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## **An Exploratory Motivational Study of Japanese Adventure Based Tourism**

This study tests a survey instrument designed to identify the motivations of Japanese travelers to participate in adventure activities on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. The four subscales were adopted from a previous study conducted by Beard and Ragheb (1983) to measure the psychological and social reasons for participation in adventure activities: Intellectual, Social, Competence-Mastery and Stimulus-Avoidance.

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Adventure activities are becoming popular among travelers. Inskip (1991) defines adventure tourism as “tourism whereby the tourists engage in physically, personally challenging and sometimes dangerous (or perceived to be dangerous) activities” such as hiking, mountain climbing, river rafting, jet skiing, scuba diving, and parasailing. Due to the diverse nature of adventure tourism, its participants display a wide range of motives (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). Studies have explored travel motivation for Japanese travelers (e.g., Cha et al, 1995, Balaz & Mitsutake, 1998, Heung et al., 1999, Gilbert & Terrata, 2001, and Jang, 2001). However, not many studies have specifically examined Japanese adventure tourists. The information can be used in order to better understand the participants’ behavior and to develop a profile of the psychological and social constructs for more effective management of the activities and resources.

Japanese visitors have been the largest international market segment to Hawaii consisting of 22.9% of total visitors (DBEDT, 2002a). The number of Japanese travelers to Hawaii peaked in 1997 with 2.1 million and it decreased to 1.4 million in 2002 (DBEDT, 2002b). The island of Oahu has been most visited by Japanese travelers. In 2002, close to 96.0 % of the Japanese travelers to Hawaii visited Oahu (DBEDT, 2002a).

In 2001, more than 30 % of Japanese travelers to Hawaii participated in snorkeling / scuba diving (18.1 %), backpacking / hiking / camping (7.2 %), and jet skiing / parasailing / windsurfing (6.8 %) (DBEDT, 2001). Faced with the maturity of the Japanese travel market, practitioners may need to better understand behavior of the growing Japanese adventure tourism market.

This study focuses on Japanese “adventure travelers” to Hawaii, a group which is likely to be a significant niche market for Hawaii’s tourism. The purpose of this study is to identify the

motivations for participating in adventure activities. This study delineates the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample and explores their activity motivations.

## **Methods**

Data were derived from a random sampling of Japanese travelers who participated in selected adventure tours conducted by tour operators on Oahu in February and March 2001 (tour providers were asked to identify Japanese customers for this study). The questionnaire was initially written in English and then translated into Japanese. Activity motivations were measured on a five-point Likert scale with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. Of the 110 contacted individuals, 69 (63 %) completed the questionnaires.

The motivational scale used in this study was modified and adapted from a study on leisure motivation of scuba divers which classified them into four subscales: Intellectual, Social, Competence-Mastery and Stimulus-Avoidance (Beard and Ragheb, 1983). The Intellectual component assess the extent to which individuals are motivated to engage in leisure activities involving substantial mental activities; the Social component assesses the extent to which individuals are motivated to engage in leisure activities for social reasons; the Competence-Mastery component assesses the extent to which individuals engage in leisure activities in order to achieve, master, challenge and compete; and the Stimulus-Avoidance component assesses the drive to escape and get away from over stimulating life situations (Beard and Ragheb, 1983).

## **Results**

The average age of the sample was 40.8. Males comprised 40.6% of the sample, while females comprised 53.6%. Nearly 45% were married, while 36.2% were single. Forty two percent of the respondents were employed full-time, 17.4% were retired, 7.2% were students,

and 2.9% were employed part-time. The education level of respondents was 37.7% high school, 33.3% four-year college or higher, 15.9% two-year college, and 4.3% junior high school.

Table 1 shows the motivational items and the mean values in addition to other study findings. The results indicate that the sample has relatively high motivation with regard to the Intellectual reasons, followed by the Stimulus-Avoidance, and last the Social and Competence-Mastery reasons. The Intellectual dimension indicated agreement (mean range = 3.3 to 4.1). In particular, respondents strongly agreed that they participated in adventure activities in Hawaii “to learn about things in Hawaii” (mean = 4.1) followed by “to have fun” (mean = 4.0). This indicates that the sample is motivated by learning, enjoyment, exploring and discovering. In the Social dimension, 63 % of the sample agreed with the item “to do something I always wanted to do” (mean = 3.7), and the rest of the items achieved neutral to negative response categories. The extent to which respondents engaged in adventure activities for interaction with others and building friendship were neutral to moderately low (mean = 3.0, mean = 2.8 respectively). More than half of the sample disagreed with “to gain other’s respect” item (mean = 2.2).

The Competence-mastery dimension mean values indicated disagreement (all the mean values being less than 3.0). This component assumes that the activities are physical in nature (Beard & Ragheb, 1983). The results indicate relatively low to neutral on items that provide challenges, competence, and skill improvement.

The Stimulus-Avoidance dimension indicated positive motivations for the items related to seeking rest. Half of the respondents agreed that they participated in the selected activities to “relieve stress and tension” (mean = 3.5), and “to relax” (mean = 3.4) many agreed to the items “to get away from daily life” (mean = 3.2) and “to avoid the hustle and bustle of daily activities” (mean = 3.0).

## **Discussion**

This study reveals that Japanese adventure traveler motivations to Hawaii can be measured using Beard & Raghebs' scale. Specifically, respondents identified Intellectual, Stimulus-Avoidance, Social and Competence-Mastery motives. Interestingly, a study of scuba divers in Hawaii identified that most divers agreed with Competence-Mastery followed by Intellectual, Social and Stimulus-Avoidance in order of motivation in order of motivation (Tobias, 1996). As indicated in Table 1, the findings also share some similarities with previous studies on adventure tourists. Swarbrooke et al. (2003) identified ten core motives (i.e., risk, uncertainty, danger, novelty, stimulation, excitement, absorption of skills or effort, challenge, contrasting emotions, escapism), some of which overlap with our findings (see Table 1). The Social motivational factors, however, were not explicit in their model. Moreover, Sung et al. (1997) identified experience, activity, environment, and mental physical fitness as benefits of adventure travel. Some of the items appear related to the Intellectual, Social, Social Stimulus-Avoidance, and the Competence-Mastery subscales of this study. These interdependencies may support the concept that adventure travelers have wide ranges of motives, which seem to be represented by Swarbrooke et al. (2003).

Further research with a larger sample is recommended for a more thorough investigation of the motivation of Japanese adventure tourists. An application to other markets (e.g., domestic market), to other islands of Hawaii, and to each type of adventure activities may also be considered.

**Table 1: Activity Motivations of Japanese Adventure Travelers and Comparison with some Previous Studies**

Activity Motivations of Japanese Adventure Travelers		Previous Studies		
Motivation of the Sample (Adopted from Beard & Ragheb, 1983).	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Tobias (1996)	Swarbrooke et al. (2003)	Sung et al. (1997)
<b>Intellectual (5 items)</b>				
To learn about things in Hawaii	4.1	✓		✓
To have fun	4.0		✓	✓
Because I cannot do this activity in Japan	3.6			
To discover new things	3.6	✓	✓	✓
To experience thrill	3.3		✓	✓
<b>Social (6 items)</b>				
To do something I had always wanted to do	3.7			
To interact with others	3.0	✓		✓
To do something differ from others	2.9			
To build friendship with others	2.8	✓		
Because it is popular	2.6			
To gain other's respect	2.2	✓		
<b>Competence-Mastery (5 items)</b>				
To see whether I like it or not	2.9			
To improve my skill and ability in this activity	2.8	✓	✓	
To develop physical skills and abilities	2.7	✓	✓	✓
To keep in shape physically	2.7	✓		
To challenge my abilities	2.5	✓	✓	
<b>Stimulus-Avoidance (5 items)</b>				
To relieve stress and tension	3.5	✓	✓	
To relax	3.4	✓	✓	
To get away from daily life	3.2	✓	✓	
To avoid the hustle and bustle of daily activities	3.0	✓	✓	✓
Because sometimes I like to be alone	2.2	✓	✓	

<sup>a</sup> Five-point Likert where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

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