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Senior travellers co-creating meaning within their end-of-life experiences

Oral Presentation Working Paper

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Research exploring the end-of-life tourism experience is limited. A gap in the literature is understanding tourism that triggered by a significant ending. This could include things such as, the end of good health, facing a life-threatening illness and other significant related life experiences. In the aftermath of these endings in life, travel can be one component used within a person's life where they search for understandings, reflection and possible new meanings for their lives. As we reach a senior age, we start to experience more end-of-life situations and are faced with how to understand them. More specifically, after facing a life-threatening illness, travel can give meaning to understand two aspects for the person of 'who I was' and 'whom I wanted to become'. Currently, little work has examined how travel addresses these two aspects following a life-threatening illness. As this age group often go through similar endings, the chance to have their 'voices' heard about creating meaning through travel experiences is essential. We draw on the results of a phenomenology thesis that sought to understand life events within tourism for senior tourists. The thesis adopted a visual co-creative method called 'MeBox' to facilitate understandings and the emotional sensitivities of senior travellers' experiences of end-of-life and international travel. The initial findings that will be presented suggest that participants perceive that their life-threatening illness brought changes to their perception towards who they were before the illness and their desires for that they want to become in the future. This paper contributes to this gap in tourism scholarship, by tackling understandings of tourism within the end-of-life context for senior citizens facing a life-threatening illness.