

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TRAVEL BEHAVIOR OF  
BLACK AND WHITE TRAVELERS**

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## (ABSTRACT)

Tourism, leisure and recreation are considered to be an important form of interaction between cultures and are a basic part of social life (McMillen, 1984; Hutchinson and Fidel, 1985). The experiences received by participating in various tourism activities may be different due to racial influences. Although in general terms, travelers may have similarities, the ethnic heritage, social and cultural differences between different racial groups produce distinct patterns of leisure travel and recreational behavior. Demographic factors such as age, education, race, gender and income, occupation and residence may all be related to each other and determine the buying power of the consumer which thus influences travel behavior.

African Americans represent more than \$400 billion in purchasing power while comprising slightly over 12.5% of the U.S. population (Whigham-Desir, 1996). As the largest non-white group in the U.S., African Americans continue to grow into a substantial force in the marketplace. More specifically, Blacks consume a diverse range of products and services. The results of a "Target Market News-The Buying Power of Black America" survey (1996) showed that blacks spent \$1.8 billion dollars on entertainment and leisure and \$4.2 billion in travel and lodging. According to Mroun and Whigham-Desir (1997), Blacks have an estimated \$25 billion in travel spending power and as a result, are gaining the attention of the \$440 billion U.S. travel industry.

Research investigating the social conditions of marginality (lower income status, lower educational level, lower occupational status and segregated residence) in influencing travel behavior is sparse to none. Little focus has been placed on this relationship and how it affects travel behavior.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not differences exist between black and white travelers with respect to travel behavior. More specifically, this study investigated whether the marginality predictors, income, education, occupation and residence contributed to differences between black and white travelers in the type of trips selected, length of stay and activities participated in during leisure travel, and whether these differences (if any) persist when controlled for race. The data were collected through telephone interviews with members of a sample of residents in the six southeastern states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee. Only those respondents who reported taking a leisure trip at least two nights away from home during the past year and those respondents who identified themselves as black or white were considered to participate in this study. A total of 500 surveys were completed of whom 225(45%) were black and 275 (55%) were white. 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. The effects of culture and of selected variables were assessed through log-linear modeling and analysis of variance.

All of the hypotheses for this study were tested and partially confirmed. While important similarities existed among black and white travelers, findings of the study suggested that blacks and whites do significantly differ in terms of length of stay and income and occupation; type of trip and income, occupation and residence; activities and income, education, occupation and residence; and race and type of trip and race and activities. Tests of the effects of race as opposed to marginality predictors upon travel variables identified race as a predictor of leisure travel and the socio-economic covariates as significant predictors in some instances.

Findings of the research suggest implications associated with the developing of effective marketing strategies targeted to the African American population and their estimated \$25 billion in travel spending power.

*And David said to his son Solomon,  
“Be strong and of good courage and do it;  
Do not fear nor be dismayed  
For the Lord God, my God -- will be with you.  
he will not leave you nor forsake you,  
until you have finished all the work  
for the service of the house of the Lord.”*

*1 Chronicles 28:20  
New King James Version*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

“No man is an island, No man stands alone  
Each man’s joy, is joy to me  
Each man’s grief is my own  
We need one another, so I will defend  
Each man as my brother, each man as my friend.”.....

Whitney, J. and Kramer, A. 1950

**“This Ph.D Degree is dedicated to my daddy, the late  
Rev. James Henry Montgomery, Sr. and my 81 year old mama,  
Mrs. Carlean Bethea Montgomery.”**

An accomplishment of this magnitude is never achieved alone. Therefore, I gladly acknowledge and dedicate this dissertation to the following.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

(ABSTRACT) .....	II
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION.....	V
LIST OF TABLES.....	XIII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XIV
LIST OF EXHIBITS .....	XV
CHAPTER ONE- -INTRODUCTION .....	1
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....	1
THE PROBLEM.....	1
JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY .....	2
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES .....	4
RESEARCH HYPOTHESES .....	6
INCOME.....	6
EDUCATION.....	7
OCCUPATION.....	7
RESIDENCE.....	8
<u>H3b.      <u>Education and Activities Participated In During Leisure Travel</u></u> .....	10
<u>H3c. <u>Occupation and Activities Participated In During Leisure Travel</u></u> .....	12
<u>H3d.      <u>Residence and Activities Participated in During Leisure Travel</u></u> .....	13
FUNCTIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS .....	17
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	17
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	17
SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.....	19
CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW.....	20

INTRODUCTION.....	20
MARGINALITY .....	21
<u>A Socioeconomic Perspective On Travel</u> .....	21
TRAVEL BEHAVIOR.....	23
MARGINALITY AND RACE .....	24
MARGINALITY AND INCOME .....	25
MARGINALITY AND EDUCATION .....	26
MARGINALITY AND OCCUPATION.....	26
MARGINALITY AND RESIDENCE .....	28
CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	30
<b>CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>31</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	31
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	31
MARGINALITY .....	31
RESEARCH QUESTION .....	32
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES .....	32
RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS.....	32
RESEARCH HYPOTHESES .....	33
DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES .....	33
<u>Population</u> .....	33
<u>Sampling Frame</u> .....	34
<u>Telephone Surveys</u> .....	34
<u>Advantages of Telephone Surveys</u> .....	34
<u>Limitations of Telephone Surveys</u> .....	34
<u>Interviewer Selection</u> .....	34
<u>Confidence Limits</u> .....	35

<i>SURVEY INSTRUMENT</i> .....	35
<i>VARIABLES</i> .....	36
<u>Race</u> .....	36
<u>Marginality</u> .....	36
<u>Types of Trips Selected</u> .....	36
<u>Length of Stay</u> .....	36
<u>Activities Participated In</u> .....	36
<i>DATA ANALYSIS</i> .....	37
LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF DATA ANALYSIS.....	38
SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.....	38
<b>CHAPTER FOUR- RESULTS</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<u>DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENTS</u> .....	42
RACE	
GENDER	
INCOME	
EDUCATION	
OCCUPATION	
RESIDENCE	
NON-RESPONSE BIAS .....	44
HYPOTHESIS TESTING .....	44
ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS H1 .....	45
<u>Marginality Predictors and Length of Stay</u> .....	45
ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS H2 .....	48
<u>Marginality Predictors and Type of Trip Selected</u> .....	48
Income.....	48
Education.....	49
Occupation.....	50

Residence .....	52
ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS H3 .....	55
<u>Marginality Predictors and Activities Participated In</u> .....	55
HYPOTHESES H3.1A-H3.14A .....	55
<u>Income and Activities Participated in During Leisure Travel</u> .....	55
HYPOTHESES H3.1B-H3.14B .....	58
<u>Education and Activities Participated In During Leisure Travel</u> .....	58
HYPOTHESES H3.1C-H3.14C .....	61
<u>Occupation and Activities Participated In During Leisure Travel</u> .....	61
HYPOTHESES H3.1D-H3.14D .....	64
<u>Residence and Activities Participated In During Leisure Travel</u> .....	64
ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESES H4 .....	67
<u>General Travel Behavior</u> .....	67
ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS H4.3 .....	69
<u>Race and Activities Participated In During Leisure Travel</u> .....	69
CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	76
<b>CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>89</b>
FINDINGS	
TOURISM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>117</b>
APPENDIX A--SURVEY INSTRUMENT	
APPENDIX B--DIALING SHEET	
APPENDIX C--NEW SOUTH RESEARCH REPORT	

APPENDIX D1-D10-13--LOG LINEAR ANALYSIS

APPENDIX E--NON-RESPONSE BIAS TABLE

APPENDIX F--TRIP DEFINITIONS

APPENDIX G--ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATED IN  
Vita.....150

## **LIST OF TABLES**

- Table 4.1 State Representation of Respondents
- Table 4.2 Frequency Distribution of Respondents With Respect to Selected Variables
- Table 4.3 Frequency Distribution of Respondents With Respect to Selected Variables By Race
- Table 4.4 Marginality Predictors and Length of Stay
- Table 4.5 Marginality Predictors and Type of Trip Selected
- Table 4.6 Income and Activities Participated in During Leisure Travel
- Table 4.7 Education and Activities Participated in During Leisure Travel
- Table 4.8 Occupation and Activities Participated in During Leisure Travel
- Table 4.9 Residence and Activities Participated in During Leisure Travel
- Table 4.10 Race and Length of Stay for Overall Travel
- Table 4.11 Comparison of Length of Stay between Black and White Travelers By Trip Type
- Table 4.12 Race and Type of trip Selected
- Table 4.13 Race and Activities Participated in During Leisure Travel
- Table 4.14 Summary of Significant Relationships of Marginality Predictors and Activities

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

FIGURE 1.1. Conceptual Model of the Study

## **LIST OF EXHIBITS**

- |             |                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Exhibit 3.1 | Data Analysis Summary                |
| Exhibit 3.2 | Measurement of Variables             |
| Exhibit 4.1 | Summary of Significant Relationships |