

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters presented the background of the study, defined the research problems, annotated the findings of relevant literature related to factors which may influence the travel behavior of Black and White Americans and presented the theoretical underpinning for this study.

In the first section of this chapter, the research design is described. Research hypotheses and questions are also presented. Then, the chapter describes the population, sampling frame, procedure for telephone surveys, and explains data analysis to be used to test hypotheses.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research focuses on the ability of utilizing marginality to understand the travel behavior of black Americans and white Americans.

This exploratory study examines whether or not differences exist between black and white travelers with respect to selected travel variables. These variables include preferred activities participated in during leisure travel, types of trips selected, and length of stay. This study further investigates the role of marginality factors (income, education, occupation and residence), in evaluating the travel behavior of Black and White Americans. The thesis being that a lack of interaction between groups during leisure travel may be due to discrimination and economic limitations (marginality) and the participation behaviors of ethnic minorities differ from these of the majority group (Gordon, 1964).

Various aspects of the marginality concept have been discussed, but the empirical findings are limited. There is a need for empirical data because of the importance of the topic and because of the benefits to the travel and tourism industry.

This study further investigates the role of marginality factors (income, education, occupation and residence) in evaluating the travel behavior of black and white Americans.

MARGINALITY

For the purpose of this study marginality is viewed as a state of lower socio-economic status and those social conditions income, education, occupation and residence or the lack thereof. Low participation of Black Americans in travel activities and the travel behavior differences between Black and White Americans can be attributed to

limited economical resources. The underlying implication being that if Black Americans had (equal access to income, education, occupational status, and integrated housing,) access to the same travel and recreational activities, their participation patterns would be similar to White Americans (Washburne 1978; Hutchinson 1988).

RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question is: "Are there differences between black and white Americans with respect to travel behavior due to marginality?"

This question is an extension of the work of Floyd (1991) as he did not address the influences of marginality. Floyd's study investigated the aspects of recreation rather than travel and tourism and discussed how individuals may be involved in recreational activities without traveling in vast distances to participate in these recreational activities. Additionally, two specific questions will be addressed. The two questions that will be addressed are as follows:

1. Is travel behavior influenced by marginality?
2. Is marginality effective in explaining the travel behavior or differences in travel behavior of black and white Americans?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine whether or not differences exist between black and white travelers with respect to selected travel behavior variables.
2. To examine the role (if any) that preferred activities participated in during leisure travel, types of trips selected, and length of stay have in understanding differences in travel behavior of black and white travelers.
3. To evaluate the extent to which blacks' and whites' socio-economic status is a predictor of their travel behavior.

RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

Based on the research objectives and the literature review, five specific research hypotheses and one hundred and twenty-three sub-hypotheses were formulated to guide the objectives of this study. Three propositions were also developed for this study.

The propositions of the study are:

1. Black and White Americans leisure travelers differ in their length of stay, types of trips selected and activities participated in during leisure travel.
2. Black and White American leisure travelers differ in income, education, occupation and residence as a predictor of their travel behavior.

- a. Black and White American leisure travelers differ in their travel behavior and these differences continue to exist when the populations are controlled for socio-economic status.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

PROPOSITION 1: Black and White American leisure travelers differ in their length of stay, type of trips selected and activities participated in during leisure travel.

H1 Length of stay during leisure travel is a function of marginality.

H2 Selecting trips is a function of marginality.

H3 Travelers will participate in different activities during leisure travel as a function of marginality.

PROPOSITION 2: Black and White American leisure travelers differ in income, education, occupation and residence as a predictor of their travel behavior.

PROPOSITION 3: Black and White Americans differ in their leisure travel behavior and these differences continue to exist when the populations are controlled for socio- economic status (marginality).

H4 Black travelers will differ from white travelers as a function of marginality.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Population

The population for this study was a sample of black and white American travelers in six southeastern states in the U.S. so that a comparison of their travel behavior and activities could be evaluated. Respondents were screened based on their self-described ethnic identification as this study was limited to black and white Americans only. Participants were also screened on their travel pattern during the past year. To participate in this study, respondents were to have traveled away from home for least two nights during the past year.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame consisted of extracted phone numbers from the survey sampling data base of New South Research in Birmingham, AL. Individuals who had taken at least one pleasure trip two nights away from home during the past year were qualified to participate in this study. For the purpose of this study, participants residing in the United States only were surveyed. Participants were selected from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina and Tennessee.

To achieve the sample, the systematic sampling method was used. This strategy followed random start, every Kth sample unit was selected from the population (Pedhazur and Schmelkin 1992).

Telephone Surveys

For the purpose of this study a professional telephone survey will be used. A professional telephone survey is a telephone survey done with personal supervision. (Blankenship 1977).

Advantages of Telephone Surveys

Unlike personal interview surveys and mail surveys, telephone surveys have several advantages. Telephone surveys offer sampling advantages such as higher completion rates, greater level of cooperation, and usefulness in approaching hard to interview populations.

As it relates to subject matter in telephone surveys, the advantages are that embarrassing topics can be covered, controversial topics can be covered and immediate topics can be addressed.

In the interviewing process several advantages include a high quality of interviewing, a decrease in interview bias and there is no third party influence. (Blankenship 1977).

Limitations of Telephone Surveys

A bias toward households that do not have a telephone represents a limitation of the telephone survey method. A second potential bias is the problem in attaining households with unlisted telephone numbers. Although random digit dialing will minimize or almost eliminate this problem, it still should be mentioned as a possible limitation of the telephone survey method. (Blankenship 1977). For the purpose of this study telephone numbers will be provided by the inquirers.

Interviewer Selection

Trained interviewers of New South Research are selected on the basis of their telephone voice, dependability, trainability, possible predictability and the ability to record well. General training will be done by New South Research. In-house instructions

will include conducting the interview, how to handle probes, and the handling of other specifics such as telephone lines, location of calls, etc. Practice interviews will include actual telephone calls to real respondents. Interviewers will be required to follow a specified script which introduces them and explains their reason for calling. (Appendix A). Interviewers will also be required to keep a record of their dialing activities by completing a dialing sheet. (see appendix B)

“All interviewing was conducted from a central telephone facility in Birmingham, Alabama. Prior to the beginning of interviewing, the interviewers were thoroughly briefed on the purposes of the survey and each question was reviewed in detail with the interviewing staff to ensure they clearly understood the question being asked and the possible answers they might receive.

While interviewing were being conducted, a supervisor was present at all times to answer questions or resolve problems that might arise. During the course of this study, no problems were encountered which would affect the quality of the data or the research results.

As surveys were completed, each interview was carefully checked by the supervisor for completeness and consistency.”(New South Research Report,1998) (Appendix C).

Confidence Limits

Based on a total sample of this size (500), it is expected that the results obtained from this research will be within ± 5.7 percent of that which would have been obtained if all households in the area had been interviewed. Further, it is expected that will occur 95 times out of 100. (New South Research Report,1998). (See appendix C).

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument was developed to investigate factors influential in travel behavior among black and white Americans.

The questionnaire contains two sections designed to attain the required information for the purpose of the study. Section one consists of questions designed to gather information on the length of stay, information sources, types of trips selected, and preferred activities (activities participated in during leisure travel). The second section consists of questions to collect demographic data such as age, gender, marital status, income, education, occupational level, religious patterns, residence and race/ethnic group.

Once the telephone survey was completed it was numerically coded, and statistical analyses were used to test the null hypotheses utilizing empirical data. (Appendix A).

NON-RESPONSE BIAS

Non-response bias was checked by a random sample of 25 individuals who were not included in the telephone survey to compare the characteristics of the respondents and determine if non-respondents are significantly different from the final respondents of the study. Non-respondents were asked several questions from the survey. Demographic information such as race, gender, age, income, education and residence was collected. The results of the analysis on non-respondents will be discussed in chapter four.

VARIABLES

Race

For the purpose of this study only two categories of race were included. Race was assessed by a self-identification question. In other words how one identifies himself and responded to question 2 in the survey determined their inclusion in this study.

Marginality

For the purpose of this study, marginality was determined by the level of income, education, occupation and place of residence. (see questions 4, 5, 6, and 8. in the survey instrument in APPENDIX A). Respondents were asked to indicate their range of household income, highest education level completed, type of occupation and where they resided. The indicators income, education, occupation and residence were selected in that they are important in determining accessibility and level or presence of discrimination.

Types of Trips Selected

An examination of the types of trips respondents chose to select led to the development of a list of eight trip types (see question 3-section I in the survey instrument in APPENDIX A). Respondents were asked to select the type of your most recent pleasure trip.

Length of Stay

The amount of time spent on each trip was acquired. Respondents were asked to indicate how long they stayed on their most recent pleasure trip (see question 3 in section I of the survey instrument in APPENDIX A).

Activities Participated In

Activities travelers actually participated in during leisure travel were measured by an open-ended question. See question 5 in section I in the survey instrument in APPENDIX A). In question 5 respondents were asked, Please indicate the activities you participated in during your most recent pleasure trip.” Possible responses to this question were grouped into fourteen categories. These categories are based on Kaplan’s

Taxonomy, 1960 and factor analysis updates by Noe(1974) and McLoughlin and Noe (1988).The activity categories include immobile activities, sports, exercise-health, popular art, Association-Sociability, outdoor-individual, hunting and fishing, games, fine art, camping-hiking, mobile activities, golf, risk-skill and boating-skiing It is understood that respondents might have participated in several activities during their leisure travel.

DATA ANALYSIS

To effectively complete an analysis of the data, a quantitative method of analysis was applied. The hypotheses corresponding to the study objectives were analyzed using the SAS (Statistical Analysis Software) program. New South Research used Dbase 4 to analyze their data. All results were considered to be statistically significant at the .05 or better probability level.

A comparison of two groups (black and white travelers) with respect to selected travel variables by controlling for socio-economic status was done. Several steps were taken to explore the study objectives and test the hypotheses (see EXHIBIT 3.1). Descriptive statistics were performed on all variables to obtain ranges, frequencies, measures of central tendency such as mean, and mode. Data were analyzed by involving three types of data analysis. Significant differences between the samples were identified using chi-square or difference of means tests. Chi-square tests of homogeneity of proportions was used for categorical variables (nominal and ordinal) and t-tests for continuous variables (interval and ratio) to examine whether differences existed between black and white travelers, controlling for socio-economic status.(See EXHIBIT 3.2)

In order to investigate the combined effects of covariates (covariates are additional independent variables that may be correlated with dependent variables), upon the nominal level dependent variables, log linear modeling was performed. Log linear modeling takes one variable as a linear function of the values of several independent variables. The independent variables effects the odds on the dependent variable. Odds is the ratio between the frequency of being in one category and the frequency of not being in that category. A log linear model is a statement of the expected cell frequencies of a cross tabulation as a function of parameters representing characteristics of the categorical

variables and their relationship with each other. The effects of culture and of selected variables were assessed through log-linear modeling and analysis of variance. Tests of the effects of race as opposed to marginality predictors upon travel variables, in some relationships, identified race as a predictor of leisure travel and the socio-economic covariates as significant predictors in some instances.

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The results of this study were limited to black and white leisure travelers with similar socio-economic status. This study assumes that the individuals who responded to this survey were truthful. Finally the study assumes that the survey instrument used to collect data actually measures the variables which determine the travel behavior of black and white leisure travelers.

“All research is subject to certain limitations. In this case, since a telephone survey was conducted, the results do not include opinions for certain populations.

Included among these populations are persons who do not have a telephone in their home, those living in institutional quarters and those living with someone else such as parents living with their children.

New listings and persons with unlisted numbers included in the research and were reached by random digit “1-plus dialing. That is, “1” was added to each working number to reach these sub-segments of the population.

While the attitudes of those persons excluded from the survey may or may not be different from those who were included in the research, the omission of these segments is not expected to have a significant effect on the survey results because of the small size of the segment.” (The New South Research Report, 1998) (See Appendix C).

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Little research has been conducted which clarifies why different ethnic groups travel, why they are attracted to specific locations, and the meaning of vacation decisions or travel behavior within different ethnic groups. The understanding of the meaning of vacations in the lives of blacks and other ethnic populations is lacking. In view of this, research would be useful in addressing diversities in the vacation travel behavior. This segmentation focused at Black Americans would allow different promotional strategies to be developed and used by the hospitality industry, thus increasing their market share of the Black American traveler and increasing satisfaction of the Black American traveler upon arrival at the vacation destination which in turn may increase the possibility of a repeat visit by the black traveler. Segmentation research would also be useful in finding like groups of tourists with similar patterns of selected travel behaviors.

This chapter presented the research methodology for this study. The conceptual framework was defined and the research question, objectives and hypotheses were summarized. The data collection procedures, sampling frame, overview of telephone surveys and data analysis methods were also discussed.