

MOTIVATIVES OF TOURING INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

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Abstract

Touring travellers represent a significant market in Australia and are expected to play an even larger role in the future. Touring holidaymakers are considered as a homogenous market segments. The aim of the present study is to question this assumption and investigate whether touring travellers have distinct motivational characteristics. The qualitative research including consumer and touring industry participants identified a list of touring motives. The empirical survey research (N=430) included all socio-economic profiles of the typical touring holidaymakers and was conducted by an independent online market research company. The factor analysis (using varimax, principal components method) identified four clear and robust factors which support our hypothesis that touring motives are not homogenous and that there are a number of key benefits which touring holidaymakers are interested in. The findings have important implications for the tourism marketing managers.

Introduction

Tourism contributed \$66 billion to Australia's economy in 2007, or approximately 4% of the nation's GDP. The vast majority of Australia's tourism market is domestic, because of the large geographic size of Australia, and its greater distance from other regions, has led to a strong domestic tourism industry in Australia, with three times as many visitors as inbound tourism (Tourism Research Australia, 2009). Furthermore, domestic tourists make up an even larger proportion of tourists to regional Australia, whereas international tourists generally ignore the regions outside of Sydney and coastal Queensland (Euromonitor International, 2008). Overseas international tourists have a long way to travel from the main tourism generating countries in Europe, North America and Japan. Another reason for lower overseas visits is the strong Australian dollar, the global financial crisis in many world economies but less so in Australia. According to the Euromonitor International (2008) more Australians and international tourists are travelling alone instead of travelling in organised groups. This is partly due to the increased ability of consumers to find out more information about their destinations and organise their own travel options online. The trend towards independent travel is not limited to Australia, but it is similar to most other developed travel markets (Euromonitor International, 2008). Independent touring travel plays a major role in the Australian tourism industry and it is predominantly domestic Australian consumers (Tourism Research Australia, 2009). This is illustrated by the fact that, in the year ending March 2008, there were 8.3 million *domestic Australian visitors* who stayed in caravans or camping accommodation and account for 39.6 million of visitor nights. The average duration of the domestic tourist's stay is 6 nights and the expenditure per visitor per trip is estimated to be AUS \$ 1268.00 or AUS \$ 10.141 billion in total for the domestic touring industry. The number of *international visitor nights* in caravans or camping accommodation in 2008 was 4.6 million, who on average spent \$ 13,212 for the total trip per visitor. However, the overall duration of stay for the international visitors was 68 nights as opposed to the domestic visitor's 6 nights and therefore the overall international visitor's expenditure was far bigger (\$ 60,775 billion) than the domestic visitors expenditure (\$10,141 billion) (Tourism Research Australia, 2009). These statistics on tourism expenditures and the size of the market indicate that the touring sector is both significant and attractive for the Australian economy. If the independent touring travel market is understood more accurately, it could be used to strengthen Australian domestic tourism. One major weakness is the lack of research data on the motives and personality characteristics of this market. Understanding the touring consumer's psychographic characteristics is more likely to lead to better market segmentation and more targeted communications strategies. The aim of this study, therefore, is to empirically investigate what are the motives of the Australian independent touring consumers.

Literature review

Touring is not a new phenomenon because it has been around since the classical Hellenic times. The origins of independent touring and travel can be traced to the period of 450-420 BC. Herodotus (1910; 1964) the father of history, describes in great detail his touring experiences to all well known nations in his era, such as Persia, Assyria, Phoenicia, Egypt, etc. Many other classical Hellenic and Roman writers and philosophers, including Plato and Galen, provide extensive coverage of travel experiences by people of high social and economic status seeking adventures,

business opportunities, knowledge and exploring different cultures (Galen, 1916; Guthrie, 1986). Throughout the Middle Ages and the renaissance travel was continued by the well to do citizens from Europe and the Muslim world e.g., Marco Polo and Ibn Battutah (Mackintosh-Smith, and Yeoman, 2004). The idea of the European Grand Tour by the British upper classes followed in the footsteps of the previous great travelers and has had a direct influence on tourism to the present day. Towner (1985) defines it as the big tour of European places and cities of interest for young wealthy British men whose travel motives included entertainment and education. The key motives for touring were the interest to see and experience the cultural glories of the renaissance Italian cities, classical Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, and the Low Countries. The motivation for acquiring knowledge, or the need to know and understand, was coupled with the passionate romantic desire to experience the beautiful natural attractions, such as the Mediterranean coastline; climb and see the highest European Alpine mountains; sail through the central European river and canal systems; to enjoy the European scenic resorts and sample the different ways of living in Europe. Brodsky-Porges (1981) suggests that young wealthy Americans travelled to Europe during the era of 1600-1800s to expand their worldviews, gain knowledge and develop better understanding of other cultures. Another motive was to learn how to be independent and therefore transition into adulthood; to learn how to be self-sufficient self reliant and able to interact with other nationalities. The American's grand tour to Europe was a form of affirming and gaining social status in their own society. Jakle (1981) and Brodsky-Porges (1981) proposed that less than a hundred years ago the American contemporary social wisdom stressed that travelling to Europe was an essential part of a young person's education. European travelling experiences was considered one of the best ways to improve the education of young people who aspired to social mobility and improved career prospects. American's considered European travelling as essential in order to experience more civilised cultures and therefore learn more refined ways of living and cast away some of their new world frontier mentality, which was characterised to be rather coarse, violent and parochial.

However, the original notion and style of the grand tour has changed somewhat and has evolved gradually during the 19th and 20th centuries, in line with the innovations in transport, improvement in safety, sanitation and geopolitical and economic relations. Jakle (1981) suggests that touring in America has been an ongoing activity during the 19th and 20th centuries continuing the broad traditions of the grand tour of the 16th -18th centuries. The advent of the motorcar, improvements of accessible roads and the newfound spirit of adventure drove many Americans to travel in previously impossible and unheard of places of great distances across the North American continent. However, the mode of touring in the early 20th century has evolved gradually due to economic improvements and developments in accommodation and transport. As travel mobility conditions improved, touring holidays evolved from travelling as "tin can tourists" (Jakle, 1981, p. 537), camping on the side of the roads and carrying with them all the necessary things, to the more comfortable mode of travel by automobiles in well-organised campgrounds. Hugill (1985) suggests that the car has changed peoples' lives dramatically during the twentieth century. More and more people took to the road and rediscovered many places, which famous and socially important people like artists and writers mentioned in their works. As car ownership became more prevalent, the middle and lower classes emulated the elite American classes' grand tours. Wall and Marsh (1982, p. 6) encapsulated the trend as "mass followed class". Car based touring was motivated by their pursuit of adventure,

to experience a more refined lifestyles and discover interesting places and people, which broaden their current horizons. During the later part of the 20th century, touring travelers were able to use motel accommodation and all kinds of transport including air transport when available and affordable.

Contemporary independent touring holidaymaker's mode of transport is usually self-drive (Sivijs, 2003). They are different in their motives from the backpackers or drifters because they are independent travellers with different choices of activities and travel route requirements (Hardy, 2003); they tend to be couples of middle socio-economic classes, more affluent, older, and seek out experiences that are intrinsically attractive (Olsen, 2002, 2003; Prideaux, Wei, and Ruys, 2001; Taylor and Prideaux, 2007). Self-drive independent touring holidaymakers seek better quality of travel product experiences because they can afford them and have more knowledge and travel related maturity to make such decisions. Independent touring holidaymakers, as a distinct market, have not been extensively researched and therefore there are a number of issues that need to be explored in more detail (Trauer (2006). The research on self-drive touring holidaymakers has focused on finding out and understanding the demographic and behavioural characteristics. Uysal and Jurowski (1994) found that demographic characteristics, with the exception of gender differences, are not very good predictors of why consumers choose different types of tourism activities. There is a major gap in the literature because the psychological characteristics of the independent touring travellers have not been adequately explored. This paper investigates the motivational differences of the touring travellers, attempting to understand their needs and benefits, through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The literature review leads to us to propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Touring independent traveller's motivations are not homogenous

Methodology

A two-stage approach was taken. First, an extensive qualitative study was conducted, which aimed to identify a range of travel motives that may not be covered in the general travel motivation literature and may be specific to touring travelers. This was achieved by conducting 12 depth interviews with adults who participated in touring holidays. The convenience snowballing sample of the 12 depth interviews comprised equal number of male and female, mainly couples of middle aged, middle class men and women residing in Victoria, Australia. As a follow up to the exploratory depth interviews, two focus groups were conducted in Victoria using a convenience sampling method; to identify their motives and types of activities they prefer doing when touring around Australia. In addition to the consumer exploratory qualitative research, a small number of informal depth interviews were conducted with 5 touring organisers and caravan distributors/sellers during the annual Touring & Caravanning Trade show in Melbourne in March and April of 2007. A questionnaire was developed and pre-tested, which was subsequently used to collect data from Victoria through a commercial marketing research company, which runs a permission-based online research panel. The sample contained equal number of male and female participants, equal proportion of all socio-economic groups, and equal proportions of age groups between 25-65 years old. In total, N= 430 valid responses were collected. The sample is considered to be valid and representative of the general touring population in Australia, because it includes all age and occupational groups that are

typically found in similar studies with specified populations (Prideaux, Wei and Ruys, 2001; Snepenger, King, Marshal and Uysal, 2006). Of the 430 respondents, 305 have already undertaken a touring holiday in the past and 424 said they were planning to do so in the future. Respondents were asked to indicate their motivations for touring holidays. A list of 25 motives was presented to them and they were asked to indicate on a seven point scale their extent of agreement with each motivation.

Results Managerial Implications and Conclusions

The factor analysis (using varimax and principal components method) identified four robust and meaningful factors (see Table 1).

Table1: Touring Motivation factors structure	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Mean	SD
Q10.13 - To get away from the routines of everyday life	.835				6.28	1.06
Q10.11 - To mentally and physically relax and recharge my batteries	.822				6.22	1.14
Q10.12 - To have time for yourself/treat myself to a break	.800				6.12	1.26
Q10.3 - To be flexible and do whatever I want to do (do as I please)	.630				6.15	1.19
Q10.2 - To feel the freedom and adventure of touring around	.557				6.03	1.18
Q10.14 - To experience something adventurous/exciting/new	.555	.362			6.15	1.06
Q10.15 - To simply do very little and enjoy the gypsy/touring life	.537	.302			5.55	1.55
Q10.16 - To be with and have fun with my family, friends & relatives	.479				5.81	1.41
Q10.18 - To have lots of touring holiday experiences to talk about		.818			4.95	1.69
Q10.19 - To learn how to become more self confident/ self-secure		.785			4.48	1.85
Q10.20 - To feel a sense of achievement and adventurous things		.754			5.13	1.65
Q10.17 - To socialise and enjoy the company of new people		.688			5.39	1.44
Q10.10 - To participate in various festivals/events i.e., wine festivals		.525	.402		4.97	1.60
Q10.8 - To visit new places and learn about the local history, culture			.880		5.85	1.20
Q10.9 - To learn about new things and local attractions			.792		5.95	1.11
Q10.7 - To visit cultural attractions e.g., museums, galleries, antiques			.789		5.24	1.52
Q10.1 - To experience nature close up (plants and animals)			.350	.701	5.08	1.59
Q10.4 - To do my leisure activities in natural surroundings				.676	5.45	1.41
Q10.6 - To do my favourite sports like cycling, riding, diving, etc				.639	3.70	1.80
Q10.5 - To do a bit of fishing, sailing, swimming (e.g., water activities)				.594	4.89	1.78
Cronbach's Alpha scale reliability	a=.856	a=.857	a=.837	a=.704		
Variance % explained by all factors	20.413	16.930	13.299	11.387	Total: 62.03%	
Eigenvalues for each factor	4.083	3.387	2.660	2.270		

The quantitative survey research reinforced the findings from the qualitative research and the literature review. The empirical survey suggests that there are a number of specific holiday benefits, which motivate touring consumers to take touring holidays. Specifically in factor 1, the idea of exploring and spending a lot of time in natural environments being in the “bush” is a major motivating factor. These consumers like the idea of being free to spend more time away from build up city environments with family and friends doing a variety of things including socializing, doing adventurous activities, driving around like gypsies and simply enjoying relaxing physically and mentally. Factor 2 suggests that it is important for many touring holidaymakers to feel free to roam around but to also spend quality time connecting with other socially important people. The need to have quality time for social reasons, building stronger and better relationships as well as having precious memories to remember is the essence of this motive for many touring holidaymakers. Factor 3 captures the strong interest to learn about the particular places they visit and the enjoyment of mental stimulation and understanding better the local history and culture. Therefore, many touring visitors have a higher need for cognition and curiosity to find out more about the history and culture of particular places as well as to enjoy the physical attractions. Factor 4 is expressing the strong motive for experiencing nature in a more direct way, in participating and enjoying physical sporting activities in natural settings and enjoying being close to nature. The opportunity to physically interact and experience directly the Australian natural environment (flora and fauna) makes them feel, albeit in a small scale, like real modern explorers and adventurers. Independent touring holidaymakers are interested in flexible travel arrangements pursuing adventures and exploring interesting places because they need to feel a sense of freedom, have interesting adventures, and have a sense of achievement and accomplishment at the end of their tour. The decision making process of independent touring travellers is influenced by their motives and therefore it is of great significance to tourism marketers plans and strategic positioning decisions.

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