individuals and groups in productive behaviours (Naidoo *et al.*, 2015; Pomfret and Bramwell, 2016). Specifically, there is a need to understand why older people do or do not engage in PA, how do they perceive the physical, social and mental health benefits (Capalb, O'Halloran and Liamputtong, 2014). The multifarious nature of human behaviour, the eclectic influencing factors of physiological and psychological needs, experience, education, and the impact of social networks make understanding why and how older people are motivated to engage in physical activity complex (Taylor, 2013; Reeve, 2014).

What is certain in relation to PA and older people is that the activities must have relevance, be achievable and the benefits must be clear. Research suggests that the value in the activity is perhaps more relevant than the outcome in relation to physical benefits (Baltes and Carstensen, 1996). Devereux-Fitzgerald *et al* (2016) argue that sustained engagement in activities requires the activities to be fun, sociable and achievable. They conclude that perceived value, enjoyment and social interaction are key to older adults' acceptability of physical activity interventions and outweighing the relevance of long term health benefits to sustained participation. Seeing the value of the activity is vital as it impacts on intrinsic motivation. Many experts in the field of motivation argue that intrinsically motivated individuals are more likely to engage and sustain particular behaviours. McGowan *et al* (2018) reviewed older adults attitudes to the relevance of engagement in PA and found that older adults do not see PA as a goal within itself. Their findings suggest that older adults see PA as a byproduct of more relevant activities such as gardening, house work or cleaning the car. They concluded that increasing older adults understanding and thus value regarding the benefits of PA as vital to increased participation (McGowan *et al.*, 2018).

Increasingly, research is turning its attention to leisure based activities and the potential of these activities to enhance wellbeing and quality of life (Heo *et al.*, 2013). Some research

suggests that older adults participation in increasingly active leisure pursuits contributes to the eroding of negative perceptions of ageing (Dionigi, 2002; Gard *et al.*, 2017). While the relationship between leisure and successful ageing is complex, the evidence is clear that leisure can provide significant opportunities for continued engagement and wellbeing (Dupuis and Alzheimer, 2008). Perhaps focusing on the pleasure to be gleaned from leisure based recreational activities rather than the health benefits is a better way to promote engagement in health promoting behaviours? Chang, Wray and Lin (2014) conclude that leisure based activities are health promoting and that further research in the area is warranted. Leisure activity serves several purposes that often includes social engagement, PA and is generally done by choice (Adams, Leibbrandt and Moon, 2011; Ryu and Heo, 2018). The concept of choice, interest and learning is key to sustaining older adults' participation in PA throughout the life course. Liechty, Genoe and Marston (2017) argue that those transitioning to retirement value physically active leisure and enjoying the outdoors. The passion for the activity as distinct from the physical activity may be the driving force for older adventurers to remain active. However, they are not mutually exclusive, as one scuba diver put it:

"I stay fit to dive and not the other way around. I really notice challenges with diving when I am unfit." (51-year-old, male scuba diver)

As an observer, it was clear that this diver valued the engagement with nature, the social aspect, the challenges of scuba diving and the opportunity to travel to remote parts of Ireland, as follows:

"I am lucky, diving gives me the opportunity to travel to beautiful parts of Ireland that I may not otherwise see or know about."

While not viewing scuba diving as a mechanism to get fit it is seen as a valued reason to stay fit. In addition, he intended to remain scuba diving as long as possible. Janke *et al* (2012) argues that the impact of maintaining engagement in leisure activity as a mechanism to sustain PA is worthy of further investigation. Remaining engaged in activity and maintenance of capabilities is corroborated in the adventure literature. Buckley (2018) argues that adventure athletes are reluctant to accept can't, and will selectively

compensate to continue their activity. One 76-year-old scuba diver suggested that he swims regularly at the local pool to retain his fitness to allow him to enjoy his diving:

“I swim a kilometer 3 to 4 times a week, I do this to stay fit for my diving. I think I would be less likely to swim or exercise as frequently if it was not for my interest in diving.”

As mentioned previously, this diver is a good example of the application of SOC. He continues to dive with medical approval even though he has a pacemaker and two knee replacements.

The physical, mental, social and economic benefits of increasing participation in blue and green PA are evident (Kerr *et al.*, 2012; Kluge, 2013; Calogiuri and Chroni, 2014). Older people are increasingly seeking more active leisure pursuits and are more likely to engage in PA in natural environments (Gladwell *et al.*, 2013; Pomfret and Bramwell, 2016; Patterson *et al.*, 2017). Outdoor adventure activities have the potential to address all of these benefits and requirements (Boyes, 2013). However, all stakeholders need to understand the motivations of the potential participants and provide a range of adventure activities relevant to the abilities and desires of this cohort.

Conclusion

The scoping exercise conducted in stages 1 and 2, while exploratory, demonstrates, that the cohort under investigation understand and are interested in adventure activities. However, they also suggest that a negative perception of ageing exists, specifically with regard to outdoor adventure activities. In stage 2, the notion that stereotypical views exist is corroborated in the interviews with providers. This initial exploratory research suggests that there is a disconnect between the motivations, desires and interests of the older cohort and providers' perceptions. Consequently, research exploring and understanding the motivations of older adventurers in the Republic of Ireland is relevant. Understanding the value older adventurers place on their activity and how they perceive its contribution to their physical, social and mental health is beneficial to informing providers, policy and consequently facilitation.

For stage 3, an ethnographic approach was chosen as the most appropriate to address the refined research questions and objectives.

Recently, ethical approval has been received from the Technical University Dublin to undertake Stage 3 primary work with trekkers and divers during the Summer 2019. This approach will involve participative observation, interviews, field notes, audio-visual and photographs. The ethnographic approach exploring older adventurers' motivations is ongoing and in its early stages and the questions are evolving. Thus far, this lived in, observational approach to understanding the culture, environment and perceptions of older adventurers is resulting in unique insights regarding 'why' and relevance. There is a lot more work to be completed, field notes to be taken, interviews to be recorded and audio visual data to be collected. However, in refining the research question, the findings do elude to passion for chosen activities, the natural environment, social connectedness, the ability to adapt and attitude as motivating factors that will sustain engagement and physical mental and social health.

The ageing of the population is unprecedented; all sectors of society need to embrace the longevity phenomenon. Additionally, it is vital that we all contribute to the positive promotion of physical, social and mental health to enhance independence and quality of life into old age.

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Appendix 1 – Older participants questionnaire

Completion guidelines

- Participants will not be identified in any publications
- Please answer all questions
- The following scale applies to a number of questions;

1 – Not important; 2 – Low importance; 3 – Slightly important; 4 – Neutral (not relevant)

5 – Moderately important; 6 – Very important; 7 – Most important

Confidential Data

Form Identity number (researcher only)

Name: _____ Phone no: _____

Address: - _____ Email: _____

Age Range

50 - 59

60 – 69

70 – 79

80 – 89

Defining Nature Sport

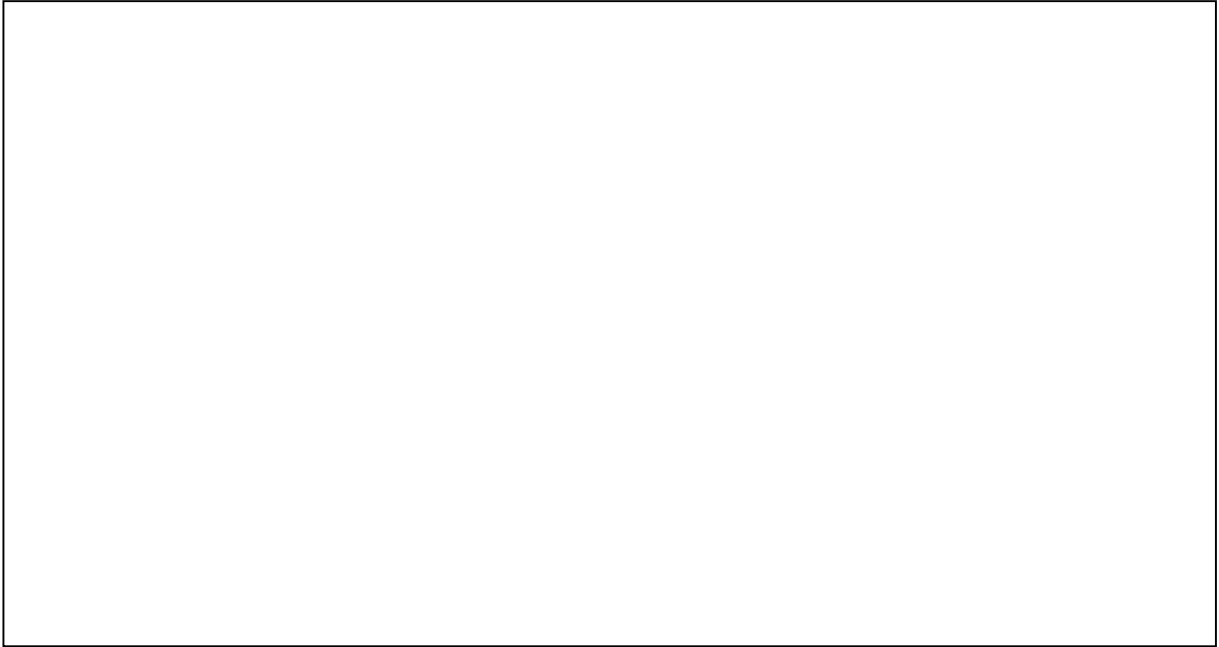
1. In order of importance which words best describe **outdoor activities** to you. (please circle a number for each word in order of importance – **1, least important (LI) and 7, most important (MI)**)

Adventure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Risk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Physical Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Outdoors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI

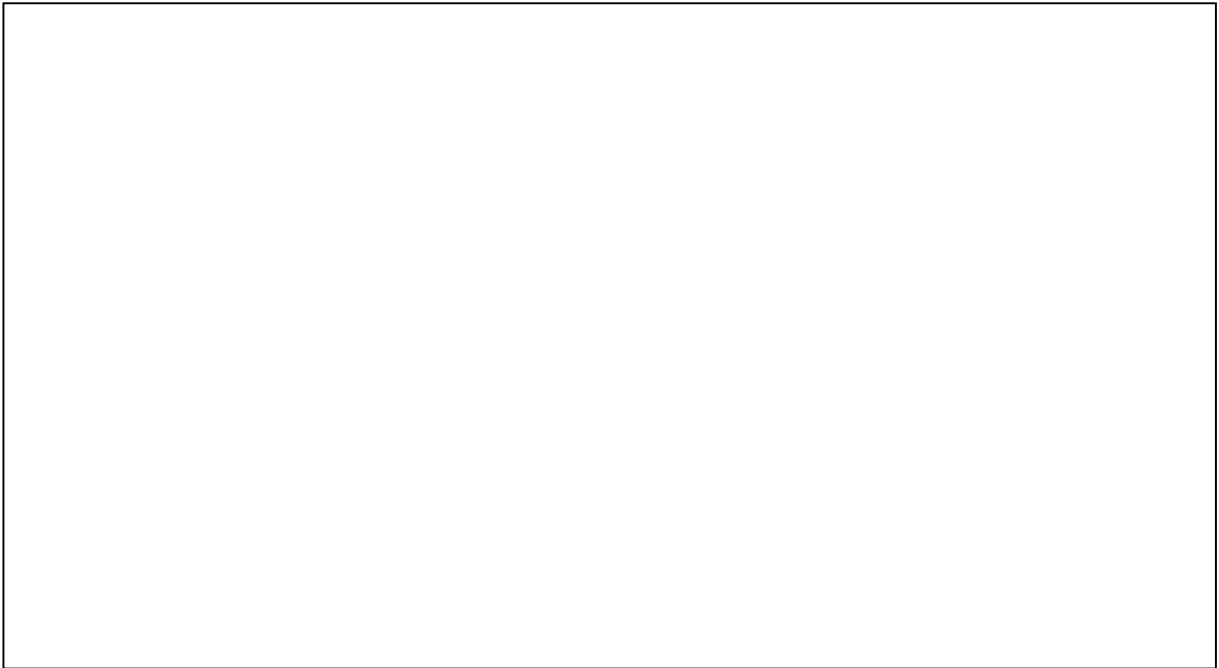
2. In order of importance which word best describes **outdoor adventure** activities to you (please circle a number for each word in order of importance – **1, least important (LI) and 7, most important (MI)**)

Adventure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Risk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Physical Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Outdoors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI

3. Describe/provide an example of what you consider to be an **outdoor activity**?



4. Describe/provide an example of what you consider to be an **outdoor adventure activity**?



5. In order of importance which word would stop you participating in **outdoor activity** – (1, least important (LI) and 7, most important (MI))

Adventure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Risk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Physical Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Outdoors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI

6. In order of importance which word would stop you participating in **outdoor adventure activity** – (1, least important (LI) and 7, most important (MI))

Adventure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Risk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Physical Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Outdoors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI

7. In order of importance which word would encourage you to participate in **outdoor activity** – (1, least important (LI) and 7, most important (MI))

Adventure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Risk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Physical Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Outdoors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI
Nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	LI						MI

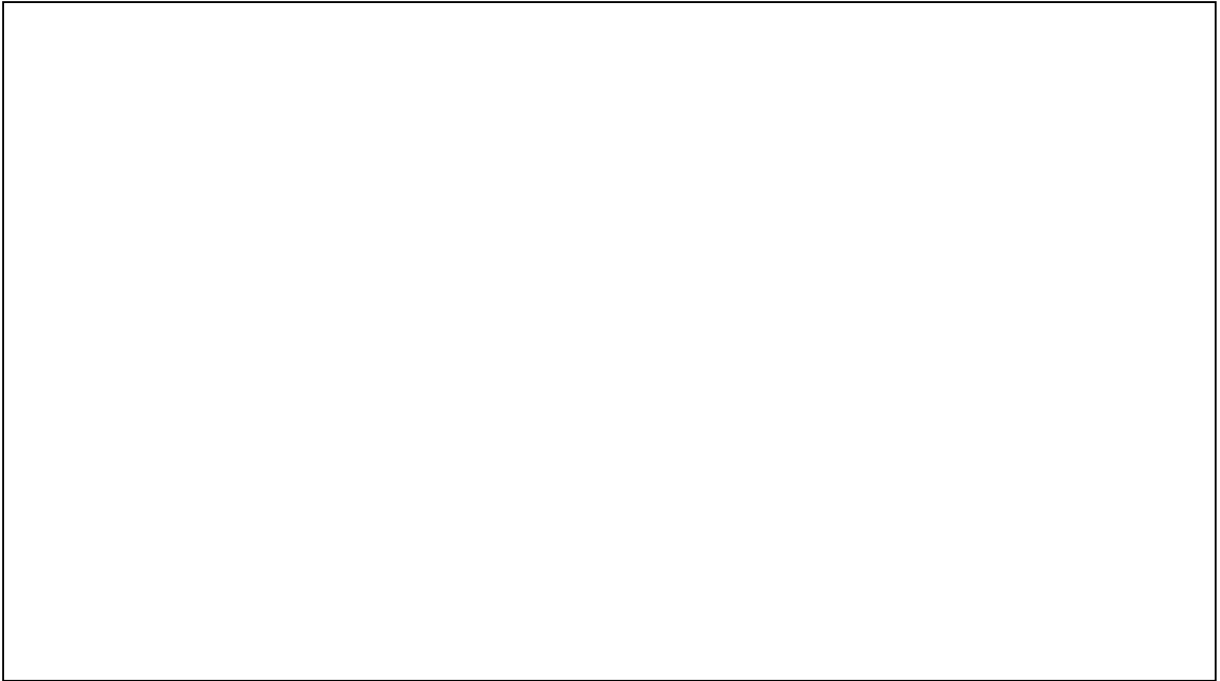
4. If outdoor ***adventure activity*** is important, why?



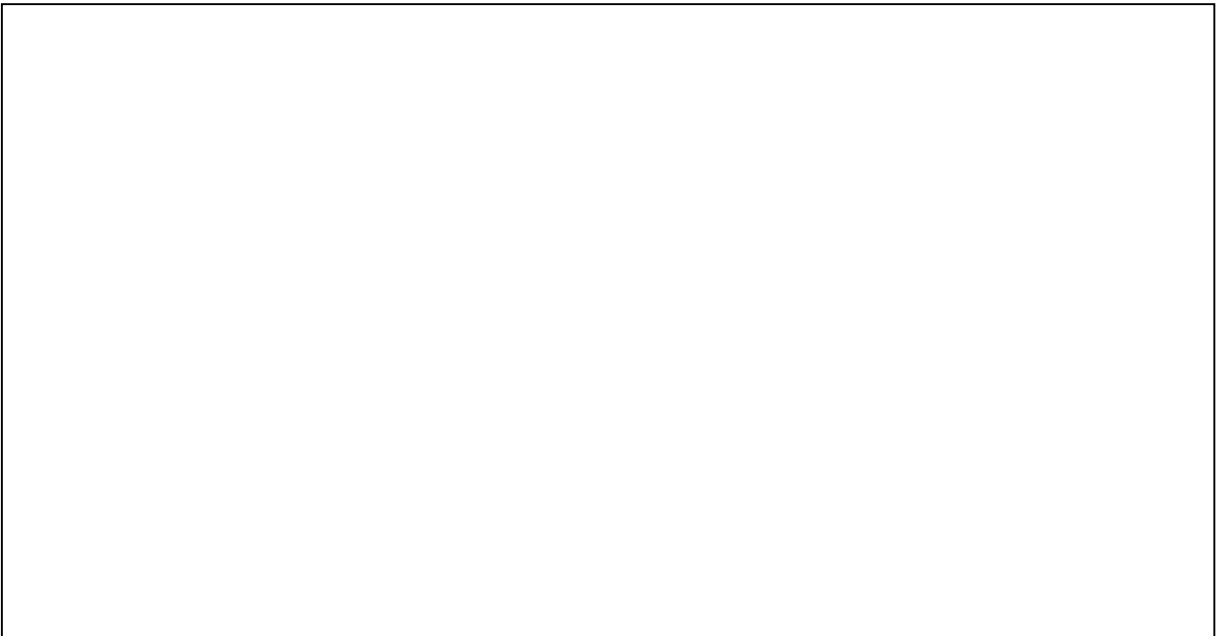
5. Are there opportunities for you to engage in ***outdoor activities***? If there are please provide a brief description?



6. Are there opportunities for you to engage in ***outdoor adventure activities***? If there are please provide a brief description?



7. What are the barriers for you to participating in ***outdoor activities***?



8. What are the barriers for you to participating in **outdoor adventure activities**?

9. How often do you engage in **outdoor activities**? (*please circle correct answer*)

1 time per week

2 times per week

3 times per week

Other, please state how often: _____

10. How often do you engage in **outdoor adventure activities**?

1 time per week

2 times per week

3 times per week

Other, please state how often: _____

11. Provide examples of the type of physical activity you engage in outdoors.

9. In order of importance (**1 being not important (NI) and 7 extremely important (EI)**) please indicate why you participate in **outdoor activities?**

Challenge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Health benefits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Risk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Engagement with nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Social reasons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Competition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI

10. In order of importance (**1 being not important and 7 extremely important**) please indicate why you participate in **outdoor adventure activities?**

Challenge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Health benefits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Risk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Engagement with nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Social reasons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI
Competition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	NI						EI

Appendix 2 – OAA industry participants questionnaire

Completion guidelines

- Participants will not be identified in any publications
- The designated identity number will be assigned by the researcher
- Data will only be used for the purpose of research for this study and will subsequently be destroyed
- For the duration of the research, data will be stored on the lead researcher’s password protected personal computer
- Participants can withdraw from the research at any stage
- Please answer all questions

NOTE:

For the purposes of this research an older adult is defined as being between the ages of 50 – 89.

Confidential Data

Form Identity number (researcher only)

Name: _____

Phone no: _____

Address: - _____

Email: _____

Changing demographic

1. Currently, approximately what percentage of your users are in the following age ranges?

50 - 59 60 - 69 70 - 79 80 - 89 Don't know

2. Have you noticed a change in the age profile of users of the adventure activities you provide?

Yes No

(if you answered no to question 2, please proceed to question 6)

3. If you have noticed a change in the age profile of users, please describe this change below.

4. If you have noticed a change in user age profile, since when have you noticed this change take place?

5. If your user demographic changed, previous to the change in demographic, approximately what percentage of your users were in the following age ranges?

50 - 59 60 - 69 70 - 79 80 - 89 Don't know

Provision

6. Provide a list of the outdoor adventure activities you provide.

7. Do you believe that older adults (50+) are attracted to the adventure activities that you provide?

Yes No

8. Do you believe there is an age cut off for participation in the activities you provide?

Yes No

9. If you answered yes to Q 8 above, please suggest an age cut off

50 - 59 60 - 69 70 - 79 80 - 89 Don't know

10. Describe the type of outdoor adventure activity an older population is attracted to?

11. List the activities currently provided by you that you believe are suitable for the age groups below.

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Suitable Activities</u>
50 – 59 -----	
60 – 69 -----	
70 – 79 -----	
80 – 89 -----	

Marketing

12. Do you promote your adventure activities specifically to the older population?

Yes

No

13. If you answered **YES** to question 12 above, describe the methods you use to specifically promote to the older population?

14. Please outline any possible benefits you believe there could be to your business from specifically marketing to the older population.

Challenges and Training

15. Are there challenges associated with delivering adventure activities to the older cohort?

Yes No

16. If yes, please describe these challenges.

17. Do you believe that specialised training for staff working with older populations would be beneficial?

Yes No

18. If you answered **YES** to question 17 above, please state why you think this training is required.

19. If you answered **NO** to question 17 above please state why?

--

20. Describe the type of training that might be beneficial to providing adventure activities for the older population.

Type of Training	Why it is required

21. Do you believe that you or your organisation is equipped to deliver this training?

Yes

No

22. If you answered yes to question 21 above, please describe the type of training you can provide

23. If you answered **NO** to question 21 above, please list the type of training required that would be beneficial to providing adventure activities for the older population and list the agencies that you believe could provide the training you believe is required.

Type of training:

Agencies that could provide training:

