

# DETERMINING THE PULL OF BACKPACKER MOTIVATION FOR ACTIVITIES IN CALGARY AND BANFF USING MEANS-END ANALYSIS

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## Introduction

Recently, means-end theory has been applied to recreation and leisure settings by using the laddering method to investigate activities such as ski destination selection, spring break destination choice, nature park interpretation and marketing for urban tourism (Klenosky 1998, 2002; Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey, 2000; Jansen-Verbeke and van Rekom, 1996). The associated methods have been used are typically applied in consumer behaviour research and segmentation. Means-end theory demonstrates an attempt to bridge tangible attributes of a product (ie destination or activity) on one end of a continuum, with “abstract or intangible benefits, needs, motivations, or personal values travelers seek to satisfy,” on the other end (Klenosky et al, 2000, pp. 60). In other words, what a product is, what it does and what people get from it (Mill & Morrison, 1998). These form the three main elements of focus in means-end theory, starting with the physical, observable *attributes* (the “means”), *consequences* (benefits or costs) that follow from the attributes, which further lead to personal *values* (the “ends”) (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988). Means-end theory focuses on why and how product attributes are important (Klenowsky et al, 2000).

Attributes → Consequence (benefits or costs) → Value
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Based on the means-end theory described above, it seems that the leisure and tourism fields can expand their understanding of experiences through an understanding of links between tangible attributes, associated benefits that link to personal values. In particular, backpacking is a type of independent travel activity that many people choose to partake in over extended periods of time and over great distances. Many young people embark on these travels at transition times in their lives, such as in-between school, work, marriage and retirement. The motivation for pursuing such trips and associated value-meanings are of interest to both researchers and tourism providers. This study draws from Plog’s (1991) Push/Pull model to look at the motivations that are revealed through Means-end theory and analysis. In addition to determining some of the motivating factors, this research also endeavours to find out more about the backpackers that are visiting Canada. Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) have suggested that backpackers in New Zealand can be segmented along a spectrum with the traditional long term travellers (more experienced, individualistic and use travel for escape and personal growth) and mainstream backpackers (younger, friendship important and seek out things that are different) at either end based on personal values.

The Youth Tourism Commission of Canada (YTCC) has been formed with the focus of gaining knowledge about young travellers visiting Canada. One area of their attention is international backpackers, whom they see some potential for market growth. They realize that the number of young backpackers worldwide is increasing, and Canada has the characteristics to be an attractive destination. As a tourism industry they realize that by attracting tourists to Canada at a young age, they may appeal to that individual for the rest of their life-time.

## **Methods**

Laddering is the associated method with means-end theory that uses semi-structured interviews. The questioning starts out by asking respondents to name some attributes or characteristics of the activity that most appeal to them. One of these attributes was selected by the interviewer and the respondent is then asked, 'why that was important?', until 1 or more benefits were elicited. One of the benefits is selected and the 'why is that important to you' type question is again asked, until a value statement is acquired. Once this data was collected, it was then analysed using the Laddermap means-end 5.4 software (Gangler, 1999) to code and group the data. Following this step, the program quantitatively compiles the data into an implication matrix that can be further graphically represented in a Hierarchical Value Map (HVM). The HVM is a diagram that shows the results of the attribute, benefit and value responses in a pictorial manner.

Research was undertaken in the Hostelling International (HI) hostels in the city of Calgary and the town of Banff. These locations were selected according to their proximity to the researcher's home, but also because they offered some distinction in their characteristics such as urban/park characteristics. An equal number of males and females, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, were interviewed. They had to be travelling for more than thirty days and hailed from 10 countries including other parts of Canada, Europe, New Zealand and Australia. Thirty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted from a convenient sample. Besides collecting data for the ladders, socio-demographic data and some travel characteristics (travel durations, past travel experience and trip plan) were collected. Each respondent commented on a maximum of three activities, so that a total of eighty-five useable ladders were completed and subsequently used for analysis. The author approached this research with an emic perspective to backpacking, with a reflexive approach to the research process, thus contributing to the depth of analysis.

## **Results**

Data collected about the backpackers can not be generalized due to the small sample, but shows that there appears it is heterogeneous as in other parts of the world, where similar data has been compiled. The development of the HVM's showed that there are similar attributes that pull backpackers to activities in both locations, including 'nature and scenery', the 'attraction', 'activity type', and 'scenery', while 'gathering place' was also an attribute for Calgary. At the benefits level, the opportunity to gain 'knowledge and learn' was most salient, while 'new and different' and gaining a 'feel for the place' were also important for both Banff and Calgary. In addition 'escape and relaxation' was noteworthy in Banff, while 'socializing' in Calgary was seen as a benefit stemming from 'gathering' places. Key values that were identified for Banff included 'self fulfillment', 'excitement', 'enjoyment' and 'self direction'. In Calgary the social gathers valued 'feeling connected', while gaining knowledge led to 'enjoyment' and 'self direction'. The third portion of the study looked at both backpacker characteristics and value outcomes where segmentation results are inconclusive as to whether a similar continuum between traditional and mainstream backpackers exists in the study location, as has been proposed in New Zealand.

## **Discussion**

The data presented shows that activity attributes can act as pulls with links to benefits and values that indicate there are multiple motivational ends. For example, in Calgary it was very clear that backpackers who selected 'gathering places', wanted the benefit of 'socializing' that they associated with a value for 'feeling connected'. An understanding of important attributes and associated values could lead to the development of more appealing activities within destination mixes. For industry it is of most interest that backpackers want experiences where they can gain from the benefit of 'learning and knowledge' and will seek activities that they perceive they will get this from. The large amount of free time (and often solo) that backpackers fill outside of their regular social circles could have implications for future leisure lifestyles.

The socio-demographic and background data is useful to determine the travel-experience of those who were visiting Calgary and Banff. Even though the segmentation part of the study was inconclusive, it is a start at determining what kind of young budget travellers visit such destinations. The data can be compared to Pearce's (1988) travel ladder to determine if backpackers visit more developed areas, before taking part in longer travels with looks at motivations and satisfaction. Overall, the exploratory nature of this study brought forward a variety of information that requires further investigation

## **Actual or Potential Applications**

This study is relevant to consumers, industry and academics for a variety of reasons. First it will act to contribute to the knowledge that is required by the Canadian Tourism industry to better understand the youth and particularly backpacker tourism segment. The nature of the information will be useful to them, as an understanding of attributes, benefits and values can help to develop products, services and marketing campaigns. In particular, it has been mentioned that laddering or chains are useful for creating "effective communication and promotional materials" (Klenosky et al, 1998). It has been proposed that young travellers may return to destinations later in life, if they have a positive experience which could positively impact the tourism industry long into the future (d'Anjou, 2004).

Secondly, the means-end theory holds a lot of potential for leisure and recreation research, as it captures data that is multifaceted. Having an understanding of the motivating factors can also contribute the body of motivation literature that already exists, in a form that uses qualitative data in a graphic manner. For example, other motivational reasons could be compared and evaluated to this qualitative analysis, to determine if they hold up when human values are considered. By having an understanding of the basic values, there can be a contribution to work on youth, future trends and lead to further research.

In addition, the Backpacker Research Group through ATLAS, in association with the International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC), have both expressed a need to better understand the type of destination that attracts backpackers. This research seeks to fulfil some of these gaps that have been identified and contribute to the growing body of research in this area. There has been very little research done on backpackers in the America's, particularly in Canada.

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