

SEGMENTATION OF RURAL TOURISTS: COMBINING PUSH AND PULL MOTIVATIONS

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Abstract

Rural tourism is an important form of tourism in many countries, including Finland. To understand rural tourists' behaviour and help tourism companies market their products more efficiently many scholars have segmented rural tourists in several different geographical locations. This study aims to combine segmentation approaches used in earlier studies, namely motivation and benefit segmentation, and segment online rural tourists in Finland. Data is collected in a rural tourism affiliate website and analysed using cluster analysis on tourists' motivations. Among 727 respondents, four rural tourist segments are found: "Social travellers", "Wellbeing travellers", "Home region travellers" and "Family travellers". The segments differ from each other in motivations, preferred destination attributes, travel behaviour and socio-demographic factors. Understanding these differences will provide rural tourism companies important information to successfully market their products by combining both push and pull motivations in their marketing and product development.*

Keywords segmentation, motivations, benefits, cluster analysis, push, pull, tourism marketing

INTRODUCTION

Segmentation is used to gain a better position in the markets compared to competitors because it provides valuable information on customers and makes it possible for a destination to adjust its offering to better match customers' needs (Matzler et al., 2004). This is important because, according to Buhalis (2000), each destination can only match certain types of demand. Hence, destinations should be aware of the needs and wants of potential tourists in order to manage the destination resources and attract the correct customer groups.

Rural tourism has been a popular research topic among tourism scholars. Results of Frochot (2005) in Scotland, Royo-Vela (2009) and Molera and Albaladejo (2007) in Spain, Kastenholz et al., (1999) in Portugal, Park and Yoon (2009) in Korea, Komppula (2005) and Pesonen, Komppula and Laukkanen (2009) in Finland as well as the literature review in a study by Cai and Li (2009) show that rural tourists in different countries have several similarities: they are most often motivated by opportunities to learn and explore nature or different cultures, participate in outdoor activities and search for peace and solitude. They may expect family togetherness, peace and quiet,

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friendly reception, change from routine and good food. Beautiful landscapes, opportunities for outdoor activity and hassle-free environments tend to attract rural tourists. Despite the similarities several differences can be found especially in relation to expectations towards farming activities, heritage or other destination attributes.

Earlier rural tourism segmentation studies have mainly compared what segments are like or what they do instead of studying what they would like. This information is particularly important in order to develop rural tourism businesses and destinations. Earlier studies have either segmented rural tourists based on their travel motivations (i.e. push motivations) (e.g. Park & Yoon 2009), benefits (i.e. pull motivations) they seek from a destinations (e.g. Kastenholtz et al. 1999) or a combination of these two (e.g. Molera & Albaladejo 2007). However, in rural tourism segmentation using both push and pull motivations has rarely been investigated in a single study. Instead, most studies have focused on what activities members of different segments want to do during their holiday (e.g. Park & Yoon 2009).

This article contributes to the existing segmentation literature by combining both push and pull segmentation in a single study. Finding combinations of motivations and destination attributes rural tourists value helps rural tourism companies to plan their marketing and product development. Earlier rural tourism segmentation studies that have used either motivations, destination attributes or their combinations as the segmentation base have not examined them as two separate concepts. Understanding how different motivations affect the destination attributes customers think of as important can be regarded as essential in understanding how customer expectations, satisfaction and value are formed (Gnoth, 1997; Snepenger et al., 2006). This study also contributes to rural tourist segmentation in Nordic and in this case Finnish context as earlier studies have focused mainly on other geographic regions.

The purpose of this research is to segment internet users who seek information regarding their rural tourism accommodation according to their push motivations. Then the importance of destination attributes, i.e. pull motivations, between segments are compared. This kind of research will provide rural tourism companies more options in differentiating their offerings and academically it will increase the knowledge on interaction between push and pull motivations.

This study is structured in three parts after the introduction. First, a literature review of earlier studies is conducted in order to examine segmentation literature in tourism regarding push and pull factors. Also goals of this study are presented. Next, methods and material used in this study as well as the results are presented. In the third and final part results of this study are discussed and conclusions and managerial implications as well as limitations of the study are presented.

BENEFIT AND MOTIVATION SEGMENTATION IN TOURISM: PUSH AND PULL ITEMS

Psychographic segmentation is the most popular data-driven segmentation method in tourism literature (Dolnicar, 2006). According to Kotler and Keller (2006), in psychographic segmentation buyers are divided into different groups on the basis of psychological or personality traits, lifestyle or values. In tourism segmentation this has generally meant using either motivations (e.g. Bieger & Laesser, 2002), benefits (e.g. Molera & Albaladejo, 2007) or Attitudes, Interests and Opinions (e.g. González & Bello, 2002). In her literature review on data-driven market segmentation in tourism Dolnicar (2006) observed that three quarters of all studied used psychographic constructs such as benefits, motivations and preference as grouping criterion. In this study the focus is especially on benefit and motivation segmentation studies, as they are in tourism marketing literature closely related to each other.

Push and pull factors are central concepts in tourist motivation literature. According to Baloglu and Uysal (1996) these concepts involve the theory that people travel because they are pushed and pulled to do so by “forces”. They continue that “these forces (motivational factors) describe how individuals are pushed by motivational variables into making a travel decision and how they are pulled (attracted) by the destination area” (Balogly & Uysal, 1996, pp. 32).

Benefit segmentation was introduced by Russell Haley in 1968 as a technique for indentifying market segments by causal factors. According to Haley (1968, pp. 31), “The belief underlying this segmentation strategy is that the benefits which people are seeking in consuming a given product are the basic reasons for the existence of true market segments.”

The difference between motivation and benefit segmentation is sometimes unclear. According to Frochot and Morrison (2000) there have been some mixed interpretations of benefit segmentation in tourism research because Haley never proposed a precise definition of benefits. Based on the review of benefit segmentation in tourism by Frochot and Morrison (2000), benefit segmentation studies can be divided into three parts based on what kind of benefit statements are used: 1) studies that use motivations, 2) studies that use destination attributes and 3) studies that have mixed both attributes-based and psychologically based benefits.

Even though motivation segmentation has been stated as a way to do benefit segmentation (Frochot & Morrison, 2000), for the purpose of this study they are seen as separate concepts. In this study motivation segmentation is regarded as segmentation based on push factors and benefit segmentation is based on pull factors. Much has been written on the concept of push and pull factors in tourism but only a few researchers have examined the relationship between the two dimensional forces as factors of tourist motivations (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). In this study push motivations are tourist’s intrinsic attributes that motivate them to travel, whereas pull motivations are destination attributes that determine which destination tourist chooses based on how well the destination attributes match the needs derived from push motivations.

There are a countless number of push and pull motivations used in earlier tourism segmentation studies. For example Frochot and Morrison (2000) list altogether 26 benefit statements used in benefit segmentation studies conducted between years 1980 and 1998. These benefit statements are all push items, i.e. factors that motivate tourist to travel. There are also many studies that have used destination attributes or pull factors to segment tourists but despite the popularity of pull factors there is no universally accepted set of destination attributes as they are destination dependant. According to Frochot and Morrison (2000) in tourism benefits are often attached to a specific destination, vacation or activity and cannot be generalized. For example Sarigöllü and Huang (2005) segmented visitors to Latin America using 24 different destination attributes mostly including activities.

This study aims to combine motivation (push) and benefit (pull) segmentation in the context of rural tourism. This study has three goals:

- 1) to segment potential rural tourists according to their travel motivations,
- 2) to compare segments regarding important destination attributes and
- 3) to compare socio-demographic factors and travel behaviour.

METHODS AND MATERIAL

Data collection and base sample

Data were collected on the Finnish Cottage Holidays Affiliate website www.lomarengas.fi during summer 2009 using banner advertisement. Website users clicking the banner were directed to the questionnaire page. Respondents were asked to state their interest in rural holidays and provide information on what kind of rural holiday they are planning to have or would like to have regarding the destination attributes they preferred by rating the importance of 48 different rural destination attributes (Table 2). Also a list of 31 motivation statements based on earlier literature on rural tourism segmentation was presented to respondents (Table 1). The push and pull statements were based on a literature review of rural tourism segmentation studies, benefit segmentation studies and studies on customer value and experiences in tourism (Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Tapachai & Waryszack, 2000; Williams & Soutar, 2000; Duman & Mattila, 2003; Komppula, 2005; Sánchez et al., 2006; Gallarza & Gil, 2008). The goal in variable selection was to choose the most often used and the most relevant push and pull motivations for rural tourism. Respondents were asked to rate different items using Likert-type scale from 1 (Not at all important) to 7 (Very important). Altogether 1043 questionnaires were completed by users of the website, 316 responses had to be deleted because of missing answers. Remaining 727 questionnaires suitable for the analysis methods used in this study were analysed using PASW Statistics 18 program.

Analysis

In this study segmentation approach presented by Boksberger and Laesser (2009) was used. Different segmentation approaches from several other studies were tested, but aforementioned approach produced the most usable and logical results regarding tourists' motivations. In this study Tamhane's T2 test was used instead of Bonferroni corrected p -values that Boksberger and Laesser (2009) used. This was justified as Tamhane's T2 is more conservative and thus produces more trustworthy results with sample size of this study. Also the homogeneity of variance test between segments revealed great statistical significances between segments regarding motivation and destination attribute scores.

Average mean score across all motivation statements was calculated for each respondent and these scores were used to calculate relative importance of each item for each respondent. K-means cluster analysis was used to find the segmentation solution. Final number of clusters was determined by examining graphical results (dendrogram) and the best discrimination result between the groups. Clusters were compared using ANOVA and post-hoc tests were conducted with Tamhane's T2 test.

RESULTS

Discriminant analysis

Results of the discriminant analysis reveal that the travel motivations *I would like to relax away from the ordinary*, *I would have a feeling of romance* and *I could visit places my family comes from* have most discriminating power between all clusters (in descending order). These results were used in naming clusters. Three discriminant functions were generated. Function 1 explains 72.3 % of variance with eigenvalue 3.668, function 2 explains 18.2 % of variance with eigenvalue 0.924 and function 3 explains 9.5 % of variance with eigenvalue 0.481. Based on the classification matrix, 95.0 % of all cases are correctly classified.

Cluster analysis

K-means cluster analysis was used to find rural tourist segments based on their motivations. Trials with two to seven clusters were executed. Based on the results of cluster formation and discriminant analyses the solution with four clusters formed the most distinctive and logical segments (Table 1).

Cluster A is named as "Social travellers" as they rate many motivations that include other people higher than other segments. For example chance to meet interesting people, sense of cooperation between the hosts and the traveller and involvement in the service process are more important for "Social traveller" than for other segments. Also control and feeling that the traveller is important are significant motivations for "Social travellers". They also differ from other segments in the importance of romance in their holidays: for "Social travellers" feeling of romance is clearly more important than for any other segment.

Cluster B is labelled as “Wellbeing travellers” as motivations traditionally related to wellbeing are more important for them than for any other segment. Escape from busy life, refreshing, physical rest, relaxation and comfort as well as security are important motivations for “Wellbeing travellers” when compared to other segments.

Cluster C has very low scores in most motivation statements when compared to other segments. However, for this segment visiting places where their family comes from is clearly more important than for other segments. Based on this the segment is named as “Home region travellers”.

Last segment is labelled as “Family travellers” as they are the most motivated by being together with family of all segments. It is also the most important travel motivation for this segment. “Family travellers” are also experience travellers, as motivations such as having fun, having memorable and “once in a lifetime” experiences and exploring new places were important for “Family travellers” when compared to other segments, especially “Wellbeing travellers” and “Home region travellers”.

Table 1: Motivation item means among clusters

Item	Sample mean	Cluster A (N=213)	Cluster B (N=164)	Cluster C (N=148)	Cluster D (N=202)
I am doing something I really like to do	5.84	5.68	5.89	5.77	6.01 ^A
It will be a memorable experience	5.56	5.78 ^B	4.86	5.46 ^B	5.98 ^{B,C}
I would have a hassle-free vacation	6.02	5.68	6.35 ^{A,D}	6.17 ^A	5.99
I would like to escape from a busy everyday life	6.03	5.78	6.38 ^{A,C,D}	6.02	6.01
I would have fun and/or be entertained	5.97	5.91	5.71	5.97	6.24 ^{A,B}
There would be an opportunity to be together as a family	5.89	5.37	5.78 ^A	6.18 ^A	6.33 ^{A,B}
I could visit places my family comes from	3.27	4.01 ^{B,D}	1.85	4.60 ^{A,B,C}	2.66 ^B
I would have a feeling like I was being pampered	4.91	5.42 ^{B,C}	4.02	4.78 ^B	5.17 ^B
I would get refreshed	6.22	6.07	6.37 ^A	6.13	6.35 ^A
I would have an opportunity for physical rest	5.80	5.67	5.96	5.88	5.77
I would have an opportunity to be physically active	4.70	5.00 ^{B,C}	4.15	4.57 ^B	4.94 ^B
I would feel at home away from home	5.46	5.51	5.16	5.51	5.59 ^B
I would be doing something thrilling and exciting	4.59	5.29 ^{B,C}	3.12	4.35 ^B	5.22 ^{B,C}
I would have a "once in a lifetime" experience	4.43	5.24 ^{B,C}	2.74	3.95 ^B	5.31 ^{B,C}
I would like to share my experience with others later on	4.53	5.27 ^{B,C}	2.87	4.37 ^B	5.20 ^{B,C}
I would be stimulated or challenged in some way	4.20	5.05 ^{B,C}	2.38	4.01 ^B	4.93 ^{B,C}
I would like to have a sense of comfort	6.19	5.95	6.42 ^{A,C}	6.13	6.32 ^A
I would like to relax away from the ordinary	6.42	6.14	6.74 ^{A,B,C}	6.44 ^A	6.46 ^A
I would like to have a feeling of	5.94	5.67	6.13 ^A	5.87	6.12 ^A

Item	Sample mean	Cluster A (N=213)	Cluster B (N=164)	Cluster C (N=148)	Cluster D (N=202)
personal security					
I would like to have a feeling that my privacy would be assured	5.71	5.54	5.93	5.58	5.82
I would like to be involved in the service processes	3.84	4.51 ^{B,C,D}	2.84	3.97 ^B	3.85 ^B
I would have a variety of things to see/do	4.58	5.21 ^{B,C}	3.48	4.26 ^B	5.05 ^{B,C}
I would have some control over the way things turn out	4.20	4.84 ^{B,C,D}	3.40	4.03 ^B	4.29 ^B
I would have a sense of cooperation between the host and me	3.64	4.69 ^{B,C,D}	2.06	3.35 ^B	4.02 ^{B,C}
I would have a feeling that I am important	4.27	5.26 ^{B,C,D}	2.95	3.54 ^B	4.85 ^{B,D}
I would have a feeling like I was on an adventure	4.37	5.39 ^{B,C}	2.69	3.59 ^B	5.21 ^{B,C}
I would experience different culture	4.54	5.45 ^{B,C}	3.27	3.59	5.32 ^{B,C}
I would explore new places	5.02	5.79 ^{B,C}	3.84	4.06	5.88 ^{B,C}
I would have a feeling of romance	2.64	4.86 ^{B,C,D}	1.63	1.96	1.60
I would have a chance to meet interesting people	4.40	5.76 ^{B,C,D}	2.73	3.68 ^B	4.86 ^{B,C}
Go to places friends haven't been	3.66	5.42 ^{B,C,D}	1.93	2.55 ^B	4.03 ^{B,C}

*Superscript denotes segments that have significantly lower mean score ($p < 0.05$)

Important destination attributes

There are many statistical differences between segments in destination attributes (Table 2). Most differences are between “Socials travellers” that value several destination attributes more than “Wellbeing travellers” and “Home region travellers”. Among other destination attributes “Social travellers” value public transportation, socializing with other people, history, culture and handicraft making significantly more than other segments. Also organized program and trips are more important for “Social travellers” than for other segments.

“Wellbeing travellers” differ statistically only from “Social travellers” by valuing calm atmosphere and spending time outside in nature more than “Social travellers”. “Home region travellers” value opportunity to go to sauna every day and full time self catering more than other segments but differences are not statistically significant.

“Family travellers” differ significantly from other segments in many ways. Safety of the destination is top priority for “Family travellers”. They also value beautiful landscapes, but differences are statistically significant only when compared to “Social travellers”. When comparing to “Wellbeing travellers” and “Home region travellers” “Family travellers” value opportunity for daytrips, variety of things to see and do, historic sites, participating local festivals or events and especially that hosting company is environmentally qualified.

Table 2: Importance of destination attributes for segments

Destination attribute	Sample mean	Social travellers (A)	Wellbeing travellers (B)	Home region travellers (C)	Family travellers (D)
Price of accommodation is low	5.65	5.81 ^B	5.42	5.55	5.76
I do not need to make major efforts in searching information about the destination	5.46	5.65 ^B	5.17	5.37	5.56 ^B
The efforts to access the destination are low	5.45	5.59 ^B	5.18	5.45	5.52
The time for travelling to the destination is short	4.80	5.06 ^B	4.39	4.77	4.89 ^B
I do not feel like wasting time when I make plans for the holiday	4.93	5.36 ^{B,C}	4.27	4.85 ^B	5.06 ^B
The price for travelling (transportation) is low	5.38	5.55 ^B	5.09	5.31	5.49
The destination is accessible by public transport	3.72	4.40 ^{B,C,D}	2.91	3.62 ^B	3.74 ^B
The destination gives children an opportunity to have a good time	4.75	4.85	4.24	4.63	5.13 ^B
The destination is not crowded	5.95	5.73	6.04	6.00	6.08 ^A
In the destination there is a variety of things to see/do	4.97	5.5 ^{B,C}	3.84	4.72 ^B	5.51 ^{B,C}
The destination is safe for everybody in the family	5.96	5.76	5.83	5.93	6.30 ^{A,B,C}
The destination gives an opportunity to have good time together as a family	5.81	5.53	5.55	5.92	6.23 ^{A,B}
The destination gives an opportunity to socialize with other people	4.26	5.13 ^{B,C,D}	3.14	4.08 ^B	4.40 ^B
Make daytrips to the neighbouring countryside	5.37	5.63 ^{B,C}	4.90	5.13	5.66 ^{B,C}
Enjoy beautiful landscapes	6.42	6.26	6.48	6.39	6.56 ^A
Enjoy a landscape with lakes/rivers/sea	6.42	6.31	6.52	6.44	6.46
Enjoy mountain landscapes	4.56	5.19 ^{B,C,D}	3.79	4.26	4.74 ^B
Spend time outside in nature	6.29	6.17	6.47 ^A	6.16	6.38
Experience original/unspoiled rural landscapes	5.71	5.82 ^C	5.57	5.40	5.93 ^C
Enjoy the forest	5.83	5.84	5.82	5.76	5.89
Visit historic sites	4.70	5.27 ^{B,C,D}	4.04	4.41	4.86 ^{B,C}
Visit cultural attractions	4.59	5.22 ^{B,C,D}	3.85	4.25	4.77
Experience a different culture	4.47	5.21 ^{B,C}	3.41	3.82	5.04 ^{B,C}
Enjoy local traditional food	5.33	5.76 ^{B,C}	4.60	4.96	5.73 ^{B,C}
Participate local festivals/events	4.58	5.29 ^{B,C}	3.57	4.22	4.94 ^{B,C}
Make long walks and hikes	5.09	5.29	4.91	4.93	5.14
Have a picnic in the countryside	5.10	5.49 ^{B,C}	4.52	4.97	5.27 ^B
Make short walks	5.78	5.79	5.84	5.59	5.87
Learn about the local nature	5.38	5.64 ^{B,C}	5.06	5.11	5.57 ^{B,C}
Get familiar with the original rural lifestyle	5.13	5.55 ^{B,C}	4.44	4.82	5.46 ^{B,C}
Meet local people	4.46	5.27 ^{B,C,D}	3.24	4.22	4.78 ^{B,C}
Handicraft making	3.28	4.27 ^{B,C,D}	2.10	2.91	3.47 ^{B,C}
See traditional live-stock pasturing	4.34	4.84 ^{B,C}	3.70	4.07	4.54 ^B
The hosting company is	5.76	5.74	5.62	5.59	6.00 ^{B,C}

Destination attribute	Sample mean	Social travellers (A)	Wellbeing travellers (B)	Home region travellers (C)	Family travellers (D)
environmentally qualified (shows environmental responsibility)					
The hosts have pets (cats, dogs, rabbits etc.)	4.72	5.09 ^{B,C}	3.98	4.55 ^B	5.05 ^B
The hosts spend time with the guests/are available for the guests	3.68	4.46 ^{B,C}	2.41	3.39	4.09 ^{B,C}
I do not need to rush according to schedules	6.36	6.07	6.62 ^A	6.38 ^A	6.45 ^A
There is a calm atmosphere	6.32	6.08	6.53 ^A	6.33	6.38 ^A
I would have no language barriers	5.05	5.40 ^B	4.52	5.03	5.12 ^B
I have an opportunity to go to the sauna every day	5.71	5.77	5.68	5.81	5.61
Full board available (three meals/day)	4.13	4.81 ^{B,C}	3.18	3.70	4.50 ^{B,C}
Half board (breakfast and dinner) available	4.94	5.51 ^{B,C}	4.11	4.64	5.24 ^B
A variety of restaurants available in walking distance	4.56	5.11 ^{B,C}	3.82	4.39 ^B	4.70 ^{B,C}
Local food available	5.13	5.62 ^{B,C}	4.35	4.79	5.50 ^{B,C}
That your accommodation gives you an opportunity for full time self catering	5.10	5.01	5.24	5.31	4.95
Daily organized program available	3.57	4.52 ^{B,C,D}	2.44	3.22 ^B	3.76 ^{B,C}
Organized trips and other packages available	4.31	5.15 ^{B,C,D}	3.27	3.91	4.56 ^{B,C}
Bicycles, boats etc. for rent	5.52	5.79 ^{B,C}	5.10	5.30	5.73 ^B

*Superscript denotes segments that have significantly lower mean score (p<0.05)

Differences in preferred rural holiday attributes and socio-demographic factors

Segments have many statistical differences regarding their preferred rural holiday (Table 3). All respondents were planning going on a rural holiday within the next year. "Wellbeing travellers" and "Home region travellers" are most sure with their holiday plans whereas "Social travellers" and "Family travellers" have more undecided tourists than other segments. All the segments prefer cottage as their accommodation during rural holiday but "Social travellers" are most interested in other accommodation options. "Social travellers" have also the least experience of rural holidays whereas "Home region travellers" and "Wellbeing travellers" have the most experience. More than 40 percent of "Home region travellers" go on a rural holiday more than four times a year. "Home region travellers" travel mostly with their partner or spouse. Nearly 50 percent of "Family travellers" travel most probably with their family. Most probable to travel with their friends are "Social travellers".

Table 3: Differences in travel behaviour between segments

Travel behaviour	Social travellers	Wellbeing travellers	Home region travellers	Family travellers	χ^2	Sig.
Rural holiday plans within the next year					10.6*	p=0.014
Yes	89 (41.8%)	84 (51.2%)	76 (51.7%)	76 (37.6%)		
Maybe	124 (58.2%)	80 (48.8%)	71 (48.3%)	126 (62.4%)		
Preferred accommodation					17.8*	p=0.007
Hotel room	17 (8.1%)	6 (3.7%)	6 (4.1%)	14 (7.1%)		
Farm room	45 (21.5%)	15 (9.1%)	20 (13.7%)	28 (14.1%)		
Cottage	147 (70.3%)	143 (87.2%)	120 (82.2%)	156 (78.8%)		
Most probably travel company on a rural holiday					49.3*	p<0.001
Spouse / partner	79 (37.4%)	67 (40.9%)	74 (50.3%)	87 (43.3%)		
Family with children under 12-years-old	39 (18.5%)	32 (19.5%)	24 (16.3%)	50 (24.9%)		
Family with children of different age groups	40 (19.0%)	29 (17.7%)	19 (12.9%)	47 (23.4%)		
Friends	30 (14.2%)	18 (11.0%)	18 (12.2%)	8 (4.0%)		
Alone	18 (8.5%)	7 (4.3%)	3 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)		
Other	5 (2.4%)	11 (6.7%)	9 (6.1%)	9 (4.5%)		

When looking at Table 4, it can be seen that there are some differences between segments regarding to their education, age, annual income and gender. It seems that “Social travellers” are least educated while “Wellbeing travellers” have most travellers with university degree. “Social travellers” have the most under 25 years old members and “Home region travellers” have the most at least 45 years old respondents. 45- to 54-year-olds is the largest age group in all segments expect for “Social travellers” where 35 to 44 years old are the largest age group. “Social travellers” have also clearly smaller income than other segments. “Social travellers” have the largest proportion of men among respondents, 26.2 percent, but nevertheless females are majority in every segment.

Table 4: Socio-demographic profiles of segments

Socio-demographics	Social travellers	Wellbeing travellers	Home region travellers	Family travellers	χ^2	Sig.
Education					18.5*	p=0.029
University degree	26 (12.4%)	40 (24.8%)	32 (21.8%)	29 (14.6%)		
Technical / Trade school / Vocational	124 (59.3%)	94 (58.4%)	88 (59.9%)	127 (63.8%)		
Upper secondary school	20 (9.6%)	11 (6.8%)	9 (6.1%)	18 (9.0%)		
Elementary school	39 (18.7%)	16 (9.9%)	18 (12.2%)	25 (12.6%)		

Socio-demographics	Social travellers	Wellbeing travellers	Home region travellers	Family travellers	χ^2	Sig.
Age					35.8*	p=0.002
Under 25	24 (13.0%)	5 (3.4%)	6 (4.5%)	4 (2.2%)		
25-34	25 (13.5%)	33 (22.4%)	28 (20.9%)	42 (22.6%)		
35-44	57 (30.8%)	39 (26.5%)	34 (25.4%)	47 (25.3%)		
45-54	55 (29.7%)	46 (31.3%)	41 (30.6%)	72 (38.7%)		
55-64	21 (11.4%)	21 (14.3%)	23 (17.2%)	17 (9.1%)		
65 or older	3 (1.6%)	3 (2.0%)	2 (1.5%)	4 (2.2%)		
Annual income of the household					39.8*	p=0.002
Less than 15 000 €	33 (16.1%)	8 (5.1%)	5 (3.6%)	9 (4.7%)		
15 000 – 29 999 €	56 (27.3%)	39 (24.7%)	32 (23.4%)	45 (23.7%)		
30 000 – 44 999 €	53 (25.9%)	40 (25.3%)	34 (24.8%)	49 (25.8%)		
45 000 – 59 999 €	33 (16.1%)	30 (19.0%)	30 (21.9%)	44 (23.2%)		
60 000 – 74 999 €	16 (7.8%)	25 (15.8%)	22 (16.1%)	25 (13.2%)		
75 000 – 89 999 €	8 (3.9%)	11 (7.0%)	9 (6.6%)	7 (3.7%)		
At least 90 000 €	6 (2.9%)	5 (3.2%)	5 (3.5%)	11 (5.8%)		
Gender					20.6*	p<0.001
Male	55 (26.2%)	15 (9.3%)	20 (13.7%)	32 (16.9%)		
Female	155 (73.8%)	146 (90.7%)	126 (86.3%)	169 (84.1%)		

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The results of this study do not only clarify the distinction between push and pull motivations but also enable rural tourism companies to plan their marketing efforts and product offerings more efficiently as they know what kind of destination attributes each segment, for example “Family travellers”, value. Besides differences mentioned before, there are many similarities between segments. These are for example the most important travel motivations and destination attributes. For all segments the most important motivation is to relax from the ordinary, closely followed by getting refreshed and sense of comfort. Beautiful landscape as well as calm, rush-free atmosphere are among the most important destination attributes for all segments. These can be regarded as something that almost every rural tourist expects from his or her rural holiday. They form a baseline for tourists’ expectations toward rural holiday.

In this study only domestic rural tourism in Finland is examined. From studies conducted in other countries it can be seen that rural tourism segments are not so different in other countries. In developing tourism foreign tourism is sometimes emphasized and the importance of domestic tourism is neglected. However, for many rural tourism companies domestic tourists are the most important source of income. By taking into account what kind of combinations of push and pull factors tourists would value it is possible to design attractive products that would encourage potential rural tourists to actually go on a rural holiday instead of just planning it.

In retrospect using both push and pull items to segment and describe segments produces accurate image of different segments. Some destination attributes are also activities and from the results it can be seen that “Social travellers” are most active when it comes to doing something in a destination whereas “Wellbeing travellers” prefer more passive rural holidays. These two segments are very similar to two of four segments, “The Actives” and “The Relaxers”, found by Frochot (2005). Also in a study by Park and Yoon (2009) segments of “Passive tourists” and very active “Want-it-all” tourists can be found. This suggests that there are many similarities between different countries regarding rural tourist segments, albeit size of segments may differ. For example in Finland many people have roots in the countryside thus increasing the size of “Home region travellers” segments when compared to other, more urban countries.

Dolnicar (2002) states that quality level of segmentation studies could be substantially increased by choosing the data format and number of variables included in the study very carefully. In this study a large number of push and pull items are included to study their interrelationship. This means that used sample size, 727 respondents, is not as large as would be preferred. This problem has been attempted to deal with by using more conservative statistical methods, namely Tamhane’s T2 test.

For the purpose of this study data was collected online in a Finnish affiliate website. This has resulted in a data where over 65-year-old respondents are almost nonexistent and there are more women than men among respondents. These facts should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. According to the marketing manager of the website which was used to collect the data, women are majority among their customers, but still somewhat overrepresented in this study.

Stability of the cluster solution is very important factor in segmentation studies (Dolnicar, 2002). To study the validity and stability of the clustering solution presented in this study a new study is to be conducted to examine how has the cluster solution changed during two-year period between studies. Even though cluster membership and relative proportion of travellers in each segment can change for individual travellers, all these segments probably exist at any given time in Finnish rural tourism. However, this requires further research.

MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTION

This research has found four different rural tourist segments among online using Finnish tourists by segmenting them according to their travel motivations using k-means clustering method. The first segment, “Social travellers” is the largest segment with 29.3 percent of 727 respondents. The members of this segment clearly value social interaction with local people, hosts and other travellers. “Social travellers” segment has also more active and younger members than other segments. There are also more males and they are more likely to travel with their friends compared to other segments. This segment should be targeted with low-cost products as they value low prices the most. This segment was also most interested in hotel accommodation, meaning that rural hotels could emphasize combination of social interaction, rural surroundings and activities in their marketing.

The second segment, “Wellbeing travellers”, is the third largest segment with 164 respondents. For them a very quiet, calm and passive rural holiday is very important. They want that everything goes as planned during their holiday. They will choose a destination that can offer beautiful landscapes and good opportunities to spend time outside in nature.

“Home region travellers” is the smallest segment. The members of this segment are very difficult to target for rural tourism companies as they choose the destination based on where they or their family comes from.

Last segment, “Family travellers”, is the second largest. They want to spend time with their family, have new and memorable experiences and have fun. Safety and family friendliness of the destination as well as well as landscape and environmental aspects of the hosting company play an important part in choosing a destination. These factors should be taken into account when planning marketing efforts for this segment.

All rural tourists seem to be motivated by relaxation, closely followed by getting refreshed and sense of comfort. Beautiful landscape as well as calm, rush-free atmosphere were among the most important destination attributes for all segments. These can be regarded as basic level of service for almost all rural tourism companies in Finland, something that everyone expects when they come to a rural destination.

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