

MOTIVATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF CAL POLY RPTA STUDENTS TO
PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL GROUP TRAVEL

A Senior Project

presented to

the Faculty of the Recreation, Parks, & Tourism Administration Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Science

by

Selena Ramirez

June, 2012

© 2012 Selena Ramirez

ABSTRACT

MOTIVATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF CAL POLY RPTA STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL GROUP TRAVEL

SELENA RAMIREZ

JUNE, 2012

The number of student travelers is increasing around the world. The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and constraints of California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), San Luis Obispo Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration (RPTA) students to participate in international group travel. Data were collected through an online questionnaire. Thirty-two females and five males participated in the study. Previous literature suggests that motivation can be understood through internal factors that push travelers from within and pull factors of the destination that attracts travelers. According to the findings of the study, students are mostly motivated to travel in a group because of social reasons, inclusive packages, and an increase in comfort levels. The most significant constraints keeping students from participating in group travel are the price, lack of independence, and an itinerary that is too restrictive. The RPTA department has an opportunity to offer scholarships for student travel, increase awareness of international group trips, and create a mutually beneficial itinerary that considers student needs.

Keywords: Motivations, constraints, college students, group travel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE	1
Background of Study	1
Review of Literature	2
Tourist life cycle	3
Group tours compared to independent travel	4
Motivations to travel	5
Constraints to travel	8
Gender and travel.....	9
Summary	10
Purpose of the Study	11
Delimitations	12
Limitations	12
Assumptions	13
Definition of Terms	13
CHAPTER 2. METHODS AND PROCEDURES.....	15
Description of Subjects	15
Description of Instrument	16
Description of Procedures	17

Method of Data Analysis	18
CHAPTER 3. PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS	19
Travel Characteristics	19
Motivations to Participate in Group Travel	20
Constraints to Participate in Group Travel	21
Summary	22
CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	24
Summary	24
Discussion	25
Conclusions	27
Recommendations	27
REFERENCES	29
APPENDIXES	32
APPENDIX A. Questionnaire	33
APPENDIX B. Informed Consent.....	36

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
TABLE 1. Motivations According to Mean and Standard Deviation	19
TABLE 2. Constraints According to Mean and Standard Deviation	221

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

According to the Power of Travel (2012) in 2010 the U.S. Travel Association (USTA) declared that the United States tourism industry was among the leading employers in the country with over 10 million workers and a value of over \$700 billion. The USTA also reported that the tourism industry supports a number of federal and local programs with \$113 billion in tax revenues. The local and national economic benefits of travel rely on consumer demand to visit destinations. Several studies have researched the behavior of tourists to understand what attracts people to specific locations to bring financial rewards to destinations. There are several factors that influence the travel tendencies of individuals; many are specific to the individual and their stage in life.

College students are at a unique time in their lives where travel is an attractive and practical option. According to Student Travel Statistics (2006), student travelers account for “23% of the entire travel market” (para. 7). Student Travel Statistics also reported that more than 14.3 million students were enrolled in colleges in the U.S. and over 715,000 (5%) of those students spend about “\$2.1 billion in the travel sector” every year (para. 6). Beyond the statistics, there are several reasons for studying the travel practices of college students. Student travelers are the fastest and the largest growing market in the travel industry with high repeat business, low last minute cancellations, and disposable incomes (Student Travel Statistics).

Researchers have investigated the travel experiences of specific markets with the goal of understanding their purchase tendencies. Socio-demographic factors have frequently been examined to determine similarities in behavior among travelers. Research has also focused on the travel practices of seniors, women, children, sport teams, and foreign travelers, among others. However, few studies have researched the travel practices of U.S. college students. Without an understanding of the motivations and constraints of college students to participate in travel, specifically group travel, the potential benefits of travel could be lost on an overlooked demographic.

To better understand the travel behavior of students, research was conducted at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in San Luis Obispo, California. The university is located along California's central coast between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Students from the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration department (RPTA) are presented with a number of travel opportunities, yet the RPTA department has completed few evaluations of the motivations and constraints of RPTA students to participate in international group travel. The RPTA major supports the advancement of knowledge to benefit individuals, communities, and society (RPTA, 2009). This study will provide information that would be helpful to the department and to tour operators to market group tours to college students so they can make efficient administrative decisions that provide experiences based on student wants and needs.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In

addition to books, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, SPORTDiscus, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, and psycINFO. This review of literature is organized into the following topic areas: tourist life cycle, group tours compared to independent travel, motivations to travel, constraints to travel, and gender and travel.

Tourist life cycle. Travel behavior varies throughout an individual's lifespan. As people age, their needs and desires change with their physical ability and comfort level. Many factors influence a traveler's life cycle. This section will explain how travel tendencies change throughout the visitor's lifespan and will review travel practices of college students.

Lundberg and Lundberg (1985) discussed how the "life travel profile" of American travelers "reflects discretionary time available, money, age, and the desire for change" (p. 2). They explain that middle and upper class American children learn from their parents and want to mimic their parents' travel patterns, but as teenagers they feel a need to "strike out on their own" (Lundberg & Lundberg, 1985, p. 2). Teenagers often go off to college and want to discover the world (Lundberg & Lundberg, 1985). Schuster, Zimmerman, Schertzer, and Beamish (1998) shared that there are many opportunities provided by schools for students to travel, including: study trips, exchanges, internships, and athletics. Bowen and Clarke (2009) explained that young tourists make many of their travel decisions based on the following social influences: family expectations, perceived role in society, opinions from their reference groups, culture and subculture, and social class (p. 78). Social influences play a significant role in the travel decisions of young adults because they trust and value the opinions of those in their social groups.

Group tours often offer incentives to travel that are particularly attractive to college students. Bowen and Clarke (2009) explain that “in effort to stimulate travel of the young with limited means, the travel industry offers lower airfare, youth rail passes, and youth accommodations in Europe, making foreign travel extremely attractive for college-aged students” (p. 24). College students have the opportunity to travel and many incentives including discounts and packaged tours are geared toward this demographic.

Group tours compared to independent travel. Travelers plan their vacations based on the type of experience they seek, personal motivations, and cultural influences. Bonn et al. (2009) suggested that people who decide to travel independently are often risk takers who see tourism as a new and varied experience. A group environment often provides a sense of security for those who want to travel but are inexperienced or nervous about traveling. Jui Chi (2007) argued that “Travel motives for joining group travel may be different from those of free independent travelers, since the guided tour combines adventure, novelty, escape, and cultural experience, all within margins of safety” (p. 161).

Group travel is defined as a “travel experience designed for three or more people by operators or tour wholesalers, who purchase the components from their suppliers and often include a tour escort, all meals, sightseeing, entertainment, and accommodations for one price” (Bonn et al., 2009, p. 61). Mansfield and Pizam (2006) reported that the World Trade Organization estimated that tour operators made up about 25% of the total international tourism market which represented at least 175 million trips. Travel is conducted by all cultures for a variety of reasons. To understand why people choose to

participate in group travel over independent travel, the motivations and constraints to traveler need to be examined.

Motivations to travel. People are motivated to travel by a number of internal and external factors. Several researchers have examined the motivation for individuals to travel and have found a number of factors that play a role in the decision making process to travel.

Bowen and Clarke (2009) explain that travel motivations can be studied as internal 'push' and external 'pull' factors that influence travel purchase decisions simultaneously. Kozak (2002) describes push factors as "origin related" internal factors that are "intangible, intrinsic desires of the individual traveler while pull factors are mainly related to the attractiveness of...a given destination and its tangible characteristics" (p. 222). Bowen and Clarke (2009) elaborate by explaining that push factors can include "the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, adventure, health or prestige" (p. 92). Push factors play a major role in the decision making process regardless of what external incentives are offered. Krippendorf (1987) states that the push factor to 'get away' is a stronger motivator than the 'pull factor' of what the attraction has to offer the traveler. Promfret (2006) mentions that the push factor is strongly influenced by an individual's personality, lifestyle, and emotional state. These internal drivers are unavoidable and vary from person to person.

Jui Chi (2007) suggests that "travel motive usually relates to their socio-economic and physiological circumstances" (p. 159). For example, economic and social factors such as income, education, occupation, wealth, health and physical condition play a psychological role in an individual to make decisions based on how they perceive their

life status (Pearce, 1982). Bowen and Clarke (2009) divide travel motivations by the following drivers: “health (physical and mental), curiosity (of cultures, politics, physical features, disasters, society or public figures), sports (participating and spectating), pleasure, spiritual or religious, professional or business, friends and relatives, and esteem” (p. 24). Depending on the travel experience a tourist desires, a group tour may or may not be the best means of travel.

To understand motivation to purchase tourism products, consumer behavior of the traveler must be examined. It is estimated that 80% of purchase decisions are made based on someone’s direct recommendation (Hsu, Kang, & Lam, 2006). According to Hanai, Oguchi, Ando, and Yamaguchi (2008), the decision to travel is based on what the consumer is “familiar with” and their “feelings toward specific products” (p. 268-269). Hsu (2006) suggest that consumers tend to make decisions aligned with the social group they identify with which is often based on a reference group that shares similar “attitudes, norms, values, aspirations, and purchase behavior” (p. 475). Although the desire to travel is a very personalized experience, travel decisions are often influenced by the consumer’s reference groups.

There are many benefits for travelers on group tours. Mansfeld and Pizam (2006) address the issue of personal safety in group tours. They explain that group tour operators have an obligation to their clients to provide safe travel, security over their belongings, and safe activities. Group tour operators are liable for the well-being of their clients, they will reduce risks by working with specific service providers to avoid unnecessary dangers and they will “take certain measures to protect their clients on the spot” (Mansfeld & Pizam, p. 337).

Schmidt (1979) explains that the biggest benefit of participating in a guided tour is “confronting the unfamiliar in a collective way” (p. 443). This concept is interesting because it allows tourists to travel to unfamiliar destinations while holding onto the comforts of their own culture (Fairly & Tyler, 2009). Whether that is a good or bad thing is debatable. Group tours allow travelers to have the comfort of companionship but that comfort may interfere with cultural immersion while traveling (Fairley & Tyler, 2009). Hanai, et al. (2008) explain a “phenomenon” known as “group polarization” that occurs within groups when travelers' decisions, actions, and feelings are strengthened by group communication. Fairley and Tyler (2009) suggest that in a group, feelings of isolation or loneliness subside when people from a similar culture travel together. Gorman (1979) describes how individuals who have never met prior to a trip naturally bond through interaction and participation in group activities on packaged tours. The experience of bonding with new people on a group tour is a valuable experience as long as it does not negatively impact tourist interaction with the host culture.

According to Jui Chi (2007) “Many researchers believe that economy and overall convenience are the most important motives for purchasing a package tour” (p. 161). Other benefits discussed by Schmidt (1979) include a pre-planned itinerary that save the traveler time and money and guide services that reduce anxiety in risky activities. Group travel allows tourists to easily explore unfamiliar destinations with the comfort and resources provided by a group tour package.

Studying the motivations of tourists can provide insight to how travel consumers make purchasing decisions, but Holloway (1998) points out a flaw to studying human behavior. Human studies are challenging to examine because participants may not

acknowledge their needs or they may not want to verbalize them which makes it difficult to determine the validity of responses (Holloway).

Constraints to travel. The psychological motivations behind the urge to travel can be overruled by overshadowing constraints. By understanding the constraints of individuals to travel, tourism professionals can better understand why travelers decide to participate in group travel.

Despite the potential benefits of traveling in a group setting, there are disadvantages of always having a safety net of comfort. It is important for travelers to put aside their differences however, Fairley and Tyler (2009) realized that if group members choose to only interact with each other, they will end up isolating themselves from the host culture and losing out on valuable experiences. It is natural for humans to seek comfort and familiarity; however it may defeat the purpose of traveling to a new location to gain new experiences if the traveler never leaves their comfort zone (Fairley & Tyler, 2009). This is problematic if the goal of the traveler is to experience another culture (Fairley & Tyler).

Another factor to consider when examining traveler constraints is the issue of personal safety. According to Mansfeld and Pizam (2006) travelers may be concerned with their safety and security because of the following issues: war, terrorism, civil unrest, crime (specifically theft), disease, natural disasters, catastrophes caused by human or technical error, and dangerous wildlife. These factors are especially important to group tour operators because it is essential for their business to keep their clients out of danger to maintain a positive reputation with the public.

Gartner (1996) identifies money as the most frequent barrier to travel since the demand for pleasure travel is elastic. Jung (1993) considers “price, convenience, status or prestige, dreams, destination, excitement, customer satisfaction, and need-fulfillment” to have a significant role in consumers’ decision to purchase travel experiences, but the strongest motivating factor is purchase price (as cited in Jui Chi, 2007, p. 161). This explains how consumers perceive value in relevant terms of what they are getting for the price that they pay. The more products an individual receives at a lower rate adds to the individual’s satisfaction which makes group packages an attractive traveling option (Sirgy, Krunger, Lee, & Yu, 2011).

Gender and travel. Gender may be a factor to consider when studying motivations, constraints, and travel tendencies. In a study of travel behavior in relation to travelers’ personality characteristics, Alvarez and Asugman (2006) suggested that female travelers were more likely to purchase package tours than men because they were “Risk-Adverse Planners” meaning that females were sensitive to perceived safety risks when making their decisions. In a study conducted by Bonn et al. (2009) 63.9% of female tourists traveling to China decided to purchase a group package. In a study of the influence of gender on travel risk perceptions by Reisinger and Crotts (2009) female subjects were more anxious, believed that international travel had higher risks, felt less safe, and planned to “travel less internationally than male respondents” (p. 793). Reisinger and Crotts (2009) also report that in both male and female groups, “terrorism and sociocultural risk emerged as the most significant deterrents of travel risk and safety perceptions” but females made travel decisions based on “anxiety” and males were mostly concerned with “safety” (p. 793). Gender is not a dependent factor on travel

practices, but it may reveal gender related trends and purchase tendencies that tour operators can factor into their management decisions. Bowen and Clarke (2009) mention that it is old fashioned to market only to women, but considering gender purchasing trends may allow tourism professionals to tailor their products to the needs and desires of their clientele.

Summary. The best mode of travel really depends on personal characteristics and life stage. A group can provide a unique bonding experience, safety, and ease of mind usually at a single price but travelers may lose out on an authentic cultural experience. Traveling independent of a group allows the traveler freedom to experience another culture, and customize activities and meals, but the traveler may feel isolated and lonely at times. To determine which mode would be most beneficial to an individual, many elements including age, gender, and other socio-demographic factors must be considered.

Motivations and constraints for individuals to travel on their own or in a group setting depend on the socio-demographic and cultural characteristics that influence purchasing behaviors. The reasons for individuals to travel include escape, exploration, relaxation, education, culture, nature, adventure, and sport. Motivations for individuals to travel in a group setting include companionship, discounted rates, convenience, safety, and learning opportunities. Economy and convenience are common motivations for people to participate in group travel. Travelers' constraints include lifestyle, time, age, physical ability, affordability, weather, safety, politics, and price.

A traveler's stage in life influences travel decisions. College students often have the opportunity to travel for educational purposes and personal development. Students are

often free to travel because they are not usually locked into careers and family obligations.

Gender may play a role in the traveler's purchase tendencies. Females may be more inclined to purchase group tours because it allows them to travel to destinations with the safety and security of tour operators, this may not be a significant concern for males. Group tour operators should not market their product to females only, but their needs should be considered when designing tour packages.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and constraints of California Polytechnic State University Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration students to participate in international group travel.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. Do college students participate in international group travel?
2. What motivates students to participate in international group travel?
3. What constraints keep students from participating in international group travel?

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the following parameters:

1. Information on group travel was gathered from students at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in Spring 2012.
2. Experience with international group travel, motivations, constraints, and gender were analyzed.
3. Information for this study was gathered using an on-line questionnaire that was distributed through a mass e-mail.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. The instrument in this study was not tested for validity or reliability.
2. The study reflects responses given by Cal Poly RPTA students and may not be applicable to other populations.
3. Online questionnaires sent through e-mail may have been rejected or deleted by the user, may have been automatically sent to Junk folders, or connection errors may have occurred while completing the questionnaire.
4. The sample may not accurately represent all Cal Poly RPTA students.
5. The sample size may be too small to employ inferential statistics.
6. Participants may have completed the questionnaire more than once.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. It was assumed that participants would respond honestly and to the best of their knowledge.
2. It was assumed that participants would complete one questionnaire.
3. It was assumed that the person who received the questionnaire was the same person who completed the questionnaire.
4. It was assumed that Cal Poly students would know how to read and respond to the questionnaire.
5. It was assumed that Cal Poly students would check their e-mails regularly enough to receive and complete the questionnaire in the allotted timeframe.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Group travel. a travel experience designed for three or more people by operators or tour wholesalers, who purchase the components from their suppliers and often include a tour escort, all meals, sightseeing, entertainment, and accommodations for one price (Bonn et al., 2009)

Socio-demographic characteristics. sex, age, economic activity status, occupation, annual household, family or individual income, education

Tourism product. represents a combination of different aspects (characteristics of the places visited, modes of transport, types of accommodation, specific activities at

destination, etc.) around a specific center of interest, such as nature tours, life on farms, visits to historical and cultural sites, visits to a particular city, the practice of specific sports, the beach. (UNWTO, 2010)

Chapter 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to identify the motivations and constraints of California Polytechnic State University Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration students to participate in international group travel. This chapter contains the following sections: description of subjects, description of instruments, description of procedures, and method of data analysis.

Description of Subjects

The subjects for this study were Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration (RPTA) students attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. This study included male and female, graduate and undergraduate, part-time and full-time students at Cal Poly enrolled in the Spring 2012 quarter. The sample was not restricted by age, race, or class standing. An online questionnaire was sent through the RPTA e-mail database to all RPTA students. The sample was limited to students who had Internet access with a functioning Cal Poly e-mail address. Participation in the study was voluntary and no external incentives were given in exchange for participation. The RPTA major at Cal Poly has an enrollment of approximately 315 students (B. Hendricks, personal communication, April 6, 2012). These students were chosen as subjects because of their experience and awareness of the tourism industry.

Description of Instrument

The instrument used to gather data for this study was an electronic questionnaire that was sent to students in the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration major through the Cal Poly State University e-mail database (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was created by the researcher on March 5, 2012 with the use of Zoomerang. The instrument was not field tested. The questionnaire began with a description of the study and an informed consent waiver declaring that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

The questionnaire had eight questions, the first three questions required respondents to check a Yes or No box to indicate their experience with group travel. The first question asked students if they had the opportunity to travel. The second question asked if the subjects had ever traveled outside of the USA. The third question asked if the subjects had ever traveled in a group tour outside of the USA (a definition of group tourism was provided at the top of the page). If a subject answered no to question three, the individual was instructed to skip question four and five and continue with question six.

Question four used a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “Do Not Agree” to “Strongly Agree” to measure the subjects’ level of agreement with a list of travel motivations. For this study motivations included: comfort, security, physical safety, companionship, convenience, discounted price, inclusive package, social drivers, and tour guides. Participants also had the option of filling in a personalized response in question five in they had any other motivations to participate in group travel.

Question six used a Likert scale similar to question four with the addition of a “Not Applicable” option to measured students’ level of agreement with several constraint statements. The constraints for this study were: lack of independence, restrictive itinerary, too many activities, lack of privacy, limited destinations, limited activities, length of trip, price, health conditions, family obligations, time, lack of interest to travel out of the U.S., and lack of interest to travel in a group internationally. Question seven allowed respondents to insert a personalized response if they had any other constraints to participation in group travel. The eighth question requested that subjects check a Male or Female box. The procedures and instrument were reviewed and approved by Cal Poly’s Human Subjects Committee on March 29, 2012 (see Appendix B).

Description of Procedures

Permission to evaluate students at Cal Poly was granted by Dr. Hendricks, the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration Department Head on March 28, 2012. The questionnaire was sent as a mass e-mail to all Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration students using the Cal Poly e-mail database in the Spring 2012 quarter. Students who clicked on the link in the e-mail were sent to the Zoomerang website to complete the questionnaire. The purpose of the study was disclosed along with an informed consent form that expressed that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. As the subjects completed the questionnaire the Zoomerang website compiled the responses into data that could then be analyzed. Data were collected from March 26, 2012 through April 16, 2012. The researcher hoped to receive 170 responses from the subjects out of a population of 315.

Method of Data Analysis

Once the questionnaires were completed the data were analyzed using the Zoomerang website features. The qualitative data from questions five and seven were grouped as push and pull factors.

The results of questions one through three were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. To answer the research question investigating why students decided to participate in group travel, results from the Likert scale in question four were examined with measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation). To answer research question six, studying constraints to participate in group travel was also analyzed using measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation). Question six also had a “Not Applicable” option that was analyzed using frequency and percentage. Open-ended questions five and seven allowed subjects to type in a personalized response. Those responses were classified into push and pull categories.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to assess the motivations and constraints of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo RPTA students to participate in international group travel. Data were gathered online April 19, 2012 through May 1, 2012 with the use of Zoomerang. An e-mail was sent to all RPTA students with a link to the survey on April 20, 2012. A sample size of 37 students represented the population of approximately 315 RPTA students (11.74%). A total of 56 students visited the Zoomerang survey, but only 37 subjects completed the questionnaire.

Travel Characteristics

Travel characteristics include subjects' gender, opportunity to travel, international travel experience, and group travel experience. Gender was the only demographic information collected. Of the 37 respondents, there were more female subjects (n=32, 86%) who completed the questionnaire than male subjects (n=5, 14%). Of the 37 respondents the majority of subjects (n=33, 89%) agreed that they have opportunities to participate in group travel and few subjects (n=4, 11%) indicated that they have not had the opportunity to travel. Thirty-three subjects (89.0%) have traveled outside of the United States and 4 students (11%) have not. The majority of subjects (n=22, 59.0%) have not participated in group travel, the other 15 subjects (41%) have participated in group travel.

Motivations to Participate in Group Travel

Question 4 asked students who have not participated in group travel to skip questions 4 and 5; however 15 subjects (41.0%) indicated that they have participated in group travel but 17 subjects (45.9%) gave responses to question 4. The highest mean scores were for social reasons (3.12) and physical safety (3.00). The lowest were for companionship (2.33) and discounted price (2.47). Refer to Table 1 for the mean and standard deviation of subjects' motivations to participate in group travel.

Table 1
Motivations According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Motivations	Mean	SD
Comfort	2.82	0.95
Belongings Secure	2.59	0.80
Physical Safety	3.00	0.71
Companionship	2.33	1.18
Convenience	2.50	0.89
Discounted Price	2.47	1.07
Inclusive Package	2.76	1.09
Social Reasons	3.12	1.02
Tour Guide	2.56	1.15

There were seven open-ended responses that identified other motivations for subjects to participate in group travel. Responses were coded into common themes and separated by push and pull factors. Some responses had both push and pull factors. There were 3 internal push factors and 5 external pull factors. Examples of push factors included the desire to volunteer, to participate in a class trip, and experience more

activities. Examples of pull factors included the destination, time saved, and a simplified travel process.

Constraints to Participate in Group Travel

The 37 subjects indicated their level of agreement with statements about constraints to participate in travel and group travel (see Table 2). The highest mean scores indicated that most subjects cannot financially afford to travel (2.48) or agree that group travel lacks opportunities for independence (2.26). The lowest mean scores were for health conditions (1.30) and not interested in international travel (1.39).

The most frequent categories that did not apply to the subjects were the lack of independence (n=6, 18%) followed by too many activities (n=5, 15%), restrictive itinerary (n=5, 15%), and not enough privacy (n=5, 15%). Since the subjects were directed to complete this section regardless of their travel experience, they were able to indicate their level of agreement with the constraint statements or indicate if the statement did not apply to them.

Twelve responses were received as other constraints to participate in group travel. The responses were separated by main themes that were categorized by internal or external drivers. Examples of internal constraints included lack of freedom, high price, lack of funds, lack of time, and loss of adventure. Other constraints mentioned were: incompatibility with lifestyle, discomfort traveling without friends, and a missed opportunity to participate in group travel. Examples of external constraints to participate in group travel included the tendency to visit tourist areas, a lack of knowledge or

resources to plan a guided tour, and a personal bias that group tours are for people who cannot plan trips.

Table 2
Constraints According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Constraints	Mean	SD
Lack of Independence	2.26	1.02
Restrictive Itinerary	2.20	1.06
Too Many Activities	1.71	0.90
Lack of Privacy	1.93	1.02
No Group Tours at Destination	1.50	0.92
Activities Not Offered	1.66	0.97
Insufficient Length	1.83	1.02
Cannot Afford	2.48	1.23
Health Conditions	1.30	0.84
Family Obligations	1.40	0.89
Not Enough Time	2.16	1.05
Not Interested in International Travel	1.39	0.97
Not Interested in Group Travel	1.69	1.03

Summary

The majority of respondents were female subjects. Most subjects have traveled internationally but not with a group tour. The results revealed that the subjects were primarily motivated by social reasons and least motivated by opportunities for companionship. Push factors from the open-ended question included the desire to volunteer, to participate in a class trip, and to experience more activities. Pull factors

included the simplified travel process, the destination, and time saved. The highest rated constraint was price and the lowest was health conditions. Internal constraints from the open-ended question included lack of freedom, high price, lack of funds, lack of time, and loss of adventure. Other constraints involved incompatibility with lifestyle, discomfort traveling without friends, a missed opportunity to participate in group travel, tendency to visit tourist areas, and a lack of knowledge or resources. See Chapter 4 for a complete analysis and summary of the results.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study provides information that can be helpful for the RPTA department and tour operators to market group tours to college students so they can make efficient administrative decisions that provide experiences based on student needs. This concluding chapter will include the following: a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary

College students are a growing market in the travel industry. Students are in a stage of life where they want to travel and they have the means and opportunities to do so. Several internal and external factors influence travelers' decisions. Push factors are internal drivers that the individual seeks to fulfill and pull factors attract tourists to a destination. Group tours offer incentives and convenience to the travel experience while independent travel can provide a tailored experience without the security of a group and tour operators.

A census was attempted to collect data from RPTA students through an electronic survey that was sent to all RPTA students on April 20, 2012. The questionnaire contained eight questions that took respondents three to five minutes to complete. The researcher expected to receive 170 responses but only received 37 completed questionnaires, 32 respondents were female and 5 were male.

The majority of respondents have opportunities to travel. Most respondents have traveled outside of the United States; however most have not been on a group tour. The highest mean score for motivations to participate in group travel was for social reasons (3.12) and the lowest was companionship (2.33). The highest mean score for constraints to participate in group travel indicated that most subjects cannot financially afford to travel (2.48) but health conditions are not a significant constraint for the subjects (1.30).

Discussion

The top three motivating factors for subjects to participate in group travel are: social reasons, inclusive package, and comfort. By knowing that the subjects would be motivated to participate in group travel for these main reasons, tour operators and the RPTA department can better market tourism products to the subjects. The response with the highest mean score is social reasons meaning that the subjects value the opportunity for friendship. The lowest mean score is for companionship but, companionship doesn't necessarily mean a romantic relationship. The subjects are not very interested in seeking romantic relationships. Group packages that focus on team building would be more successful than packages that encourage opportunities for companionship.

The most common response in the open-ended section is the motive to participate in a class trip. This is probably because the RPTA department at Cal Poly has an Adventure Travel and Tourism course that plans and participates in trips to different locations annually for educational purposes. Since this course provides students with the opportunity to travel in an educational environment there may be additional incentives for subjects to participate that have not been researched in this study. Other responses

include time, the destination itself, and a simplified travel process. Further research is required to determine the specific requirements individuals seek. This information can help tour operators customize the duration and location of group tours based on the subjects' needs.

The three highest rated constraints to participate in group travel include: lack of independence, lack of privacy, and too many activities. Based on these findings, tour operators can make an effort to schedule leisure time and independent opportunities. The lack of privacy may be an unavoidable issue while participating in group travel, perhaps there are more suitable accommodations that maximize privacy. The most common constraint provided in the open-ended section is the cost of group travel. Group travel may or may not be more expensive than independent travel. If tour operators market tourism products to the college demographic discounts on travel, accommodations, activities, or food would be strong incentives. Other constraints include lack of knowledge or awareness, and incompatibility with subjects' lifestyle. Lack of awareness or knowledge presents an opportunity for tour operators and professionals to educate and market their services to students. Further research is required to determine what aspects of group travel conflict with an individual's lifestyle. That information may be helpful to tour operators if the data can be categorized into useable data. These findings coincide with research on travel behaviors.

There are several limitations present in this study. One limitation is that the researcher hoped to receive 170 responses to represent 315 RPTA students but only received 37 completed questionnaires so the sample may not accurately represent the population. Also, only 15 subjects have taken a group tour, the rest of the respondents

were given directions to skip question 4 and 5, however 17 subjects responded to the Likert-type scale of agreement with motivation statements. Of the 37 questionnaires completed, 32 were female subjects and only 5 subjects were male. As a result, precise gender comparisons could not be completed.

This research provides the department with insight regarding student travel behavior. The findings identify student motivations when considering travel options as well as constraints that keep them from participating in international group travel. Based on the research, group tours should incorporate social and independent opportunities with a balance of leisure time and planned activities. Discounts on tourism products for this demographic is a big incentive to participate in group travel.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. College students do participate in international group travel.
2. The subjects are mostly motivated to travel in a group because of social reasons, inclusive packages, and an increase comfort levels.
3. The most significant constraints to group travel are the price, lack of independence, and a restrictive itinerary.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Inform students about opportunities and benefits of participating in international group travel.

2. Provide options for activities on group tours or involve the students in the planning process so they have some control over which activities they want to participate in.
3. Provide discounts on tourism products for students who participate in group travel.
4. Leave some unplanned time for students to do independent activities while traveling on a group tour.
5. Collect more data from males and females to accurately represent the populations so gender comparisons can be made.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Alvarez, M., & Asugman, G. (2006). Explorers versus planners: A study of Turkish tourists. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(2), 319-338. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.elsevier.com>
- Bonn, M. A., Chang, H., Agrusa, J., Furr, L., Woo Gon K., & Hae Young, L. (2009). Demographic, behavioral and perceptual comparisons of U.S. visitor experiences with group package tours and free independent travel to China. *FIU Hospitality Review*, 27(1), 58-76. Retrieved from <http://hospitality.fiu.edu>
- Bowen, D. & Clarke, J. (2009). *Contemporary tourist behaviour yourself and others as tourists*. London, UK: Oxford Brookes.
- Fairley, S., & Tyler, B. (2009). Cultural learning through sport tourism experience: The role of the group. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 14(4), 273-292. doi:10.1080/14775080903453823
- Gartner, W. C. (1996). *Tourism development: Principles, processes, and policies*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Gorman, B. (1979). Seven days, five countries: the making of a group. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 7(4), 469-491. doi: 10.1177/089124167900700403
- Hanai, T., Oguchi, T., Ando, K., & Yamaguchi, K. (2008). Important attributes of lodgings to gain repeat business: A comparison between individual travels and group travels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(2), 268-275. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2007.08.006.
- Holloway, J. C. (1998). *The business of tourism* (5th ed.). White Plains: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Hsu, C.C., Kang, S.K., & Lam, T. (2006). Reference group influences among Chinese travelers, *Journal of Research*, 44(4), 474-484. doi:10.1177/0047287505282951
- Jui Chi, C. (2007). Travel motivations of package tour travelers. *Tourism*, 55(2), 157-176. Retrieved from <http://www.iztzg.hr/tourism.htm>
- Kozak, M. (2002). Comparative analysis of tourist motivations by nationality and destinations. *Tourism Management* 22, 221-232. Retrieved from www.mendeley.com
- Krippendorf, J. (1987). *The holiday makers: Understanding the impact of leisure on travel*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann Elsevier Ltd.

- Lundberg, D. E. & Lundberg C. B. (1985). *International travel and tourism*. Canada: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Mansfeld, Y. & Pizam, A. (2006). *Tourism, security & safety: From theory to practice*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Pearce, P. L. (1982) *The social psychology of tourist behavior*. International series in experimental social psychology (Vol. 3). Elmsford, N.Y.: Pergamon Press Inc.
- Pomfret, G. (2006). Mountaineering adventure tourists: A conceptual framework for research. *Tourism Management* 27, 113-123. Retrieved from www.mendeley.com
- Power of Travel (2012): Economic impact: Travel-the benefits are everywhere. *U.S. Travel Association*. Retrieved from <http://www.poweroftravel.org/>
- Reisinger, Y., & Crofts, J. C. (2009). The influence of gender on travel risk perceptions, safety, and travel intentions. *Tourism Analysis*, 14(6), 793-807. doi:10.3727/108354210X12645141401269
- Recreation, Parks, & Tourism Administration. (2009). Degree information. Retrieved from <http://www.rpta.calpoly.edu/degree.html>
- Schmidt, C.J. (1979). The guided tour: Insulated adventure. *Urban Life*, 7(4), 441–467. Retrieved from <http://tou.sagepub.com>
- Schuster, C.P., Zimmerman, R.O., Schertzer, C.B., & Beamish, P.W. (1998). Assessing the impact of executive MBA international travel courses. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 20(2), 121–132. Retrieved from <http://jmd.sagepub.com>
- Sirgy, M., Kruger, P., Lee, D., & Yu, G.B. (2011). How does a travel trip affect tourists' life satisfaction? *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(3), 261-275. doi: 10.1177/0047287510362784
- Student travel statistics. (2006, November 18). Introduction to the student traveler [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://studenttravelstatistics.blogspot.com/>
- UNWTO (2010) *International recommendations for tourism statistics 2008*. (Series M No. 83/Rev.1) New York: United Nations. Retrieved from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesm/SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf

APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

MOTIVATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF CAL POLY RPTA STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL GROUP TRAVEL

Created: April 19 2012, 7:49 PM
 Last Modified: April 19 2012, 8:54 PM
 Design Theme: Tablet
 Language: English
 Button Options: Custom: Start Survey: "Start Survey!" Submit: "Submit"
 Disable Browser "Back" Button: False

Motivations and Constraints of Cal Poly RPTA Students to Participate in International Group Travel

Page 1 - Question 1 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Do you feel you have opportunities to travel?

- Yes
- No

Page 2 - Question 2 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Have you ever traveled outside of the United States?

- Yes
- No

Page 3 - Question 3 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Have you ever participated in international group travel? For the purpose of this study, GROUP TRAVEL is defined as: a travel experience designed for three or more people by operators or tour wholesalers, who purchase the components from their suppliers and often include a tour escort, all meals, sightseeing, entertainment, and accommodations for one price.

- Yes
- No

Page 4 - Question 4 - Rating Scale - Matrix

If you answered NO to question 3, skip questions 4 & 5 and move onto question 6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about group travel using the scale below.

	Do Not Agree	1	Somewhat Agree	2	A g r e e	3	Strongly Agree	4
I am more comfortable traveling in a group tour.	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
My belongings are more secure when I am traveling in a group tour.	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
I feel more physically safe when I travel in a group tour.	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
I decided to participate in group travel because I had the opportunity for companionship.	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4
I decided to travel in a group tour for convenience.	<input type="radio"/>	1	<input type="radio"/>	2	<input type="radio"/>	3	<input type="radio"/>	4

- I decided to participate in group travel because of the discounted price. 1 2 3 4
- I decided to participate in group travel because it was part of an inclusive package. 1 2 3 4
- I decided to participate in group travel for social reasons. 1 2 3 4
- I decided to participate in group travel because I wanted to travel with an experienced tour guide. 1 2 3 4

Page 5 - Question 5 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Are there any other reasons you decided to participate in group travel? If there are, Please explain here

Page 6 - Question 6 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about group travel using the scale below.

	Do Not Agree	Somewhat Agree	A g r e e	Strongly Agree	N / A
There is a lack of independence to do activities I am interested in if I travel in a group.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
The itinerary in group travel is too restrictive.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
Group tours include too many activities.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
There is not enough privacy on group tours.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
There are no group tours where I want to travel.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
Group tours do not offer the activities I want to participate in when I travel.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
The length of group tours does not fit my needs.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
I cannot financially afford to travel.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
I am not able to travel outside the USA because of health conditions.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
I am not able to travel outside the USA because of family obligations.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
I do not have enough time to travel.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
I am not interested in traveling outside the USA.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A
I am not interested in a group tour outside the USA.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> N/A

Page 7 - Question 7 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Are there any other reasons keeping you from participating in group travel? If there are, Please explain here

Page 8 - Question 8 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

What is your SEX?

- Male
- Female

Appendix B
Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY OF MOTIVATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF CAL POLY RECREATION, PARKS, AND TOURISM STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL GROUP TRAVEL

A senior research project on group travel is being conducted by Selena Ramirez in the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration at Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo under the supervision of Dr. Bill Hendricks. The purpose of the study is to determine if college students participate in international group travel, what factors motivate or constrain students to participate in international group travel, and if gender effects students' decision to participate in international group travel.

You are asked to take part in this study by completing the following eight item online questionnaire. Your participation will take approximately 3-5 minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also omit any items on the questionnaire you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated with the participation in this study.

Your responses will be provided anonymously to protect your privacy. Potential benefits associated with this study include a better understanding of the decision making process of Cal Poly RPTA students to participate in international group travel.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Selena Ramirez at (530)210-1694, scramire@calpoly.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Susan Opava, Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, at 756-1508, sopava@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by completing the following online questionnaire. Please retain this consent cover form for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.