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**BEER DRINKING SMOKERS AND GRANOLA CRUNCHERS:
THE CHALLENGE OF PHYSICALLY AND SOCIALLY ACCOMODATING
INCOMPATIBLE WINTER RESORT MARKET SEGMENTS**

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ABSTRACT

Earlier research which focuses on conflicts between participants in different kinds of recreational activity has demonstrated that the most intense forms of physical and social incompatibility exist between mechanized and non-mechanized recreationists. The purpose of this research effort was to describe and compare groups of individuals who are likely to stay at a resort primarily for the purpose of engaging in snowmobiling or cross-country skiing activities. Social incompatibility was clearly evident in the resort setting. Both snowmobilers and cross-country skiers believe that their outdoor space requirements can be accomodated in an integrated resort setting if proper design and management decisions are made. Greater tolerance of snowmobilers by cross-country skiers, and of cross-country skiers by snowmobilers is emerging, but the social incompatibility of the two markets is still real and of significant interest to those who would attempt to serve both.

INTRODUCTION

In vacation areas where summer months are few and winters are long and cold, developers and operators of resort properties are faced with the need to vary their facility, service and program offerings almost as frequently and dramatically as the fluctuations they experience in weather. For any number of reasons (including the expansive natural setting, accessible off-site facilities, reduced personal safety risk from harsh weather, and a general outdoor orientation to recreational activity), warm weather guests may be more plentiful and less reliant on the inside space of the resort for their entertainment and facilitation of their recreational pursuits. Resort guests during the winter months are more likely to depend on and expect the resort to have buildings, rooms and indoor facilities that not only provide a physically comfortable and safe environment, but also accommodate desirable social interaction. In order to provide a desirable social environment, it is important that socially compatible guest populations be targeted in resort marketing efforts. Thus, the resort developer and operator face the challenge of

identifying compatible market segments and providing the physical and social facilities that guests require for a successful resort experience. This is especially important for winter operations.

There are times, however, when the need to survive financially forces resort operators to consider markets which include segments that are or could be socially incompatible and which have vastly different facility and service requirements. Two such summer market segments are power boaters and canoeists, and examples of incompatible winter segments are snowmobilers and cross-country skiers.

Earlier research which focuses on conflicts between participants in different kinds of recreational activity has demonstrated that the most intense forms of physical and social incompatibility exist between mechanized and non-mechanized recreationists (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). This conclusion was based on the study of several recreational land (and water) use conflict situations. Jackson and Wong (4) suggested that "there are four basic interrelated principles concerning conflicts between incompatible recreational activities and the people who participate in them". The first is that the variation in levels of mechanization involved in the activities influences the probability of conflict. The second is that conflict is usually asymmetrical with mechanized recreationists showing greater indifference to the interaction situation than non-mechanized recreationists who commonly consider mechanized forms of recreation incompatible with their activity. The third principle is that incompatibility is based on compromise of motivations and expectations, and is more complex than merely competition for spatial resources. Finally, Jackson and Wong propose that there are two levels of conflict: "direct contact, including perceived impacts of another activity on the environment; and an indirect confrontation representing a general or more pervasive feeling of disliking and/or unwillingness to appreciate others' views" (4, p. 49).

In the studies from which these conclusions were drawn, observation was limited to user conflict in the narrow context of the activity setting. None of the researchers considered the potential incompatibility that might be displayed in extended settings where the conflicting recreationists may also interact.

One extended setting where interaction is likely is the resort complex. Consistent with Jackson and Wong's fourth principle, it is reasonable to expect that value and motive driven conflict during recreational activity will manifest itself as social conflict in the pre or post-activity environment of the resort common areas. For this reason it is essential that developers and operators not only recognize the need for variation in physical facilities to accommodate these distinct market segments, but they must understand the problem of social incompatibility and learn to minimize its negative effects on the guests' resort experience.

The purpose of this research effort was to describe and compare groups of individuals who are likely to stay at a resort primarily for the purpose of engaging in snowmobiling or cross-country skiing activities. The study was designed to facilitate identification of facility, service and program requirements of each winter market segment, and to describe the nature and

extent of social incompatibility of snowmobilers and cross-country skiers in the resort setting. This article reports the results of the study and discusses their implications for developers, operators and marketers of commercial recreation resorts.

METHOD

The data required for this study of resort winter market segments was provided by six samples of snowmobilers and five samples of cross-country skiers. A small sample (n=15) of snowmobilers selected from the list of directors of a large snowmobile trail and touring association in Canada provided data collection interviews and the Repertory Role Construct Test (5), that were required for the development of the primary data collection instrument. The second sample of snowmobilers (n=1,265) was drawn from the membership lists of two large Canadian snowmobiling clubs. This group provided the bulk of data used in the segment profiling and issues identification part of the study. Four more snowmobiler samples (two groups in the United States [n=13] and two groups in Canada [n=12]) were drawn for participation in data collection and refinement through focus group meetings.

Five samples of cross-country skiers were also drawn. The first sample (n=15) included individuals who were identified through a snowball sampling technique with an imposed condition of relative proximity to a particular major urban centre and a proposed resort development site. This sample provided data that were required for the development of the primary data collection instrument (mail survey questionnaire). The second sample of cross-country skiers (n=725) was drawn randomly from the membership lists of a provincial cross-country skiing association and an urban community club. This larger group provided the detailed information used in profile and issues related measurement of the cross-country skiing population. Three more convenience samples were drawn from Canada and the United States for participation in data collection through focus group meetings.

Data were collected by means of face-to-face interviews (30), self-administered mail survey questionnaires (1,990), and focus group interviews (7). Survey data were subjected to a variety of statistical comparisons and manipulations as warranted by the research questions. Most direct comparisons involved T-tests, and some regression analyses were conducted in an attempt to identify possible predictors of observed behavior or behavioral intention.

RESULTS

The demographic profiles of the snowmobiler and cross-country skier market segments differed in several significant ways. As can be seen from the results reported in Table 1, the snowmobiler population is comprised of a larger percentage of males, is younger and has fewer divorced or separated individuals. Snowmobilers generally have fewer years of formal education

and have lower average household incomes than do the cross-country skiers. There are more older adults (>50 years of age) in snowmobiler households. These results are consistent with the observations of Jackson and Wong (4) and Knopp (6) in their earlier comparisons of the two segments.

With respect to resort vacation behavior, snowmobilers are less likely to vacation in the summer. Table 2 demonstrates that, in the winter, they will travel for longer periods of time to a snowmobiling destination than would cross-country skiers to a ski resort. Snowmobilers are more likely to take vacations specifically to participate in their preferred winter activity, and they tend to spend more nights in commercial lodging while on vacation. Although vacationing snowmobilers spend less than do cross-country skiers on transportation, lodging, food and beverages, and retail items, they demonstrate a greater willingness to pay more than the reference price for a basic hotel room if the room is in a resort that caters specifically to the interests of snowmobiling enthusiasts.

The differences between these two winter market segments with respect to weekend getaway behavior are outlined in Table 3. They are generally consistent with observed vacation behavior, except that weekend snowmobilers spend considerably more than do cross-country skiers on transportation and food and beverage services.

Resort facility, program and service requirements of the two groups also differed in several important areas. Cross-country skiers were more interested in child care services at the resort, a healthy menu in the restaurant, basic kitchen facilities (microwave oven and sink) in guest rooms, a fireplace in the guest room, and programmed evening activities. The cross-country skiers wanted quiet common areas in the resort building and a range of alternative outdoor winter activities for children and other family members. Both snowmobilers and skiers rated groomed, directly accessible trails as the most important outdoor facility feature of a resort, but emphasized that ski and snowmobile trails should never cross each other nor be in the same area. For indoor recreation and lodging areas they expressed great interest in a swimming pool, whirlpool and sauna, extra large closets in guest rooms, and private clothes drying facilities.

Table 4 lists facility and service features that differ in importance or priority for the two sample populations. Items marked with an (A) for a particular sample are considered to be essential, basic elements of any resort hoping to serve this market segment. Items marked with a (B) are items which would significantly enhance the attractiveness of the resort, and items marked with a (C) are considered to be 'nice' but may or may not contribute to the relative attractiveness of the resort complex.

Social incompatibility was clearly evident in the resort setting. Disdain and a relative amount of intolerance for each group by the other were observed and support for Knopp's suggestion that "recreation activities often serve as a symbolic identification for a cultural group" (6, p. 7) was evident. Cross-country skiers in the focus groups and interview situations tended to view themselves as healthy, fit and clean individuals who were not at all like the "beer drinking smokers" who ride noisy

machines all day and have no respect for the environment. Snowmobilers who were interviewed or participated in focus group discussions, on the other hand, saw themselves as sociable, hard working and energetic individuals who are not at all like the self-centred "granola crunchers" who, in their opinion, won't share the wilderness and don't contribute to the economy. Both groups expressed a need for spatial and social separation during their primary recreational activity and at other times while in the resort setting.

DISCUSSION

One of the main benefits that cross-country skiers seek in their chosen recreation is serenity and solitude. They will not realize that benefit if snowmobiles are being used nearby and are audible, visible or artifactually evident. The need for spatial and perceptual separation is just as important for snowmobilers who want to be able to enjoy trail riding without the fear of ruining a groomed ski trail or injuring a skier. Both snowmobilers and cross-country skiers believe that their outdoor space requirements can be accommodated in an integrated resort setting if proper design and management decisions are made. The results of this study can help guide that decision-making effort.

Some social separation should also be facilitated in the design and operation of the resort. Greater tolerance of snowmobilers by cross-country skiers, and of cross-country skiers by snowmobilers is emerging, but the social incompatibility of the two markets is still real and of significant interest to those who would attempt to serve both.

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TABLE 1
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF
 SNOWMOBILERS AND CROSS COUNTRY SKIERS

| Characteristic | Snowmobiler | Cross Country Skier |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| % male | 88.4 | 61.3 |
| mean age of respondent | 37.4 | 40.7 |
| % married | 75.6 | 70.8 |
| % single | 20.6 | 17.3 |
| % divorced or separated | 3.8 | 11.9 |
| % with < High School education | 12.8 | 4.3 |
| % with High School education | 48.6 | 11.7 |
| % with some post-secondary education | 22.8 | 25.5 |
| % with college or university diploma | 12.8 | 39.0 |
| % with graduate work | 3.0 | 19.6 |
| % with income < \$20,000 | 9.3 | 4.9 |
| % with income \$20-39,999 | 30.7 | 24.1 |
| % with income \$40-59,999 | 35.9 | 37.2 |
| % with income \$60-79,999 | 16.2 | 19.1 |
| % with income \$80,000 or more | 8.0 | 14.8 |
| mean household size | 3.16 | 3.06 |
| mean # < 6 yrs old | .59 | .40 |
| mean # 6-12 yrs old | .59 | .87 |
| mean # 13-17 yrs old | .44 | .58 |
| mean # 18-29 yrs old | 1.09 | .66 |
| mean # 30-49 yrs old | 1.37 | 1.51 |
| mean # 50-64 yrs old | .64 | .48 |
| mean # >65 yrs old | .38 | .13 |

TABLE 2
 VACATION BEHAVIOR PROFILE OF
 SNOWMOBILERS AND CROSS COUNTRY SKIERS

| Behavior Variable | Snowmobilers | Cross Country Skiers |
|---|--------------|----------------------|
| % most likely to go in summer | 49.3 | 61.1 |
| % most likely to go in autumn | 6.3 | 8.4 |
| % most likely to go in winter | 33.6 | 18.7 |
| % most likely to go in spring | 4.9 | 4.2 |
| % most likely to go at Christmas | 6.0 | 7.6 |
| % least likely to go in summer | 19.0 | 14.9 |
| % least likely to go in autumn | 27.2 | 29.2 |
| % least likely to go in winter | 14.6 | 20.8 |
| % least likely to go in spring | 25.8 | 21.5 |
| % least likely to go at Christmas | 13.4 | 13.5 |
| Hours would travel in winter | 13.2 | 12.0 |
| # of snowm./xc ski vacations in 1989-90 | 0.7 | 0.2 |
| Ave. nights in commercial lodging/winter vacation | 1.1 | 0.5 |
| Ave. \$ spent on transportation/win. vacation | 110.4 | 150.34 |
| Ave. \$ spent on lodging/win. vacation | 120.9 | 213.62 |
| Ave. \$ spent on food & bev./win. vacation | 134.9 | 147.05 |
| Ave. \$ spent on retail /win. vacation | 57.6 | 88.46 |
| Average amount (\$) willing to pay above reference price for specified features | 33.63 | 10.60 |

TABLE 3
WEEKEND GETAWAY BEHAVIOR PROFILE OF
SNOWMOBILERS AND CROSS COUNTRY SKIERS

| Behavior Variable | Snowmobilers | Cross Country Skiers |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| % most likely to go in summer | 42.2 | 45.4 |
| % most likely to go in autumn | 6.7 | 7.2 |
| % most likely to go in winter | 46.9 | 42.2 |
| % most likely to go in spring | 4.2 | 5.2 |
| % least likely to go in summer | 18.6 | 18.1 |
| % least likely to go in autumn | 30.8 | 30.2 |
| % least likely to go in winter | 12.8 | 19.8 |
| % least likely to go in spring | 37.7 | 31.9 |
| Hours would travel in winter | 5.8 | 4.0 |
| # of weekend getaways in 1989-90 | 4.2 | 1.5 |
| Ave # of nights in commercial lodging | 1.3 | 1.0 |
| Ave. \$ spent on transportation/w. getaway | 99.6 | 47.69 |
| Ave. \$ spent on lodging/w. getaway | 79.6 | 95.55 |
| Ave. \$ spent on food & bev./w. getaway | 104.4 | 70.32 |
| Ave. \$ spent on retail /w. getaway | 40.9 | 24.49 |

TABLE 4
RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC FACILITY
AND SERVICE FEATURES TO EACH WINTER MARKET SEGMENT

| Facility/Service | Snow- mobile | Cross Country Ski |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Trails - groomed | A | A |
| Trails - lighted | C | B |
| Trails - direct access | A | A |
| Trail condition reports | B | B |
| Snowmobile rental | C | C |
| Cross country ski rental | C | B |
| Snowmobile service area | B | C |
| Snowmobile mechanic on-call | C | C |
| Gasoline on or near site | A | C |
| Ventilated waxing room | C | A |
| Secure snowmobile parking compound | A | C |
| Ski lockers - not in guest room | C | C |
| Ski closet - in guest room | C | B |
| Larger closet for winter sport clothing | A | A |
| Large meeting/party room | B | B |
| Smaller meeting rooms | C | B |
| Winter event administration area | B | A |
| Basic audio-visual equipment | C | C |
| Child care services | C | B |
| Large foyer | B | C |
| In-room clothes drying facilities | B | B |
| Boot-tolerant flooring in common areas | B | C |
| Coffee shop/restaurant | A | A |
| 'Healthy' menu in restaurant | C | B |
| Microwave and sink in room | B | A |
| Fireplace in room | C | B |
| Fireplace in group area | B | B |
| Whirlpool/sauna | A | A |
| Outdoor event staging area | B | B |
| Snowmobile loading ramps | C | C |
| Outdoor skating area | C | C |
| Swimming pool | A | A |
| Games room (pool, shuffleboard, video games) | B | B |
| Programmed evening activities | C | B |