

Trip motivations among water-based recreationists

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As participation in outdoor recreation activities has increased dramatically over the past few decades in the US, researchers have attempted to study the underlying motivations for participation. Participants have wide sets of motives and the range of motive importance varies across individuals and is dependent upon their goals. Previous studies have identified various motivational dimensions, such as, exploration, escape, general natural experience, introspection, exercise, being with similar people, seeking exhilaration, and escaping physical stressors. In addition, empirical research has consistently demonstrated that motivations differ based on participation in various activities, as well as due to the significant effect of other variables (e.g. skill level, past experience, group type, purpose of visit, first-time versus repeat visitors, and demographics). With the current growth in participation and projected increases in the future, natural resource managers must be able to learn about the needs and trip motives of their visitors, and to act accordingly to optimize the quality of their experiences.

The purpose of this paper was to examine the effect of selected variables on motivations among recreationists on the Gallatin River, Montana. The river is a naturally free flowing river with headwaters that originates from Yellowstone National Park, and is popular among local and non-local recreationists (rafters, kayakers, anglers) during the summer months. A 15-mile stretch of the river was earmarked for data collection due to its popularity and accessibility to private recreationists (self-guided) and commercial operators (charge for services such as a guide and/or outfitted raft/fishing trips). Data were collected (n=321) in June and July 2000 via river exit interviews (approximately 12 minutes) with a systematic stratified sample of users.

Motivation was operationalized into 9-items using a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1=not at all important to 5=extremely important. The items employed were based on the literature. Similarly, non-motivational variables included the type of user, first/repeat visit, frequency of participation, and demographics (age, gender, income, residence). Based on the primary activity of the day, 32% were identified as kayakers; 35 % were rafters, and 33 % were anglers. The sample was almost evenly split between tourists and residents (someone who as traveled 50 miles or less to the site). Majority of the tourists (72 %) noted to have participated in rafting, while a similar percentage of residents (77 %) noted to have kayaked. Anglers were fairly evenly split between being a tourist and a resident. About 37 % were first time visitors; 23 % participated between 2–9 days in the past 12 months, while 40 % visited 10 days or more. Likewise, 94 % were overnight visitors while 6 % were day visitors. Males comprised about 71 % of the respondents, while 29 % were females. About 36 % were between 21–30 years of age, and 22 % were between 41–50. Respondents were fairly affluent with 34 % noted family income to be over \$90,000.

In order to explore potential differences, one-way analyses of variance were conducted employing the motivational items as dependent variables against the non-motivational

variables. Some of the findings highlight that tourists were more likely motivated to participate on the river for purposes such as, to get away from everyday routine of life, to see wildlife, and to tell others about it. Local residents were more likely to participate as it helps them to keep in shape. Based upon primary activity, anglers were more likely to participate for solitude and to tell others about it at home; kayakers were more likely to participate as it offers a challenge, keeps them in shape and also as a social network, whereas interestingly, rafters were more likely to participate to see wildlife. Repeat visitors were more likely than first time visitors to mention solitude as their motivation to visit the river. However, as expected, first time visitors were more likely to indicate to watch wildlife as well as to tell others about it as key motives. Regardless of activity, males were more likely to participate for solitude while females indicated participation so that they could tell others about it at home.

Understanding what people seek through recreation can provide useful guidance to a variety of planning and management tasks, such as measuring supply and demand for recreation, developing management objectives, and preventing and managing conflicts between users as well as local residents and tourists.