CHAPTER 2

Marketing to the Traveling Public

I have wandered all my life, and I also traveled; the difference between the two being this, that we wander for distraction, but we travel for fulfillment.

—Hilaire Belloc

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of segmenting the tourism market.
2. Identify the four major models of tourist motivations.
3. List and describe the steps involved in segmenting a market.
4. Describe the major approaches that are used to segment the tourism market.
5. Discuss the importance of business and professional, incentive, SMERF, mature, and special-interest travelers.
6. Describe how information gained from segmenting the tourism market can be used to target and meet the wants, needs, and expectations of the traveling public.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

A Ride on the Wild Side!

"Let's start our own rafting business!" When Jim first mentioned the idea to Andy, they both laughed. Sure, they had been raft guides during summer breaks, but what did they really know about starting and running a business? As they stared through their dorm window at the leaves falling from the trees and thought about their summer adventures, they began to talk about the possibilities.

It had all started on a summer vacation. Like many tourists who visit the Rocky Mountains, they had taken a whitewater rafting trip. During this trip, they struck up a conversation with Casey, the owner of the company. At first, what they learned from Casey seemed almost too good to be true. Was it really possible to spend the summer months guiding people through the rapids on a beautiful mountain river and earn a living at the same time?

The lure of the outdoors, the river, and job offers to work for Casey as raft guides pulled them back to that same small mountain town the following summer. Casey, like most business owners in small tourist towns, was always looking for good potential employees. When he asked Jim and Andy to come back and work for him the next summer, they jumped at the opportunity.

Now, after two summers of experience, Jim wanted Andy to help him start their own whitewater rafting business. Once Andy said yes to the idea, things really started happening. They scanned maps of the Rocky Mountain region to locate premier rafting rivers and thumbed through every outdoor enthusiast magazine they could find. They wrote to government agencies in every location that looked interesting to find out what types of permits and licenses were needed. After months of research, they decided on the perfect location.

On spring break, they visited the town where they wanted to set up their business. It was perfect: no other rafting companies in town and a great place for rent with a barn and an old house right on the river. Everything seemed to fall into place. Jim's grandmother agreed to lend them enough money to purchase their equipment, and two of their college professors helped them develop a business plan. Casey even offered them some words of encouragement as they prepared to launch their new business.

After graduation, Jim and Andy were ready to put their knowledge and experience to work. They moved in, hung up their sign, opened the doors, and waited for the customers to come to their new business, A Ride on the Wild Side! June was a great month, but July and August were even better! In fact, business was so good and they were so busy, they almost didn't notice a story in the local paper announcing the granting of a permit for another rafting company.

When the rafting season was over, Jim and Andy stored their equipment, counted their profits, discussed their successes and mistakes, and began to think about next year. What would the new competition mean for them? There had been plenty of customers this year, but what about next year? Would there be enough business for two companies? Who were their customers? Where did they come from? How did they find out about A Ride on the Wild Side!? Would they return? Would they tell others about their experiences?

To continue their success and prosper with new competition on the horizon, they needed to know more about marketing and customer service. As they thought about the future, they realized many of the lessons they had learned about business in their college courses would be useful.

Introduction

In Chapter 1, we presented a model highlighting the scope and complexity of the tourism industry. Referring back to this model, notice that the center is the focal point and primary reason for all tourism activities: travelers. In this chapter, we will learn more

The ancient Roman ruins attract a wide variety of tourists. Photo by Cathy Hsu

about these travelers (tourists) and how we can plan to meet their wants and needs successfully. Take a minute to look around and notice all the different types of people at your college or university. The diversity of this group may be similar in many ways to the diversity of guests being served in the tourism industry. Because these tourists are at the heart of the industry, we need to know more about who they are, why they travel, and what they expect during their travels.

Any number of activities, including seeking the assistance of a travel agent, flying to another city, or walking through the gates of a theme park, change a person into an active participant using tourism services. As consumers of these tourism services, we have sometimes similar, as well as different, needs. In response to the tasks of understanding consumers, their needs, and the actions they take to satisfy these needs, a whole branch of marketing, **consumer behavior**, has developed.

Consumer behavior is the study of consumer characteristics and the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, and use goods and services to satisfy wants and needs. How we behave as consumers is determined by a variety of interpersonal influences (e.g., we learn how to make shopping decisions from our parents) and by our individual characteristics (gender, age, personality, etc.). Consumers are likely to return and continue to use goods and services as long as their needs are met. Consequently, we need to learn more about who these consumers are and what they need and want.

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

Think of the number and variety of decisions that go into a vacation. First, you have to decide in a general way that you want to spend a period of time away from your home area. That time period may run the gamut from a quick overnight escape to a full year's travel to "find yourself." You then have to consider where you might want to go, your

destination. Will you travel to a single destination, such as Ogunquit, Maine, and stay put for a relaxing long weekend, or will you travel continuously during your vacation using a multi-destination itinerary? Will you rely on a travel professional to help in your planning, or will you do all the "legwork" yourself? Will you make lodging reservations and buy attraction tickets in advance, or will you simply wing it? Will you stick to your original plans and choices, or will you make modifications as your trip progresses? As you read this section, look at Figure 2.1 to aid your understanding. For leisure travelers, this thought process occurs in four stages and is often referred to as the dreaming (first decision), researching (second and third decisions), booking (fourth decision), experiencing (fifth decision), and then finally the sharing cycle. Social media made this process even more personal for many travelers as it creates the opportunity to share experiences real-time.

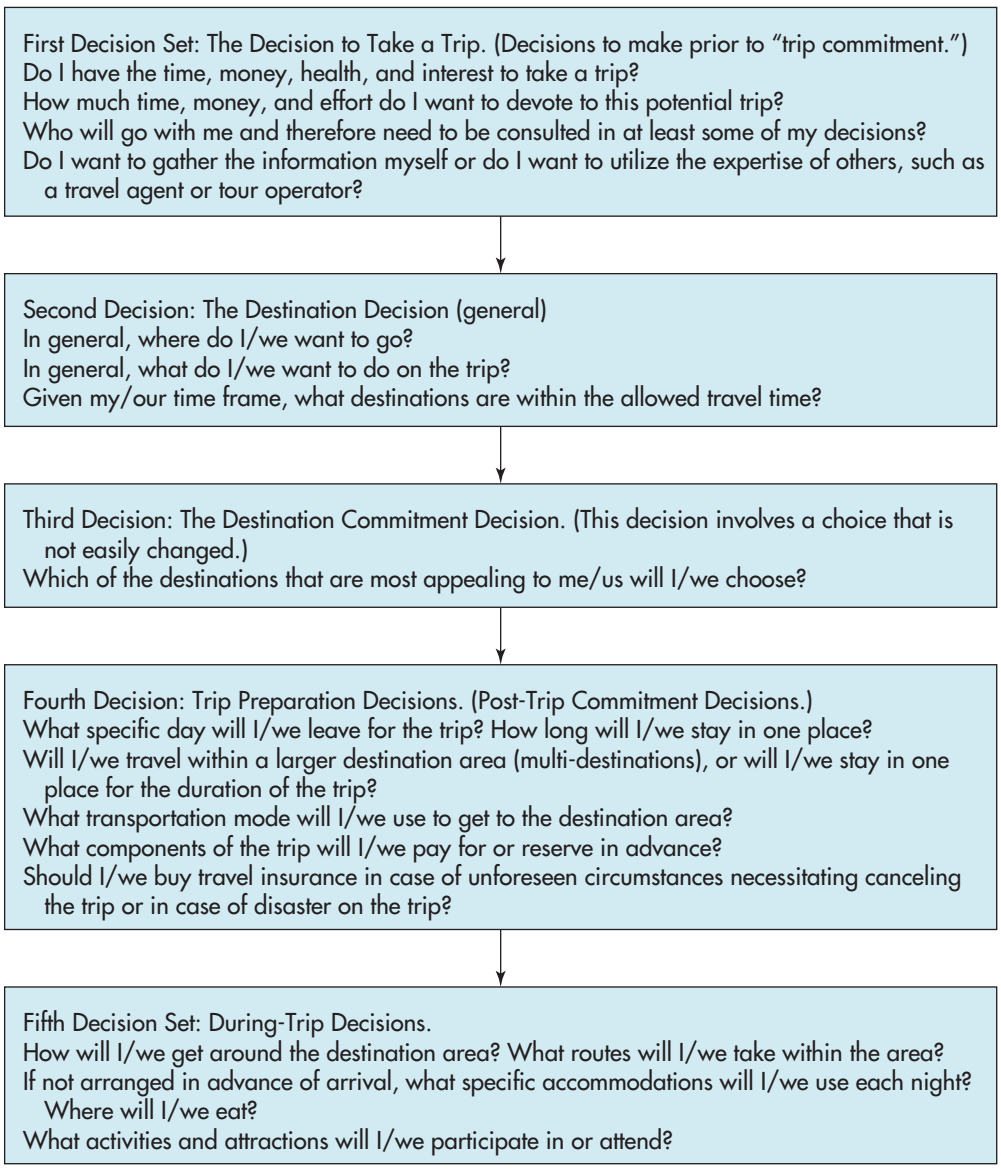


FIGURE 2.1
The travel decision-making process.

The previous paragraph hints at the endless number of decisions leisure travelers need to make. How and when do travelers make decisions? How much information do they gather prior to selecting their choice? The depth of information search conducted and the timing of that information gathering are of substantial importance to tourism suppliers. They want to provide the information that tourists desire at the time they most desire it. Consumer research has proven that we will most notice and remember advertising messages and other forms of information when we are actively seeking information to make a certain decision. This information receptive mode is called selective attention.[1]

Information Seeking

When we are in the midst of making a decision regarding a trip, we have a variety of information sources available. First, we have our own memory, including our existing base of knowledge and experiences. This form of memory reliance is called internal information search. Imagine Kurt and Sharon who are thinking about going on a weeklong family vacation. They recall the terrific time their kids had at that great Recreational Vehicle resort at Lake George in upstate New York and simply decide to make that trip again.

Frequently, we feel the need to gather additional information; this is termed *external information search*. These external sources are grouped into two types, personal sources and nonpersonal sources. Personal sources are individuals who provide us with information. A friend who recommends a rafting company that offers Colorado River trips through the Grand Canyon would be an example of a noncommercial personal source. Your trusted travel agent who helps you decide which cruise best fits the true you is an example of a commercial personal source. And, finally, the front desk clerk who suggests a fun nightspot where locals party is also a personal source of information.

Nonpersonal sources of information are all other forms of information available to you, from travel magazine ads to resort brochures to billboards along your trip route. Tourism suppliers can control to a large extent the information in nonpersonal sources, such as websites and pop-up ads. Messaging that is controlled by the supplier is called **induced information**. Travelers may also gather information from organic sources that are not controlled by the tourism supplier.[2] Examples of organic sources include travel guides, blogs, and travel review sites such as tripadvisor.com. However, one form of tourism information often consulted by long-trip-duration travelers are published travel guidebooks, which frequently include opinions and impressions from the authors/editors. Travel guides such as Frommer's and Lonely Planet are viewed as neutral sources of information because the author is usually not being compensated to make the recommendations included in the guide. Many travelers are also turning to blogs and review sites, which may or may not contain reliable and unbiased information. While many organic sites began with the intent to provide neutral information from user-generated content, consider the fact that there are also opportunities to post induced information on organic sources that can mislead travelers. We will explore the impact of blogs and user-generated content on the tourism industry when we turn our attention to technology issues in Chapter 5.

Although business and professional travelers will have a set plan and reservations for almost all components of their trips, leisure travelers have a full range of planning options. As suggested earlier, after deciding to travel, the next decision a traveler faces is where to go. And with the endless possibilities out there, that is often not a simple choice. Leisure travelers often spend hour upon hour gathering information about various destinations to find the one that most tickles their fancy. The conclusion to the destination decision may be very specific—"I'm going to Disney World!"—or it may be very general, such as Southeast Asia.

After the decision of "where" is made, travelers will differ on how much information they collect before making other decisions. A portion of vacationers will turn

most of the information gathering and decision making over to others, by using a travel agent and purchasing a tour package. Package tours allow the traveler to trust the judgment of a tour wholesaler to piece together the necessary services so that decision making by the traveler is minimal.[3] This is usually the case for travelers with limited experience in consuming travel products.

However, most experienced travelers are independent travelers, those who do not leave the planning to someone else. Specifically, independent travelers do not book all-inclusive packages that include transportation, accommodations, and activities at the destination. These travelers have many decisions to make, both before (pre-trip planning) and during their trip. Independent travelers tend to have more flexibility in their itineraries, in terms of where they go, how long they spend at any one place, where they stay, and what they do at each locale. Travel planning by independent travelers can be thought of as a continuum. Travelers may make virtually all decisions prior to departure regarding route, duration of stays, where to stay, and what they will do each day. On the other extreme of the continuum are the travelers who do virtually no pre-trip planning and allow their trip to evolve spontaneously.[4] For example, in studies of visitors to New Zealand (NZ), Tourism New Zealand researchers have found that more than 40% do absolutely no preplanning before their arrival on NZ shores.

By now, you realize that travel decision making involves a series of choices concerning many facets of a trip. "Compared to most other examples of consumer decision making, vacation decision making is a particularly complex and multifaceted matter, involving a series of decisions on multiple elements of the vacation itinerary."[5] (p. 20) What factors make pre-trip planning more likely or less likely? Research conducted in a variety of countries indicates that certain characteristics of a trip lead to greater information search by leisure travel consumers. These characteristics are lack of experience with the destination, longer duration of trip, farther away from home (especially international), commercial accommodations (rather than staying with friends or relatives), larger group size, and multiple destinations.

It's All in the Details

Logically, the length of a trip will play a role in determining how much pre-trip planning occurs. For short-term domestic trips, most tourists will plan many elements of the trip ahead of time, such as dates of the trip, destination, accommodations, and travel route. For such a trip, even the attractions to attend and other activities are likely to be planned ahead, although travelers will allow some flexibility in these areas.[6]

Trips of longer duration allow travelers the opportunity to have multiple destinations. Multi-destination trips tend to be less rigidly planned and allow for more spontaneity. Travelers who take long multi-destination trips tend to utilize guidebooks and on-site information sources for help in making decisions as they travel. Locals and other travelers met along the way are important personal sources of information regarding what to do, where to stay, and where to dine. Typically, the sequence of decision making for multi-destination, long-duration trips tends to be sub-destination decisions, followed by travel route (how to get from A to B), concluding with decisions concerning attractions and activities to attend/participate in.

Personality type and demographics also impact how much information search and trip planning a traveler will perform. Think of two very different friends of yours. One is a planner, a clock-watcher, and a deliberate thinker. The other is spontaneous, ready to drop everything and go where the wind blows him. Your first friend likely would enjoy pre-trip planning and view this information-gathering step as part of the challenge and fun of travel. Your other friend would view such planning as confining and ruining the surprise of a vacation. Generally speaking, older travelers tend to plan more, along with those who perceive substantial risk, such as those traveling in a country whose people do not speak the traveler's language.

Finally, think of the type of information travelers may want. In choosing a destination, travelers may seek general information to get a "feel" for the look, culture, and possible activities of the location. They may also seek more specific information once they have narrowed their focus to a few destinations, their choice set, so they can compare the possibilities in more detail. For example, Jo may want to take a fun-in-the-sun break from winter and decides from all the possibilities that she will go to one of the islands of the Caribbean. She needs detailed information about the islands she finds most intriguing. Once she chooses an island destination, St. Lucia, she will need information about resorts on the island to make an advance reservation. Finally, while at the destination, she will need to collect information to make individual decisions to satisfy her day-to-day needs for food, entertainment, local transportation, and the like.

Tourism suppliers therefore vary in the type of information they need to provide prospective customers. At the macro level, destination marketing organizations, such as Tourism British Columbia (using the slogan "Super Natural British Columbia"), need to entice visitors to their region by providing general information in an appealing format. At the micro level, individual hotels need to have websites that can be accessed directly or that are linked to the destination marketing site or will be listed when a traveler conducts a Web search. Small-scale area attractions, such as that of Jim and Andy from the chapter opener, need to have attractive brochures available in local area shops, restaurants, and the local visitor information center. From this discussion of decision making and information gathering, we hope you now have a better understanding of the challenges facing tourism suppliers in getting the right information to the right people at the right moment in time.

Foundations for Understanding Tourist Motivations

In Chapter 1, you learned that humans have traveled away from their homes throughout history. What has motivated people to leave familiar surroundings and travel to distant places? In this section, we will consider what psychological reasons compel individuals to travel. Psychologists have long studied motivations for a variety of human behaviors including the drive to travel. We will discuss four of the most well-accepted models of tourist motivations: push and pull motivations, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Pearce's travel career patterns (TCPs), and Plog's psychocentric–allocentric continuum.

Push and Pull Motivations

For decades, tourism researchers have grouped tourist motivations as push or pull factors. The notion is that travelers are both "pushed" to travel by personality traits or individual needs and wants, and "pulled" to travel by appealing attributes of travel destinations. Generally, the push motivations are useful for explaining the desire for travel while the pull motivations are useful for explaining the actual destination choice.[7] Table 2.1 lists many of the push and pull factors proposed and examined by tourism motivation researchers.

This "theory" of travel motivation highlights the fact that tourists are pushed (motivated) to travel by many factors simultaneously, and destinations pull (attract) visitors with a combination of resources. For instance, a tourist generates the desire to escape from his mundane day-to-day routine and seeks a destination that seems to offer the "ticket" to that escape. Research has shown that push and pull factors are matched by travelers. For example, studies have found a large percentage of travelers are motivated to travel by a desire to be pampered, comfortable, and entertained. Destinations that generate the most "pull" for this group of travelers are cities and beach resorts.

Several of the "push" factors listed in Table 2.1 are identified and researched personality traits (e.g., novelty seeking). An additional and particularly appropriate

Table 2.1 Push and Pull Travel Motivations

Push	Pull
Desire for escape	Beaches
Rest and relaxation	Recreation facilities
Health and fitness	Historic sites
Adventure	Reasonable prices
Prestige	Cultural resources
Social interaction	Undisturbed nature
Novelty seeking	Ease of access
Exploration	Cosmopolitan environment
Enhancement of relationships	Climate
Evaluation of self	Safety and security
Regression	Shopping facilities
Learning new things	Celebrity sighting opportunities
Desire for pampering/comfort	Popular attractions
Being entertained	Scenery and landscape
Hobbies	Quality accommodation

personality trait theory that relates to tourism is **optimal arousal theory**. Briefly, the core of this theory is that each of us has some optimal level of arousal at which we feel most comfortable. For some, that level is quite low, leading to a relaxed, slower-paced lifestyle, whereas for many, the optimal arousal level is very high, driving individuals constantly to seek new and challenging activities. A person who is stressed out by work may desire to reduce arousal by seeking a quiet seaside resort to spend some quiet time with a loved one. Another who is bored by the routine of his job and life may instead decide to travel to Europe and test his mettle on the ski slopes of the Alps.

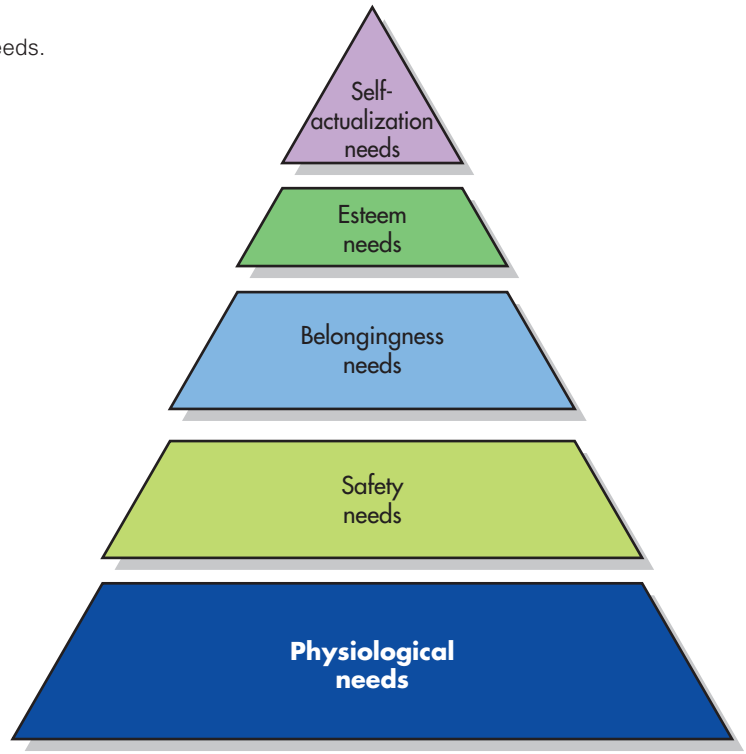
As mentioned in Chapter 1, other factors also play a role in the desire to travel. In addition to the push and pull factors, there are inhibitors to travel. Travel requires time, money, energy, and security. Work and school demands on time may keep a person from traveling. Lack of funds may restrict travel opportunities, and failing health prevents travel altogether for some. Family situations, for example, a new baby or caring for an elderly parent, may limit opportunities to travel. Finally, due to worldwide political unrest, uncertainty about personal safety while traveling has made many hesitant to travel. The extra security now mandated at many airports, borders, attractions, and events has dampened the carefree attitude some may have had prior to the increase in terrorist attacks on civilians, especially travelers, around the globe.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow provided a good general framework for describing human needs in his classic model depicting the hierarchy of needs.[8] This hierarchy, as can be seen in Figure 2.2, begins at the bottom with basic physiological needs and progresses upward through safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Maslow further grouped these needs into two broader categories: lower-order and higher-order needs. He believed that this hierarchy of needs was shared by everyone. Although the hierarchy of needs model was developed to explain human behavior and motivation in general, we will see later in this chapter how these same concepts can be applied specifically to tourists.

To understand an individual's behavior, we begin at the bottom of the hierarchy and move upward. As each level of needs is satisfied, individuals move up to the next level of needs. At the lowest levels are basic physiological and safety needs. Basic

FIGURE 2.2
Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



physiological needs consist of food, water, clothing, shelter, and sleep. Next are safety needs, which consist of protection, security, and the comfort we seek from familiar surroundings. In the advanced economies of developed countries such as Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Japan, and the United States, most consumers' lower-order physiological and safety needs have been met. Because these needs have been satisfied, they are no longer motivators. Individuals often strive to fulfill their higher-order needs through travel.

These higher-order needs include belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. Belongingness needs include love, friendship, affiliation, and group acceptance. Esteem needs include the desire for status, self-respect, and success. The highest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualization or the desire for self-fulfillment.

Travelers may be seeking to fulfill more than one need when they participate in a tourism activity. Let's put the ideas in Maslow's hierarchy of needs into practice by looking at specific examples in the tourism industry.

Physiological

- Tour packages that offer frequent rest stops
- Easily accessible food outlets in theme parks
- Sleeping shelters strategically located along the Appalachian Trail for overnight visitors

Safety

- Reservation service provided at government-approved agencies or locations
- Cruise ship lines providing medical facilities and doctors as part of their standard services
- Tour guide services provided in exotic or unfamiliar locations

Belongingness

- Group tours with people having similar interests and/or backgrounds

- Group recognition gained by belonging to frequent-user programs provided by airlines, hotels, restaurants, and car rental companies
- Trips made to explore one's ancestral roots

Esteem

- Elite status in frequent-user programs such as diamond, gold, or silver "memberships"
- Incentive travel awards for superior company performance
- Flowers, champagne, and other tokens provided to guests in recognition of special occasions

Self-Actualization

- Educational tours and cruises
- Trekking through Nepal, a personal challenge to one's physical limits
- Learning the language and culture before traveling to another country and then practicing on arrival

The hierarchy of needs model provides a good foundation as well as a brief glimpse into the fundamentals of motivation. Can you think of other examples?

The Travel Career Patterns

The Travel Career Patterns (TCPs) developed by Pearce[9] is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but it goes further by providing more detailed insights into specific tourist behaviors. The TCP model attempts to explain individual behaviors on the basis of stages in a tourist's life cycle. When you think about tourist life cycle stages, it may be helpful to remember that they are very similar to the stages individuals experience in their working careers. Just as a person tentatively enters a career and eventually becomes more proficient and effective based on experience, so do tourists as they venture into leisure activities.

According to Pearce, tourist motivations can be illustrated as three layers, where each layer consists of different travel motives. The most important common motives (e.g., novelty, escape/relax, and enhancing relationships) are found at the center in the core layer. The next layer, surrounding the core, includes the moderately important travel motives, which include internally oriented travel motives (e.g., self-actualization) and externally oriented motives (e.g., nature and host-site involvement). The outer layer consists of common, relatively stable, and less important travel motives (e.g., nostalgia, isolation, or social status). As shown in Figure 2.3, pleasure travelers at all stages of the TCP are influenced by the most important and central travel motives as well as by less important motives. However, as their travel career develops—in other words, as they grow older, pass through the stages of their life span, and gain more travel experience—pleasure travelers' moderately important travel motives shift from internally oriented needs to externally oriented needs.

The Psychocentric–Allocentric Model

Further attempts to understand and broadly describe the differing wants and needs of tourists have resulted in a widely used model developed by Stanley Plog.[10,11] Based on observable and consistent patterns of behavior, it is possible to use personality characteristics to understand tourists' behavior patterns further (see Table 2.2). Plog accomplished this task by originally classifying tourists along a continuum with **allocentrics** anchoring one end and **psychocentrics** anchoring the other.[9] In an update, Plog suggested the terms **venturers** and **dependables** were better descriptors for the end points.

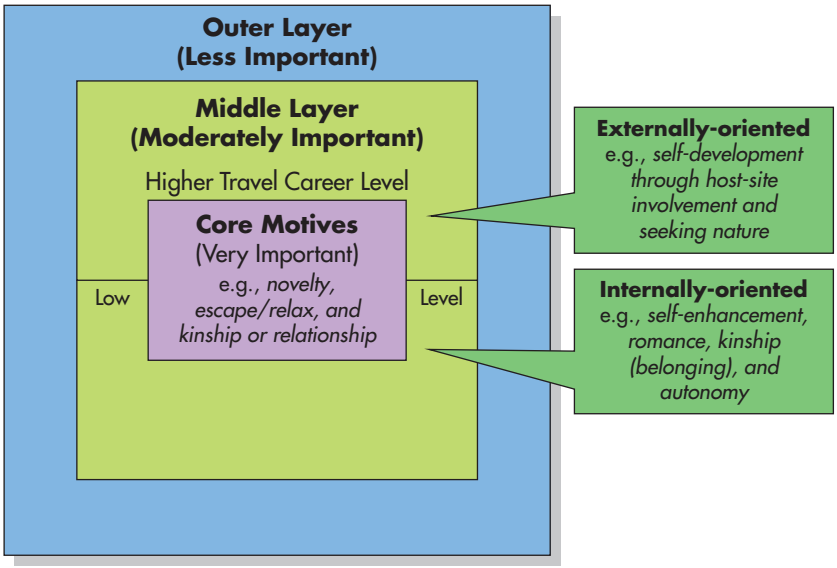


FIGURE 2.3
Travel Career Patterns (TCPs). *Source:* Based on Lee, U., and Pearce, P. L. (2003). Travel career patterns: Further conceptual adjustment of travel career ladder. *Proceedings of Second Asia Pacific Forum for Graduate Students Research in Tourism,* 65–78.

In general, venturers are seeking adventure through travel, whereas dependables are seeking the comforts of familiar surroundings in their tourism experiences. However, as the model shows, most travelers fall between these two extremes and would be classified as near-venturers, midcentrics, and near-dependables. Research has shown that while Plog's model may not provide a perfect picture of an individual's actual travel patterns, it can be useful to marketers as it appears to be effective in providing an understanding of their travel aspirations.[12]

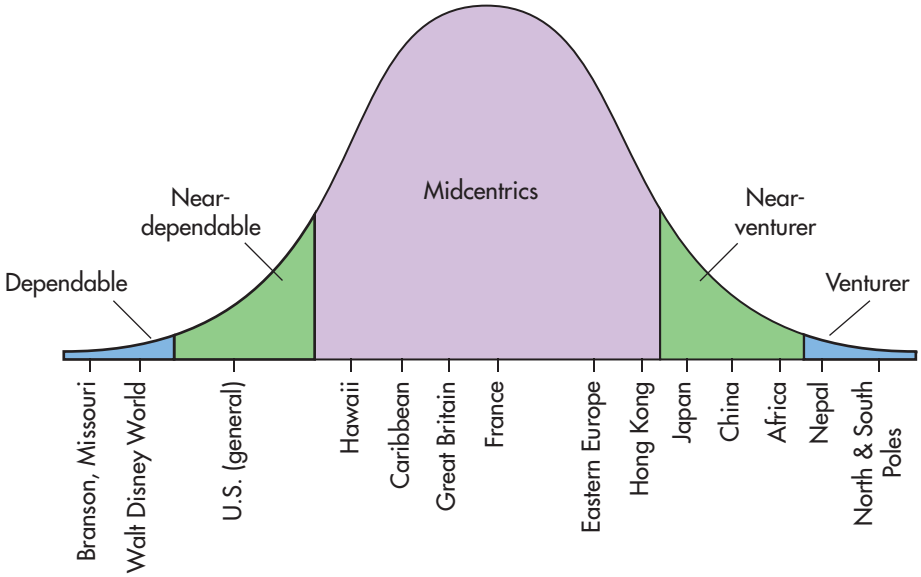
The venturer found at one extreme of Plog's continuum (see Figure 2.4) would be referred to by marketers as an "innovator." These innovators seek out new locations and activities before they are discovered by others. As more people become aware of these locations and activities, information about them is communicated or diffused to

Table 2.2 Psychocentric–Allocentric Personality Characteristics

Psychocentrics/Dependables	Allocentric/Venturers
Prefer familiar travel destinations	Prefer non-"touristy" destinations
Like commonplace activities at destinations	Enjoy discovering new destinations before others have visited them
Prefer relaxing sun-and-fun spots	Prefer unusual destinations
Prefer low activity levels	Prefer high activity levels
Prefer driving to destinations	Prefer flying to destinations
Prefer heavy tourist accommodations, such as hotel development, family-style restaurants, and souvenir shops	Prefer services such as adequate to good accommodations and food, and few developed tourist attractions
Prefer familiar rather than foreign featuring a full schedule of activities	Enjoy interacting with people from different cultures
Prefer purchasing complete tour packages	Prefer tour arrangements that include basics (transportation and accommodations) and allow for considerable flexibility

Source: Based on Plog, S. C. (1974, February). Why destination areas rise and fall in popularity. *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, pp. 55–58; Plog, S. (2001). Why destination areas rise and fall in popularity. *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42(3), 13; Plog, S. C. (2002). The power of psychographics and the concept of venturesomeness. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40, 244–251.

FIGURE 2.4
Psychographic positions of destinations.



Wading into The Narrows at Zion National Park fulfills venture traveler's needs. Photo by Sabrina Cook

more and more people. Interest in traveling to these new locations or experiencing new activities passes from the venturer to the midcentric and eventually to the dependable as these locations or activities become commonplace.

The dependable found at the opposite extreme of Plog's continuum would most likely be tradition bound and tend to be uncomfortable with new and different activities and/or locations. These individuals would be interested only in visiting popular locations and participating in customary activities. They desire predictability and the comforting reassurance that other visitors have enjoyed the same experiences.

Dependables can enter a McDonald's restaurant throughout the world and find a familiar atmosphere and menu. On the other extreme, venturers may be drawn by the allure of seeking out unique travel and tourism experiences that have previously gone unnoticed. Taking a rubber raft down the headwaters of the Amazon River or trekking among the highland villages of Nepal might appeal to the venturesome travelers today, but they will be looking for something new and different tomorrow.

The creators of the Disney mystique may be catering to a broad cross section of visitors. For dependables, a Disney theme park assures them of similarity and consistency in operations. However, Disney is continually adding new attractions and entertainment to appeal to a broader market group of visitors. How would you classify yourself along this continuum? To find the answer, log on to BestTripChoices.com and take a short quiz.

Segmenting the Tourism Market

The old saying "You can't please all the people all the time" certainly holds true for tourism service suppliers. Because you can't please everyone, whom should you please? One common approach to answering this question is to focus marketing efforts by segmenting potential customers into groups with fairly similar wants and needs.

Identifying tourism customers and deciding how to meet their wants and needs is a basic task facing everyone in the tourism industry. In large organizations, this task is often given to marketing professionals. For example, according to the vice president for Revenue Management at MGM Brands, "The finer we can segment our market, the better we can target and get the right product in front of the right customer in the right channel at the right price."[13] (p. 112) In smaller organizations, such as Jim and Andy's A Ride on the Wild Side!, this responsibility might remain with the owner or manager.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, the marketing concept creates a customer-oriented philosophy that is essential to meeting visitors' wants and needs. Let's think about the questions raised by Jim and Andy as they considered the future of their rafting business. They both agreed on the importance of knowing more about marketing, sales, and customer service, but they weren't sure where to start.

The starting point for any organization planning to implement the marketing concept is to learn more about its customers. But, who are these customers? Although it may sound appealing to think of everyone as a potential customer, marketers have learned that this usually does not lead to a high level of customer satisfaction. A common example with which we can all identify will help explain this statement.

Imagine for a moment you are the president of a major lodging company. You decide that it would be profitable to come up with the perfect hotel—a hotel at which everyone would want to stay. Is such a dream possible? If you designed the "average" hotel—rooms, a restaurant, and a swimming pool—do you think every potential guest would be equally satisfied with this hotel? Of course not. Some guests want inexpensive accommodations and have no need for any amenities other than a clean, comfortable room for the night, whereas others want to be pampered and select from a large variety of services, room types, and amenities. With this in mind, could you design an "average" hotel that would satisfy everyone? Probably not, because trying to meet everyone's needs and wants with the same services would prove to be an impossible task.

The task of meeting diverse needs and wants led to the idea of **market segmentation**. Instead of trying to meet everyone's needs and wants with a single product or service, marketers divide the large, **heterogeneous** market for a good or service into smaller but more **homogeneous** market segments. A heterogeneous market is one composed of people having differing characteristics and needs, whereas a homogeneous market is one with people of similar characteristics and needs.

The task of grouping millions of travelers into groups with similar needs and wants may appear to be a bit complex at first. However, this process can be simplified if we begin to think of the tourism market as a large jigsaw puzzle. Each piece of this puzzle (i.e., each consumer) is unique. Once several pieces are put together, they begin to form similar-looking sections (market segments). Finally, when all of these sections of the puzzle are put together, they form the whole picture (the market).

As you saw in Chapter 1, it is possible to begin segmenting the tourism market by using the broad reasons people give for traveling: vacation and leisure, visiting friends and relatives, and business and professional. Although these broad reasons for travel may provide some initial insight into potential tourism market segments, they do not provide the level of detail needed to understand specific consumer needs. What are needed are segmentation approaches that clearly describe travelers and that can be used as a basis for planning to meet their needs and wants.

Common approaches (called "bases") to segmenting markets can be achieved by grouping customers according to the following variables:

1. Geographic characteristics
2. Demographic characteristics
3. Psychographic characteristics
4. Product-related characteristics

These segmentation variables provide a good starting point as we begin to fit the pieces of the tourist jigsaw puzzle into a meaningful picture. Each of these segmentation approaches also serves to highlight the breadth, depth, and differences to be found among individuals and groups of tourists. However, as we begin to study groups of travelers, do not lose sight of the importance of meeting individual needs. Remember, Maslow, Pearce, and Plog showed that although we may behave in similar ways, we are all still individuals! The brand boom taking place in the hotel industry demonstrates the importance of serving the needs of varying segments of travelers. With over 350 brands, and many of them part of the same parent company, there is a hotel to cater to everyone's needs.[14] We will explore hotel brands in more detail later in this chapter and also in Chapter 7.

Geographic Segmentation

Geographic segmentation, grouping potential tourism customers based on their location, is the oldest and simplest basis for market segmentation. Even though people in the same geographic location do not usually have similar wants and needs, their location often has an important impact on their selection of tourism goods and services. Commonly used geographic segmentation variables include nations, regions, states/provinces, counties/parishes, cities, and even neighborhoods.

Geographic segmentation has proven especially useful in segmenting the traveling public. Many tourism facilities and attractions market their services regionally, recognizing that the time and money involved in traveling makes them more attractive to consumers within a certain defined geographic area. For example, the Walt Disney Company advertises Disneyland, located in California, heavily in the western United States and the Pacific Rim countries (such as Japan), whereas it markets Walt Disney World, located in Florida, more heavily in the eastern United States and Europe. On a smaller scale,

Killington Ski Resort in Vermont is promoted to skiers in northeastern North America, whereas Durango Mountain Resort outside Durango, Colorado, tries to attract skiers primarily from the southern and western United States. Would geographic segmentation provide useful information to Jim and Andy about their potential customers?

Demographic Segmentation

Although geographic segmentation is the simplest and oldest approach to grouping tourists, **demographic segmentation** is the basis most commonly used for market segmentation. Using this approach, consumers are grouped according to variables that define them in an objective, easily measurable way. These variables include classifications such as gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, education level, income, household size, and family situation. **Demographics** are frequently used by marketers because information about people's objective characteristics is routinely collected and widely available. A gold mine of segmentation information for marketers who know how to use it can be found in data gathered and reported by most national government offices, such as Statistics Canada and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Examples of tourism organizations using demographic segmentation abound. Club Med is using demographic segmentation when it attempts to serve the needs of two distinct upscale market segments. One segment is composed of young singles and the other of high-income married couples with children. Tour operators and cruise lines are using demographic segmentation when they develop special tours or cruises featuring nostalgic, educational, religious, or ethnic experiences. Can you think of other examples?

Psychographic Segmentation

Geographic and demographic variables provide easy approaches to segmenting travelers, but we all know that people are much more different than these simple pieces of information might suggest. For example, most of us listen to music. And, even though age is an important factor in determining the type of music different people enjoy, you probably know people of similar ages who have different tastes. Some Generation Yers enjoy rap music while some enjoy old-fashioned rock and roll and still others prefer the sounds of the classical music. These differences come from what marketers call "**psychographic** variables."

Psychographics were developed by marketing researchers to try to link personality to product or brand usage. Originally, these researchers relied on standard psychological personality measurement.[15] *Personality* refers to a person's unique psychological composite that compels a person to react in consistent ways to his or her environment. Examples of personality traits that are commonly measured by psychologists are introversion/extroversion (outgoingness), need for cognition (think and puzzle things out), and innovativeness (degree to which a person likes to try new things). To better capture a person's "consuming" self, researchers added to personality concepts the measurement of activities, interests, and opinions, called AIOs.

Psychographic segmentation involves grouping people on how they live, their priorities, and their interests. Put all this together and you have a description of a person's lifestyle and personality. Psychographic segmentation has been used by cruise lines and resorts to target individuals with similar hobbies, sports preferences, and musical interests.

Sometimes, psychographic segmentation is called lifestyle segmentation. A **lifestyle** is broadly defined as a way of living identified by how people spend their time (activities), what they consider important (interests), and what they think of themselves and the world around them (opinions). Some examples of activities, interests, and opinions that might be important to those working in the tourism industry are included in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Psychographic Lifestyle Dimensions

Activities	Interests	Opinions
Work	Family	Themselves
Hobbies	Home	Social issues
Social events	Job	Politics
Vacation	Community	Business
Entertainment	Recreation	Economics
Club membership	Fashion	Education
Community	Food	Products
Shopping	Media	Future
Sports	Achievements	Culture

Source: Faarup, P. K. and Aabroe, J. (2010). *The marketing framework*. Denmark: Academica. (p.136).

The idea of segmenting travelers based on activities, interests, and opinions might seem familiar, because this approach was popularized by Stanley Plog in his psychocentric–allocentric continuum. More recently, three large psychographic segments have been identified in the American travel market. In a proprietary (privately funded) study based on survey information collected from thousands of travelers, a research firm developed segments by associating values expressed by the survey respondents and the type of vacations they preferred.

The largest segment the study identified is termed the "family getaway traveler" (38% of American travelers). This segment values family time above all else and seeks activities that all members of the family can enjoy together. The second segment is called the "adventurous/education traveler" (31%). This type of traveler values physical activity and challenge, and enjoys interacting with nature. Segment three is composed of "romantics" (28%). As the name suggests, these travelers value intimate companionship and have a primary desire for comfort and relaxation. Do you see yourself fitting into any of these categories? To learn more about psychographic or lifestyle segmentation, consult any consumer behavior textbook.

Product-Related Segmentation

The previously mentioned bases for segmentation—geographic, demographic, and psychographic—are all used to help marketers move closer to the goal of developing product offerings that better satisfy potential tourism consumers. However, in all these cases, we are indirectly grouping people based on characteristics we assume are related to their needs and wants. Because assumptions can sometimes get us into trouble, marketers often try to segment less indirectly and more directly: They attempt to group potential buyers directly from what people indicate they need or want in a particular good or service. These product-related variables include the following:

1. The benefits people seek in the good or service (e.g., the ability to guarantee the availability of a room at a hotel).
2. The amount of good or service used (light users such as occasional leisure travelers versus heavy users such as business travelers).
3. The degree of company loyalty shown by the consumer in relation to the specific good or service (participation in frequent-user programs).

In Chapter 1, we mentioned that travelers are frequently grouped into leisure versus business categories. These groupings serve as good examples of **product-related segmentation**. Tourism suppliers know that travelers seek different benefits based on the purposes of their trips. Think about the benefits a businessperson seeks in

FYI VALS™

The most widely used psychographic segmentation system, VALS, developed in 1978 by California firm, SRI International, is now owned and operated by SRI spinout Strategic Business Insights (SBI). VALS segments people based on psychological characteristics that correlate with buying behavior. Extensive survey research was used to identify the eight core types. VALS systems have been developed for countries the world over including the United States, Japan, Venezuela, and Nigeria. If you would like to determine which U.S. VALS segment you are most like, visit www.stategicbusinessinsights.com/VALS and take the test!

Lifestyle measurement has gone global. In addition to the "internationalization" of VALS by SBI, Backer Spielvogel Bates Worldwide is one company that annually surveys thousands of consumers around the globe to monitor changes in the world's psychographic segments. The company's effort, called Global Scan, groups respondents into the following five major segments:

Strivers—young people on the run
Achievers—slightly older, affluent opinion-leaders
Pressureds—largely women, facing economic and family concerns that drain them
Adapters—contented older people that still find newness fun and challenging
Traditionals—conservative older people who prefer the good old days and ways

Source: "VALS (Values and Lifestyles)—the world's five major psychographic segments," Author: David Kurtz, Author: Louis Boone, © 2009, in *Contemporary marketing* 15/e, ISBN: 9781111579715, p. 293.

accommodations compared to the benefits desired by a person traveling on a holiday or vacation. How would these benefits differ?

Business travelers tend to be the "heavy users" of many tourism services, especially air transportation, hotels, and rental cars. Airlines, hotels, and rental car companies have responded to these needs by developing services and forms of promotion that appeal especially to these busy frequent travelers. Services such as ticketless travel, hotel rooms wired for all types of technology, and the computerized check-in kiosks at many airport rental car locations were all developed to appeal to this special group of travelers. Finally, in a special appeal to this group, frequent-user programs were developed expressly to encourage and reward loyalty and repeat patronage.

Putting Segmentation Knowledge to Work

Now that you know some of the basic approaches to market segmentation, you are faced with yet another challenge: when and how to segment. It would be nice if we could neatly categorize and slice up all travelers into distinct market segments. However, we can encounter several problems in attempting to segment markets. For example, some markets might be too small to segment. In addition, each of us can be classified as members of many different markets, which tends to complicate the segmentation task.

There are almost as many potential market segments as there are groups of people. In fact, many market segments that were not even considered a few years ago, such as travelers with disabilities and volunteerism travelers, are growing in size and importance.

The task of deciding when and how to segment can be clarified by answering the following questions:

- Can the market segment be relatively easily identified and measured in both purchasing power and size?
- Is the segment large enough to be potentially profitable?
- Can the segment be reached efficiently and effectively through advertising and other forms of promotion?
- Is the segment interested in the service offered?
- Is the segment expected to be long term and will it grow or shrink in size?[16]

Market segmentation helps satisfy differing visitor needs. Vibe Images/Fotolia

Although this list of questions helps narrow the range of potential segments, the most important reason for segmenting should not be forgotten. Segmenting permits tourism service suppliers to better meet specific customer needs and wants while attempting to increase their satisfaction. Once a segmentation approach has been selected, the next task is to decide which of these segments to target.

Marketers use a five-step approach to accomplish this market segmentation decision process. In Step 1, they choose one or more of the segmentation approaches we have previously described for grouping individuals. Even though we introduced each basis for segmentation separately, most organizations tend to use a combination of these approaches. For example, the Vancouver Aquarium in British Columbia might define its market in terms of geographic location and demographic profile. The aquarium's marketing team might break the potential market for its educational and entertainment services into two geographic segments, such as people within a 200-mile radius of Vancouver and those living more than 200 miles away, and then further group potential visitors by age and family situation.

In Step 2, each segment is profiled in as much detail as is cost-effective. This greater amount of detail provides a more accurate understanding of the needs of the segments and is used in developing a basic outline of the marketing mix that each segment would require. Continuing with our example, management of the Vancouver Aquarium may decide to conduct a comprehensive consumer research study to gather detailed information about the visitors to the aquarium. The decision makers can then develop more thorough profiles of the various segments. In acquiring this consumer information, the research team would need to survey consumers who visit the attraction at different times of the year. Visitors during July may tend to be international travelers from the United States and Japan, whereas visitors in December may tend to be Vancouver locals and other British Columbians.

In Step 3, forecasts are developed for the market potential of each segment being considered. All segments will not be the same in terms of number of potential buyers and amount of purchasing power, nor will they be equally likely to desire the good or service.

Table 2.4 The Segmentation Process

Step 1.	Select segmentation approach.
Step 2.	Create detailed profile of segments.
Step 3.	Forecast market potential of each segment.
Step 4.	Estimate likely market share of each segment.
Step 5.	Decide which segment or segments to target and design appropriate marketing mix.

In Step 4, an "educated guess" about the share of each segment's business that the organization is likely to be able to achieve is prepared. Some segments are likely to find the organization's offerings more appealing than are other segments.

In Step 5, the decision is made as to which segment or segments will be targeted, that is, for which segments a specific marketing mix will be developed. These segments then become the organization's **target markets**. Returning to our example, although school trips to the aquarium are plentiful and acquaint thousands of area youngsters with its marine species, this segment does not bring in large revenues to cover the cost of operations. Other segments with more purchasing power will also need to be attracted to generate the money necessary to keep the aquarium "afloat."

Based on the information gathered in this five-step process, as shown in Table 2.4, marketers are able to develop sets of "product, place, promotion, and price" that they hope will be attractive to the segments they have chosen to target. As an illustration, the marketing director of the Vancouver Aquarium may decide that the "within 200-mile radius, environmentally concerned, married retiree" segment has great potential during the fall. She may therefore develop a marketing package that offers these consumers special guided tours (including lunch) on Tuesdays during September and October for one all-inclusive price. She may advertise this package on area radio stations that features easy-listening music. The process of segmenting larger markets and then targeting these specific segments furnishes tourism organizations with the tools to focus their attention on providing appropriate levels of service to their most likely customers. Just like the time and effort it takes to put together an intricate jigsaw puzzle, it may also require time and commitment to identify potential groups of tourism consumers, but the effort will be worth it. When wants and needs are identified and met, tourists will return and often tell others who share similar characteristics about their positive experiences.

An example of meeting these needs can be found with hotels. With the advancement of technology and changes of tourist behaviors, hotels may segment and market to their customers based on rate fences. Researchers have identified four distinctive segments: refund seekers, one-week advance booking lovers, price-sensitive consumers, and nonfenced consumers.[17]

TOURISM IN ACTION

PUTTING SEGMENTATION TO WORK IN VACATION PLANNING

The United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) uses psychographic and demographic cues on its website (https://www.ustoa.com/dream-vacation) to help viewers choose the perfect vacation. Website viewers are encouraged to explore their vacation options by selecting from a variety of destinations, activities, and vacation types to discover their perfect "dream vacation." By clicking on choices that fit their individual desires and profiles, viewers are presented with a variety of tour packages offered by member companies. Using these user-friendly cues, the USTOA better targets its members' products to potential clients. By putting segmentation to work in vacation planning, USTOA has simplified the process of finding the perfect vacation options for group travel with "like-minded" individuals.

Specialized Tourist Segments

Five large and distinctive segments of tourism consumers deserve special discussion because of their size and importance to the industry. These segments are business and professional travelers (product-related segmentation), incentive travelers (product-related segmentation), SMERF groups (psychographic segmentation), mature travelers (demographic segmentation), and special-interest travelers (psychographic segmentation). Let's take a brief look at the size, importance, and common characteristics of each of these segments.

Business and Professional Travelers

Business travel is considered to be the backbone or "bread and butter" of the tourism industry because businesspeople are often required to travel as a part of their day-to-day activities. Worldwide, direct spending on business travel including expenditures on meetings, events, and incentive programs reached $1.12 trillion in 2013 and should grow by over 7% a year through 2017. The most rapid growth in business travel and spending is projected to occur in Brazil, Russia, India, and China (the BRIC countries).[18] Because travel is a part of their jobs, the amount of money they spend on tourism services tends to stay fairly constant, and they are not as price sensitive as vacation and leisure travelers. Therefore, the demand for business travel services is fairly inelastic. When demand does not significantly change with price fluctuations, it is said to be inelastic. In contrast, when demand changes substantially as price fluctuates, it is referred to as elastic. The demand for vacation and leisure travel and tourism services is elastic because it can be significantly influenced by changes in prices.

The prices travelers pay for airline tickets provide an excellent example highlighting differences between **inelastic** and **elastic demands**. When looking at airfares, you may have noticed the least expensive airfares are the ones booked the farthest in advance of the scheduled departure date, or the last-minute sales of **distressed inventory**. Because businesspeople typically have to travel on short notice at specific times and to specific destinations, they are willing to pay higher fares to obtain needed services (inelastic demand). However, because leisure travel is elastic and these individuals can plan their trips in advance or on the spur of the moment, they are attracted to lower airfares and are often willing to travel to bargain destinations just for the fun of the experience. How would the concepts of inelastic and elastic demand work for a downtown commercial hotel experiencing heavy demand from business travelers during the weekdays while attempting to fill the rooms with leisure travelers on the weekend?

Business travel expenses are also one of the largest and most controllable expense categories in any organization. Because these travelers are so important to the profitability and potential success of most tourism service suppliers, it is important for us to know more about these individuals. The task is made easier because there are several characteristics that are common to many business travelers, as can be seen in the information provided in Table 2.5. Business travelers will continue to be more demanding of tourism service suppliers as they come to expect at a minimum the current level of services and benefits as a standard level of performance. The challenge of retaining and satisfying these individuals will depend on identifying the aspects of the travel and tourism experience that can be modified or improved to truly delight these demanding visitors.

Professional travelers are similar to business travelers in many ways, although this type of travel is more elastic than business travel. Professional travel is built around the meeting and convention markets. These markets have grown as transportation, especially by air, has become more available and affordable. As professional travel continues to grow, new and expanded meeting and convention facilities have been developed to satisfy this increasing demand. Along with this growth, new management

Table 2.5 Business Traveler Profile

Seventeen percent of frequent business travelers take 64% of all business trips.	
Average number of trips	7
Average number of nights per trip	3.2
Average miles per trip	1,128
Traveled by car	60%
Traveled by air	38%
Used a rental car during business trip	25%
Stayed in hotel	65%
Combined vacationing with business trip	62%
Male	57%
Female	43%

Source: Washington, K., and Miller, R. (2005). *The 2006 travel & tourism market research handbook*. Loganville, GA: Richard K. Miller & Associates.

challenges have arisen to serve this specialized market. Some of the key market segments for meeting participants or attendees are associations, businesses, exhibitions and trade shows, religious organizations, political parties, and governments.

For many years, forecasters have predicted the demise of business and professional travel based on the increasing availability and sophistication of electronic communication technology. However, the importance of face-to-face interaction remains important in maintaining business relationships. Many futurists have also predicted a decline in business and professional travel with the introduction of **teleconferencing**. Although teleconferencing serves to introduce people to each other electronically, they will eventually want to meet in person to interact and network. This need for personal contact and interaction has allowed the business travel market to grow even in the face of advancing technology.

In response to the needs of the business travel segment, tourism service suppliers have offered a wide array of services and benefits. Airlines instituted frequent-flier programs and service **upgrades** including premier economy seats as well as business and first-class cabins and have provided corporate pricing, discounts and rebates, travel lounges, and preferred check-ins. Amtrak developed club service with reserved seating, snack and beverage service, and conference rooms on some trains. Car rental companies, following the lead of airlines, established frequent-renter programs that provided corporate pricing, discounts, rebates, upgrades, and special check-in procedures. Hotels and other lodging properties have provided similar benefits to business travelers including corporate pricing, discounts, and rebates; special floors and sections including business centers; frequent-stay programs; and upgrades.

Marriott International provides a good example of how one company has used consumer behavior information to further segment the business and professional travel market successfully. Although Marriott serves the needs of leisure travelers, it has designed multiple types of lodging facilities to serve business travelers in three distinct segments. The first is the luxury collection of brands including The Ritz-Carlton, Bulgari Hotels & Resorts, and Edition Hotels.

The second is the full-service collection of brands, including Marriott Hotels & Resorts, JW Marriott, Renaissance Hotels, and the Autograph Collection. These hotels are targeted to business travelers who want a wide variety of facilities and services while on business trips, such as secretarial support, room service, spas, exercise facilities, conference rooms, a variety of restaurants, and other services. The third is the limited-service collection of brands, including Courtyard by Marriott, Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott, Spring Hill Suites by Marriott, Residence Inn by Marriott,

TownePlace Suites by Marriott, and Marriott ExecuStay. These properties were designed expressly with the "limited expense account" businessperson in mind. This type of traveler wants the basics of a business hotel or the comforts of home for an extended stay but doesn't have the budget or desire to pay for the extras not used.

Even inside each of these broad segments, there are further subdivisions. For example in the limited-service segment, Fairfield is targeted at the value-conscious travelers, while Residence Inn is targeted at the upscale extended stay travelers. A good example of how Marriott has placed hotels to meet a wide variety of guest needs can be seen in the brands that surround the Las Vegas Convention Center. Guests traveling to events at this venue can choose from the Renaissance Las Vegas Hotel, the Las Vegas Marriott, Courtyard, Residence Inn, or Spring Hill Suites. Catering to a variety of needs has become even more important, as there is a growing trend for business travelers to combine pleasure trips with business demands.

Incentive Travelers

One of the faster-growing segments of the tourism industry is **incentive travel**, which is a sub-segment of the broader MICE (meetings, incentive travel, conventions, and events) segment generating about $13 billion a year in the United States alone.[19] Employee productivity and motivation are a concern for all organizations, and incentive travel awards are an attempt to achieve higher levels of both. Incentive programs are designed to create competition, with the winner(s) receiving many different types of awards, including complete holiday getaway packages. The good news for the tourism industry is that, in general, if properly planned, people will work harder to receive an incentive trip than any other type of reward, including cash.[20]

Planning incentive travel awards requires creating a party atmosphere for celebrating achievement, so the settings for celebrating these successes are spectacular by design. In the United States, typical destination locations for recipient awards include Hawaii, Europe, and the Caribbean Islands. The up and coming destinations include Africa and China.[21] Trips to these locations often involve recognition award banquets and many other special activities where the recipients can be honored and pampered.

All aspects of incentive travel are structured so that everything is first class, filled with pleasant surprises, and arranged so that participants never have to pay for anything. The incentive travel segment demands the best in service and, at the same time, is willing to pay **incentive tour operators** top dollar for these services. Companies such as BI, Maritz, and Wyndham Jade provide organizations with a one-stop shop for motivation and loyalty enhancement programs designed around rewarding people with incentive travel. These programs can be designed to reward individuals or groups by providing everything from transportation, lodging, food, activities, to entertainment. BI's efforts to continuously improve its internal processes and customer satisfaction have garnered the coveted Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award. BI joins only one other tourism service provider, the Ritz Carlton Hotels, to have achieved this distinction of excellence. Because of the size and importance of MICE, we will explore this segment of the tourism industry in more depth in Chapter 4.

SMERFs

SMERFs are not those little blue creatures that became popular Saturday morning cartoon icons and later a movie but is an acronym for a very large, but hard to define and reach, group of travelers. SMERF stands for **S**ocial, **M**ilitary, **E**ducation, **R**eligious, and **F**raternal. Even though these groups are hard to define and reach, their importance to the tourism industry cannot be overlooked. They are a large market in terms of potential revenue; they tend to hold events on weekends that create traffic when

business travel volume is at its lowest point; and contrary to popular opinion, they are not always price sensitive.

Estimates have placed the market value of these groups of U.S. travelers at anywhere between $18 billion and $90 billion annually and growing. Because of the size, growth, and need for personalized service, this market segment is proving to be very attractive to tourism service providers, especially travel agents, tour operators, cruise lines, hotels, and resorts. Because SMERF groups are typically run by volunteers, they pose some unique marketing challenges both in identifying the specific groups and in creating service offerings that cater to their needs. Social groups such as vacation clubs, reunions, weddings, and girlfriend get-togethers may be the hardest of all the SMERFs to identify and target, but they have proven to be the least price sensitive.[22]

Mature Travelers

Another large and growing segment of tourism consumers is **mature travelers**. The face of the industrialized world's population is changing. Although it is probably a mistake to lump all mature travelers together into a single market, it is important to understand the immense size of this market. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the number of senior citizens aged 65 and over in the year 2040 will be 1.3 billion worldwide, representing 14% of the world population.[23] By 2050, those people over 60 years old will more than double, and by 2100 it will more than triple.[24] A good idea of the changes taking place in the mature segment of the tourism market can be seen by looking at the changes taking place in the United States. The American population is aging and will continue to increase as a percentage of the total population. This segment will grow seven times faster than all other age segments.[25] Similar demographic shifts are taking place in many countries throughout the world.

The number of senior citizens in the United States who compose the market segment called mature travelers has been growing at double-digit rates. This rapid growth provides many opportunities for firms who recognize and plan to meet the needs of

Mature travelers have the time and money to explore the world. Wavebreakmedia/Shutterstock

Table 2.6 Profile of Mature Travelers

Represent 21% of all leisure travelers
Comprise 14% of business travelers
Take an average of 4.1 leisure trips each year
Take an average of 6.7 business trips each year
68.3% would like to travel to beach, rivers, and lakes
64.3% like to travel to quiet countryside
57.6% like to travel to natural wilderness
52.9% would like to visit historical sites
Travel primarily by car, truck, or recreational vehicle: 75%
Take long trips: 5.3 nights
Take the longest pleasure trips of all age groups: 948 round-trip miles (avg.)
Age group most likely to purchase package tours

Source: Based on U.S. Travel. (2010). *Travel facts and statistics*. Hsu, C. H. C., Cai, L. A., and Morrison, A. (1995). *Relationships between sociodemographic variables, travel attitudes, and travel experiences*. In K. S. Chon, ed., *New Frontiers in Tourism Research*. Harper Woods, MI: Society of Travel and Tourism Educators.

these travelers. The mature traveler market segment is especially important because these individuals spend 30% more than younger travelers and account for 80% of all commercial vacation travel.[26]

Other significant facts about this group of travelers in the United States that may have gone unnoticed or unappreciated are as follows:

- They are the fastest-growing segment of the travel market.
- They have the time and desire to travel.
- They have the wealth and **disposable income** needed for travel.
- They actively seek the services of travel professionals.[27]

Findings from two different surveys (see Table 2.6) of travelers over the age of 50 provide useful insights into the needs and expectations of this growing market.

Many mature visitors have the time, money, and energy to travel and enjoy family, friends, new sights, adventures, and active lifestyles. Several researchers have found that most mature travelers fall into one of three segments. The first tend to be sightseers, preferring package tours to cities with a wide variety of urban attractions. They do not like either surprises or the party scene and are very concerned for their safety while they travel. The second segment of mature travelers, are enthusiastic participators, who tend to be younger, better-educated seniors, and they seek adventure and new experiences. They enjoy exploring on their own and mingling with the local population at destinations. The third segment of mature travelers are family focused, preferring travel that results in family time and interactions. They tend to be less affluent and less educated than the other two segments.[28]

Mature travelers are increasingly traveling with their families, at least on some of their trips. Because families are scattered across a country (or even around the globe), more and more families are using vacations as a time for family togetherness, including grandparents and other extended family members on the trip. This emerging segment that is focused on creating memories designed to educate, pass on traditions, and build family ties is called intergenerational or multigenerational travel. These family groups tend to take vacations to destinations that offer a wide variety of activities so everyone, no matter one's age, can find something exciting to do. Las Vegas, Hawaii, and cruises have proved to be popular destinations for these family "reunions."[29]

"One of the biggest challenges, overall, is how to market to the mature travelers. Mature travelers do not want to be seen as 'mature travelers,' but merely an older 'young person' with distinctive tastes and enthusiasm."[30] (p. 72) As tourism service suppliers plan to meet the needs of this growing and potentially lucrative market segment, it will be important to recognize their similarities and differences when compared to other traveler segments. While they demand the same types of services as other travelers, these service offerings will need to be adapted to meet their special needs.

Meeting these special needs requires attention to reducing uncertainties, providing opportunities for relational benefits and simplifying the decision-making process prior to purchases. Simple things like providing travel insurance options, creating opportunities to meet others either personally or through blogs and forums, and limiting the complexity of information sources, combined with testimonials, can ease the travel planning and purchase process. Finally, providing opportunities to share experiences through social media postings will enhance the feeling of connectivity and lead to repeat purchases.[31]

Special-Interest Travelers

Over the past 50 years, tourism has evolved as tourists have become more sophisticated and more discriminating in their tastes and jealous of their limited free time. Originally, tourism was characterized by general-interest tourism. The destination and its variety of attractions were the most important components of the tourism product and the primary motivators for leisure travel. Today, more and more travelers are focusing their vacation attention on experience and are selecting a destination based on the ability to participate in one or more of their favorite pastimes. This selective form of tourism is now called **special-interest tourism (SIT)**. SIT is "defined as tourism

TOURISM IN ACTION

FOCUSING IN ON SENIOR TRAVELERS

Developed in 1975 as Elderhostel to fulfill the educational and travel needs of the increasing senior citizen population, Road Scholar Adventures in Lifelong Learning has long focused on the mature traveler segment of the tourism market. Pioneered at five New Hampshire colleges and universities, the nonprofit Road Scholar organization developed into a nationwide network on college campuses that used dormitories and classrooms during the summer months. The programs provided inexpensive, residential educational programs for persons 60 years of age and over. In 1993, the eligibility age was lowered to age 55.

Since its humble beginnings, the Road Scholar concept has expanded to include programs at over 6,500 different locations in 150 countries. Responding to the expanding affluence and sophistication of the retiree population, Road Scholar now offers travel adventures that are far from two weeks on a traditional New England college campus. International Road Scholar programs span the globe from Antarctica to Iceland and can range from single-site one- or two-week educational tours to four-week treks through several countries.

For example, Road Scholar offers such exotic programs as a four-week train journey studying Australia's human and natural landscapes, a two-week expedition to the Cook Islands in the Pacific Ocean, and a three-week journey into the heart of Asia. Participants in any of these programs may extend their travels and adventures by purchasing pre- and post-tour package extensions to the areas they are visiting.

Road Scholar has served the educational and travel adventure needs of over 5 million older adults throughout the world. Given the growth in size and financial resources of the mature traveler segment, Road Scholar should continue to expand and thrive in the 21st century to inspire adults to learn, discover and travel and that the "sky is the limit" when it comes to personal potential—at any age!

Source: Road Scholar brochure and catalogs. Road Scholar, 11 Avenue de Lafayette | Boston, MA 02111. Available at: http://www.roadscholar.org.

Table 2.7 Evolution of Special-Interest Tourism

General-Interest Tourist	Mixed-Interest Tourist	Special-Interest Tourist
Where would I like to go?	Where do I want to go, and what activities can I pursue there?	What interest/activity do I want to pursue, and where can I do it?

undertaken for a distinct and specific reason; thereby indicating that the special interest tourist has a specific interest-based motivation for his/her travel to another destination."[32] (p. 12) Table 2.7 shows the evolution of this tourism transition.

Special-interest travelers come in all shapes and sizes. Tour operators, for example, are now offering tours with a list of special interests/activities (e.g., opera, wine, and battlefields), geographic area (e.g., Antarctica), or affinity groups (e.g., single women, LGBT).[33] These groups are particularly appealing to tourism suppliers for a number of reasons. Often they travel in small groups on very specific itineraries, so they see the planning and knowledge benefits of using a travel agent or specialty tour operator. They highly value education and skill enhancement, so many of these travelers prefer to hire the services of guides. They frequently travel during shoulder or off-season periods, providing revenue when businesses need it the most. Because their special interest is central to their lives, they typically spend above-average amounts on their trips. Take a look at Table 2.8 for a sampling of some typical special-interest trips often taken with tour groups. Have you ever taken an SIT trip? One of the larger and faster-growing special-interest groups of travelers is **sports tourism visitors**, so we will take a closer look at this group.

Rather than traveling for rest and relaxation, more and more of the world's population is traveling for sports-related reasons. Sports tourism has exploded in the last 10 years and is now seen as a major form of SIT. Sports tourism is "travel away from home to play sport, watch sport, or to visit a sport attraction including both competitive and noncompetitive activities."[34] (p. 2) Think of the vast array of travel that is included in this definition. Sport team members traveling to out-of-town tournaments are included; booster and alumni clubs trekking to "bowl" games are included; golf fans traveling to the British Open are included; a snowboard/ski club traveling to the Rockies for spring break is included!

Sports tourism is not a new phenomenon. The first Olympic Games occurred nearly 3,000 years ago. In 1852, a New England railroad company sponsored the Harvard–Yale crew competition in part so ridership would increase dramatically. The Northern Pacific Railroad developed the Sun Valley ski resort to generate passengers during the company's slow season! As sport participation, spectatorship, and team

Table 2.8 Examples of Special-Interest Trips

Archeological	Bird watching
Culinary	Culture
Dark	Ecotourism
Educational	Genealogical
Heritage	Medical
Shopping	Sports
Volunteer	Winery
Adventure	LGBT

Table 2.9 Types of Sport Tourists

A.	Outdoor/Nature Sport Tourists—Usually must travel substantial distance to participate in chosen sport, as many sports are dependent on a natural resource (e.g., a mountain, a river, a wilderness area). Most of these sports are nonteam and noncompetitive, but some require substantial skill. Frequently, participants return to the same destination many times throughout the year.
B.	Resort Sport Tourists—Travel typically to highly developed luxury resorts to participate in such sports as golf and tennis. Some skiers also fall in this category.
C.	Amateur Team Sport Tourists—Travel to participate in a team sport or travel to watch, coach, or support team members. Travel is usually to urban or suburban locations.
D.	Athletic Spectators—Most often travel with group of friends or family members. Travel is to high-profile events (e.g., NASCAR race, Olympic Games) or to scheduled professional or high-profile sport team game.

Source: Based on Weed, Mike, and Bull, Chris (2004). *Sports tourism: Participants, policy and providers*. Oxford: Elsevier, Butterworth-Heinemann.

affiliations have increased with the world's increased affluence and health consciousness, sports tourism has exploded as a segment of the tourism market.

Sports tourists are primarily of two types, participatory sport tourists and spectator sport tourists, and these two types can be further grouped (see Table 2.9). Participatory sport tourists tend to be physically active, college educated, relatively affluent, and young (18–44 years old). This type of traveler also tends to participate in more than one activity; for example, a skier by winter may be a golfer by summer.

However, even the least physically active among us can be a sport tourist. Millions upon millions of travelers worldwide are following "their team" or their favorite athlete, and they spend billions for tourism and other services. U.S. Travel estimates that nearly 40% of U.S. adults are sport event travelers, and the percentage in the industrialized world is likely to be high as well.[35] Many of these trips are families traveling to watch a family member compete in a sporting event, so sports tourism is now a major component of family travel. Sport event travel is about evenly split between professional and amateur sporting events, and summer is the peak season for such travel, although autumn is also a popular sports tourism season. Many cities, states/provinces, and even countries have specially designated sports commissions whose primary role is to attract sports tourism events.

Delivering High-Quality Service

Simply identifying and attracting targeted customers is not enough. Tourism organizations must then meet customer expectations by satisfying their wants and needs. Every component of the tourism industry is service oriented. Therefore, providing consistently high-quality service is the key to establishing and maintaining a successful operation.

Because the tourism market has become more competitive, service quality has become critical for tourism suppliers. It is no longer good enough simply to provide today's demanding travelers with adequate service. Travelers now expect consistency in service, if not superior service. Delivery of superior service requires understanding travelers' needs and expectations. We will talk about the specific knowledge and skills needed to deliver service quality in Chapter 3.

Summary

We continue our journey through the dynamic world of tourism by starting at the center of the tourism model, where we focus on the millions of people who travel away from home each day. Because it is impossible to serve all of their wants and needs, we learned more about these travelers, their reasons for travel, and how we can meet their needs. As we learned more about these travelers, we could begin segmenting them into groups based on some similar characteristics.

Common approaches to segmenting markets include classifying consumers based on geographic, demographic, psychographic, and product-related characteristics. There are several very large market segments such as business and professional, incentive, SMERF, mature, and special-interest travelers that are particularly important to the future of the tourism industry.

Segmentation and target marketing are used to focus marketing efforts on groups of individuals with common wants and needs. A segment can then be seen as a distinct target that can be served with its own unique mix of services, prices, locations, times, and promotional activities. When customer wants and needs are properly identified and customer expectations are met, travelers will often tell others about their experiences and return.

Providing service that, at a minimum, results in satisfaction and strives truly to delight customers should be the goal of all tourism organizations. Remember, tourism is a business dependent on human relations and shared experiences. People like to be served and feel that they are welcome, that their business is important, and that service providers care about their experiences. By identifying the specific needs of individuals and groups of guests and visitors, it is possible to meet and exceed their expectations.

You Decide

Event tourism ranging from art shows and music festivals to athletic tournaments and food fairs are becoming a large and growing travel industry entertainment component. Communities that host these events have been, for the most part, receptive because of their apparent economic benefits. These events provide a variety of leisure opportunities for participants, as well as needed traffic for local tourism service providers. In fact, many of these events are intentionally scheduled during traditionally slow tourism periods to provide an extra boost to the local economy.

Although local residents may greet special events enthusiastically, one event, the motorcycle rally, seems to polarize communities along emotional lines: equally vocal supporters and detractors. Why do these events generate so much local interest? A quick look at their history gives a good indication as to why.

The first recognized motorcycle rally was held in Sturgis, South Dakota, in 1940 and attracted about 200 people. However, today, this sleepy little mountain town "welcomes" over 200,000 rally enthusiasts to this event each year. The success of the Sturgis rally has spawned other rallies in places such as Bainbridge, Georgia; Hollister, California; Daytona Beach, Florida; and Laconia, New Hampshire.

Many of these Sturgis copycat rallies were promoted because the economic benefits could be enormous, but there are other impacts to be considered. Just think about the thundering sounds and raucous partying that occur as thousands of motorcyclists descend on these many annual gatherings. Motorcycle rally participants are a far cry from the genteel crowds that come together for a spring flower show!

Whereas members of the tourism community, from lodging facilities and restaurants to attractions and retailers, who benefit directly from increased expenditures are supporters, local governmental agencies from law enforcement to sanitation are not always quite as enthusiastic. They are the ones who must provide extra services at additional costs, which may not be offset by increased tax receipts. And although local residents may enjoy many of the event activities, they may resent the noise, wild party antics, and other inconveniences created by a sudden influx of revelers.

Governmental officials and local tourism service suppliers face a variety of issues when making decisions regarding endorsing or encouraging the creation and/or continuance of these events. They must weigh the potential economic benefits against the costs and inconveniences they create. If your hometown was presented with the opportunity to host a motorcycle rally, what would you recommend?

Net Tour

To get you started on exploring Internet links for this chapter, see

www.ustoa.com
www.nbta.org
www.RoadScholar.org
www.sric-bi.com
www.BestTripChoices.com
www.incentivefederation.org
www.aarp.org/travel
www.lonelyplanet.com
www.tripadvisor.com
www.ecotourism.org

Discussion Questions

1. What do we mean when we refer to segmenting a market?
2. Why do we segment the tourism market?
3. Identify and provide examples of the common approaches to segmenting the tourism market.
4. Why are business travelers so important to the tourism industry?
5. How do SMERF groups complement the business travel market?
6. Why are mature travelers so important to the future of the tourism industry?
7. Why are special-interest travelers becoming more important to tourism service suppliers?
8. Why are incentive travelers so important to the future of the tourism industry?
9. Why are special-interest travelers so important to the future of the tourism industry?
10. Why should the topic of customer service be important to tourism service suppliers?

Applying the Concepts

1. Collect several advertisements for tourism-related goods or services. Based on the content of these advertisements, describe the customer segment you believe is being targeted.
2. Browse the Internet and find three tourism supplier home pages. Which segments do you think each is targeting based on the information provided on the home pages?
3. Interview the head of a tourism service supplier's marketing or sales department to find out the segments targeted and the relative importance of each of these segments to overall profitability.
4. Arrange an interview with a member of one of the specialized tourist segments introduced in this chapter. Develop a profile of this segment's travel behaviors. Examples of questions you might ask include: Where do you travel? How frequently do you travel? When do you travel, how do you travel? What do you enjoy doing when you travel? With whom do you travel? What types of service suppliers do you select to meet these needs?
5. Based on what you know about market segmentation, help Jim and Andy by preparing a list describing some of the common characteristics of the people who might be potential customers for their whitewater rafting business.
6. Your family is planning a summer holiday and designated you as the information gatherer. How much information would you collect? What types of information would you collect? What sources of information would you consult?
7. Spring break is a popular travel occasion for many college students. What would be the motivation factors of spring break travel? Can you classify the motivation factors based on one of the tourist motivation models introduced in this chapter?

Glossary

Allocentrics *See* Venturers.

Business travel Travel-related activities associated with commerce and industry.

Consumer behavior The study of consumer characteristics and the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, and use goods, services, or experiences to satisfy wants and needs.

Demographics Characteristics used to classify consumers on the basis of criteria such as age, education, income, gender, and occupation.

Demographic segmentation Dividing consumer markets based on demographic data such as age, education, income, gender, religion, race, nationality, and occupation.

Dependables Travelers who seek the comforts of familiar surroundings.

Disposable income Household income after paying taxes that is available for personal use.

Distressed inventory Tourism services that have not been sold as the date of use approaches.

Elastic demand A change in the quantity of goods or services used in a proportion that is greater than changes in prices.

Geographic segmentation Dividing consumer markets along different geographical boundaries such as nations, states, and communities.

Heterogeneous Having differing characteristics and needs.

Homogeneous Having similar characteristics and needs.

Incentive tour operators Tour operators who specialize in organizing, promoting, and conducting incentive tours.

Incentive travel Motivational programs designed to create competition, with the winner(s) receiving travel awards.

Induced information Information and messaging that is controlled by the supplier.

Inelastic demand A change in the quantity of goods or services used that is not in direct proportion to changes in prices.

Lifestyle A mode of living that is identified by how people spend their time (activities), what they consider important in their environment (interests), and what they think of themselves and the world around them (opinions).

Market segmentation Dividing a broad market into smaller and distinct groups of buyers—each group with similar needs, characteristics, or behaviors.

Mature travelers People aged 55 and older; also called "senior citizens."

Optimal arousal theory Level of arousal or level of activity at which different segments of tourists feel most comfortable.

Product-related segmentation Dividing consumer markets according to characteristics such as the amount of use or benefits consumers expect to derive from the service.

Psychocentrics *See* Dependables.

Psychographics Consumer psychological characteristics that can be quantified, including lifestyle and personality information.

Psychographic segmentation Dividing consumer markets into groups based on lifestyle and personality profiles.

SMERF An acronym for the market comprising social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal groups.

Special-interest tourism (SIT) Tourism undertaken for a distinct and specific personal reason.

Sports tourism visitors People who travel to participate in or view sporting activities.

Target market (target segment) A group of people sharing common characteristics that an organization attempts to serve by designing strategies to meet the group's specific needs.

Teleconferencing A meeting that allows people to remain in several locations but come together and communicate through a combination of television and telephone connections.

Upgrades Receiving a better class of service or facility than was paid for, such as moving from coach to first class.

Venturers Travelers who seek adventure.

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