# Resort Motivations for Different Family Life Cycle Stages

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## BY

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## ABSTRACT

Motivational differences for resort vacation travel among family life cycle stages have not been addressed in travel research. However, from a marketing standpoint, segmenting the resort market into family life cycle groups can be reasonably important. Linking an identified group of motivations with these stages is the purpose of this article. Descriptive analysis, factor analysis, and analysis of variance are used to evaluate the data. Twenty motivations are reduced into five motivation factors that coincide with established travel motivations or needs. The importance of family relationship, health and social, and fun and entertainment motivations does differ among respondents single or married, with or without children. The importance of relaxation and escape and novelty, education and prestige motivations does not differ across family life cycles. A target market with greatest potential is identifed as married couples without children, the largest current family life cycle grouping of resort vacationers.

## INTRODUCTION

Several authors have promoted the importance of the family life cycle in market segmentation.(4, 8, 11, 13) Consumer researchers feel

that family life cycle segmentation may be one of the most powerful ways of understanding individual and family purchase decisions. Successful marketing to these segments follows from an understanding of their differences. Peter and Donelly (13) identify nine basic stages in the family life cycle. They are bachelor stage, newly married couples, full nest 1 with youngest child under six, full nest 2 with youngest child over six, full nest 3 as older married couple with dependent children, empty nest 1 with household head still in labor force, empty nest 2 with household head retired, solitary survivor in labor force, and solitary survivor retired. This classification of the family life cycle stages implies that family life cycle is a function of age, marital status, age of children at home, and position in labor force. Combinations of these variables can be used to delineate life cycle stages into mutually exclusive groups for comparisons. The premise of this paper starts with the notion that the motivations for resort vacationers will differ among family life cycle stages. Motivations are generally considered to be an active, driving force that exists to reduce a state of tension, or to meet a deep need.(9) General vacation motivations (3, 9) and the importance of the family life cycle in market segmentation.(4, 11, 13) have been considered and discussed. Nevertheless, little or nothing has been said about specific motivations for resort vacations or the relative importance of motivations to different family life cycle stages.

A wide variety of travel motivations have been identified (10) suggest physical, cultural, interpersonal, and status and prestige motivators. Mayo and Jarvis (9) add to these the intellectual needs to know and understand, the need for adventure and exploration, and the need for a balance of consistency and complexity.

Vacation destination choice models and market segmentation studies have classified vacationers by sex, marital status, education, income, psychographics, and destination attributes.(5, 15) More recent research segmenting the resort market have focused on similar characteristics.(16, 17) Although, family life cycle as a decision factor or market segment has caught the attention of researchers (c.f. 6, 7, 12), linking motivations with family life cycle stages has received little attention.(8) Plog (14) did segment some non-travelers into life cycle stages in an attempt to understand their marketing needs. He identified young, single women--18 to 25, middle aged women--35 to 50, and empty nesters, and stressed that different life cycle groups require different marketing packages. His focus groups pointed out effective ways to reach these markets and how to talk to them.

From a resort marketing point of view, motivations which are important to resort vacationers should become the focus of destination promoters if they intend to satisfy their customers. In addition, if the motivations of people in various life cycle stages are different, resort objectives for satisfying customers should reflect those differences. Meeting these needs can then become a focus of a marketing and advertising campaign.

Crompton (2) sought to refine the motives of pleasure vacationers into two sets, socio-psychological and cultural. Among socio-psychological motivations, he identified self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships,

and facilitation of social interaction. Novelty and education formed the cultural motivation set. These motives correspond with and form the basis for motivation factors identified from the data in this study. Following Crompton's suggestion, this study attempts to quantify and rank the travel motivations of a particular population, resort vacationers. Thus, it is the purpose of this paper to analyze the motivations of resort vacationers and examine how these motivations differ among life cycle stages. No attempt is made to add to the theory of motivation measurement. Instead, the current state-of-knowledge in that area is utilized to examine how these motivations might be used to differentiate family life cycle segments.

## METHODOLOGY

A study of the U.S. pleasure travel market conducted by National Analysts of Philadelphia for Tourism Canada served as the raw data for this investigation. A multi-stage, area probability sample design drawn from the 1980 Census was used by National Analysts of Philadelphia to gather a representative sample of U.S. trip takers. A sequential probability plan, by quota, sampled area segments, housing units, and eligible consumers within households. Americans at least 16 years of age who had made at least one pleasure trip in the three years preceding the study qualified for sample selection. A total of 9,033 telephone interviews were conducted. Eight trip types including visits to friends or relatives, close-to-home leisure trips, touring vacations, city trips, outdoor vacations, resort vacations, cruises, theme parks, and exhibits or special events were identified in the survey. For this study, 246 respondents were singled out because of their recent resort vacations. A resort vacation was defined as a trip to a resort or resort area where a wide variety of activities, such as beaches, skiing, golfing, tennis and so on, are available close by or on the premises.

For the purpose of this study four life cycle stages were identified. These life cycle stages were: 1) single--no children, 2) married--no children, 3) single--children, and 4) married--children.

Twenty motivations for a resort vacation were rated on a 4-point Likert Scale including 1--Not At All Important, 2--Not Very Important, 3--Somewhat Important, and 4--Very Important. These motivations were then factor analyzed with varimax rotation to identify underlying dimensions of the motivations for resort vacationers. In extracting the factors, standard criteria were followed. All factors had eigenvalues greater than one; each factor explained at least 5 percent of variance; and, together they explained a substantial share of total variance in the variables. In addition, only factor loadings over .4 were included in the study. Analysis of variance was used to determine if differences existed among identified resort motivation factors across the four family life cycle stages included in the study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY


Resort Motivations


     Descriptive analysis of the study revealed that getting away from
pressures and responsibilities was very important to 67 percent of the
resort vacationers. Being together as a family, spending time with
someone special, and just resting and relaxing were also very important
to over 60 percent of those surveyed. In addition, about 55 percent felt
that having lots of things to see and do and being entertained were very
important. Less significant, meeting someone of the opposite sex was
very important to only 8 percent and visiting places my family came from
was very important to 15 percent. Table 1 displays the mean rank and
importance of each of the 20 motivations.

     Five factors representing twenty motivations were abstracted from
the factor analysis. These motivation factors are labeled as 1) novelty,
education and prestige motivations, 2) health and social motivations, 3)
enhancement of kinship relationship motivations, 4) regression, or fun
and entertainment motivations, and 5) relaxation and escape motivations.
The variance explained by the five factors is 55.8%. The eigenvalues,
factor loadings, and Cronbach's alpha scores are provided in Table 2.

     However, some caution is in order when examining these motivations.
First, the specific motivation components were preselected by the data
collectors. They did not come from open-ended questioning. Therefore,
motivations of even primary importance may have been left out of the
questionnaire. Second, motivations dealing with self-actualization,
adventure, and the consistency-complexity continuum are conspicuously
absent. From these two problems we can surmise that not all possible
travel motivations have been covered. However, we may assume that a
significant majority of the "push" motivations identified in the
literature have been included.


FAMILY LIFE CYCLE MARKET SEGMENTS


     The second section of the study aimed at gaining insight into the
family life cycle stages of resort vacationers. Information about
current vacationer frequencies can be important to marketers concerned
with market development and market penetration. Marital status and
presence of children at home were the two key variables used to segment
family life cycle stages in this study. Each group is represented at
resorts. Predictably, the largest life cycle stage is made up of married
couples without children at home; they are 36% of the total. Singles
without children and married resort goers with children each make up 27%
of the total. The smallest group are single parents with 11%.

     By comparison, in the United States in 1987, 28% of the population
were married without children at home, 43% were married with children, 9%
were single parents, and 13% were single without children.(17) From this

comparison with the general population, resorts attract more than their share of married couples without children and singles without children, and less than their share of families with children.

A further breakdown of the family life cycle stages by age and labor force would add to the findings of this study. However, no standards of categorization for these variables have yet been established.

## MOTIVATION DIFFERENCES ACROSS FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES

The third portion of this study focused on the different magnitudes these motivation factors exhibit among some specific target markets. The remainder of the study concentrates on the analysis of changing motivations with respect to the four defined life cycle stages (single, with no children, married, with no children at home, single, with children, and married, with children).

An analysis of variance showed that some motivations differed significantly across the four defined life cycle groups while others did not. The statistical results are provided in Table 3. No significant differences occurred among family life cycles for the "relaxation and escape" and the "novelty, education, and prestige" motivations. However, the other motivation factors significantly differ in importance among some life cycle stages. "Enhancement of kinship relationships" is more important to those who are married than those who are single. Conversely, the "health and social" motive is more important to single vacationers than family vacationers with children. Also, "regression, or fun and entertainment" is significantly less important to married couples with or without children than to single groups.

## DISCUSSION

Several meaningful conclusions can be drawn from this study that will be beneficial to researchers and marketers. By far the largest vacationing life cycle stage is married people with no children living at home. These couples are vacationing to relax and enjoy each other's company. They make up a percentage at the resort high above their national population share. With the success resorts are having attracting these couples, a marketing penetration strategy would be appropriate for this market segment. Further breaking down this life cycle stage by age adds another dimension to this information. Of the 39 percent respondents in this group, almost 88 percent are over 40 and only 12 percent are under 40. Therefore, older married couples without children are the prime market for resort vacations. Younger married couples without children provide a market development opportunity for resort marketers. By effectively marketing the rest and enhancement of spousal relationships offered at a resort, the married couples without children, this market could be penetrated and developed even further. The most important motivation to every life cycle stage is rest and relaxation. Also, the company of family was very important to most every stage. However, staying healthy and taking advantage of social

situations are relatively unimportant to resort goers. These traditionally important motivations at resorts take a backseat to rest, family and fun. As one might expect, cultural motivations are also less important. Do resorts market with the primary motivators of rest and family in mind? Are they attempting to meet the needs of their customers in this way? Perhaps the exotic locations considered important to resort developers and managers are not nearly as important as the resort's ability to help travelers relax and enjoy the companionship of spouse and family. This analysis suggests that a resort able to meet and market these needs would be very successful.

The motivations described here are generally considered "push" motivations. Other factors that determine resort decisions, such as destination characteristics or "pull" motivations, are not considered in this study. A further study that expanded the family life cycle stages and included destination characteristics would add nicely to the purposes of this research.

From the analysis one can also see that only some motivation factors differ significantly among life cycles. Married respondents with or without children vary from single respondents without children in the importance placed on family relationships at the resort. Family resorts should mark the difference. Married couples without children care significantly less about fun and entertainment than every other life cycle stage. Health and social motivations are significantly more important to singles than nuclear family units. Therefore, a resort marketing to couples of nuclear families should stress rest and enjoyment of the family. Fun and entertainment rather than family relationship should be stressed to singles and single parents. Nevertheless, relaxation and escape from routine are the dominant motivations for all resort vacationers.

In conclusion, differences among life cycle motivations may help to attract markets segmented by life cycle stage, but these differences are not intense or unexpected. Opportunities for marketing penetration and development are available among life cycle stages and motivational psychographics can play a role in these marketing strategies.

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Table 1
Importance of Mean Score and Rank of Motivations
for Resort Trips

| Motivations | Average Importance Mean Score | Ranked Importance |
|---|---|---|
| Spending time with someone special | 3.41 | 3 |
| Experiencing a simpler lifestyle | 2.53 | 15 |
| Being together as a family | 3.28 | 6 |
| Going places many people haven't seen | 2.45 | 16 |
| Talking about the trip after I return home | 2.60 | 14 |
| Getting way from pressures and responsibilities | 3.48 | 2 |
| Experiencing different cultures, ways of life | 2.65 | 12 |
| Travelling to places where I feel safe & secure | 3.07 | 7 |
| Being physically active | 3.05 | 8 |
| Having fun, being entertained | 3.37 | 4 |
| Having lots of different things to see and do | 3.35 | 5 |
| Visiting places my family came from | 2.10 | 19 |
| Becoming more healthy and fit | 2.75 | 11 |
| Just resting and relaxing | 3.54 | 1 |
| Taking advantage of reduced fares | 2.89 | 9 |
| Fulfilling a dream of visiting a place I've always wanted to visit | 2.80 | 10 |
| Meeting someone of the opposite sex | 1.60 | 20 |
| Finding thrills and excitement | 2.42 | 18 |
| Meeting people of similar interests | 2.65 | 13 |
| Being pampered, having all my needs attended to | 2.43 | 17 |

Note: Respondent utilized a 4-point Likert type scale to indicate the importance of each motivation item. (1=Not at all important, 2=Not very important, 3=Somewhat important, and 4=Very Important).

Table 2
Factor Analysis of Travel Motivations for Resort Trips

| MOTIVATION FACTORS & COMPONENTS | FACTOR LOADING | EIGEN VALUE | CRONBACH'S ALPHA |
|---|---|---|---|
| Novelty, Education & Prestige Motivations | | 4.7509 | 0.6899 |
| Fulfilling a dream of visiting a place I've always wanted to visit | 0.7006 | | |
| Experiencing different cultures & ways of life | 0.6809 | | |
| Going places many people haven't seen | 0.6464 | | |
| Being pampered & having all my needs attended to | 0.4925 | | |
| Taking advantage of reduced fares | 0.4884 | | |
| Talking about the trip after I return home | 0.4460 | | |
| Health & Social Motivations | | 2.0803 | 0.7031 |
| Becoming more healthy & fit | 0.7573 | | |
| Meeting people of similar interests | 0.6966 | | |
| Being physically active | 0.5486 | | |
| Meeting someone of the opposite sex | 0.5474 | | |
| Experiencing a simpler lifestyle | 0.5245 | | |
| Visiting places my family came from | 0.4788 | | |
| Enhancement of Kinship Relationship Motivations | | 1.7760 | 0.6029 |
| Spending time with someone special | 0.8009 | | |
| Being together as a family | 0.7633 | | |
| Traveling to places where I feel safe & secure | 0.4060 | | |
| Regression or Fun & Entertainment Motivations | | 1.3626 | 0.6541 |
| Having fun and being entertained | 0.7904 | | |
| Having lots of different things to see & do | 0.5913 | | |
| Finding thrills and excitement | 0.5062 | | |
| Relaxation & Escape Motivations | | 1.1957 | 0.4302 |
| Just resting and relaxing | 0.7727 | | |
| Getting away from pressures & responsibilities | 0.5104 | | |

Table 3
Analysis of Variance for Motivation Factors
Across Four Life Cycles

| MOTIVATION FACTORS | LIFE CYCLES | | | | F-value | F-prob |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Single, No Children n=65 | Married, No Children n=89 | Single, Children n=27 | Married Children n=64 | | |
| Importance Mean Score of Motivations | | | | | | |
| Relaxation and escape | 3.44 | 3.46 | 3.50 | 3.65 | 1.53 | .20 |
| Enhancement of kinship relations | 2.97a | 3.35b | 3.27ab | 3.41b | 4.57 | .00 |
| Fun and entertainment | 3.22b | 2.78a | 3.35b | 3.10b | 7.68 | .00 |
| Novelty, education & prestige | 2.67 | 2.53 | 2.70 | 2.66 | 0.77 | .51 |
| Health & social | 2.56b | 2.39ab | 2.66b | 2.31a | 2.88 | .03 |

Note:  a.  Motivation Importance Ranking: 1=Not at all important, 2=Not very
          important, 3=Somewhat important, and 4=Very important.
       b.  Life cycle groups with different subscripts for specific motivation
          factors are significantly different (Duncan's multiple range test,
          p=.05)