

SKIER MOTIVATIONS: DO THEY CHANGE OVER TIME?

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Abstract: Skiing has been declining in participation over the last decade. This study examines motivations pre-trip and post-trip to see if the motivations for participation in an international ski vacation change over time. Results revealed significant differences among: to view scenery, to rest and relax, to fulfill responsibilities to my family, to take it easy, to spend more time with my family, to meet new people and socialize, to be close to nature, to feel good after being physically active, and to meet interesting people. Two of the motivations were found to be significant at the .01 level. These motivations were: to socialize with others, and to engage in activities that require considerable skill.

Introduction

In 1994-95, approximately 16.8 million people participated in downhill skiing. According to the USDA Forest Service (Wellner, 1997), 4% of all pleasure trips in the U.S. in 1995 including skiing. "Eight percent of Americans aged 16 or older have been downhill skiing at least once in the past 12 months, making it the second most popular winter sport after sledding" (Wellner, 1997, p. 253).

Although skiing enjoys a substantial amount of participation, in recent years skiing has been experiencing decline. In fact, participation has declined from 11.0 million in 1989 to 7.4 million in 1999 (National Sporting Goods Association, 2000). Several reasons have been suggested for this decline. One reason is that the industry competes with other vacation options, like Disney World and Europe (Wellner, 1997). Additionally, skiing is an expensive sport and the "cost is keeping people away" (Leocha, 1997). Finally, skiing has been suggested to be a high impact sport and with an "aging" population, perhaps skiing has already started to recognize the inevitable decline.

One area of the research, which may help to understand this decline in skiing participation, is the study of motivations. Tourism motivations have been studied since the early 1950s. In recent years, there has been criticism regarding some of the research involving motivations. Pearce (1993) has one of the main criticisms. He suggests that too much of the motivation's research provides only a snapshot in time and ignores the fact that motivations can

be dynamic. The major problem with studies that do not include change is that the results are less meaningful and applicable.

One theory that addresses this concern is Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml's (1988) gap analysis. This theory suggests that people's motivations can be dynamic and change over time. The theory posits the importance of gaps between perceptions of motivations and expectations. The SERQUAL scale (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1994; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988) does not represent either a new or innovative technique to analysis; however, its results may contribute to explanations of vacations behaviors and "subsequent assessments by tourists of their vacations" (Ryan & Glendon, 1998).

Research by Loundsbury and Hoopes (1988) is potentially important, for it was one of the first to examine the stability of motivations over time. Loundsbury and Hoopes (1988) used rankings of factors over a five-year period, including the factors taken from the Leisure Motivation Scale. They found that there was some "medium term consistency." Stability can be assessed in a number of ways, including, mean scores, rankings, and persistence of factor loadings. This study examined stability over time by assessing the mean scores and ranking of individual items over the two times. Factor loadings were not computed due to the low sample size.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this pilot study was to investigate the stability of motivations for skiing over time. The study focused solely on one trip organized by a Southern United States ski club.

Methods

This study used a convenience sample of members of a snow skiers club in the Southern United States traveling across to Europe on a ski vacation. A questionnaire was administered while in transit to the ski destination. One week after returning home, a follow-up questionnaire sent out. A total of 29 travelers filled out the initial survey out of a total of 42 people who were on the trip (2 of the travelers were the researchers and were excluded). One of the reasons for a lower response rate was that there were many couples on the trip and only one person per couple filled out the questionnaire rather than both parties. The follow-up study was completed by the entire 29 who filled out the original survey. Therefore, a 100% response rate was achieved for the post-trip questionnaire.

Motivations were derived from Manfreda, Driver and Tarrant's study (1996) "Measuring leisure motivation: a meta-analysis of the recreation experience scales. Twenty motivational statements were chosen representing six dimensions. Skiers were asked to indicate the level of importance of each motivation as a reason for participating. Each item was scored on a 5-point likert-scale, 1 meaning "not at all important" and 5 meaning "extremely important." The post-trip scale asked skiers to respond to

the level that each motivation was met. Each item was scored on a 5-point likert-scale, 1 meaning "strongly disagree" and 5 meaning "strongly disagree." Mean scores were computed for the motivation statements (Table 1).

Limitations

This study one major limitation, a relatively low sample size. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be considered representative of the entire ski club. Thus, it should be considered only as a pilot study that suggests hypotheses to be tested in future studies. One positive result was that the post-test was completed by 100% of the initial sample.

Findings

Differences in motivations were examined by looking at pre-trip versus post-trip responses (Table 2). The findings indicate that the top five motivations for Ski travelers pre-trip were: to view the scenic beauty (4.05), to view scenery (4.00), to do exciting things (3.95), to feel good after being physically active (3.91), and to engage in sports activities (3.82). When asked about ski trip motivations after the trip, the responses changed slightly. The top five motivations for the ski travelers post-trip were: to view the scenic beauty (4.40), to view scenery (4.40), to do exciting

things (4.40), to feel exhilaration (4.30), and to feel good after being physically active (4.20). The least important motivations were to spend more time with my family, and to fulfill responsibilities to my family (pre-trip). Post-trip, the least important motivations were to be able to go out alone, and to bring my family closer together.

T-tests revealed that the changes in several motivations over time were significant at the .05 level. These motivations include: to view scenery, to rest and relax, to fulfill responsibilities to my family, to take it easy, to spend more time with my family, to meet new people and socialize, to be close to nature, to feel good after being physically active, and to meet interesting people. Two of the motivations were found to be significant at the .01 level. These motivations are: to socialize with others, and to engage in activities that require considerable skill.

Another motivation that changed over the time from pre-trip to post-trip was to feel exhilaration. The mean score for this attribute was 3.77 for the pre-trip responses, and 4.30 for the post-trip responses. Pre-trip, it was more important to feel good after being physically active and to engage in sports activities. Perhaps, after the trip, travelers label this 'feel good after being physically active' feeling as exhilaration.

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-trip Motivations and Post-trip Motivations

Attributes	Pre-trip ^a (N=29)		Post-trip ^a (n=29)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
To view the scenic beauty	4.05	0.95	4.40	0.52
To view scenery	4.00	0.82	4.40	0.52
To do exciting things	3.95	0.90	4.40	0.70
To feel good after being physically active	3.91	0.87	4.20	0.42
To engage in sports activities	3.82	0.85	4.10	0.32
To participate in physical activities	3.77	0.81	3.90	0.57
To feel exhilaration	3.77	0.09	4.30	0.48
To get away from it all	3.68	1.13	4.20	0.79
To experience new challenges	3.68	0.89	3.90	0.57
To increase my knowledge of different cultures	3.64	1.09	4.10	0.32
To have thrills	3.45	1.01	3.80	0.92
To seek intellectual enrichment	3.36	1.09	3.60	1.17
To engage in activities that require considerable skill	3.23	0.92	4.10	0.32
To travel where I feel safe	3.18	1.22	3.30	0.82
To be close to nature	3.14	0.99	3.80	0.63
To seek an educational experience	3.09	1.19	3.60	0.84
To meet new people and socialize	3.09	1.11	3.80	0.63
To meet interesting people	3.09	1.19	3.70	0.82
To rest and relax	3.05	1.53	3.70	0.95
To take it easy	3.00	1.45	3.40	1.35
To socialize with others	2.91	1.06	4.00	0.94
To feel safe and secure	2.73	1.28	3.20	0.92
To vacation with my family	2.05	1.33	2.20	1.48
To be able to go out alone	2.05	1.13	2.10	0.88
To bring my family closer together	2.05	1.21	2.00	1.15
To spend more time with my family	1.95	1.25	2.20	1.23
To fulfill responsibilities to my family	1.55	1.10	2.30	1.25

^a Mean values based on a 5 point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1=not at all important and 5=very important.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-tests and Levels of Significance for Motivation Statements

Attributes	t-test	sig.
To view scenery	-2.6	.02*
To rest and relax	-2.4	.03*
To fulfill responsibilities to my family	-2.8	.02*
To do exciting things	-1.0	.33
To socialize with others	-4.7	.00**
To feel safe and secure	-1.0	.34
To seek an educational experience	-1.7	.10
To view the scenic beauty	-1.5	.17
To take it easy	-2.7	.02*
To spend more time with my family	-2.3	.04*
To have thrills	-1.1	.28
To meet new people and socialize	-3.5	.01*
To travel where I feel safe	-0.8	.43
To be close to nature	-3.0	.01*
To feel good after being physically active	-2.3	.04*
To get away from it all	-1.7	.11
To vacation with my family	-1.7	.11
To increase my knowledge of different cultures	-0.9	.39
To engage in activities that require considerable skill	-4.7	.00**
To meet interesting people	-2.3	.04*
To be able to go out alone	-1.5	.16
To bring my family closer together	-1.4	.19
To experience new challenges	-.26	.79
To participate in physical activities	-1.0	.34
To seek intellectual enrichment	.00	1.00
To engage in sports activities	-.56	.59
To feel exhilaration	-.59	.59

* significant at the .05 level

** significant at the .01 level

This data analysis revealed five motivation factors that have emerged. These five factors are: Nature, Social, Family, Rest and relaxation, and Physical. Each of these factors was measured using 2 or 3 statements. These five factors encompass the broad motivations that seem to be most important to ski travelers.

Overall, the motivations for ski travelers on this particular trip seemed to remain stable over time. Despite slight variances, the motivations generally remained stable, and showed that the scenery and the physical activity itself were the greatest motivators.

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