

Significant profile differences among male and female adventure tourists in Pretoria, South Africa

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Abstract

Different adventure activities/experiences evolve because individuals, their motives, behaviours, and experiences differ and change over time. This notion illustrates the broad nature of adventure tourism and its links with other forms of tourism. In turn, adventure tourism companies are compelled to promote/sell an array of activities/experiences to a diverse range of markets as novel and exclusive experiences to facilitate the growth of adventure holidays (Swarbrooke *et al.*, 2003). To assist adventure tourism companies in achieving effective marketing strategies, the study's objective is to identify significant socio-psychological profile differences among male and female adventure tourists in Pretoria, South Africa. Furthermore, to facilitate the comparison of adventure tourists' profiles, an equal number of respondents were male (117) and female (117), which provided a 93.6% response rate.

In comparison to female respondents, male respondents prefer winter as a season to participate in hard/high-risk adventure activities when they are with or without their family, and they participate in adventure activities for travelling and socialising purposes. Whereas, female respondents predominantly regard scuba-diving, abseiling, and helicopter flights as a hard/high-risk adventure activity, although these activities are generally regarded by the overall sample as being soft/low-risk adventure activities. Furthermore, even though females' participation in adventure activities is sponsored, they did not participate or only participated in adventure activities once over the past year due to fear/risk and/or lack of skill. This study established that there is a need to further research adventure tourists' profiles before it could be equally accepted and interpreted.

Keywords: tourism; adventure tourism; market segmentation; consumer profiles

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, according to Funk and Bruun (2007), can be considered as a socio-

psychological experience. This highlights that even though geographic, demographic and socio-economic characteristics affect tourist behaviour, there are also other trip-

related factors related to the experience of tourists that are emerging and that can explain this complex process. For example, motivation and satisfaction are considered as two essential interrelated elements that determine individual behaviour in the field of tourism. This is supported by Meng, Tepanon and Uysal (2006) who hypothesizes that tourist satisfaction is a function of travel motivation.

A study of previous literature on tourism motivation reveals that people participate in tourism because they are pushed or pulled into it (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Uysal & Jorowski, 1994). Jang and Wu (2006) suggest that push factors tend to be related to internal or emotional aspects (such as the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, adventure, or social interaction) and pull factors are linked to external, situational, or cognitive aspects (attributes of the chosen destination, leisure infrastructure and cultural or natural features are examples). This highlights that motivation initiates tourism behaviour and determines different aspects of tourist activity in the context of why people participate in tourism, where they are going to, and what the overall result of the experience is (Guttentag, 2009). Dey and Sarma (2009) concur by suggesting that the current demand trend towards greater segmentation can be explained by the diversification of tourists' motivations.

Diversification is a very valuable element when directing the expansion of emerging tourism products/services. A substantial and frequent method of describing tourists is to refer to their choice of a tourism product/service and to define their characteristics and behaviours in relation to that product/service. Pearce (2005) suggests that the range of tourism categories and tourist classifications that can be studied in this way is considerable.

Evidently, identifying tourist motivations is crucial to successfully penetrate a specific market. However, according to Heyniger

and Consulting (2008), adventure tourism is not a well-defined segment in the discipline of tourism studies making it difficult to examine the different motivations and segment differentiations in niche markets such as adventure tourism. As a result, adventure tourism companies need to include target marketing as a core element of strategic marketing management in order to recognize the parts of the market it can best serve. This could aid adventure tourism companies to promote and sell specific activities and experiences that will meet the specific needs and wants of their recognized niche target market. In order to assist adventure tourism companies to identify different travel motivations among adventure tourists in Pretoria, South Africa, which could contribute to achieving a more effective marketing strategy, this study aims to categorize significant socio-psychological profile differences among male and female adventure tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is still a debate about the exact size of the adventure tourism market as there is no universally accepted definition of adventure tourism. However, even though it is difficult to measure the market, Fluker and Turner (2000) explain that the adventure tourism market is a newly emerging, fast-growing sector of tourism. Swarbrooke et al. (2003) further concur that although the adventure tourism market appeals to an expanding population who are seeking self-fulfilment and excitement through participating in physically and mentally stimulating activities, the patterns of consumer behaviour are in a constant state of flux. Therefore, in the 1990s, Loverseed (1997) suggested that satisfaction is crucial in understanding a tourist's engagement with an activity or a product for a specific purpose to satisfy his/her specific interest and needs.

Furthermore, Fluker and Turner (2000) propose that when trying to understand adventure tourists, the research should focus on the distinct travel psychographics

emphasising specific needs, motivations, and experiences or on individuals' subjective experiences and perceptions of adventure. Lastly, Weber (2001) recommends that when analysing the decision-making process, researchers should obtain information regarding the tourists' characteristics and their consumer and travel behaviour because anticipating and meeting a tourist's needs is the key to success.

Adventure tourism participants display a wide range of motivations due to the diverse nature of adventure tourism. Every adventure activity has its particular forms and amounts of risk, which is a stimulatory motive to participate in the activity (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). Positive risk refers to risk that a person can control and this is perceived as a challenge, whilst negative risk refers to risk that a person cannot control and this is perceived as danger. These risk levels are linked to an individual's skills, experience, and knowledge of the adventure activity.

Evidently, risk taking is an important component that contributes towards a rewarding adventurous experience. However, there is often a disparity between a person's perceived risk and the actual risk involved in adventure participation and the absence or presence of risk can influence a person's experience. Moreover, there are numerous other motives that are intertwined with the element of risk.

One of these is sensation seeking. Sensation seeking, according to Woicik et al. (2009), is (1) the seeking of varied, novel, complex and intense experiences; and, (2) the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such an experience. Other motives that stimulate people to engage in adventure activities are driven by needs, for example the need to enhance self-esteem, to become more competent, to face a challenge, to develop a skill, and/or to experience novel situations.

Evidently, a correlation exists between the degree of experience an individual has in a particular activity and changes in an individual's motivation. This implies that if people have a positive experience, or the more experience people have in a particular adventure activity, the more likely they will feel competent. Experience and competence are important in situations where some degree of skill is required to participate successfully in adventure, for example abseiling.

Lastly, Shoham, Rose and Kohle (2000) explain that there are generally four motives that encourage continuous participation in risky sports. These motives are: (1) identity construction; (2) efficacy; (3) camaraderie; and (4) experience. On the contrary, the flow experience, as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1992), seems to be the main motivation for continued participation because people become so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter. The experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.

It is important to consider the number of types of adventure experiences beyond those solely related to physical risk, because this aids towards understanding the motives of adventure tourists. Suppliers of adventure products/services could benefit from recognising that there are different classes of adventure tourists, ranging from those who seek activities that offer physical challenge and risk to those looking for adventures that are intellectual, spiritual, or emotional.

As adventure tourism is associated with specific activities as a primary motive for travelling, various types of adventure tourists have emerged (Weed, 2007). These include, for example: eco-tourists, sport tourists, wildlife tourists, charity challenge tourists, gambling tourists, independent travellers, hard and soft adventure tourists, hidden adventure tourists (sex tourists), religious tourists and gay tourists. Exploring

adventure tourists' motives, as explained above, can be useful to some extent. However, the deeper motivation is often overlooked. Therefore, when targeting adventure tourists it is important to develop an understanding of their needs, desires, and personal goals.

METHODOLOGY

This study's core research function or purpose is based on applied research in order to attain the stated objectives and find a solution to the research problem. This study is based on the descriptive research approach because of the specific information requirements of this study. A quantitative methodology is used because the methodology of this study is grounded in the positivist social sciences paradigm.

The target population consisted of all adventure tourists within Pretoria, South Africa, and the sample consisted of adventure tourists making use of the products/services (land, water and/or air-based activities) of adventure tourism companies within Pretoria, South Africa. Non-probability sampling in the form of quota and convenience sampling was used to select the sample members because this method relies on the personal judgment of the researcher rather than chance.

The sample consisted of 250 adventure tourists of whom 50% were male and 50% female. However, because of incomplete questionnaires that could affect the outcome of this study, the sample that actually realised was 234, providing a 93.6% response rate. A list of adventure tourism companies presenting adventure tourism activities (land, water and/or air-based) at their premises within Pretoria, South Africa was compiled with the assistance of the Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA), the GSA (industry magazine), the Indaba traders' catalogue, the Internet, and personal interviews. The list consisted of 35 adventure tourism companies; however, due to a lack of cooperation by some of these

companies, the final list comprised of 20 adventure tourism companies.

The sample size was divided into the number of adventure tourism companies to ensure that an equal number of responses were obtained when these companies were visited. After completing the pilot study, during the period of 26 September 2009 to 2 December 2009, self-completing questionnaires were distributed among adventure tourists making use of the products/services (land, water and/or air-based activities) of adventure tourism companies in Pretoria, South Africa. To ensure that these tourists have participated in at least one adventure activity (land, water and/or air-based), the researcher approached them to participate in the study after they have completed their activities. This approach was necessary because the purpose of this study is to profile adventure tourists and not tourists in general. The researcher administered the fieldwork of the study.

The questionnaire was specifically designed for the purpose of this study and the reliability of the questions in the questionnaire posted to the sample was tested by using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of checklists and three open-ended questions. The second section of the questionnaire included checklists and two ranking scales that required respondents to rate their personality, motives, and lifestyle values. The last section of the questionnaire included checklists to identify the participants' benefits sought, user status, usage rate, and loyalty status.

Thereafter, the raw data obtained from the self-completing questionnaires was turned into numerical representations to enable statistical analysis on the aggregated data. The raw data was captured onto a database in Microsoft Access that was imported into the SAS (Statistical Analysis Software) format through the SAS Access module.

The data was then analysed according to a bivariate analysis (cross-tabulation and the Pearson correlation coefficient) to determine whether any relationship(s) and/or difference(s) existed between two variables. The statistical analysis of data for descriptive and inferential purposes was conducted in co-operation with statistical consultation.

RESULTS

A bivariate analysis considers the relationship between two variables. For the purposes of this study, cross-tabulation was used to present the information of two variables simultaneously and to determine whether any relationship exists between these variables. The aim of this study is to identify significant socio- psychological differences among male and female adventure tourists in Pretoria, South Africa. As an equal number of males and females participated in this study, the respondents' gender facilitated the comparison of adventure tourist socio- psychological profiles. Therefore, a comparison was made to see whether the distribution of males and females differed with respect to their answers in the questionnaire.

Furthermore, while the variables were tested, inferential statistics were performed. These statistics are important, as statements will be made about the respondents in relation to the population being studied. The following inferential statistics were performed on the data:

- Cronbach Alpha Coefficient test – The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is an index of reliability associated with the variation accounted for by the true score of the underlying construct. The construct are comprised of those hypothetical variables that are being measured (Cooper & Schindler, 2001). Another way to put it would be that the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient measures how well a set of variables measures a single uni-dimensional latent construct.

- Pearson's Chi-square – this test was used to assess two types of comparison, namely tests of goodness of fit and tests of independence. A test of goodness of fit establishes whether an observed frequency distribution differs from a theoretical distribution. A test of independence assesses whether paired observations on two variables expressed in a contingency table are independent of each other – for example, whether two genders differ in the frequency with which they answer the questions put to them.

SAS (Statistical Analysis Software) computes a P-value (probability value) that measure statistical significance that is derived from the test values such as the Chi-square, F-value and Z-value. Results will be regarded as significant if the P-values are smaller than 0.05, because this value presents an acceptable level on a 95% confidence interval ($P \leq 0.05$). The P-value is the probability of observing a respondents' value as extreme as, or more extreme than, the value actually observed, given that the null hypothesis is true. This area represents the probability of a Type 1 error that must be assumed if the null hypothesis is rejected (Cooper & Schindler, 2001).

The P-value is compared to the significance level (α) and on this basis the null hypothesis is either rejected or not rejected. If the P-value is lower than the significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected (P-value $< \alpha$, reject null). If the P-value is greater than or equal to the significance level, the null hypothesis is not rejected (P-value $\geq \alpha$, do not reject null). Thus, with $\alpha=0.05$, if the P-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected. The P-value is determined by using the standard normal distribution. A small P-value represents the risk of rejecting the null hypothesis. A difference has statistical significance if there is good reason to believe that the difference does not only represent random sampling fluctuations. Results will be regarded as

significant if the P-values are smaller than 0.05, because this value is used as a cut-off point in behavioural science research. The results indicate the variables and statistics for which there were statistically significant differences between the proportions of males and females with respect to their answers. The respondents who did not answer all the questions were deleted, and thus the total respondents may differ from the descriptive statistics.

Distribution of responses regarding soft and hard adventure activities with families

A large percentage of female respondents (54.1%), as illustrated in Figure 1, prefer soft/low-risk adventure activities when they are with their families. However, most male respondents (64.1%) prefer hard/high-risk adventure activities when they are with their families. Females and males collectively (82.4%) prefer soft/low-risk adventure activities when they are with their families.

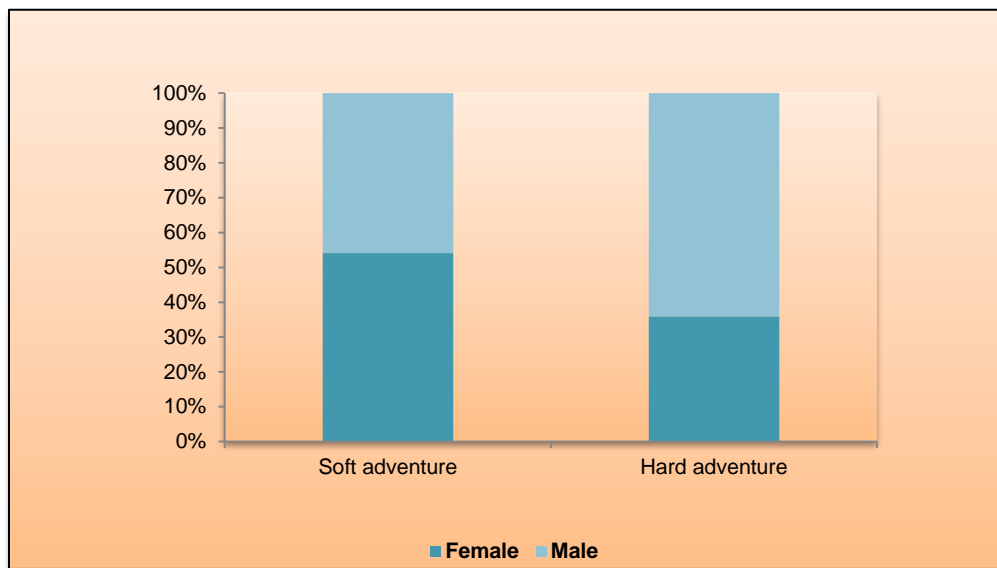


Figure 1: Distribution of responses regarding soft and hard adventure activities with families

Distribution of responses regarding soft and hard adventure activities without families

A significant percentage of female respondents (61.2%) prefer soft/low-risk adventure activities when they are without their families. However, as illustrated in Figure 2, 64.0% male

respondents prefer hard/high-risk adventure activities when they are without their families. This coincides with the results as previously discussed (activities with family). This result could be an indication that most females always prefer soft/low-risk adventure activities.

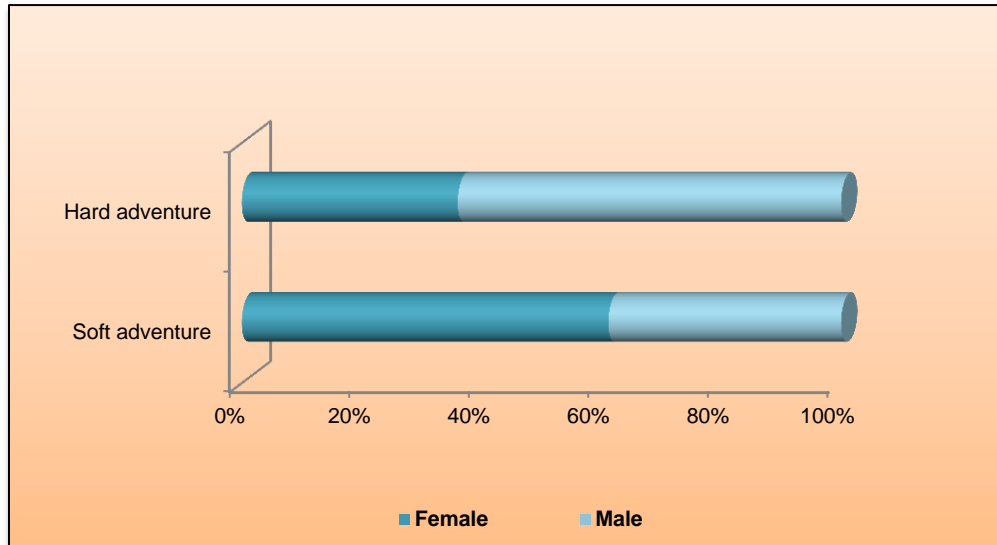


Figure 2: Distribution of responses regarding soft and hard adventure activities without families

Distribution of responses regarding hard adventure activities

In order to elaborate on the results obtained in the above response set, it is important to understand what respondents perceive as being a hard/high-risk or soft/low-risk adventure activity. Hiking, abseiling, snorkelling, scuba diving, helicopter flights and skydiving, were ranked from soft/low-risk to hard/high-risk adventure activities as perceived by the respondents. As there were only statistically significant differences regarding hard/high-risk adventure activities the soft/low-risk adventure activities were not included in this discussion. The results indicated that female respondents perceive scuba-diving (59.2%), abseiling (58.2%), and helicopter flights (62.0%) as hard/high-risk adventure activities. However, male

respondents perceive scuba-diving (60.9%), abseiling (60.2%), and helicopter flights (54.3%) as a soft/low-risk adventure activity. It can therefore be said that females view all three activities as hard/high-risk activities whilst males view them as soft/low-risk activities.

Distribution of responses regarding air-based adventure activities

As there were only statistically significant differences regarding air-based activities, the land and water-based activities were not included in this discussion. A large percentage of female respondents (56.5%) do not prefer air-based activities in comparison to the 60.0% male respondents who do prefer air-based activities. These differences are illustrated in Figure 3.

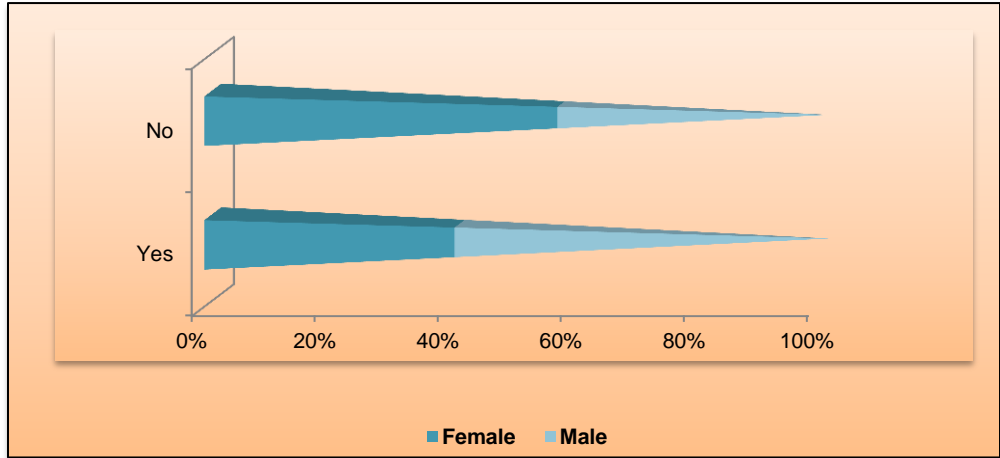


Figure 3: Distribution of responses regarding air-based activities

Distribution of responses regarding socialising

As there were only statistically significant differences regarding socialising as a reason for participating in adventure activities; relaxation, self-discovery, skill development, and risk were not included in

this discussion. Figure 4 illustrates that 60.6% of female respondents do not regard socialising as an important reason for participating in adventure activities whilst 53.6% of the male respondents regard it as an important reason for participating in adventure activities.

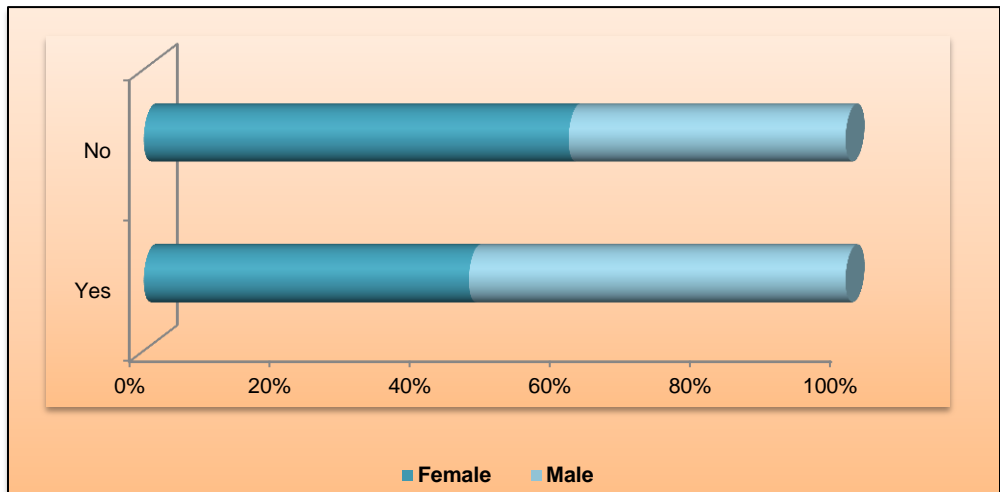


Figure 4: Distribution of responses regarding socialising

Distribution of responses regarding travelling

As there were only statistically significant differences regarding travelling as an influence for participating in adventure activities; the activity, contact with different cultures, and location were not included in

this discussion. As illustrated in Figure 5, 59.1% of female respondents do not regard travelling as an influence on their choice to participate in adventure activities whereas 54.5% of the male respondents regard it as an influence on their choice to participate in adventure activities.

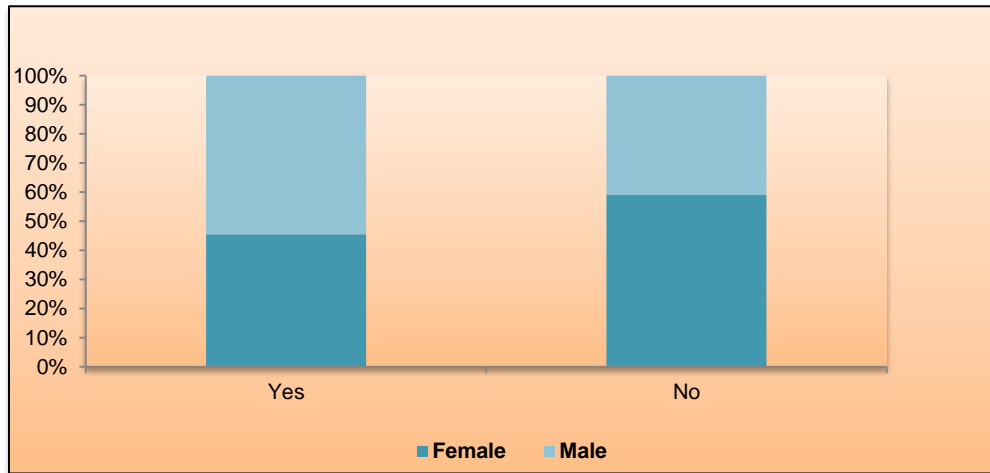


Figure 5: Distribution of responses regarding travelling

Distribution of responses regarding fear/risk and lack of skill

As there were only statistically significant differences regarding fear/risk and lack of skill as a limitation to purchase adventure activities; the cost, family/friends, fitness/health, lack of information, limited interest, time, and previous experience were not included in this discussion. As indicated by the statistical results, 62.7% of female respondents regard fear/risk as a limitation to purchase more adventure activities whilst 55.1% of the male respondents do not regard fear/risk as a limitation.

Distribution of responses regarding the payment method

A substantial percentage of male respondents (60.5%) purchase their own adventure activities in comparison to the 39.5% female respondents who purchase their own adventure activities. Furthermore, 80.0% of female respondents' adventure activities are purchased by their companies, 57.9% by their families, 100% by their friends, and 93.6% by their spouses. The distribution of responses regarding the payment method is illustrated in Figure 6.

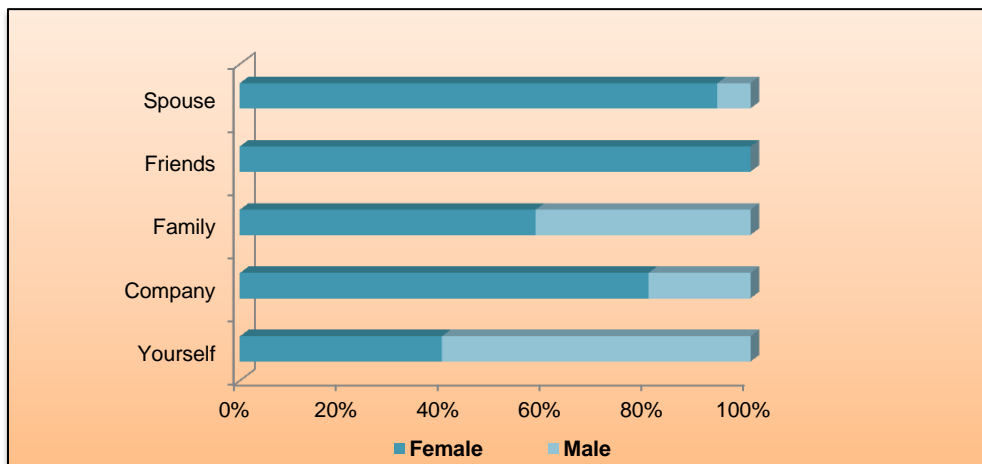


Figure 6: Distribution of responses regarding the payment method

Distribution of responses regarding winter

As there were only statistically significant differences of winter as a preferred season to participate in adventure activities, summer, autumn, and spring, were not

included in this discussion. Figure 7 illustrates that 58.1% females do not prefer winter as a season to participate in adventure tourism activities while 58.2% males prefer winter

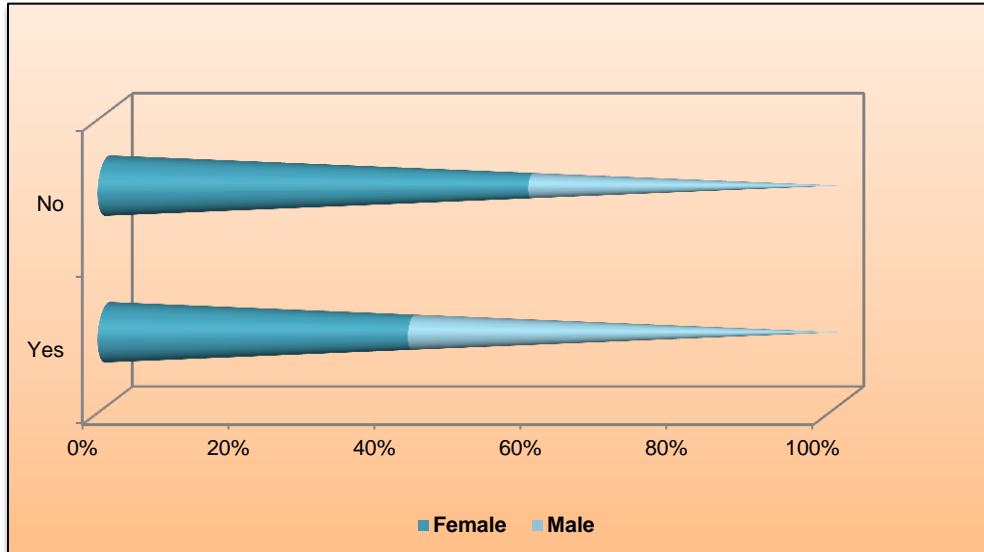


Figure 7: Distribution of responses regarding winter

Distribution of responses regarding participation during the past year

A large percentage of female respondents (72.1%) did not participate in adventure activities the past year whilst males were

more active during the past year. Most males tend to partake in adventure activities every three months (71.0%). The distribution of responses regarding participation during the past year is illustrated in Figure 8.

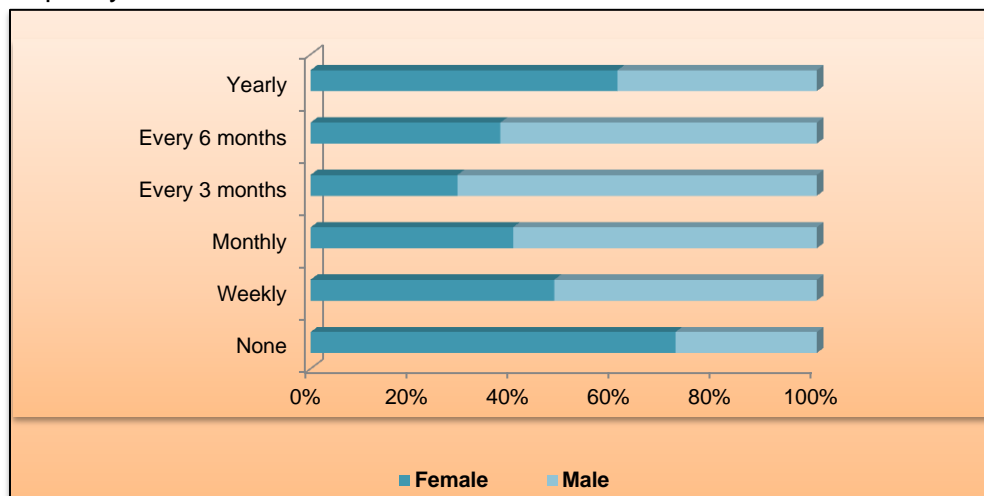


Figure 8: Distribution of responses regarding participation during the past year

DISCUSSION

It is a natural instinct for companies, to want to target as many people and groups as possible (MaGee, 2008). However, Kurtz (2008) suggests that every company should identify those parts of the market that it can best serve, rather than trying to compete in an entire market. According to Rudra (2008), this is the first step of market segmentation, which will allow adventure tourism companies to develop a highly focused marketing campaign to address the needs and desires of a specific group of consumers.

When segmenting the adventure tourism market, adventure tourism companies tend to focus on the needs and wants of male tourists. Therefore, to assist adventure tourism companies in achieving a more effective marketing strategy, this study set out to identify significant socio-psychological differences among male and female adventure tourists in Pretoria, South Africa. This proved to be an interesting task as there seems to be an untapped opportunity for the industry to embrace the female adventure tourism market.

This study identified that when targeting male adventure tourists, adventure tourism companies could successfully promote hard/high-risk adventure activities (for example air based activities) for travelling and socialising purposes during winter months. However, when targeting female adventure tourists, adventure tourism companies should promote soft/low-risk adventure activities (which do not include scuba-diving, abseiling, and helicopter flights) that involve their families. This could however provide some challenges as female adventure tourists did not participate or only participated in adventure activities once over the past year which may be due to fear/risk and/or lack of skill. Evidently, when targeting male and female adventure tourists in Pretoria, South Africa, adventure tourism companies should package their products/services to cater for the needs and

wants of these two unique groups of consumers.

IMPLEMENTATIONS

The empirical research recognized that adventure tourism companies cannot appeal to all consumers in the market and they cannot effectively approach all consumers in a similar way. It is advised that companies should recognize sections of the market they can serve best. This approach contributes towards recognizing market opportunities and developing products/services that are more efficient. Therefore, the first step of target marketing, namely market segmentation is a tool that could assist adventure tourism companies to be knowledgeable about their potential consumers and ultimately satisfy their needs with the appropriate products and services.

Similar to other marketing tools, segmentation is best used in a flexible manner, for example by combining segmentation techniques or dovetailing certain segments (Kurtz, 2008). In other words, markets are segmented using different bases and adventure tourism companies could try numerous approaches, and even amalgamations of these, in order to establish which will yield the best opportunities. However, in order for adventure tourism companies to successfully utilise profiles, the last two steps of the target marketing process (market targeting and positioning) should be implemented, as the steps of this process are dependent on the success of each other. In other words, every step needs to be put into practice successfully in order to proceed and effectively complete the systematic process. To conclude, numerous adventure tourism companies should view marketing as a major tool to reach their target markets who in return needs to understand the nature and benefits of the adventure tourism companies' products and/or services. Adventure tourism companies should also use different marketing methods and techniques to meet

the varying levels of understanding tourists. Moreover, they should further consistently analyse, plan, develop, deliver, evaluate, and update their marketing campaigns to meet their marketing objectives whilst meeting the demand of their target markets.

LIMITATIONS

The structural limitations of this paper include that the exact size of the adventure tourism market is still debateable due to the non-existence of a standard definition of adventure tourism. Furthermore, the sample might raise concerns in terms of representativeness and the fact that this paper cannot be generalised. For example, due to incomplete questionnaires that could affect the outcome of this paper, the sample that realised was smaller than the original sample size anticipated; due to a lack of cooperation from some adventure tourism companies, all the adventure tourism companies based in Pretoria, South Africa could not be included in this paper; and non-probability sampling was used.

Nevertheless, the target population of this paper was not the general public in Pretoria, South Africa; rather, it comprised adventure tourists utilising the products/services (land, water and/or air-based activities) of adventure tourism companies within Pretoria, South Africa. The generalisation of the paper findings to the general public, therefore, should be treated with a degree of caution. Lastly, due to time and monetary constraints this paper could not be expanded to include more or all provinces in South Africa, nor a bigger sample.

CONCLUSION

Different adventure activities and experiences constantly evolve because individuals, motives, behaviours, and experiences differ and change over time. This study focuses on the socio-psychological profile differences among male and female adventure tourists, who used the products/services of adventure

tourism companies within Pretoria, South Africa to assist adventure tourism companies to promote and sell specific activities and experiences that will meet the specific needs and wants of their identified target markets. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, results indicate that there are significant profile differences among male and female adventure tourists that adventure tourism companies should consider when targeting these groups.

Future research could include more research in terms of adventure tourism marketing because the full effect of this type of marketing will be beneficial to the entire adventure tourism industry; more behavioural components and/or psychographics such as needs, motivations, or benefits in the analysis to provide reliable and useful information about adventure tourists' consumer behaviour that is specific to their particular adventure travel participation; and, more extensive research to gain further insight into profiling adventure tourists.

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