

## Trip motivations among water-based recreationists

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**Abstract:** Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that motivations differ based on participation in various activities, as well as due to the significant effect of other variables. Perpetuating this line of research, the purpose of this paper was to examine the effect of select non-motivational variables on motivations among recreationists on the Gallatin River, Montana, USA. A 15-mile stretch of the river was earmarked for data collection (n=321) in June and July 2000 via river exit interviews. Based on the literature, motivation was operationalized into 9-items using a 5-point Likert scale. Some of the findings highlight that rafters emphasized the status motive, while anglers noted relaxation and solitude. Residents were motivated to participate for social and physical aspects, while tourists noted setting and prestige motives. Repeat visitors were more likely to mention solitude, while first time visitors indicated to watch wildlife, and to tell others about it as key motives. Males were more likely to participate for solitude while females noted that they could tell others about it at home. Recreationists have wide sets of motives, and understanding what individuals seek through recreation can provide useful guidance to a variety of planning and management decisions.

### Introduction

As participation in outdoor recreation activities has increased dramatically over the past few decades in the US, researchers have attempted to study the underlying motivations for participation. Empirical research has largely employed Recreation Experience Preference (REP) Scales conceptualized and empirically tested by Driver and associates. Due to the length of the REP Scales, researchers have typically employed smaller sets of items or certain domains pertinent to their respective research (Graefe et al. 2000).

However, motives differ among recreationists and are largely dependent on their goals (Mannell & Kleiber 1997) and their respective activity. Some of the participants that have been examined in the literature are, rock climbers (Iso-Ahola et al. 1988, Levenson 1990, McIntyre 1992), mountaineers (Ewert 1985, 1993, 1994), mountain bikers (Vilter et al. 1995), river users (Graefe et al. 1981, Knopf & Lime 1984, Schreyer et al. 1984, Schuett 1994, 1995), campers and horse and wilderness users (Graefe et al. 2000), and SCUBA divers (Meyer et al. 2003, Todd et al. 2002).

Based on river users, peace and calm, and viewing scenery were noted as key motives (Knopf & Lime 1984). Among rock climbers, McIntyre (1992) identified recognition, creativity, physical setting, challenge, escape, and control as motives to participate.

Similarly, exhilaration/excitement, social aspects, image, aspects of climbing, and catharsis/escape were found for climbers (Ewert 1994). For SCUBA divers, Todd et al. (2002) noted adventure, learning, escape, social interaction, status and personal challenge. Among visitors to the Delaware State Parks system, Confer and colleagues (1996) identified escape/solitude, nature/harmony, nature/learning, fun/recreation and social/interaction as major motive domains. Furthermore, based upon various user groups within a wilderness area setting, Graefe et al. (2000) found that scenic area users (mostly day visitors) were motivated to visit so that they could be surrounded by nature and learn about it. Conversely, escape was the strongest motive factor for campground and wilderness users.

In addition to understanding motives for participation, researchers have further examined non-motivational factors that may influence participation in a certain activity. Such variables relate to past experience and skill level (Ewert 1985, 1993, 1994, Knopf & Lime 1984, Graefe et al. 2000, Schreyer et al. 1984, Schuett 1995, Todd et al. 2002, Williams et al. 1990), first/repeat visit and type of trip (Graefe et al. 2000), group composition (Ewert 1993, Ewert & Hollenhorst 1989, Heywood 1987, Schuett 1994), enduring involvement (Ewert & Hollenhorst 1989, McIntyre 1992, Robinson 1992, Schuett 1993), and select demographic variables (Meyer et al. 2003).

Some of the findings highlight that first-time wilderness visitors were more motivated to learn, while repeat visitors noted escape reasons. Additionally, learning was also mentioned as a major motive to visit by day users, and overnight users identified more with escape, fun and challenge (Graefe et al. 2000). Among SCUBA divers, those with higher levels of development (i.e., beginners through experts) were highly motivated to participate for adventure, learn, status, and escape (Todd et al. 2002). Similarly, Meyer et al. (2003) found that females SCUBA divers were more likely to participate for intrinsic purposes, while males noted for extrinsic reasons.

Overall, based on empirical research, there has been some consistency in findings as recreationists have noted the following but not limited to these motivations/domains such as, exploration, escape, general natural experience, introspection, exercise, to be with similar people, to seek exhilaration, and to escape physical stressors. In addition, empirical research has consistently demonstrated that motivations differ based on participation in various activities, as well as due to the significant effect of other non-motivational variables. With the current growth in participation and projected increases in the future, natural resource managers must be able to learn about the needs and trip motives of their visitors, and to act accordingly to optimize the quality of their experiences. The purpose of this paper was to examine the effect of selected non-motivational variables on motivations among recreationists on the Gallatin River, Montana, USA.

## Methods

Big Sky is one of the gateway communities to Yellowstone National Park and is a destination frequented by tourists largely during the summer months. Gallatin River is a naturally free flowing river with headwaters that originates in the Park, and is popular recreation site for local recreationists (rafters, kayakers, anglers) and tourists. A 15-mile stretch of the river was earmarked for data collection due to its popularity and accessibility to private recreationists (self-guided) and commercial operators who charge for services such as a guide and/or outfitted raft/fishing trips.

Data were collected in June and July 2000 via river exit interviews (approximately 12 minutes) with a systematic stratified sample of users throughout the day. Collectively, 321 recreationists (residents and tourists) who were 18 years and above were sampled. Motivation was operationalized into 9-items using a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1=not at all important to 5=extremely important. The items were based from the literature. Similarly, non-motivational variables included activity style, first/repeat visit, frequency of participation, and select demographic variables such as gender and residence. The motiva-

tional items were employed as dependent variables, and a series of one-way analysis of variance were conducted against the non-motivational variables (independent variables). Significance was measured at the .05 level.

## Results

Males comprised about 71% of the respondents, while 29% were females. About 36% were between 21–30 years of age, and 22% were between 41–50. Respondents were fairly affluent with 34% noted family incomes to be over \$90,000. The sample was almost evenly split between tourists and residents (someone who has traveled 50 miles or less to the site). About 52% of the respondents noted to live within 50 miles of the recreation site. Based on the primary activity of the day, 32% were identified as kayakers; 35% were rafters, and 33% were anglers. Majority of the tourists (72%) noted to have participated in rafting, while a similar percentage of residents (77%) noted to have kayaked. Anglers were fairly evenly split between being a tourist and a resident. About 37% were first time visitors; 23% participated between 2–9 days in the past 12 months, while 40% visited 10 days or more. Likewise, 94% were overnight visitors while 6% were day visitors.

Based on the comparison of motivational items and activity style, six out of eight items were significant at the .05 level. Findings highlight that anglers were more likely to participate for solitude; kayakers were more likely to participate as it offers a challenge, keeps them in shape, and to do things with other people, whereas rafters were more likely to participate to see wildlife, and to tell others about it at home (see Table 1).

On comparison of motivational items and first/repeat visit, four items were significant. Regardless of activity, repeat visitors were more likely than first time visitors to mention solitude and relaxation as their key motives to visit the river. However, first time visitors were more likely to indicate to watch wildlife as well as to tell others about it as key motives (see Table 2). Similarly, recreationists that participated for more than 8 days in the past 12 months were more likely to indicate participation to help keep them in shape, and also as an opportunity for challenge (see Table 3).

With respect to gender differences, regardless of activity, males were more likely to participate for solitude while females indicated participation so that they could tell others about it at home (see Table 4). Finally, on comparison with residency status, regardless of activity, tourists were more likely motivated to participate to get away from everyday routine of life, to see wildlife, and to tell others about it. Local residents were more likely to participate as it helps them to keep in shape (see Table 5).

Table 1. Comparison of Motivation Items and Activity Style.

Motive	Rafters		Kayakers		Anglers		F value
	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	
For relaxation	4.06 (109)	.95	4.09 (100)	1.07	4.36 (101)	.84	2.94
To do things with other people	3.66 (109)	1.25	3.84 (100)	1.20	3.33 (101)	1.41	4.11*
To get away from the everyday routine of life	4.31 (109)	.96	4.17 (100)	1.21	4.44 (101)	.96	1.62
Opportunities for solitude	3.17 (109)	1.31	3.39 (100)	1.41	3.92 (101)	1.22	9.01***
To tell others about it at home	2.67 (109)	1.35	1.67 (100)	.97	2.16 (101)	1.19	18.56***
Help keep me in shape	2.60 (109)	1.26	3.36 (100)	1.20	2.27 (101)	1.23	20.79***
Be in a natural setting	4.35 (109)	.87	4.33 (100)	.83	4.22 (101)	1.02	.63
Opportunities to challenge myself	3.57 (109)	1.27	4.32 (100)	.92	3.18 (101)	1.40	22.94***
To see wildlife	3.62 (109)	1.25	2.89 (100)	1.29	3.42 (101)	1.33	8.84***

\* significant at .05 level (2-tail significance)  
 \*\*\* significant at .001 level (2-tail significance)  
<sup>1</sup>Standard Deviation

Table 2. Comparison of Motivation and Visitation (First/Repeat Visit).

Motive	First Visit		Repeat Visit		F value
	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	
For relaxation	3.89 (72)	1.07	4.23 (248)	.91	7.40**
To do things with other people	3.60 (72)	1.30	3.60 (248)	1.31	.12
To get away from the everyday routine of life	4.38 (72)	.88	4.29 (248)	1.09	.40
Opportunities for solitude	3.13 (72)	1.30	3.57 (248)	1.35	6.16*
To tell others about it at home	2.93 (72)	1.26	1.92 (248)	1.15	41.33***
Help keep me in shape	2.57 (72)	1.27	2.76 (248)	1.32	1.21
Be in a natural setting	4.35 (72)	.84	4.27 (248)	.93	.40
Opportunities to challenge myself	3.74 (72)	1.19	3.66 (248)	1.33	.18
To see wildlife	3.81 (72)	1.08	3.15 (248)	1.35	14.30***

\* significant at .05 level (2-tail significance)  
 \*\* significant at .01 level (2-tail significance)  
 \*\*\* significant at .001 level (2-tail significance)  
<sup>1</sup>Standard Deviation

Table 3. Comparison of Motivation Items and Frequency of Participation.

Motive	1 Day		2-7 Days		More than 8 Days		F value
	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	
For relaxation	4.08 (120)	1.01	4.35 (69)	.86	4.13 (131)	.95	1.88
To do things with other people	3.66 (120)	1.28	3.65 (69)	1.29	3.49 (131)	1.33	.64
To get away from the everyday routine of life	4.45 (120)	.79	4.39 (69)	.88	4.13 (131)	1.29	3.26*
Opportunities for solitude	3.21 (120)	1.33	3.74 (69)	1.30	3.56 (131)	1.35	4.05*
To tell others about it at home	2.65 (120)	1.29	2.22 (69)	1.25	1.65 (131)	1.00	23.14***
Help keep me in shape	2.56 (120)	1.20	2.32 (69)	1.23	3.08 (131)	1.36	9.49***
Be in a natural setting	4.35 (120)	.87	4.20 (69)	.95	4.27 (131)	.93	.59
Opportunities to challenge myself	3.62 (120)	1.25	3.19 (69)	1.49	3.99 (131)	1.16	9.31***
To see wildlife	3.68 (120)	1.22	3.09 (69)	1.28	3.06 (131)	1.36	8.20***

\* significant at .05 level (2-tail significance)  
 \*\*\* significant at .001 level (2-tail significance)  
<sup>1</sup>Standard Deviation

Table 4. Comparison of Motivation Items and Gender.

Motive	Male		Female		F value
	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	
For relaxation	4.22 (228)	.96	4.00 (92)	.94	3.47
To do things with other people	3.57 (228)	1.34	3.63 (92)	1.21	.14
To get away from the everyday routine of life	4.34 (228)	1.04	4.23 (92)	1.08	.72
Opportunities for solitude	3.58 (228)	1.31	3.20 (92)	1.39	5.39*
To tell others about it at home	2.04 (228)	1.19	2.41 (92)	1.34	5.97*
Help keep me in shape	2.74 (228)	1.35	2.67 (92)	1.21	.15
Be in a natural setting	4.26 (228)	.93	4.35 (92)	.84	.57
Opportunities to challenge myself	3.63 (228)	1.33	3.80 (92)	1.23	1.22
To see wildlife	3.25 (228)	1.34	3.41 (92)	1.29	.10

\* significant at .05 level (2-tail significance)

<sup>1</sup>Standard Deviation

Table 5. Comparison of Motivation Items and Residency Status.

Motive	Residents		Tourists		F value
	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	Mean (n)	Std. Dev. <sup>1</sup>	
For relaxation	4.19 (160)	.95	4.12 (160)	.97	.49
To do things with other people	3.61 (160)	1.33	3.57 (160)	1.28	.07
To get away from the everyday routine of life	4.13 (160)	1.25	4.49 (160)	.76	9.85**
Opportunities for solitude	3.58 (160)	1.38	3.36 (160)	1.31	2.00
To tell others about it at home	1.68 (160)	1.04	2.61 (160)	1.26	51.70***
Help keep me in shape	2.96 (160)	1.35	2.48 (160)	1.22	10.86***
Be in a natural setting	4.29 (160)	.91	4.29 (160)	.91	.00
Opportunities to challenge myself	3.73 (160)	1.35	3.63 (160)	1.25	.53
To see wildlife	2.99 (160)	1.37	3.60 (160)	1.21	17.66***

\*\* significant at .01 level (2-tail significance)

\*\*\* significant at .001 level (2-tail significance)

<sup>1</sup>Standard Deviation

## Discussion and Conclusion

Empirical research has demonstrated that recreationists have wide range of motives and the importance of key motives varies across individuals and activities. In addition, motivations are influenced due to the significant effect of other non-motivational variables. Based on the results of this study, the importance of motives varied based on activity style, first/repeat visit, frequency of participation, gender and residence. Rafters placed emphasizes on the status motive while anglers noted solitude. Such findings were expected as anglers generally prefer isolation and are susceptible to conflict situations due to presence or behavior of other activities. Anglers were equally representative of both tourists and locals. However, kayaking is a strenuous activity and as noted, participation was largely based for the purpose of physical conditioning. Also, it was more representative of local residents. Conversely, rafting was predominantly participated by tourists who sought to learn about the wildlife in the area, and

wanted to let others at home know about their experience on the river. Similarly, first time visitors were mostly tourists who were more interested in learning about the wildlife in the area and sharing the experiences upon their return to their respective homes. As expected, repeat visitors were largely local residents who recreated for solitude. Concomitantly, recreationists that participated for more than 8 days in the past 12 months were predominantly local residents that participated for physical aspects.

Females' motive for participation was largely based on the fact that they could tell others about it at home. Also, more females were representative of being a tourist and chose rafting than kayaking or angling. Rafting on rivers along gateway communities is very popular among tourists as local residents work as guides. It can be noted that rafting among tourists is largely based for extrinsic reasons. Finally, as expected, local residents placed greater importance with physical aspects of their recreation experience, while for tourists, the setting and prestige motives were important.

This study sought to examine trip motivations and the effect of select non-motivational variables among water-based recreationists. The findings derived from this study was largely expected and confirmed. Future research should expand on the motivational items and also offer an alternative method of analysis, using factor-based or cluster-based segmentation to further understand water-based recreations. Understanding what people seek through recreation can provide useful guidance to a variety of planning and management tasks, such as measuring supply and demand for recreation, developing management objectives, and preventing and managing conflicts between users as well as local residents and tourists.

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