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Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

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Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

by

Brandon M. J. Finn

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Kinesiology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Human Kinetics at the
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Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Ski tourists are one of the largest activity-based market segments in both Canada and the United States (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2003). This study has used an exploratory approach to better understand why ski resort tourists travel for a ski holiday. Members of a Windsor, Ontario ski club participated in focus groups and an action research component that were analyzed to create a Ski Tourist Motivational Model. The factors that were found which impacted the ski tourist's motivation were: risk, facility/destination, price/economic value, social, safety, skill mastery, relaxation, green initiatives and culture. The factors strengths on ski tourist motivation are shown in the model (high, medium or low). The findings are specific to a small group of Windsor skiers and cannot be generalized about the whole skiing population. This study does, however, provide a theoretical basis for future studies to examine a larger ski tourist population.

DEDICATION

Casandra Finn

I couldn't have asked for a more supportive and loving wife. Thank you for that great smile and energetic personality that always lifts me up.

Mike and Deborah Finn

To Dad, who has always given me the freedom to make my own choices and has taught me what is most important in life. To Mom, who believes I can do anything and the ability to have instilled that belief in me. Thank you both for everything.

Josh Finn

You have inspired me to be a better person and to accomplish anything. You are poised to do great things in life and I couldn't be more proud to be your older brother. Thank you.

Kyle Oates and Jake Schneckeburger

Rarely do friends have such an impact on one's life. Thank you for the adventures and for encouraging me to live life to the fullest!

Richard and Cathy Meloche

Thank you for all the encouragement that you have given me and for showing me the importance of family.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

A once thriving industry, Canadian ski resort tourism has been plagued by a number of challenging issues: a declining ski market and skiing holiday numbers, the current economic recession, climate change and environmental issues (Canadian Ski Council, 2009). In light of these complex issues ski resort operators need to understand why their consumers do what they do in order to attract and retain clientele. While the study of skiers' motivation is not new, less is known about skiers as tourists. Further, sport tourism research has lacked exploratory research to qualitatively investigate why sport tourists travel. Thus the following study utilised a qualitative exploratory approach to begin to develop an understanding of why alpine ski resort tourists travel and stay at a ski resort. This study provided a basis for future quantitative studies and provided useful information to ski resort operators to find out more about the motivations of their consumers and potential clientele.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore why ski resort tourists travel and stay overnight at ski resorts. Focus groups were used to ask ski resort tourists directly why they travel and stay at ski resorts. This research has contributed to the limited exploratory work on motivation in sport tourism research. The work that has been done on motivation in leisure tourism and ski destination choice is largely descriptive (Holden, 1999; Richards, 1996; Ryan & Glendon, 1998; Won & Hwang, 2009) with few exceptions (Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey, 1993). Such descriptive work has begged the question from other prominent sport tourism researchers

(Gibson, 2004; Weed, 2008) what do we really know about the motivation of leisure and sport tourism participants? Although such descriptive work has its uses many have lacked a theoretical underpinning (Weed). Researchers that have done studies on sport tourism have borrowed theories from other disciplines such as psychology and leisure studies. Moreover, further research has been done that has drawn heavily on ‘expert’ opinion to develop questionnaires and surveys and has lacked theory. More exploratory work is needed create such a theoretical foundation for a future model for understanding the motivations of sport tourists. This study has helped to lay such a foundation for future research. My study drew upon the current motivation literature in both the fields of sport tourism and leisure tourism to help facilitate a conceptual model. My conceptual model and research questions can be found in the research design and methodology section.

The Significance of the Study

Gibson (2004) suggested that in order for sport tourism to develop as a legitimate area of study researchers needed to *[move] beyond the “what is and who” of sport tourism to understanding “why”* (p.247). Essentially, Gibson argued that sport tourism researchers needed to get past defining what a sport tourist is and describing them, and start to explain their behaviours. In order to do this Gibson proposed using varied theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, Weed and Bull (2004) conducted a study of all the peer reviewed articles published on sport tourism over four years (2000-2003). Weed and Bull’s findings suggest that much of the sport tourism motivation research that has been done has focused on sport events or sport spectators and not on the sport tourist as a participant, as this study has explored. Weed (2008) argued that there has been a secondary focus on outdoor adventure activities. The work that has been done in this area has focused on the participant’s experiences, perceptions and profiles, and

thus has been largely descriptive focusing on explaining who and what sport tourists are and failing to explain the why as Gibson (2004) suggested. Weed argued that in order to understand 'why' sport tourists travel, researchers need to focus on participation experiences underpinned by ontological research. My study has added to the body of literature of sport tourism and more specifically active sport tourists to explore the 'why', using a conceptual framework based on the current sport tourism and leisure tourism research.

Although the study of skier motivations is not new, few researchers have specifically paid attention to the skier as a sport tourist. Nogawa, Yamaguchi and Hagi (1996) have suggested that to be considered a tourist one must stay at the destination for at least 24 hours. There is a large difference in purchase behaviours between overnight tourists and day trippers (those who stay for less than 24 hours). Hudson (2000) described how 'destination skiers' who stay at ski resorts for extended periods of time are the most sought after visitors. This is because they not only buy a lift ticket as a 'day tripper' would but they also purchase accommodations, meals, and lessons. Destination skiers can also fill in midweek days when the resort is typically less busy (Hudson).

Sport Tourism has gained great momentum since the 1980s (Priestly, 1995) and sport and physical activity travel is one of the fastest growing trends in the tourism industry, (Gibson, 1998a). Despite the growth in the tourism industry participation in skiing has been declining since its peak in the 1980s (Hudson, 2000). Hudson suggested that this slide seemed to have coincided with the economic downturn in 1993. Since then participation in skiing has continued to drop (Hudson). Williams and Dossa (1995) found that the number one reason why people quit skiing was because of finances. Williams and Basford (1992) examined the skiing image with social adventurers and young families and found that cost constraints were consistently high among both groups. Furthermore, the number two reason that non-skiers have never taken a ski

holiday is that they cannot afford it or it is too expensive (Mintel, 1996). From this information the ski industry faces the problem that people are leaving the sport because it is too expensive (Williams & Dossa), individuals are not entering the market because they perceive it as too costly (Williams & Dossa) and those that have left the sport for five years or more may not come back because of financial reasons (Mintel). The recent economic downturn has put further strain on the ski industry. Ski resort operators should be concerned with the impacts the economic decline will have on their market.

A further problem for ski resort operators is increasing concerns about climate change and the environmental impacts on ski resorts. Consumers are making more informed purchasing decisions about how their behaviours and consumer choices effect the environment. Hudson and Ritchie (2001) noted that skiers/snowboarders are not very knowledgeable about how ski resorts have impacted the environment but they would be willing to pay more to visit a resort with certain environmental policies or initiatives.

In light of these issues in the ski industry, it is all the more important to find ways to design strategies that will effectively move consumers from moderate to higher levels of consumption. Such behaviour could mean repeat purchase behaviour or longer duration stays. This study sought to explore what factors skiers and snowboarders consider to be important when travelling to a ski resort. From the factors found, ski resort operators will be able get a better picture of what is important to their consumers and to start using this information to adapt current strategies to more effectively meet the wants and needs of their market.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sport Tourism

Sports tourism is defined by Standeven and De Knop (1999) as “all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organised way for non-commercial or business/ commercial reasons, that necessitate travel away from home and work locality” (p.12). Although this provides a good starting point to understand what sport tourism is, Weed (2008) critically questioned the worth of such a definition as he suggested it does not provide a thorough and descriptive understanding of what constitutes sport tourism.

To more accurately define sport tourism other researchers have broken down the concept of what constitutes a sport tourist. In this approach ‘tourism’ is the industry or action while the ‘tourist’ is the person within the industry. Gibson (1998b) identified three realms of sport tourism: active sport tourism, event sport tourism and nostalgia sport tourism. Active sport tourists travel to partake in sport; event sport tourists travel to watch a sporting activity; and nostalgia sport tourists travel to pay homage to a sporting site such as a historic stadium or a hall of fame. Gammon and Robinson (1997) categorized sport tourists by their reasons to travel: those who partake in sport as the main reason for travel (primary) and those who partake in sport, however participation is not their main objective for travelling (secondary). An example of a secondary motive would be to make a presentation (primary) at a conference and also golfing (secondary) during their visit. Robinson and Gammon (2004) further proposed that because of the distinctions of sport tourists’ motives (primary and secondary) sport tourism could be separated into two focus areas: sport tourists (primary motives) and tourism sport (secondary

motives). Robinson and Gammon (2004) felt their original paper lacked a theoretical underpinning and further developed their concepts of the sport tourist and tourism sport into secondary reinforcement categories. This included a 'hard' and 'soft' framework for a sport tourist and tourism sport. A hard sport tourist is one who is travelling to participate or watch competitive sport. The competitive component represents the 'hard' aspect. Therefore, the 'soft' aspect is when someone participates in sport but is pursuing recreation motives and not competitive motives. For instance, someone participating in sporting events such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup would be a 'hard' sport tourist. Someone who is on a ski holiday for recreational purposes is a 'soft' sport tourist. It is important to note that both primary and secondary motives have 'hard' and 'soft' categories.

Tourism sport would encompass the same 'hard' and 'soft' elements with sport being a secondary motive for travel. One example of 'hard' tourism sport would be going to visit family but booking one's trip around competing in a marathon. The primary reason for travel here is to visit family but one who competes in marathons may wish to compete if the opportunity is there. 'Soft' tourism sport can be seen using the previous example of the skier who is skiing for recreational purposes but the primary reason to travel was to visit family.

Gibson (1998b) excluded the competitive element in her profiling of active sport tourists. What Gibson did include was anyone considered an 'activity participant' (Hall, 1992) who travels to participate in leisure activities, whereas 'hobbyists' (Hall) or amateurs who travel to engage in competitive sport, were left out. In Gibson's study the population was referred to as active sport tourists even though they were only travelling for leisure means.

Robinson and Gammon (2004) defined in each of their categories that the tourist must travel 'outside their usual environment'. In order to clarify Robinson and Gammon's definition of what constitutes 'outside their usual environment', I drew upon *Statistics Canada* (1999), which classifies a tourist in Canada as one who has travelled at least 80 kilometres (one way) from their normal residence. Nogawa, Yamaguchi and Haggis (1996) stated that in order to qualify as a sport tourist the individual must stay for a duration of at least 24 hours. Nogawa et al. further indicated that any visitor staying less than 24 hours would be considered a 'sport excursionist'.

Weed and Bull (2004) suggested that the social and cultural aspects of sport tourism are important but are often neglected in the pursuit of understanding tourism's economic impact. Therefore, Weed and Bull added to the definition of sport tourism suggesting that it is a "social, economic and cultural phenomenon arising from the unique interaction of activity, people and place (p. 17)". Pigeassou (2004) indicated that people could only truly engage in sport tourism if they have a desire to experience sport culture, and that just participating in sport on holiday is not enough. Pigeassou identified four key areas a sport tourist can undertake that would count as a sport tourism experience: practice of physical and/ or sport activities, participation in an event exhibition with a sport focus, knowledge-seeking and/or remembrance of historic and contemporary sport culture and involvement in sport administration. Pigeassou further defined sport tourism as "a human experiment which is focusing on a set of services necessary for the realization of non professional temporary journeys towards specific destinations to experience sport culture" (p.287). In order to understand why sport tourists travel it is necessary to identify who participates in these activities by examining what defines an active sport tourist.

Active Sport Tourists

Gibson (1998a) profiled the active sport tourist in an article entitled *Active sport tourism :who participates?*. The active sport tourist was found to be most likely male, affluent and well educated, which reiterates similar findings by Schreiber (1976). Gibson and Yiannakis (1994) findings suggest that males (57.8 percent) do indeed travel to participate in sport more than females (44.8 percent). One third of the respondents also reported household income of \$70,000 US or more (Gibson & Yiannakis). This is substantially higher than the average income of the study area, which at the time was \$53,848 US dollars. Furthermore, the participants were found to be well-educated with 76.4 percent reporting a college education and 23.5 percent having an advanced degree (PhD, MD or Law Degree). Similar results were found by Attle (1996), Gee (1988), Gosline (cited in Morse & Lanier, 1992), Kaae and Lee (1996), and Schreiber (1976). Kaae and Lee specifically looked at cross-country and alpine skiers, noting that while both were affluent and well educated there were equal numbers of male and female cross country skiers whereas alpine skiers were predominantly male. Gibson, Attle and Yiannakis (1997) further noted that active sport tourists who were well educated, affluent and predominately male were also willing to travel long distances to engage in their favourite sport, likely to participate in active sport tourism activities past retirement and most likely to pursue the same activities (not a one-off vacation). One of the largest growing trends in active sport tourism is adventure sport tourism. It is important to note that skiing is an adventure tourism activity; acknowledging this orientation will aid in understanding the motivations of ski resort tourists.

Adventure Tourists

Adventure tourism is defined as:

a broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialized and involving an interaction with the natural environments away from the participant's home range and containing elements of risk; in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and management of the touristic experience (Hall & Weiler, 1992, p. 143).

The Adventure Travel Society¹ (cited in Hudson, 2003, p. 14) noted that adventure tourism is growing annually at a rate of 10-15 percent. Hudson suggested that most of this growth is happening in Costa Rica, parts of Mexico and Peru. Most adventure tourists tend to be North American, however Japanese, Thai and Western European participants are increasing. Senior and female adventure tourists are also on the rise with women potentially eclipsing men in participant numbers in both sailing and backpacking in 2008 (Hudson, 2003). The literature suggests that all adventure tourists are active sport tourists but not all active sport tourists are adventure tourists.

It was also reported by the Travel Industry Association of America (cited in Hudson, 2003, p.58) that half of Americans (98 million) said they were adventure travellers, with 46 percent participating in 'soft' adventure activities such as camping, hiking and biking and 16 percent 'hard' adventure activities such as white-water rafting/kayaking, scuba diving and mountain biking. The 'soft' and 'hard' adventure activities mentioned here differ from Gammon and Robinson's (1997) definition in that 'hard' activities are perceived as dangerous while 'soft' activities do not propose serious risk. Hudson also found that 'hard' adventure tourists were:

¹ The Adventure Travel Society is an adventure travel consulting firm that aids international governments and trade groups with marketing, public relations and environmentally sustainable practices. The Adventure Travel Society president, Jerry Mallet, resides and operates out of Colorado.

more likely to be men than soft adventure travellers (60% of hard adventurers versus 51% of soft adventurers); single (40% versus 26%); young, eighteen to twenty-four years old (24% versus 18%); college educated (82% versus 73%); with higher household incomes of \$75, 000 per year or more (25% versus 19 %) (p.15).

It was also suggested that hard adventure tourists (48%) travelled more often with friends than did soft adventure travellers (30%). Only 4 percent of hard adventure tourists travelled alone, which was a little higher than soft adventure tourists (2%). Soft adventure travellers were, however, more likely to travel with partners (60%) and children or grandchildren (41%) while hard adventure tourists only reported travelling with partners 42 percent of the time and with children and grandchildren 18 percent of the time (Hudson). While adventure tourism is a growing trend, it is dominated by young to middle aged male participants; however seniors and female participant numbers are climbing rapidly. Most of the adventure activities are enjoyed by the affluent and highly educated and most of the activities consumed are considered 'soft' tourism.

Thus, from previous researchers' attempts at defining sport tourism, adventure tourism and active sport tourism, the following definition has been developed for the purpose of this study: The active sport tourist is someone who travels a great distance (requiring accommodations) to pursue adventure in sport either for primary or secondary reasons and for leisure or recreation with the nature of the activity involving some perceived level of risk.

Ski Tourists

In 2007, Ski Canada profiled Canadian alpine skiers and snowboarders. It was reported that 45 percent of skiers/snowboarders had household incomes of \$100,000 CDN or more. This population is affluent as compared to only 21 percent of all Canadian households who have

median incomes of \$100,000 or more. About 35.9 percent of the skiing/snowboarding population live in the top ten Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) which include: Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Ottawa-Gatineau (Ontario/Quebec), Calgary, Edmonton, Québec, Winnipeg, Hamilton and London. Toronto had the largest skiing/snowboarding population out of all the CMA's at 18.8 percent. The second closest CMA was British Columbia with 3.5 percent. While it was suggested that skiers and snowboarders are affluent, the highest percent of Canadian skiers and snowboarders were aged 15 to 19. This suggests that most of these teenagers are relying on financial support from their parents, who likely earn a household income of \$100,000 or more. It should be noted that skiers and snowboarders were categorized together and not separated as in the Hudson (2000) study. At the time of Hudson's book, *Snow Business*, was released the average US skier was 35 years old. Ski Canada reported that the skiers and snowboarder population aged 35 to 39 was only 7.6 percent, which ranked as the seventh highest skiers/snowboarder age group. While Ski Canada did not separate skiers and snowboarders in their demographic survey there are two noticeable swells: one at the younger ages (15-19 years at 16.7% and 20-24 years at 12%) and one in the older age categories (40-44 years at 9.2% and 45-49 years at 9.5%) (Ski Canada). The literature suggests that the majority of the younger population participates in snowboarding while the majority of the older population participates in skiing. Ski Canada reported that the majority of the skiing population is now between 40-50 years of age. Such a result would make sense as the average skier age in *Snow Business* was 35 and the book was published in 2000; the average skier would then be around 45 in 2010 as demonstrated in Ski Canada's demographic survey. In Hudson's chapter profiling the skier/snowboarder as a consumer, he concluded that the motivations for partaking in such

activities include: personal achievement, social reasons, enjoyment of nature, and escape and thrill.

The National Ski Areas Association (cited in Hudson, 2003, p.100) provided a profile of ski tourists as well. The National Ski Areas Association is a trade association for ski resort operators and owners made up of 329 alpine resorts (National Ski Areas Association, 2010). The profile indicated that skiers were predominantly male (60%), well educated with at least a college degree, hold a managerial or professional career, have median household incomes of \$56,614 US dollars, and are on average thirty five years old. Skiers were also found to be twice as likely to travel overseas, invest in real estate and buy wine. Alternate activities skiers enjoyed included tennis, racquetball, sailing and cycling. Snowboarders were also found to be mostly male (73%); however, they were on average much younger with 89 percent being twenty five years of age or less, living in a household where the median income is \$45,413 and being mostly students (The National Ski Areas Association, 2000). Alternate activities snowboarders enjoyed included hiking, skateboarding, surfing, mountain biking and playing video games. Spring (1996) suggested that North American skiers take advantage of their ski resort's ability to make snow and enjoy/prefer better terrain. It has also been suggested that skilled skiers take more ski holidays than less skilled skiers (Richards, 1995). While the profile of ski resort tourists is necessary to address, it is all the more important to understand the internal and external forces that drive their behaviour. As such, the concept of motivation must be explored in more detail.

Motivations

Motivation is defined as “the hypothetical construct used to describe the internal and/or external forces that produce the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behaviour” (Vallerand & Thrill, 1993, p.18; translated from French). The construct that is motivation includes two main facets: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to persons engaging in an activity because they enjoy the activity itself and receive satisfaction from partaking in it (Deci, 1971). Extrinsic motivation refers to partaking in an activity as a means to an end and not for the pure enjoyment of it (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have been dissected to more accurately describe motives affecting human behaviour. Numerous theoretical perspectives have been used to examine motivation. Thus, this section will highlight the research on motivation that has shaped my theoretical framework and this study.

Motivation of Leisure Tourists

In order to understand motivation in sport tourism one must first look to leisure tourism literature as many studies in sport tourism have borrowed heavily from leisure tourism research. Ryan and Glendon (1998) applied the Leisure Motivation Scale developed by Beard and Ragheb (1980) to 1,127 UK holidaymakers. The purpose of the study was to see what motivations were more important in one’s decision to travel and if the destination met the participant’s expectations. A cluster analysis was used to group certain individuals together based on how they ranked in their motivations. For example, the largest group (37%) consisted of unimaginative relaxers, which rated relaxation as high, social reasons low; intellectual also ranked high and mastery reasons low. The clusters were then compared to their satisfaction of the destination visited. “Noisy socializers” enjoyed the presence of active nightlife more than any

other cluster. This group also shared a common disinterest in the culture of the destination, its history and the friendly locals. Friendly discoverers, relaxed discoverers and intellectual discoverers did, however, rank culture as important. Positive holiday makers ranked high in almost every category for destination attributes with only a few scoring low: night-life, bars and child facilities. While the clusters used in the Ryan and Glendon study are less important to this study, the factors which were used to categorise each group are important. These factors included social reasons, skill mastery, culture and relaxation. While these factors are important, the Leisure Motivation Scale is limited in that it does not account for elements such as risk, which is an important element of outdoor adventure activities.

Ross (1992) used Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs to explore the motives of backpacker visitors in the wet tropics of Northern Australia. Ross's approach was unique in that the tourist's positive and negative perceptions were identified within the participant's motives. Ross found that friendships/relationships and personal fulfillment were anticipated positive motivators and accommodations and food/drink were anticipated negative motivators. Later work by Ross (1997) examined backpacker's motivations looking at achievement, affiliation and power. Ross found the average age of the budget traveller to be 30 years with an unequal distribution of males (57 percent) and females (43 percent). The importance of relaxation was found to be more vital than the educational component. The elder population in the study were more apt to travel for achievement purposes while females and older individuals scored higher for environmental controllability. Reasons given for this finding suggest that the female and elderly population would feel safer if they were in control as they perceive themselves as being at risk. It was also found that the backpackers wanted to achieve something on vacation and when the trip is over the individual wanted to have a feeling of accomplishment. While the

factors that emerge from Ross's study are important, the theoretical work has been based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is not appropriate to explore the motivations of ski tourists. Maslow's work has been important in understanding human motivation when an individual is lacking a need that needs to be filled for a human's well being. The hierarchy was, however, never intended to understand the motivations of individuals who have the means to take a luxurious vacation such as a ski holiday.

Prebensen (2005) examined Norwegian tourists' perceptions of a place visited and compared them to their motivations and experience using a modified version of the Lillehammer scale originally used by Kleiven (1998). In the analysis, six countries were the most commonly visited, which included: Greece, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Cyprus and Portugal. Prebensen identified eight factors to explain 67.3 percent of the variance of the 33 motivational items generated. These factors were identified as: culture, avoid stress, fitness, accomplishment, sun/bathing, friends, kids/family and hedonic. Culture (adventure and knowledge) was found to be a very strong motive for Norwegian travellers. No significant differences were found to be associated with the visitor's motivation and country visited. Prebensen suggested that this finding occurred because those taking chartered vacations do not care where they go as long as all of their needs are being met. Vacationers would thus assume that southern European countries are able to fulfill their needs. Although Prebensen examined leisure tourists and not sport tourists, this study shares some good insight into the motivations of tourists and the factors that shape their perceptions.

While profiling adventure tourists, Delpy (2003) made an important reference to the adventure tourist population and their usual length of stay. It was found that in the United States 31 percent of adventure tourists stayed for one or two nights with only nine percent staying on

longer trips (Leisure Trends Group, 2000). Delpy also noted the motivation for outdoor recreation participants to engage in activities. It was also reported by the Recreation Roundtable (1995) that the most common motivations for outdoor recreation enthusiasts are: fun, relaxation/getaway, health and exercise, family togetherness, stress reduction, experience nature/environment and thrill/challenge of learning. These factors are important because they apply to adventure tourists and some of the same factors could apply to ski tourists as well.

Motivation and Experiences of Ski Tourists

Motivations for ski destination choice have been examined by Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey (1993) using means-end theory (Gutman, 1982). Means-end theory examines the connection between the product consumed and the values consumers place on the product to make their purchases (Klenosky, et al. 1993). Twenty-four items were grouped into three categories: attributes, consequences and personal values. Klenosky et al. found that skiers want to be challenged and to have a variety of choices and thus are concerned with the difficulty of the trails. However, it was also found that skiers had a concern for their well-being and safety, which were clustered with grooming and snow conditions. It is interesting that although risk is valued by skiers through the difficulty of trails, safety is also appreciated through the grooming of trails. Not surprisingly a social atmosphere that led to a sense of belonging was also important. The social and family elements seem to be one of the strongest motivators for ski tourists (Klenosky et al.). Interestingly, ski packages, lodging and resort services were clustered with saving money. Even though these packages are expensive, consumers felt that they were saving money by bundling services together and therefore 'saving money.' Klenosky et al.'s motivations differed from Hudson's (2003) research, which found three primary motivators for skiers and snowboarders to choose a destination: friends (34%), ease of getting to resort (25%), and previous

experience (31%) (Leisure Trends Group, 2000). While Klenosky et al.'s study examines why consumers picked one ski resort over another, which is not the focus of my study, the factors that were used in the consumer's decision is important. Klenosky et. al. found that both safety and risk or at least perceived safety and risk, are important to the consumer.

Skiers' motivation has also been examined by Holden (1999) using Pearce's Travel Career Construct (Pearce, 1988). The construct was based on Maslow's five-stage hierarchy of needs model. The scale examined beginner, intermediate and advanced skiers' as well as snowboarder's needs to travel based on five categories: relaxation, thrills, relationships, self-esteem and fulfillment. The instrument used was self-report questionnaire with 27 needs listed. Participants were asked to rank each need on a 1-5 likert scale. Holden's findings suggest that the need for thrills is the most important factor across each type of skier. Relaxation was also found to be important as respondents wanted to experience a change from their daily routine. Among the groups studied snowboarders valued relationships more than any other. Beginners wanted more time to spend with loved ones while snowboarders wanted to make new acquaintances and have a good time with friends. The need for fulfillment was fairly constant among all groups with the highest level of importance being attached with 'to feel close to nature' category. The responses also indicate that the higher the level of skier the lower the level of satisfaction the skier felt about their needs being met. Ski resort operators need to find out how to better attend to these consumers' needs to keep them coming back. Holden's study, while useful for understanding the motivation of skiers and snowboarding, has not been examined in the tourism literature.

Richards (1996) specifically examined skilled UK skiers and their consumption behaviours. Skilled UK skiers were more likely to stay at higher quality skiing facilities, spend

more time in their destination, ski more frequently and enjoy challenging ski conditions.

Advanced skiers were found to travel in large groups, which is a more prominent trend in Europe than North America, which generally attracts smaller groups. The population in the study also enjoyed a variety of other recreational activities with the most prominent being swimming and tennis. In terms of factors affecting ski destination choice, snow conditions was the most important. Advanced skiers were also more insensitive to the price of the holiday. Richards argued that ski resort operators should try and move less experienced skiers to more advanced skiers because they tend to spend more, stay longer and take more trips. My study has explored the motivations of such high end consumers. Richards' study, however, focused on consumer behaviour and not why ski resorts tourists actually go to the ski resort, which was the focus of my study.

Hudson and Shephard (1998) measured the service quality at alpine ski resorts. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were used to come up with a list of traits that ski operators and skiers believed to be valuable. Although Hudson and Shephard were not looking at motivation, they did elicit some important attributes that are important for getting ski resort tourists to come back to a ski resort. Hudson and Shephard made an action grid with four quadrants consisting of: A) Concentrate Here, B) Keep Up the Good Work, C) Low Priority; and D) Possible Overkill. The skiing population thought that operators should concentrate their efforts on some of their services such as: comfortable beds, value for money in bars and restaurants, and the prices in ski shops. Skiers thought operators were doing a good job in: providing hot water in accommodation, variety of slopes, number of lifts, quality of food and efficient tour operator staff. Some services which the skiers thought were overdone included: off-piste skiing, sports facilities, sun terraces in restaurants and the language ability of staff in shops. Skiers believed

that low priority services were live bands in bars, choice of food in restaurants, guiding services and an open fire in accommodation.

Service providers' answers were also recorded on the grid. The service providers felt that the services they needed to focus on were ski slope services, tourist information services, tour operator services, ski shops, accommodation and ski slopes. The only item where the service providers felt the resort operators were doing a good job was in providing medical services in the resort. There were no items listed as being overkill. Since most of the resort services fell under quadrant A (Concentrate Here) for both service providers and skiers, operators need to better attend to these attributes to keep their customers satisfied and coming back. Keeping customers coming back is crucial for moving moderate levels consumers to high end consumers. While the focus of Hudson and Shephard was to examine ski resort attributes rather than ski tourist motivation, it still gives some good insight into what is important to ski resort tourists.

Ferrand and Vecchiatini (2002) examined the effect of service performance and ski resort image on skier's satisfaction. A structural equation model was used to determine the relationships between the three identified attributes of non-ski services (local culture, core ski facilities and leisure facilities), the two factors of ski service attributes (ski facilities and cost and ski facilities access), the three dimensions of ski resort image (maternal safety, purchasing and using goods and holiday fun) and lastly the two elements of consumer satisfaction (global and ski service and non-ski service). Ferrand and Vecchiatini's results indicated that the global and ski service has a greater influence on ski resort image than the ski facilities and cost dimension. It was also found that the non-ski service has a stronger impact on leisure facilities than the purchasing and using goods dimension. Furthermore the ski facilities accessibility has a strong impact on the leisure facilities and local culture dimension. It was also found that global and ski

satisfaction was influenced by the satisfaction of other service items and was unconnected with skiing. Although Ferrand and Vecchiatini provide good insight into a skier's satisfaction on a particular ski resort, they do not examine the motivations of the skier to actually go and stay at the resort. This study is, however, useful in finding out what attributes are important to ski resort goers such as culture and snow quality, which has helped in understanding the motivations of ski resort tourists who were explored in my study.

Won and Hwang (2009) examined the factors that affect ski destination choice among Korean college skiers and snowboarders. Skiing and snowboarding in Korea, unlike most of the world, is increasing in popularity. From the 2000-2001 to the 2005-2006 season ski resorts in Korea have experienced an average annual increase of twelve percent in visitors. Won and Hwang's results indicate that snow quality is the most important factor for Korean college students to visit a ski resort (33.6%). Other factors that were important to the participants were: lift wait time (17.8%), travel time (16.9%), daily expense or cost (16.3%) and variety of the ski trails (15.4%). While Won and Hwang's study does not explore ski tourist motivation it does provide some good insight about what is important to ski resort tourists in Korea where, unlike the skiing population in most other countries, growth is occurring in the sport.

Hudson and Ritchie (2001) examined skiers from three different countries in accordance with their tourist behaviour/attitudes towards the environment. From the sample used, 70 percent of the respondents thought that skiing and snowboarding was environmentally friendly. However, 65 percent said that ski terrain should be limited because it harms animal habitat and migratory paths. Only 64 percent thought that ski terrain does not damage the environment as much as the ski resorts' hotels and real estate development. Hudson and Ritchie found a large gap in the knowledge of skiers on environmental issues coinciding with skiing. These issues

included: skiers not knowing that ski trails can create new habitat for wildlife, and skiers generally thinking that elk were disturbed by visitors (this contradicts what some scientists are saying) (Hudson & Ritchie). It was also found that only 17 percent of skiers take into account a resort's green initiatives before making their destination decision. 74 percent of Canadian skiers thought that skiing was environmentally friendly as compared to only 46 percent of the British skiers (Hudson & Ritchie). North Americans on the whole thought that skiing was environmentally friendly as 77 percent of Americans agreed with this statement. All three cultural groups (US, Canada and UK) indicated that they would be more likely to visit a ski resort if it implemented better environmentally friendly policies. Furthermore, it was also found that 63 percent of Canadians would be willing to spend more money to visit a greener ski destination. On average Canadians would spend \$10.39 (CAD) more to visit such a resort while the average of all three cultural groups was \$16 more per day. These findings could have an important impact on ski resorts in the future and it would seem advisable that such resorts would want to implement green initiatives to at the very least enhance their image. Hudson and Ritchie shed some good insight on how consumer's environmental sensitivity is impacting the ski industry. Little research has been done on how consumers' environmental sensitivity impacts their motivations to travel and it was important to see if this factor surfaced in my study.

The literature review conducted has shaped my conceptual framework on the motivations of ski tourists. What will follow is a number of motivational factors that were reoccurring or prominent in the literature, which has served as a guide when collecting and analyzing the data for the study. Each factor is listed with a brief explanation about why it is important for skier motivation and which studies have used it in the past, thus shaping my conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework: Motivational Factors

Despite the prevalence of literature in leisure studies and the somewhat limited research in tourism dealing directly with motivation, few studies have employed a broader qualitative methodology to explore motivation from the perspective of the ski resort tourist. What follows is a collaboration of factors gleaned from the literature in motivation, leisure and tourism research that has been used to generate the conceptual framework for my study. Each aspect chosen was considered in order to facilitate exploration for the study. A table summarizing the motivational factors and the studies exploring each factor can be found in Table 1 following the description of each factor.

Risk

Risk is an essential component of adventure tourism. The definition of sports tourism drawn upon earlier by Hall and Weiler (1992) included risk as a main ingredient to the experience. Furthermore, skiing being an adventure tourism activity does incur risk. It is important to note that the risk being referred to for skiing is considered positive risk behaviour (Hansen & Breivik, 2001). Researchers have found risk as a motivational factor for sport and leisure consumers (Milne & McDonald, 1999; Allman, Mittelstaedt, Martin & Goldenberg, 2009). Holden (1999) also found thrills as an important need for skiers and snowboarders. Thrills and other experiences of feeling excitement or exhilaration are included in the risk factor.

Social

Social needs and belongingness are consistently mentioned as motivational factors for ski tourists in the literature (Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey, 1993; Ryan & Glendon 1998; Holden 1999). Such needs can be travelling with friends/family, developing new relationships and

meeting new people. Family was identified by Prebensen (2005) as an important factor for why sport tourists travel. Since family is a social focal point it has been included in the 'social' factor.

Environment

Environmental awareness and sensitivity is becoming an increasingly larger issue in today's marketplace and ski resorts have not been left unaffected. Although the effects and criticisms of ski resort practices on the environment is not new (Hudson, 1996), research is now emerging on how consumers attitudes and behaviours are affected by ski resorts and their 'green' initiatives (Hudson & Ritchie, 2001). Hudson and Ritchie's findings suggest that consumers would pay more to stay at a 'greener' resort and environmental consciousness is important to them.

Relaxation

Relaxation is perhaps the backbone of leisure and tourism activities. The need to get away from everyday life and avoid stress drives people to seek out activities away from their usual environment. It is not surprising then that relaxation/avoid stress has been used as a motivational factor for many leisure and tourism studies (Lang & O'Leary, 1997; Ryan & Glendon, 1998; Prebensen 2005). Holden (1999) identified relaxation as a motivational need for specifically skiers and snowboarders, whereas the previous studies mentioned a focus on leisure participants in general.

Skill Mastery

Perhaps more unique to sports tourism versus leisure tourism is the concept of skill-mastery. While leisure activities do not usually have a competing component, sport does whether

it be against an opponent or one's self. Competition can drive participants to improve their ability to enhance their chances of success the next time the task presents itself. For example, even when participating alone one can try to outrun a previous distance or time set by oneself. Skill-mastery has been notably important for skiers; as they become more skilled they want to challenge their ability on harder runs and different trails, thus affecting ski destination choice as well (Richards, 1996).

Knowledge

Increasing one's knowledge has been noted as a motivation for leisure and sport tourism participants in a number of studies (Beard & Ragheb, 1980; Ryan & Glendon, 1998). Walle (1997) believed insight to be so important that he disputed current definitions that accepted risk as an inevitable part of adventure tourism and offered a new definition in which activities can be explored purely for the insight gained from partaking in it.

Culture

Hinch and Higham (2008) stressed the importance of culture of the sport tourism experience. Hinch and Higham argue that tourists search for meaningful experiences and are actively engaged in consuming local culture. It is important to note here that it is this notion of consuming local culture that will be explored and not the skiing culture or lifestyle of skiers. Hinch and Higham suggest that culture is so pervasive that it simply cannot be separated from the sport or tourism experience. Although Hinch and Higham's work generally referred to sport events it will be important to see if those participating in sporting activities produce similar findings. Prebensen (2005), studying Norwegian tourists' motivations and perceptions, found that learning and experiencing culture was very important to them. Klenosky, Gengler and

Mulvey (1993), while studying skier destination choice, also found that experiencing local culture was an important factor among ski tourists.

Facility

The ski resort and/or the facilities they have played a central role in consumer destination choice. Won and Hwang (2009) found that snow quality and average lift wait time were important to destination skiers. In order to provide optimal snow conditions some ski resorts have opted to make their own snow, which is more prevalent in North America than in Europe. Chairlifts can also be faster and hold more people to speed up wait queues. Richards (1996) also found terrain and snow conditions were important, however accommodation quality, resort accessibility and leisure facilities were essential as well. Hudson and Shephard (1998) examined specifically what elements of service quality were important to ski tourists. All these factors are associated with the ski resort facility as a whole.

Price

One of the most influential factors in skiing participation for not only ski tourists but skiers in general is price. Skiing in itself is an expensive sport, and as such creates a barrier for participation. Hudson (2000) credits the economic downturn in the early 1990's for the decline in participation rates in skiing. With the current economic recession price will certainly affect those who partake in ski resort holidays. Richards (1996) suggested that more advanced skiers were more insensitive to price than less skilled skiers. This study has explored the motivations of skiers/snowboarders with varying abilities; it was thus important to see how price sensitive the participants were, how the recession impacted their club and how they found ways to overcome such obstacles.

Safety

Although risk has been a prevalent factor in many studies done on adventure activities, including skiing, the literature has provided examples that safety is also important to skiers. Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey (1993) interviewed skiers and found that safety was an important consideration when selecting their ski destination. Klenosky et al. also linked interviewee responses of grooming, snow conditions and hills and trails with safety. Safety as argued by Maslow (1954) in his hierarchy of needs must be fulfilled in order for one's higher order needs to be fulfilled. If participants perceive the task as unsafe they may not partake in it or at the very least will choose a safer resort. It would seem that safety and risk are intertwined; one wants to pursue risk but in a perceived safe and controlled environment.

Fitness

Skiing has some physiological benefits with its participation as well. The fitness component has been found as a motivator by Prebensen (2005). Although Prebensen's study was on Norwegian adventure tourists, skiing does have its own physiological benefits. Fitness has not been examined often in the literature as most studies on ski resorts have focused on consumer behaviour and attributes of the ski resort. While fitness is an important component in both leisure and sport, not much research has been done on the physiological benefits of tourism activities. My conceptual framework included fitness as a factor to account for participants who partake in trips to ski resorts for physiological reasons.

Table 1

Motivational Factors Contributors

Motivational Factor	Studies Exploring Factor	Explanation
Risk	Hall and Weiler (1992)	Hall and Weiler (1992) included 'risk' in their definition of adventure tourism.
	Milne & McDonald (1999) Allman, Mittelstaedt, Martin & Goldenberg (2009)	Milne & McDonald (1999); Allman, Mittelstaedt, Martin & Goldenberg (2009) include risk as a motivational factor for sport and leisure consumers.
	Holden (1999)	Holden (1999) included 'thrills' as an important need for skiers/snowboarders.
Social	Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey (1993)	Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey (1993); Ryan & Glendon (1998); Holden (1999) include social needs and belongingness as a motivational factor for ski tourists.
	Ryan & Glendon (1998)	
	Holden (1999)	
	Prebensen (2005)	Prebensen (2005) identified 'family' as a motivational factor for why sport tourists travel.

Motivational Factor	Studies Exploring Factor	Explanation
Environment	Hudson (1996)	Hudson (1996) identified that ski resorts are under criticism for environmental practices.
	Hudson & Ritchie (2001)	Hudson & Ritchie (2001) indicated that ski tourists would pay more to stay at a 'greener' resort.
Relaxation	Lang & O'Leary (1997)	Lang & O'Leary (1997); Ryan & Glendon (1998); Prebensen (2005) identified relaxation as a motivational factor for leisure tourists.
	Ryan & Glendon (1998)	
	Prebensen (2005)	
	Holden (1999)	Holden (1999) identified relaxation as a motivational need for skiers and snowboarders.
Skill Mastery	Richards (1996)	Richards (1996) identified that skiers, as they become more skilled, want to try different runs and harder trails.

Motivational Factors Contributors

Motivational Factor	Studies Exploring Factor	Explanation
Knowledge	Beard & Ragheb (1980) Ryan & Glendon (1998)	Beard & Ragheb (1980); Ryan & Glendon (1998) identified knowledge as a motivational factor for leisure tourists and sport tourists.
	Walle (1997)	Walle (1997) included gaining 'insight' in his definition of adventure tourism.
Culture	Hinch & Higham (2007)	Hinch & Hingham (2007) stressed the importance of culture in the sport tourism experience.
	Prebensen (2005)	Prebensen (2005) identified that learning and experiencing culture was important to leisure tourists.
	Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey (1993)	Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey (1993) identified experiencing culture as an important factor for ski tourist's destination choice.

Motivational Factors Contributors

Motivational Factor	Studies Exploring Factor	Explanation
Facility	Won & Hwang (2009)	Won & Hwang (2009) identified that snow quality (ability to make snow) and average lift wait time were important to ski tourists.
	Richards (1996)	Richards (1996) found that ski terrain, accommodation quality, resort accessibility and leisure facilities were important for ski tourists.
	Hudson & Shephard (1998)	Hudson & Shephard (1998) identified what elements of service quality were important to ski tourists.
Price	Hudson (2000)	Hudson (2000) credited the economic downturn in the early 1990's for the decline in participation rates in skiing.
	Richards (1996)	Richards (1996) identified that more advanced skiers were more insensitive to price than less skilled skiers.
Safety	Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey (1993)	Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey (1993) identified that safety was important to ski tourists.

Motivational Factors Contributors

Motivational Factor	Studies Exploring Factor	Explanation
Fitness	Prebensen (2005)	Prebensen (2005) identified fitness as a motivational factor for leisure tourists.

Based on each factor derived from the literature review, the following conceptual model (Figure 1) was formed;

Conceptual Model

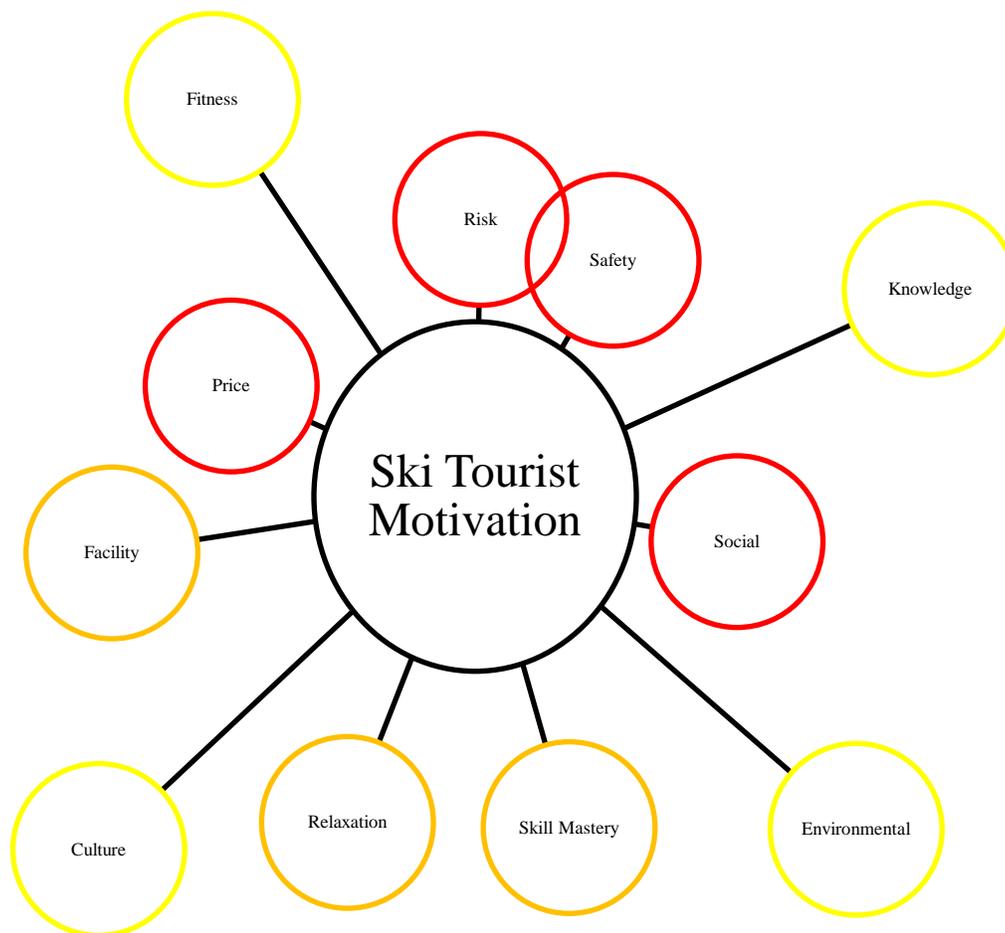


Figure 1. The Ski Tourist Motivation Model: The expected strength of each factor on the motivation of ski tourists.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to explore the motivations of ski tourists and to gain an understanding of why they travel and stay at ski resorts. This research has contributed to the limited exploratory work on motivation in sport tourism research. The work that has been done on the motivations of sport tourists has been largely descriptive and has lacked a theoretical underpinning. It was the intent of this study to start to lay a theoretical foundation in order to understand why sport tourists and more specifically ski tourists do what they do. Therefore, this study has used a bottom up approach using focus groups to ask ski tourists directly why they travel and stay at ski resorts. My research has been guided by the following questions:

Central question: What motivates ski tourists to travel and stay at ski resorts?

Sub question: What is the primary reason for travel?

Sub question: What is it about the skiing/snowboarding experience that makes ski tourists want to go to a resort?

Sub question: What features of a ski resort makes a ski tourist want to go to a particular resort?

Sub question: How has the current economic climate affected the skiers/ ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort?

Sub question: How has the emphasis of being green and environmental awareness affected the ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort?

Sub question: How does the local culture affect the ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at ski resorts?

Sub question: Who do ski tourists travel with when they travel and stay overnight at ski resorts?

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in my study:

(1) Ski resort goers are both skiers and snowboarders and they will be referred to interchangeably.

The focus of this study was on the motivational factors of ski tourists in general. However, this does not mean that the two were automatically integrated or divided. Most of the participants in the study were skiers and those that did snowboard had mostly skied before.

(2) The ski resort goers included in this study are alpine skiers and will be referred to as skiers in general.

Skiers that go to a ski resort are alpine skiers, this is not to suggest that participants do not also enjoy other snow activities like cross-country skiing. However, for the purpose of this study it is assumed that the participants are alpine skiers and they will be referred to as skiers in general.

All adventure sport tourists are active sport tourists but not all active sport tourists are adventure tourists.

An adventure tourist, by Hall and Weiler's (1992) definition is someone engaged in outdoor touristic activities. Since one must be actively engaged in a 'touristic activity' the adventure tourist is an active tourist. However, not all active tourists are adventure tourist because all adventure tourist activities must interact with the natural environment outdoors. Therefore, skiers would be considered both an active or adventure tourist, whereas, a travelling hockey team would be active sport tourists but not an adventure tourist.

(3) The participants in my study were not travelling to compete (hard motive) and were referred to as active sport tourists.

Robinson and Gammon (2004) determined that a competitive or hard motive is when one competes as in the Olympic Games and not simply between oneself. The participants in this study were not involved in such hard motives but they were still broadly referred to as active sport tourists. Gibson (1998b) also excluded the competitive element in her profiling of active sport tourists as was illustrated in the literature review. Hall (1992) distinguished those travelling for leisure activities as 'activity participants' whereas those travelling for competitive reasons were seen as 'hobbyists'.

Research Design

Participant Selection

Participants for my study were selected from the Windsor Ski and Snowboard Club. The Windsor Ski and Snowboard Club is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1960. The

club is open to any skiers or snowboarders who are at least 21 years of age (Waddell, 2010). The club is run by a board of eleven executive members. Members in the club are mostly between the ages of 21 and 60 but a few are in their 80's. Most of the club's members are skiers, however, the number of members who snowboard is increasing. The rationale for choosing the Windsor Ski and Snowboard club is because it was a sample of convenience. All members resided in or close to Windsor, Ontario and members must travel a long distance to find the nearest ski hill, thus qualifying them as a ski/active tourists. The club is close to Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport a major American airport that can assist the travellers when taking large trips. The club organizes a few trips a year, which require overnight stays, such trips include travelling to Colorado, British Columbia and New York State. The group most recently travelled to Telluride, Colorado. Choosing ski tourists that travel so extensively has aided this study in understanding why moderate to high end consumers go to a ski resort and what keeps them coming back. The research design is broken down into two stages. In the first stage the participants were involved in focus groups and in the second stage the participants were involved in the action research component.

Stage 1: Focus Groups

In order to explore the concepts of motivation a qualitative research design was used to explore the motivation of ski resort tourists. In order to do so a focus groups approach was used. Two focus groups were conducted, which is satisfactory for exploratory research where the goal is to find out about people's perceptions (Morgan, 1988). The participants who were studied were a rather homogeneous group in that they belong to the same club and share the same interests (travelling to ski or snowboard). The higher the degree of homogeneity the fewer number of focus groups is required (Morgan). "Moderate sized" focus groups were conducted,

which that usually ranges from six to ten participants (Greenbaum, 1998; Krueger, 1994; Morgan). The range of six to eight participants is widely used and is the most popular in marketing research. For the purpose of this study four participants were used, which was appropriate for a number of reasons. First, Greenbaum suggested that the average time for a focus group is 100 minutes. Therefore, having ten participants only allows for ten minutes of input from each individual. Having a slightly smaller number of participants gave me a few advantages; I was able to increase the depth of information that I received from each participant (Greenbaum, 1994; Morgan, 1988), it placed more emphasis on each individual to contribute (Morgan) and prevented “social loafing”. Social loafing can happen in larger groups where individual participation decreases as the conversation is dominated by a few members of the group (Latene, Williams & Harkins, 1979).

Focus groups also required a moderator to direct the group’s discussion. As the researcher, I was the moderator for my focus groups for a number of reasons. Krueger (1994) suggested that a moderator should be comfortable with group processes, have some type of training with group dynamics, possess a curiosity about the topic, have adequate background knowledge on the topic of discussion and possess self-discipline. I was comfortable working with group processes as I had conducted several focus groups in the past as part of a previous study. I had also received training on how to conduct focus groups. Furthermore, I was curious about my topic, as I have dedicated my Master’s thesis to exploring why skiers and snowboarders travel and stay at ski resorts. A thorough literature review was also conducted, which greatly increased my knowledge of the topic of discussion and aided me in conducting the focus groups (Krueger). Krueger’s last moderator trait, ‘self-discipline’, is where “internal researchers and others who have a personal commitment to the topic of inquiry need to be

particularly careful to suspend their personal views and seek out the perceptions of the group participants” (p. 102). It is important to note here that I am not implying nor is it possible for me as the moderator to be neutral (Krueger). Krueger suggested that being neutral is impossible because a person is a member of a certain race, gender and age category, which can affect the openness of the group.

As the study was exploratory, I tried to keep my level of moderator involvement to a minimum, which is ideal for such research (Morgan, 1988). Morgan describes low involvement as “playing a small role in the ongoing group discussion and attempting to keep their comments as nondirective as possible” (p. 48). Morgan notes that such nondirective styles were used by early marketing researchers because they revealed more depth. It was imperative in the study that the participants come up with their own reasons for why they travel. The participants’ responses were then probed to receive more in depth information.

In order to conduct effective focus groups four criteria were used: range, specificity, depth and personal context (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1956). Range is the ability of the focus group to cover a wide range of topics and to have the participants introduce factors/issues by themselves (not cued) that the researcher had not already contemplated. I have presented some factors that I believed were to come out in the focus groups, however, it was my expectation that the participants would introduce new issues that were not anticipated and give more depth to motivational factors not presented in much of the descriptive research in the leisure and tourism studies. This has not only enhanced the importance of the study but has also added to the existing knowledge about skiers and snowboarders and why they travel.

The focus groups were also specific, which provided clarity about generalizations by participants such as attitudes and experiences (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1956). General statements were probed that provided clarity and developed a greater understanding of the participants' accounts. By probing responses and generalizations the focus groups had more depth (Merton et al.). Depth refers to the participant's involvement with the input they are providing. Merton et al. suggested that participants are likely to provide more depth if the conversation is focused on past experiences rather than external stimuli. By having a small number of participants and allotting sufficient time everyone in the focus group was given the opportunity to share their insights and experiences.

Personal context has also enhanced the focus groups as attention was paid to individual remarks to find out what it was about participants that made them think of things in a particular way. Some skiers were more advanced than others in the group and they varied in age. Such discrepancies might have made one participant respond to a question much differently than another participant, probing responses was thus important to gain personal context and therefore a deeper understanding.

When determining what content was included in the focus groups, I had to first be aware of the time it took for each session. Each focus group lasted between one to two hours and I aimed for one and a half hour sessions (Morgan, 1988). I did, however, inform the participants that the session would last for two hours. This was done to prevent the disruption of early leavers (Morgan).

For the purpose of this study a structured group format was used which included pre-planned probes for each topic. A structured group required higher levels of moderator

involvement, which required a guide to be followed in the same way from session to session (Morgan). Morgan suggested that such a guide is useful for channelling group interaction and to make comparisons between the sessions in my analysis. The guide was only used as a flexible template as some topics needed to be probed more deeply and other subjects were skipped because they had already been discussed (Morgan). I also wanted the discussion to be open to explore new factors or areas about which I had not thought of previously. To see the full focus group guide and questions please refer to Appendix A.

Stage 1: Procedures

Firstly, the Windsor Ski and Snowboard Club President Carl White was contacted to explain the purpose of the study and determine the relevance of the site/ sample selection. Ethics approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor. Upon approval, Mr. White was asked to forward an email to his members containing a letter of information (See Appendix B) for the study and an invitation to take part in the study. Any member who wished to be included in the study was asked in the email to reply to my email address. Members who responded to the email wishing to participate were then contacted by me and given the dates and times of the focus groups. The group sessions were conducted in graduate seminar room 142 in the Faculty of Human Kinetics at the University of Windsor. A few days before the focus group took place, participants were emailed to remind them that the focus group was coming up as well as giving them directions. Refreshments were provided to make the participants feel comfortable as well as to show them a token of appreciation for participating in the study. All parking fees were also reimbursed by me so the participants would not incur any costs to participate.

When the participants arrived for the focus group they were asked to sign a consent to participate in research form (See Appendix C) and an audio consent form (See Appendix D). Participants were also asked to fill out a brief demographic survey (See Appendix E), where participants wrote their pseudonym and filled out which box most accurately reflected their: age, household income, gender, and skiing experience. The sessions began by introducing the topic in a general way. Morgan (1988) suggested such an approach because the participants may not be able to comprehend a researcher's knowledge/expression of the topic and a detailed introduction can steer a participant's discussion in a narrow fashion. Next, a few ground rules were set: only one person was able to talk at one time, no side conversations were allowed and everyone was given a chance to express their opinions or ideas about each topic (Morgan). Morgan suggested that the best introduction is to honestly admit that, as the researcher, I am there to learn from them. It is further argued that the researcher should not claim to be completely ignorant but still want to learn from the participants' greater experiences (Morgan).

In opening the group discussion I asked each individual to answer a general question, such as "tell me a little bit about yourself and what you like about skiing/snowboarding?" The general statement serves as an icebreaker and gives me some background information about everyone in the group (Morgan). I noted such responses, also called tracking, which was useful for introducing new topics and asking the next question in high moderator involvement sessions (Morgan). For example, if the participants said they liked to ski and go to ski resorts I could have asked them "what is it about the resorts that you like?" This was useful when trying to maintain the interests of the participants and it increased the breadth of information rather than just sticking to a strict researcher agenda and hinder the discussion (Morgan). Nearing the end of the focus group each member was asked to make a final statement, which could not be interrupted

by other members of the group, if they wanted to add anything or if they did not have a chance to comment on it before hand. The statement let the members know that the focus group was ending and it gave the members a chance to say something they may have been holding back (Morgan).

Site selection to conduct the focus groups was also important as it needed to be somewhere that benefited the researcher as well as the participants (Morgan, 1988). First, the site had to be a place where the participants would actually go. The selected site was a seminar room 142 at the Kinesiology building at the University of Windsor. This location was well suited for both the participants and the researcher because it is close to the group's usual meeting place in Windsor and the room provides good acoustics and could be free of any interruptions. Secondly, the site must support the type of recording the researcher is used (Morgan). Audio recordings were used and the facility allowed for optimal acoustics, which was beneficial for both interviewer and focus groups. The participants were also given a University of Windsor coffee mug to thank them for their participation and contribution to the study. A follow up email was sent out to thank them for their participation and to remind them that the results of my study would be available on the research ethics board's website.

Stage 2: Action Research

Action research was used to engage skiers/ consumers in the active development/redevelopment of the revised conceptual framework. The active development involved presenting the framework at one of the club's monthly meetings. Members were asked to generally comment on the framework and help validate the ski tourism motivations as determined by the previous analysis. There were 20 members who remained at the meeting to

participate in the action research component. Individual consent was also given to be included in the research. The next section will elaborate on the focus group and study's procedure.

Stage 2: Procedures

The club's President, Carl White, was contacted to see if I would be allowed to sit in on one of the club's meetings and present the revised conceptual framework. Mr. White was informed that I would be looking for feedback on the model from his club's members. A letter of information had been given to the club previously, outlining the nature of the study. The group was asked to sign a consent form to participate in the study (See Appendix F). When the agenda for the club was completed I was given the floor to present the model. Those that had signed the consent form and wished to stay were asked to give feedback on the model once I had presented it. There were 20 members that stayed for my presentation. First, I presented the original conceptual framework and then I explained that based on the data analysis from the focus groups a revised conceptual model was developed, which I then presented. Members were asked to generally comment on the model and the changes that were made from the original. The members were then thanked for their time and participation in the study and told that the results of my study would be available on the research ethics board's website.

Data Analysis

Once the focus groups had been completed, the data were transcribed verbatim into a word document. When the data had been transcribed the information was analyzed through manual coding. "Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 51). Such information attached to codes could be phrases, sentences, words or paragraphs. Codes are

necessary to not only organize data but also to retrieve it (Miles & Huberman). To begin to establish codes a “start list” was developed, (Miles & Huberman) which was done before conducting the focus groups. The list was based on my conceptual framework, which had been developed from reoccurring themes in the literature. The codes were revised once the data had begun to be analyzed. Such revision makes sense as the study aimed to get at what the real experts (participants) say motivates them to ski and travel, so the codes and themes were derived from their data. A rigid prefabricated start list was not used, where one or few codes were used that were broad and used for many words, sentences and phrases.

The codes needed conceptual or structural order and this was important when the codes were created and revised (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When my code list was constructed it was easily remembered, usable, led directly to the analysis and was well-defined (Miles & Huberman). Failing to meet such criteria would have left my study with far too many codes that lacked direction; it would be hard to communicate results to others. I used my conceptual framework to guide this part of the analysis to provide some good structural support while maintaining some flexibility.

The quality of the study was affected by how I verified my results. I used Miles and Huberman’s (1994) framework, which suggested a few ways to make sense and meaning from one’s qualitative data: noting patterns and themes, making contrasts/comparisons, and making conceptual/theoretical coherence. Despite using Miles and Huberman’s framework to analyze my data the process was still open and iterative so as not to miss any important details.

The codes that emerged in the study were continuously gathered and related to one another, a process Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to as noting patterns and themes. Noting

patterns and themes is a process that helped to verify my results. During the coding process a few emergent codes surfaced that differed from the original start list. Some of the emergent codes were similar to the start list codes but were identified differently based on the emphasis or direction that the participants placed on the factor. For example, the participants placed an emphasis on the particular destination of the ski facility. At first, the data related to destination was coded as 'destination', however, upon further revision destination was included under facility. The patterns and themes that emerged were open for criticism or challenged by conceptual and empirical testing (Miles & Huberman). The initial model was displayed to the focus group to allow for such criticisms.

After the initial codes were determined when transcribing the data they were compared to the revisions made to my original conceptual framework by members of the focus groups. Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to this process as making contrasts and comparisons, which further helped to verify my results. Such comparisons included: the strength of the factors placed in the motivation model, the location of factors around the motivational model and the emergence of different factors in the model.

Once the data from the focus groups had been analysed and the focus group's revisions were examined, a revised conceptual model was developed. The revised model helped to make conceptual/theoretical coherence (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of my data. Much like the initial model, it aided in understanding the strength of each factor on the participants' decision to travel and stay at a ski resort. Consideration was also given to factors that seemed to be closely tied to one another. For example, the factor of safety and facility were put closer together as feedback from participants suggested that these two factors shared similarities. The strength of each factor

was also highlighted in three different colours to more clearly make the distinction of what was considered a low (yellow), moderate (orange) or high (red) factor.

The revised framework was presented at one of the club's meetings where the club's members got to critique the model. This process helped to validate the model and aided in verifying the results further. More contrasts and comparisons were made at this stage as participants gave additional feedback on the model. Once the club gave their feedback on the model, their input allowed me to re-review the codes/results further and to go back to the focus group data to look at the information in a different way. Such revisions included re-categorizing factors to more appropriately represent the data from the focus groups. The re-categorizing was also necessary to avoid confusion, which happened in both the focus groups and action research component. A few of the factors strengths were debated in the club's meeting, which allowed me to go back to the focus group data to see if any similarities took place. Once, the analysis was completed I formed a revised conceptual model that differed slightly from the intermittent model shown at the club's meeting. The analyzing strategies that were employed are justified as the study was empirically grounded from the bottom up, substantiating claims even further (Miles & Huberman).

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was **delimited** to the following:

- (1) The population of my study was only taken from a small sample of ski and snowboard tourists in the Windsor area.

A sample of convenience was chosen as the potential pool of participants satisfied my definition of an active sport tourist. As the club members reside in Windsor, I had easy access to

them and I knew that they needed to travel a great distance to the nearest ski hill as Windsor has a flat topography. The limitation of this, however, was that the perceptions of the few that who participate cannot provide as accurate representation of all ski and snowboard tourists as a larger sample size with more diverse characteristics might be able to provide.

- (2) The effect of different age variations and gender differences on the motivational factors were not examined.

While different age variations and gender differences could have impacted the motivational factors, such differences were not examined at this point in time. What was more valuable for this study was to see how participants felt about certain factors in general, to start to be able to make conceptual sense of why ski tourists travel.

- (3) I examined only those who travelled in a group or club.

Travelling in a group or party could have affected the results of the study. Group travel differs from vacations where a person travels alone or with a partner/family. For this reason the results of the study would more accurately represent only those who travel as part of a group of people rather than travelling as a couple or individually.

The study is **limited** to the following:

- (1) The focus group members had pre-existing relationships with each other.

Focus group members knew each other and this posed several potential limitations. Members could have exaggerated their responses to say what they think others in the group want to hear. Further, because the group members knew each other, what they said in the focus groups

may have been discussed outside the focus group. Therefore, if a participant had said something inappropriate about the group or one of its members it could have affected their social status among the group. This posed a risk to confidentiality as well; while I the researcher kept their responses confidential I could not guarantee that other group members would honour such an agreement.

- (2) The data I received was about what the participants perceived that they do and perhaps does not reflect what they actually do.

The data collected reflected the perceptions of the participants. One cannot determine for certain if what the participant perceives accurately depicts what is actually going on.

- (3) The ski tourist motivational model only displays the strengths of the factors from high, medium or low.

A gradient was not used in the study, which could have more accurately displayed the strengths of each factor. Therefore, the findings suggest only the perceived strengths of each factor.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The focus group and action research results will be presented in the following sections: 1) the conceptual framework of motivational factors, 2) presenting the framework, 3) revised conceptual model, 4) action research results, and 5) sub problem discussion. The order of presentation is important as it mirrors how the study was presented. A detailed focus group profile and the results of the demographic survey can be found in Table 2 following this section. First, each factor that will be explored, based on what the participants have said and not what the literature has suggested. Secondly, as focus group participants were presented with the original framework and asked to comment on it and develop their own framework, the revisions to the model are discussed in the 'presenting the framework' section. The revised conceptual model was developed based on the analysis of the focus groups. As per the action research component of this study, once the revised conceptual model was formed it was presented at one of the ski clubs meetings and the club members were asked to comment on it similarly to what was done in the focus groups. The results of this discussion are found in the action research section. Lastly, the sub problem discussion is presented where the questions that guided the study are explored using all the results from the analysis.

A detailed focus group profile is provided in the following section in Table 2. There were an equal amount of male and female participants. Focus group members were also all over the age of 40, with over half reporting household incomes of \$80,000 or more. The participants were also experienced skiers, all having 20+ years of experience except for one.

Table 2

Focus Group Profile

Focus Group	Date/Times	Age	Household Income	Gender	Skiing Experience (yrs)
Focus Group 1	March 31, 2011 Start Time: 4:10pm End Time: 5:48pm	40-49: (2)	\$40,000-	Male: (3)	10-14: (1)
		50-59: (2)	60,000: (2)	Female: (1)	20+: (3)
			\$80,000-		
			100,000: (1)		
			\$100,000-		
			120,000: (1)		
Focus Group 2	March 31, 2011 Start Time: 6:15pm End Time: 7:44pm	40-49: (1)	\$40,000-	Male: (1)	20+: (4)
		50-59: (2)	60,000: (1)	Female: (3)	
		70+: (1)	\$80,000-		
			100,000: (2)		
			\$120,000+		
			(1)		

Note. The number of participants for each item is shown within brackets.

Conceptual Framework: Motivational Factors

What follows are the results from the focus group discussion on ski resort travel and what factors the participants felt were important to them. The factors that the participants discussed were similar to the factors included in the original conceptual model. The original factors remained largely intact with some differences. There were also some changes to the degree of importance these factors had on the motivation to travel to a ski resort. The changes are explained in detail following the discussion of each motivational factor in the section 'Presenting the Framework'. The changes are shown in the revised conceptual model following the 'Presenting the Framework' section.

Risk

The risk or thrill component for the participants was a strong factor for skiers to take a ski holiday. Focus groups participants were quick to mention or describe the 'feeling' of skiing/snowboarding.

Ski Freak: [Skiing is] exhilarating and exciting, it gives you a rush [as if] you are going down the hill in a toboggan or through a bobsled track. The adrenaline gets going, it's exciting going fast and throwing snow around, it's cool.

The 'feeling' or sensation of skiing took many forms as other members of the focus group shared what the 'feeling' meant to them. Words used to describe the 'feeling' varied from excitement, fast, rush, and even flying. Some participants even felt addicted to this 'feeling'.

Windy: I believe as humans we all tend to steer toward something. I believe addiction is the right word, for me that's what it is. I'm addicted to that motion, there is no question

about it. I do skiing, snowboarding, windsurfing, kite boarding - it's that motion it's that carving.

Another participant in the group described himself as a 'junkie' for the 'feeling' and getting a high from it. One participant made a comparison between deep powder skiing and being addicted to heroin saying "you cut on anything so you can get that deep powder rush" (Bob). Deep powder skiing and back country skiing were activities enjoyed by the more advanced skier/snowboarders in the group. However, other participants who were at an intermediate level said as their abilities increased they could go to more dangerous areas or advanced runs to increase their adrenaline rush. The above example demonstrates a link between the risk and skill mastery factors. Some destinations also allowed the participants to take more challenging or higher risk runs and elements. One participant talked about skiing off the back wall and how it had been a goal of hers. While taking risks and increasing the adrenaline rush was important, there seemed to be a limit to the risks one should take. Chloe commented, "you're taking risks but you want to take safe risks, you don't want to do something that's really risky and that you're probably going to get hurt." Participants were aware that the risks that they took or enjoyed could have consequences and they recognized that safety was an important part of skiing or snowboarding.

Safety

Safety and risk were intertwined in the responses gathered from the focus group. Generally what safety meant to participants is taking preventative measures in order to reduce the risk of injury while pursuing risk. Members of the focus group each had their own idea of what safety meant for them. For some members, safety came in the form of numbers. The

participants felt that travelling with a group meant someone would be able to get help in case someone got injured. Some preferred to ski with a partner or in a buddy system to make sure they got to the bottom of the hill safely. When participants felt they were safe they felt comfortable to take on new risks or challenges. Feeling comfortable was also related to improving one's skill level or the skill mastery component. Goldie commented on how feeling confident or comfortable allowed her to take more risks, however, she admitted that by being over confident one can get injured.

Goldie: [When] I feel comfortable and confident it feels good. I did double black diamond runs and it didn't look pretty. I did it a couple times and [my] confidence goes up and [I] can go a bit faster, it [feels] like pushing that envelope a little bit. [However,] you can get overconfident and just one little edge and you can get hurt, you wipe out and there's a yard sale.

A 'yard sale' was a term the skiers used when they wiped out on the hill causing them to lose their skis and other gear. The term also demonstrates the distinctive sub-cultural relationship between risk and safety. Participants accepted that the risks they took had consequences and yard sales were a likely outcome of the activity they enjoyed. Icy conditions were another concern for the group; more advanced skiers could control themselves through the ice better than the intermediate skiers. The consensus of the group, however, was to try and pick a destination with optimal conditions and avoid the ice altogether to prevent an injury.

Preventative measures to ensure one's health and safety were also taken. Scouting was one preventative measure mentioned, where the skier or snowboarder would see if there was a way out when skiing in the bush. Skiing in the bush or backcountry skiing comes with its own

unique safety elements; one member shared that he took avalanche courses to prepare him for such conditions. Another participant added that drinking lots of water was another preventative measure that helps to avoid altitude sickness. Injury prevention was especially important to one of the senior members of the group, Crash: “as you get older you just don’t bounce as well or recover as quickly.” Wearing proper protective equipment, such as a helmet, was also important to the group. Some admitted that they didn’t think they needed a helmet when they started, but after either getting hurt or knowing someone who got hurt, wearing a helmet became essential.

Skill Mastery

A goal for the skiers was to continuously improve their abilities and challenge themselves so they could take on bigger runs and risks.

Chloe: You learn by what you experience and it doesn’t matter how long you’ve been [skiing]. I’ve been skiing for thirty years and I still experience new things and you’re always looking for that new challenge or [something] bigger and better you want to learn, you want to improve. So often times we like to ski with people that are better than us so that you can learn from them. You try to mimic their techniques and you get a lot of information from other people that are better than you. You ask for help and you improve and enjoy it [skiing] that much more; there’s always that need to want to improve. When you accomplish some level that you’ve been trying to do and you can’t do it and somebody helps you along with it [there’s] a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction.

Participants enjoyed that they could choose how hard they wanted to push themselves and that skiing is not a team sport where one is competing against someone else. There was much discussion on how to improve one’s technique, such as drawing upon the expertise of other

members. As alluded to previously, improving one's skill also meant the participants felt safer and more in control.

Being a part of the group made it easy for novice skiers to ask the more advanced skiers for help or advice. The skier who wished for help would ask other members if they were on their 'slow day'. The 'slow day' was a day on the trip that more advanced members took to relax or take a break from their more rigorous runs or activities. Even the most experienced skiers in the group admired other highly skilled skiers. One participant, who was an advanced skier, admired skiers out West. He described, "it's just night and day it's a pleasure to see these guys do what they do" (Bob). It appears that even the most advanced skiers in the group still watch others to improve.

Data from the ski tourists supported the idea that skill mastery should also include knowledge. Knowledge had previously been its own separate factor, however, when skiers talked about increasing their knowledge they were also trying to improve their abilities (skill mastery). The skiers/snowboarders in the focus group were only motivated to increase their knowledge to improve their ability to ski. The participants did not show an interest in learning about a particular destination or its culture, a factor was originally valued based on the literature review. Learning, for the ski resort tourists, was strictly a chance to improve their abilities.

Goldie: I like skiing with other people with more experience. When they let me, I always ask if it's their slow day. Everyone in the club, they are willing to accommodate anybody and they let you tag along and show you different techniques that you didn't think to do. [There is] a lot of trial and error experience with others and if you take a lesson,

depending on what hill you're at they all offer it, but you can take lessons from the ski patrol or ski school.

Instructional weekends were a draw for the group, where there would be a cheap weekend where one could go to learn and improve skiing techniques. An instructional weekend consisted of skiers/snowboarders being split up, based on their abilities, and an instructor would teach them accordingly. One participant, who was self-taught, said she had to undo fifteen years of bad habits and that she enjoyed what the courses had to offer her even though she had been skiing for a long time. One member took avalanche courses as he liked to back country ski. For this member, learning how to ski in avalanche conditions was important for safety reasons. By taking avalanche courses and/or learning how to stop, or improve their technique, skiers wanted to avoid injury and to challenge themselves with larger runs and risks.

Facility/Destination

The facility/destination factor was talked about extensively in the focus groups. It is important to note that skiing conditions and the destination were grouped in with facility. The skiing conditions were grouped with facility as members perceived certain resorts to have better snow quality than others. It was found that when participants spoke about the destination they were also talking about the facility. When analysing the focus group data, it was clear that participants emphasized the destination as being an important part of their motivation to travel to a ski resort. The facility was discussed by the participants for mainly two reasons: one, the skiing conditions and location, and two, the amenities the resort had to offer. The conditions were important to skiers as they would prefer to go to a ski resort that is perceived to have better snowfall.

Chloe: Whistler was a great place but you can't rely on it to have good snow. I want to go back there too but the last time we were there, there was no snow.

The participants were also more likely to go back to a resort that had favourable ski conditions. Ski freak suggested that “the conditions that are there at the time, if you have fabulous conditions and had no problems with your room then you definitely want to go back there another time.” The mountain or destination where the ski resort is located cannot change and could be a draw in itself for skiers, another rationale as to why it was included as facility. Ski Freak said, “[he] considered the mountain itself as part of the facility”. Some skiers/snowboarders would not even consider going to a ski resort unless it was at a mountain. Some participants said they would never ski in Ontario or have not done so since they skied out West (in the mountains) because they enjoyed it so much it could not compare. Charlene said: “I haven't been skiing [in Ontario] since I've been skiing out west; out here I haven't gone; I just can't bring myself to.” The value that skiers placed on the destination affected how much they were willing to spend to go to that resort, which is explained in greater detail under the price/economic value factor. When skiers/snowboarders did go to a smaller hill it was often to serve as a practice or warm up to get their ‘ski legs back’ before their trip to a mountain.

Secondly, there were some amenities that were important to the skiers/snowboarders. Hot tubs were one amenity that was of high importance to the participants. The hot tubs served as a place for skiers to relax their muscles after skiing and it served as a place to socialize. Being able to ski right to the chairlift from where the skiers/snowboarders room was also a bonus. Bob liked the closeness of the chairlifts as he commented, “believe me that was a blast last year at Jackson's Hole. [You] do a little skiing and the chair is right there.” Some participants valued shopping more than others, however, for those who did, it was important to have their hotel close

to shops. Having bars and restaurants right at the ski resort and friendly staff was also important. The skiers/snowboarders discussed how festivals and carnivals were also a draw for them, along with special instructional weekends where they could learn and improve their abilities.

Price/Economic Value

Skiing as a holiday is expensive, and the participants were strongly motivated to find the best price and economic value for their money. “Price is always going to be one of the most important things on [their] list” (Ski Freak). It is important to note that while some of the members were affluent, some members had lower incomes, were retired, and one was out of work for a year. It seemed that participants were willing to do whatever they could to still take a skiing vacation. Bob, for example, started skiing with his parents. He explained that they “got [him] into rich white man sports.” While Bob’s comment has a couple of interesting cultural connotations about skiing, it is important to take away that he grew up enjoying sporting activities that he considered to be reserved for the affluent. Bob, who had quit his job a year ago, still wanted to pursue skiing holidays; “you got guys sleeping in vans for like two months because they want to go ski all over the place but they are doing it on a budget, right?” Bob also made the point that some skiers want to be catered to and have all the amenities; while he admitted that it is nice to treat yourself once in a while, a skier/snowboarder does not have to do that every trip. A couple of members in the group were also retired, with less disposable income, so was important to them as well. One member made the comment that middle class people are disappearing and that the activity, in his/her opinion, will become dominated by the upper class.

While participants did whatever they could to afford a skiing holiday, the current economic climate caused some members to cancel their plans.

Goldie: It has affected me personally quite a bit, the way the economics are right now. Job wise I won't get a pay increase for four years. I would love to go with everybody all the time [however] I can't afford it... I look forward to these ski trips. I take one vacation a year and that's my trip is to go with the ski club; this year I wasn't able to make it, next year I don't know, it will be tight.

Many comments illustrated that the group sought after the best deals or economic value for their ski trip. When talking about price it was found that skiers were actually talking about a good value or deal. By travelling in a group the club could pursue a discounted rate from ski resorts because of the number of skiers they were bringing. Bargaining for a good rate, however, was found to be more easily done in the United States than in Canada. Members found that Canadian ski resorts would not bargain or negotiate prices. The ski club actively sought out such deals for the financial benefits of its members. The focus group iterated that they would love to go back and ski out West in Canada, however, they cannot pass up the better deals in the United States.

Goldie: We just went for \$1000 dollars to the States and that was airfare, accommodations [and] lift tickets for six days and we were still able to buy food and alcohol at a lot cheaper price than we can get for in Canada. So why would I spend \$2000 Canadian when I can go for \$1000 US and given the exchange rate right now [it] is phenomenal; you can't beat going to the United States.

The above example demonstrates the importance of economic value to the participants. The participants also offered advice to other members on whether to buy or rent skiing equipment. For newer skiers, they advised renting skis for awhile when they are learning; that way they did

not buy a pair and then figure out they need a different style to suit them later on. One relatively newer skier was taking this approach and now knew exactly the kind of ski boots she wanted. She said that she would be buying them online to get the best deal. Her statement got several responses from the veteran skiers and they recommended stores/websites to get the best price on ski and snowboard equipment. Getting an economic value, for skiers, sometimes meant spending more money as well.

Chloe: [Price] is important but [if] it's like basically a \$100 or \$200 difference in the place I will go to the place I like better that's \$200 dollars more, I'm not going stay with the low price if I think well for another \$200 we could get this and that and this is so much better than that.

The participants were willing to pay a little more if they felt it were to be getting a better value for their money. Members in the group also had the perception that 'hills' in Ontario and Michigan were expensive and many would only go on a trip if there was a mountain because they thought skiing at a Mountain was a better economic value. This meant that even though trips to a mountain would cost more, the participants valued the mountain that much more than a hill. The effect of the destination on the skiers' perceived economic value was a strong motivator. The link between the two factors is demonstrated in the revised ski tourist motivation model. Certain amenities of the ski resort that skiers found important also affected their perception of the resort's economic value. These amenities are described in more detail in the facility/destination section. Along with facilities, skiers had other needs that were important to them and are illustrated in each of the motivational factor sections. Resorts that could facilitate the risk and social needs, for example, were of higher economic value to the participants.

Social

The focus groups consisted of mostly long standing members of the ski club who enjoyed socializing with members of the club.

Windy: going with the club is nice because you already have 20 people going with you on the trip that you already know. After you come off the hill at the end of the day you get together and socialize; we like that part.

Participants liked to socialize after they were done skiing for the day. After skiing some members would go out for dinner together, or meet up after and talk about their skiing experience that day. Socializing was closely tied with the skiers/snowboarders downtime where skiers got to relax, another factor found to be important to the participants. Renting condos that held a larger number of skier/snowboarders were important to members travelling with the group as it “is more suitable for group socializing” (Ski Freak). Condos or skiing chalets made it easier for the large group to communicate to each other as they were closer to one another versus staying in separate hotels or rooms that accommodated less people. Although travelling with existing friends was a motivational factor for the participants, meeting new people was also important. The social dynamic of the club also played a role in safety, where by the veteran members of the group disliked new rowdy members whose primary interest was to “go on a big drunk” (Chloe). The veteran members did not want to worry about these rowdy members hurting themselves on the ski slope.

Some members joined the club to meet new people, even though they were not expert skiers. One participant joined the club solely to meet new people. Another participant had his girlfriend, who was new to skiing, join the club. Participants liked having members with various

skiing abilities, as participants who were less skilled could challenge themselves skiing with veteran skiers and the more skilled skiers could relax skiing with the beginners. The new member could ski with more advanced skiers to learn how to ski better and also ski with other people who were at his/her level. The more advanced skiers could have a relaxing day and teach the new member how to improve their skills. The veteran skiers could also go off on their own, knowing that there were other members who would ski with a beginner skier. Meeting new people at the ski resort was also important to the group, however, more so for some of the single members of the club. The club “[tries] to room people [accordingly]; they put singles together so they feel more comfortable.” One participant mentioned how he had formed friendships with people all over North America and when he travelled to their mountain or hill he could stay with them and find out where the best ski spots were, as well as enjoy entertainment and dining.

One member shared how his mother got him into skiing when he was young and how he wanted to pass it on or share it with the younger generation. Participants’ comments about travelling with parents or family were rare. It was also found that travelling with family was not as important to participants as had been expected. Participants were quick to mention they travelled with friends, their spouse and to meet new people, but there was little mention of travelling with family. The social component also tied in with safety, as one member enjoyed skiing with other people in a buddy system in case he/she got hurt or needed help. Socializing also helped resolve issues the skiers had, such as one member catching edges on his/her skis. The group figured out that the ski shop where they were tuned up did not set them up properly. Once the issue was resolved, the skier could enjoy his/her holiday that much more.

Relaxation

Although relaxation was found to be important in the leisure and tourism research, the participants in the focus group did not find it to be all that important in terms of traditional notions of relaxation. However, they did discuss it extensively in their own way. In the focus groups, the participants compared taking a skiing vacation to a tropical beach vacation. Members did not want to sit around on a beach and relax; they wanted to be busy. The skiers did enjoy the sense of freedom skiing gave them and that they had no stress when participating. Ski Freak liked skiing “to get out of town, to get away from your house and your responsibilities at home and your job and just go on some fresh air through your lungs.” It was common that skiers would take at least one ‘slow day’, where they would just relax and take in the scenery. One advanced skier commented that he liked skiing with someone slower than him because he got to relax more and did not have to worry about pushing himself all the time. For some skiers relaxing was appropriate only after skiing was over, in the hot tub or the après ski. Après skiing is when skiers go out after a day of skiing and have some drinks and socialize. The above examples also demonstrate a link between the relaxation and social factors.

Culture

The literature review indicating that learning about local cultures in the tourism experience was important for leisure tourists. However, the participants of this study did not find culture to be a strong motivator for them. Engaging with the local culture for some extended no further than asking the locals what was good in town and what restaurants or bars to attend. Participants did enjoy talking to locals and eating and shopping at their favourite spots. Culture in the skiers’ terms meant finding a place for them to relax and socialize. Chloe said she

“[doesn’t] go there per say to mix and mingle with the local culture; it just happens.” From this statement it appears that individuals cannot separate themselves from participating in the local culture; however, culture was certainly not a motivation for participating in ski tourism. There was minimal evidence supporting the influence of culture on the choice of ski destination. The factor was pushed to the external range of the model.

Green Initiatives

Green initiatives affected the skiers and snowboarders in a few different ways. It should be noted here that the framework initially had environment as a motivational factor. The factor was changed to green initiatives as it more appropriately reflected what was found in the literature and more accurately reflected the intended concept. When focus group participants were shown the original model, there was some confusion between what was considered the destination and what was considered the environment. When the participants were asked about their environmental awareness, they responded in two different yet interrelated ways. One response addressed environmental concerns and another the majesty of the landscape. Members of the group had a difficult time booking trips in advance as ski conditions became more unpredictable. The participants attributed this unpredictability to climate change. Thus the group had to book less in advance or choose a resort that had more reliable snow. The participants also favoured resorts where they had considerable amounts of snow in the past. Although the skiers/snowboarders felt that they were more aware of the environment because they participated in outdoor activities, members did not really pay attention to the green initiatives of the ski resort.

The majesty of the landscape was also important to members, many who back country skied to ‘find their own treasure’, seek solitude and take in the majesty of the mountains.

Bob: Where you’re coming from Alberta and BC and you’re crossing one of the provincial parks there’s a sign that says “in the mountains bring peace to the peaks.” You feel so insignificant but it’s so beautiful at the same...you can’t experience it any other way but being there.

It was interesting that even though the skiers and snowboarders valued the beauty of the landscape and were affected by climate change that they were not swayed by pro environmentalism. A few participants felt that they were more conscious about the environment because they participated in outdoor activities.

Charlene: There’s no electricity up there in the outhouses. [Skiing] is an outdoor sport like camping and biking; those people are more aware of their environment because they are in their environment enjoying it. You come home and you got cloth wrappers from your sandwich in your pockets and you just don’t think about throwing your stuff all over the place.

Although some participants felt that the environment was important to them, they did not take interest in the green initiatives of ski resorts and it was not a motive for the ski tourists to travel. The participants did feel, however that green initiatives was still important to include in the model despite their lack of attention to the area. As participants perceived green initiatives to be a motivational factor for them it was still included in the model as a low strength factor.

Presenting the Framework

Focus groups generally agreed with the factors and where they were placed on the model. However, there were some important changes that the groups made to the original model. The changes included placing safety behind risk, adding a destination factor and linking it with facility, and moving fitness to a medium factor.

Firstly, both focus groups chose to place safety behind risk. The data from the focus groups supported the change of placing safety behind risk and the revised conceptual model reflects this change. While both groups thought that safety and risk were important and wanted to show that risk was their first priority, they also wanted to be safe. Chloe suggested that “you’re going to take a certain amount of risks but you want to be safe about it.” This comment shows the intertwining of the risk and safety factors. Some members argued that they travelled to experience the thrill of skiing while they didn’t travel to feel safe in itself, safety was inherently a need for such a risky activity. For some of the senior members, however, safety seemed to be more important, as discussed in the ‘safety’ results, than for younger members.

The second change that the focus group made was adding a factor one group called ‘the mountain’ and the other called ‘destination’. Both groups asked where the mountain or destination would be included in the factors on the model. Instead of telling the groups where I thought the mountain or destination should belong, I asked them where they thought it should go. Both groups thought that the mountain or destination was a highly important motivator. They both ended up adding a factor that represented the destination with one important difference; one group kept the mountain on its own while the other linked destination with facility. When I started analyzing the data, I coded the destination and the facility as separate entities. However,

as I delved deeper in the analysis, I found that when members were talking about a favourite ski spot, hill or mountain, they were also talking about the resort where they stayed. From the analysis, it was found that while the consumer could choose different resorts around a mountain the resort itself was fixed to the area or mountain. As the ski resort or facility could not change its location, the 'destination' was included as part of the facility factor. This resulted in moving the facility from a medium to a high factor as both groups thought that the mountain and destination were highly important.

The last change the focus groups made was moving fitness from a low to medium importance factor. However, after the data was analyzed 'fitness' was excluded from the final revised model. Both groups felt that fitness was more important to them than how it was placed on the original conceptual model. Many focus group members worked out on a regular basis and had a program that was tailored to improve their skiing experience. Members also valued skiing as an activity where they could gain physiological benefits by doing something they enjoyed. The participants, however, generally agreed that fitness was not an important motive to actually go to a ski resort. While the participants enjoyed the physiological benefits of skiing, they did not go to a ski resort to become fit; they went because they enjoyed the activity. While it was found that generally participants had an active lifestyle and worked out before taking ski trips, the group did not mention using any fitness facility if the resorts had one. Furthermore, skiing was such a physically taxing activity that the skiers were likely to be resting their bodies when they were not skiing. The chances of skiers wanting to work out or use a fitness facility besides the sauna or hot tub were unlikely. As fitness was not a motivator for the participants to actually travel to a ski resort, the factor was removed from the revised conceptual model.

What was encouraging in this exercise was that the participants generally agreed upon the factors and where they were placed on the model. Such findings suggest that previous work by other researchers, which contributed to the motivational factors chosen in this study, have identified similar motives for sport tourists and their importance to the participants as were found in this study. Bob, one of the members of the focus group, stated “well I guess it’s good to know that whatever studies they’ve done out there, whatever else is based on the experiences of skiers, that we all think alike.” It was also encouraging that both groups came up with very similar models and many of the same changes.

The revised conceptual model was developed based on the data analysis from the focus groups and the feedback from participants on the original model. There were a few changes made from the original model, most of which have been previously described. The changes in the factors included the following: placing safety behind risk, placing knowledge with skill mastery, including destination in the title with facility, renaming the environment factor as green initiatives, renaming price as price/economic value, and the removal of fitness as a motivational factor. Some of the factors that were closely linked in the focus group analysis are shown in the revised model, connected by dashed lines. Motivational factors have also been colour coded to better differentiate the strengths between what was considered a high (red), moderate (orange) or low (yellow) motivational factor.

Based on the data analysis, the following revised conceptual model (Figure 2) was formed:

Revised Conceptual Model



Figure 2. Revised Ski Tourist Motivation Model

Action Research Results

The action research component was used to engage skiers/consumers in the active development/redevelopment of the revised framework. The framework was presented at the club's last monthly meeting of the year on April 14, 2011. The group was asked to generally comment on the new framework and help validate the ski tourism motivations as determined by the previous analysis. The feedback from the group was positive and members generally agreed upon the new framework as compared to the old framework. The group was asked if they thought any factors needed to be added or changed. The consensus was they thought the motivational factors were appropriate to cover their motivations to travel to a ski resort, and they did not have additions. What was also encouraging was that they supported that the destination or mountain and the conditions should be included as part of the facility.

There were, however, some concerns that were raised by the group. The first concern was that the risk factor should be moved even closer to the middle, signifying that it is an even stronger motivator. This comment reconfirmed the importance of risk to the participants and also identified a limitation to the study. The way the factors were spread around the model was based on low, medium and high importance. The model did not use a gradient and therefore, risk was put into the high category of importance along with other factors that were considered high. Future studies should try to use a model in which factors could be placed in a gradient instead of being limited to three categories. Secondly, a member of the group agreed that while risk used to be more important to her, as she got older safety became more important. This member felt that if the model looked at just senior skier/snowboarders, then safety would be of higher importance. This comment coincides with some of the older members in the focus group, who thought safety was more important than some of the younger members. This finding is also described in the

comment from Crash, used in the focus group analysis for safety, in which he felt that senior skiers did not heal as well as they used to and therefore safety was important. Perhaps future studies could look at developing a model for different age demographics or there could be a shift towards safety becoming more important as the age of skier/snowboarders increases.

Discussion

The results of the study demonstrated strong support for the motivational factors present in the literature. The revised model shows how the factors fit into this particular model based on data from the focus groups and feedback from the participants on the original model. In completing the analysis I was able to address the central objectives of this study, which will be discussed in the following section.

Sub-Problem 1

What is the primary reason for travel?

The primary reason for travel for the participants included the factors that were found to be most central to the ski tourist motivation model. The factors that were found to be most central included: risk, facility/destination, price/economic value, and social. Participants wanted to experience the ‘feeling’ or sensation that the activity of skiing gave them. Holden (1999) also found that skiers and snowboarders sought out thrills, which was an important part of the skiing experience for them. Part of the participants’ motivations for seeking out such risks came from the participants’ ‘addiction’ to the skiing or snowboarding experience, as explained in the motivational factor section on ‘risk’. As the skiers/snowboarders became more experienced they could try new things or push themselves further. The activity of skiing/snowboarding and the

different destinations skiers can choose creates an almost endless array of challenges for skiers to enjoy.

The skiing facility and destination offered skiers more than just new thrills; skiers enjoyed both the amenities and skiing conditions at the resort. For the participants there were a few elements of the facility/destination that were necessary in order for them to travel there. Richards (1996) also found that both the leisure facilities and the snow quality were important factors for skiers. The participants wanted the ski resort to be located by a mountain, have optimal skiing conditions and have particular amenities. If the ski resort was by a mountain, the skiers perceived the resort to have high price/economic value. The ski resorts that were not located by a mountain were dismissed or were used as day trips in preparation for a larger trip. The perceived quality of ski conditions at the resort was also important to the participants. Certain amenities were a must, including hot tubs and ease of access to chairlifts.

Taking a skiing vacation also facilitated the social needs of the participants. Skiers travelled to meet old friends, new friends and to enjoy a vacation with their partner. Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey (1993) also found that social needs and belongingness was an important factor for ski tourists. While the participants were at the resort they also sought out social activities. Some of these activities included going out to dinner, relaxing in hot tubs and enjoying a drink together after skiing for the day.

Sub-Problem 2

What is it about the skiing/snowboarding experience that makes ski tourists want to go to a resort?

For participants the skiing or snowboarding experience was enhanced by travelling to a ski resort. Risk was found to be one of the most influential factors for ski tourists. Holden (1999) also found that thrill or risk was the most important factor for all skiers and snowboarders (beginner, intermediate and advanced). As described previously, the participants wanted to seek out new thrills and take on different risks. This behaviour leads ski tourists to want to travel to a resort to fulfill their need to take on such risks. The rush or thrill of the skiing/snowboarding experience was heightened by travelling to a mountain. The skiers had the option to back-country ski and experience longer runs with more variation. Skiers also enjoyed the majesty of the mountains.

The social component was another primary reason for travel, as described in the previous section. Travelling with friends to a resort enhanced the skiers' skiing/snowboarding experience. Holden (1999) also found that having a good time with friends was important, especially for snowboarders. The members of the club looked forward to meeting old friends and taking a skiing vacation with them. The club looked for a resort with condos so members could stay together. The tourists enjoyed travelling to such accommodations as they could be close to their friends in order to socialize. Being that close to one another, skiers could easily plan to go to the hot tubs, grab a drink or a bite to eat. The social component of the after ski activities was a strong motivator for the members to go to a ski resort. While the participants remained highly active and busy on their trip, the down time activities is where participants experienced some

relaxation. Hence, in the analysis it was described that relaxation in the skier's terms differed from traditional leisure vacations or, as the participants put it, 'lying on the beach'. Members enjoyed being busy and active; a skiing trip fulfilled those needs.

Sub-Problem 3

What features of a ski resort makes the ski tourist want to go to that resort?

In the analysis there were some key features of the ski resort that made ski tourists want to go to a particular resort. It is important to note here that all of the features of the ski resort that follow affected the price/economic value of the resort for the skiers. The facility/destination factor was a strong motivator for ski resort tourists and there were some amenities that were important to the participants. The elements that were most important to skiers were hot tubs, proximity to the chairlifts, availability of shops and bars and the perceived snow conditions. This study reiterates the findings of Richards (1996), which found that terrain, snow conditions, accommodation quality, resort accessibility and leisure facilities were all important for skiers. The hot tubs, while tied into facility, also serviced the social and relaxation needs of the consumer. The members would retreat to the hot tubs after a day of rigorous skiing activities to relax and enjoy each other's company. The proximity of the resort to the chairlifts was also important to members. As illustrated in the focus group results, participants specifically referenced certain resorts that had rooms close to the ski lifts. The participants favoured resorts that could give them good accessibility to the mountain. Participants also enjoyed a ski resort that was close to shops and bars. While shopping was valued higher by some members than others, those that did not particularly like shopping went as a social activity.

Skiers also perceived certain resorts to have better snow conditions. These perceptions were sometimes formed from previous experiences. If participants had a preference for certain ski conditions, it strongly affected their decision to return. Optimal snow conditions were also important to skiers for safety reasons. Skiers did not want icy conditions for fear of being injured. More advanced skiers enjoyed deep powder skiing and back country skiing. These advanced members would prefer going to a resort that could provide such challenges or risks. Even participants who were not as advanced liked to progress to take on new challenges. Since risk is a primary motivator for tourists, it is important that a ski resort offers numerous challenges for ski tourists. Mountains offer an array of challenges for skiers and snowboarders, which is one reason that the skiers and snowboarders valued the price/ economic value of resorts that were situated close to a mountain.

Sub-Problem 4

How has the current economic climate affected the skiers/ ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort?

It was found that the current economic climate has affected some of the members' decisions to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort. Skiing in itself is an expensive activity and the ski club does its best to reduce or get the best deal for its members' money when booking a ski trip, as described previously in the price/economic value section. The importance of price as a motivational factor was explored in more detail in the focus group results. In the analysis it was seen that there was some insensitivity to price as long as the club perceived the value of the trip to be higher. The insensitivity to price is best explained as the resort having a higher economic value. For some members, however, the current economic climate has forced them to miss out

on the club's bigger trips. Hudson (2000) reported similar findings as he credited the economic decline in the early 1990s for the sharp decrease in skiing numbers. It appears that the current economic climate will have some effect on skier/snowboarders' decision to travel and stay overnight at ski resorts. Participants who are cost savvy can still enjoy ski trips, however, the ski in and ski out service provided by some of the bigger resorts included in the ski club's larger trips are generally avoided by members who have been affected to a greater extent by the recession. As illustrated earlier in the focus group results American ski resorts have adopted price bargaining strategies that are attractive to the ski clubs, while Canadian ski resorts have not. The bargaining strategy has been effective as the club is taking more trips to the United States. Members wanted to head back to areas like Western Canada, however, they admitted that the deals from the United States are too good to pass up.

Sub-Question 5

How has the emphasis of being green and environmental awareness affected the ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort?

From the analysis it was seen that although the skiers/snowboarders felt that they were more aware of the environment, it had little impact on the ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort. The focus group did not support Hudson and Ritchie's (2001) findings that the consumer's attitude is being more affected by ski resorts and their 'green' initiatives or that skiers would be willing to pay more to stay at a 'greener' resort. The study did support, however, Hudson and Ritchie's findings that ski resort goers are not knowledgeable about the green initiatives of the ski resort. The skiers/snowboarders felt they were more sensitive about the environment because they enjoyed outdoor activities. The participants, beyond being

courteous consumers, did not put much thought into the green initiatives of a ski resort when choosing a destination. The potential effect of global warming on skiers was acknowledged in the focus group results, where skiers were having a difficult time booking trips as good skiing conditions become more difficult to predict. Given the findings of this study, I suggest that while global warming may affect the skiers' experience and convenience when booking trips, the emphasis on being green and environmental awareness had little effect on the decision to travel and stay overnight at a resort. This finding does apply, necessarily, to all skiers, however, environmental awareness was a weak motivating factor for the club's members.

Sub-Problem 6

How does the local culture affect the ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at ski resorts?

The local culture did little to affect the ski tourist's decision to travel and stay overnight at ski resorts. The findings do, however, support Hinch and Higham's (2008) notion that tourists are actively engaging/consuming local culture. As explored in the focus group results, the interaction between the tourists and the local culture consisted of mixing and mingling with locals and finding out what was good in town. While members enjoyed engaging with the local culture, it was not something they sought after, it 'just happened.' Such activities were more strongly linked to the social and relaxation factors for ski tourists wanting to take a skiing holiday. Participants were more likely to go shopping to socialize and relax with other members of the club. However, the motivation to engage in tourist activities was low for participants when deciding on travelling overnight to a ski resort.

Sub-Problem 7

Who do ski tourists travel with when they travel and stay overnight at ski resorts?

The participants in the study largely did not discuss the people they travelled with besides other members of the club or their spouse. The findings did not support Prebensen's (2005) study, which found family to be an important factor for why sport tourists travelled. The study did, however, support Holden's (1999) findings, which found that travelling with friends was an important factor especially for snowboarders. In the focus groups there was relatively no mention of travelling with family. Participants generally felt that the members of the club were like family, and one participant made note of how his parents got him into skiing. Besides those comments, little mention of family was present in the discussion. The average age of the participants was between 45-60; it is thus possible that they no longer had children at home. The study was delimited in that the participants were not asked if they had children and if so, how old they were. An Australian national survey did find, however, that travelling without children was more common in sport tourists who travelled in parties with friends to participate in physical activity (BTR, 1999). Travelling in a party or as part of a ski club, in this instance, could account for the lack of emphasis on family as a strong social factor for these particular ski tourists. There were a few members who discussed travelling with their partner, most of whom were also members of the club. Generally, members discussed travelling with members of the club (friends). The ski trips for the participants were a chance to meet with old friends or make new friends. Travelling with friends was a way that members could fulfill their social needs, which was a primary factor for why ski tourists travelled. The lack of family being an important social factor and the strength of friends as a social factor supports the finding of an Australian national survey. That study found that sport tourists who travelled in parties to participate in physical activity with friends without children had a higher percentage (35%) than friends or family

travelling with children (6%) (BTR). Since participants in this research study travelled in a party or ski club, this could have accounted for the lack of emphasis on travelling with family as opposed to travelling with friends.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to explore why ski resort tourists travel and stay at ski resorts. The importance of the study was to use an exploratory approach to obtain rich data directly from the ski resort tourists in order to investigate what was of value to them. This bottom up approach differs from previous studies on ski tourists as previous studies have been descriptive and have failed to ask the actual participants what is important to them. A conceptual model was formed based on what the literature has suggested is important to ski tourists to travel and stay at a ski resort. After the data had been analyzed, a revised conceptual model was formed based on what the actual participants thought was important to them when travelling and staying at a ski resort.

Conclusions

The old model was left relatively intact with a few changes. Factors including risk, social, skill mastery, environment (green initiatives), relaxation, culture and price (economic value) all remained in the same position on the model. Participants therefore, supported that the factors were either of high, medium or low importance to them, as was found for each factor in the literature.

It is important to note the primary motives that attracted ski tourists to travel and stay at a ski resort, which included: risk, social, price/economic value and facility/destination. Risk or thrills was found to be an important factor for skiers and snowboarders in the literature (Allman, Mittlestaedt, Martin & Goldenberg, 2009; Hall & Weiler, 1992; Holden, 1999; Milne &

McDonald, 1999) and the results of this study supported such findings as risk was a primary motive for ski tourists. The social needs of the participants were also found as a primary motive for the ski tourists, which support similar findings in the literature (Holden, 1999; Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey, 1993; Ryan & Glendon, 1998). A third primary motive found was price/economic value. The original model only had 'price' as a motivational factor, however, after analyzing the data it was found that skiers also sought out 'economic value', not just 'price'. Some participants were constrained by the economic situation similar to what Hudson (2000) found with the economic downturn in the early 1990's. When participants were talking about price in the focus group they were more apt to discuss the deals they received or what they thought was more valuable to them. Skiers would be willing to pay more if they thought that the item was of higher value. For example, skiers were willing to pay more to travel to a mountain versus a smaller hill because they perceived it to have a better value. Lastly, facility/destination was found as a primary motive for ski tourists. The original factor included facility alone; however, destination was included later as it was a key element that skiers thought was important when taking a skiing holiday. The ski tourists also heavily favoured optimal snow conditions, which supports Won and Hwang (2009) as well the quality of the resort's amenities (Richards, 1996). My findings have also supported my attempt to situate the vast literature on motivation and tourism in the literature review. This study adds support for the factors and how important they are to ski tourists from a ground up approach, where the ski tourists were asked about what was important to them.

There were some changes to the original model that the participants did make, which are important to note including safety, facility, fitness and knowledge. Some factors were renamed to more appropriately address the motivational elements they were trying to represent. Such factors

included: facility (facility/destination), price (price/economic value) and environment (green initiatives). The participants in the focus groups felt that safety was important to them, however, members generally stressed that risk should come first as it is a central reason for travelling to the ski resort. In the action research component, however, there were some senior members of the club that wanted to see the reverse. It was explained that as they got older risk became less important and safety became more important. While the results of this study are not meant to be generalized for the whole skiing population, ski resort operators would do well to highlight some of their safety aspects as their main demographic is getting older.

Facility was another factor that changed location as it went from medium to high importance. Some of the members insisted that “you don’t care about the resort itself, you just want to ski, you know that’s not an important factor” (Bob). The literature review contained similar insights since risk, social and price factors all seemed to be necessities while having a nice facility was just ‘nice’ to have but not needed. Facility, however, was more comprehensive than just having nice amenities. The members, for instance, put much emphasis on the skiing conditions and the mountain itself. Participants also considered the mountain to be affixed or part of the ski resort. For these reasons facility was renamed to include destination. The inclusion of destination moved the facility from medium to high importance. While the weather is outside the ski operators control, members admitted that they had a favourable view of a particular resort if they had optimal snow conditions and vice versa. The members’ perception of the skiing conditions and the destination was highly important to the skier and as such facility was moved from medium to high importance.

Fitness was a factor that was removed altogether from the motivational model. When skiers talked about fitness they generally discussed how being fit was important to them.

Travelling to pursue fitness was not a reason why they went to travel. Members enjoyed the physical benefits of skiing, however, the reason to travel to a ski resort was not to pursue fitness. Members generally already had workout regimes and pursued fitness through other means. For the above reasons, fitness was removed as a motivational factor.

Lastly, when skiers discussed knowledge they were generally talking about improving their skiing abilities and thus knowledge was included in the skill mastery component. Originally it was thought that skiers might travel to learn more generally, whether it be about a particular destination or the local culture. Travelling to learn about other things besides how to improve their own skiing ability was not found in this study and therefore, knowledge was categorized into the skill mastery component.

Recommendations for Future Research

There has been little exploratory research to qualitatively investigate why sport tourists travel. This thesis has used an exploratory approach to develop a conceptual model on why ski tourists travel. The study has provided a foundation for future research as the conceptual model needs to be empirically tested. A future quantitative study that could test the conceptual model would compliment this study well. Since the study had a small population, it is impractical to make generalizations from the results and apply them to all skiers and snowboarders in North America. A future study that uses a larger sample size, such as a survey, could be used to test the validity of the model on a larger scale. This would help validate the accuracy of the model and the depictions of motivations of ski and snowboard tourists.

For the purpose of this study it was not practical to develop a gradient for where the motivational factors should be on the model. Future work could be done to determine the relative

proximity of ski tourist's motivation. A gradient would clarify what factor is more important to skiers and could assist ski resort operators on where to focus their attention for attracting or retaining consumers. The gradient, or something similar, could be tested on different demographics such as age. As was found in this study, safety seemed to be more valuable to members as they got older and there was less emphasis on risk. While these results cannot be generalized about the whole population, a study that developed a conceptual model for different demographics would be able to give such insight.

It would also be valuable to see if the factors found in this study can be applied not only to ski tourism but to other sport tourist activities as well. Similar to looking at different demographics, other sports will have varying motives to travel and relative importance to the consumer. For instance, golf tourists are another popular sport tourist segment. While risk may not be as important to golfers, they may enjoy relaxing more or mastering their skill. If this study was replicated but chose a different sport, such as golf, and found similar factors this could mean that other sport tourists have similar motives but they just might differ in importance. Laying such a theoretical foundation will improve our understanding of sport tourists, which thus far has been largely descriptive. As there are many sport tourism activities and new sports or adventure activities emerging, it is important to be able to identify a theoretical foundation on which to build. If the study can be easily replicated, or the conceptual factors stay largely intact, then the participants of such vast and new sport tourist activities can be better and more quickly understood.

Some general future recommendations can be made from this study to ski resort operators. Resorts need to facilitate the primary needs of ski tourists as described previously. Increasing the variety of runs and giving the consumer the opportunity to take the risks they

desire is important. At the same time skiers want to be safe; offering safety equipment and having medical resources available is important. Ski resort operators should also focus on highlighting their location. If the resort is located on a mountain, skiers will be attracted to the location as they perceive it to have a high economic value. However, resorts on smaller hills can focus on other attributes such as their proximity to the hill, shops, and bars. Skiers are willing to travel to smaller hills, for at the very least, weekend trips. If ski resorts could offer one amenity it should be hot tubs. There was no other amenity that facilitated the relaxation and social needs better than hot tubs. Other amenities that provided opportunities for consumers to socialize were: condos, bars and the après ski. While skiing conditions are largely out of the resort's control, making the best of what snow one has is important. This means well groomed trails and utilizing snow making equipment if available. For at least Canadian resorts, bargaining or offering deals is an important incentive, especially in tough economic times. Until such bargains are offered to consumers, competitors in the U.S. are going to continue to attract more Canadian skiers as they are willing to offer low prices offer a high value for services.

Ski resorts should not spend too much money or time advertising the local culture or green initiatives of the resort. My findings are not suggesting that the local culture and the environment are not important in general; however, the two attributes are low contributing factors for skiers and snow boarders choosing a skiing vacation. Highlighting local bars, shops, night life and what is good around town is what skiers were looking for in the resort's local culture. As for green initiatives, skiers or snowboarders felt as if they were more sensitive to impacts on the environment. From the analysis it was found that having recycle bins available enough to facilitate the needs of consumers is important to make them feel environmentally responsible. The green initiatives of the resort, however, were largely ignored or neglected.

Skiers largely master their skill by watching and seeking help from other skiers. Ski resort operators should offer classes or lessons for skiers who wish to increase their knowledge to improve their skiing abilities.

There is much work needed to better understand the motives of not only ski tourists but also sport tourists in general. This study has laid a foundation for future work in order to better understand why sport tourists travel and stay overnight at their destinations. Such future work is needed, as the dynamics of sport tourism are rapidly changing. New activities are emerging while the interests of the participants of better known activities such as skiing are also changing. Future studies need to be based on theory and not simply descriptive research in order to better understand the participants and the activities they enjoy. This study utilized such a framework to gain a deeper understanding of ski tourists, exploring why ski tourists travel and stay at ski resorts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Focus Group Guide

**Focus Group Questionnaire****Briefing Paragraph:**

What will follow is approximately a two hour focus group session. Please note that you have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions and your name and information will be kept confidential.

Focus Group Question Outline:*Open Discussion (30-45min):*

1. Why do you ski or snowboard?

- What about the skiing/ snowboarding experience makes you want go to a ski resort and return?

2. Why do you belong to a ski and snowboard club?

- What types of people do you travel with, if at all, or hope to meet when you travel and stay overnight at ski resorts?

3. Why do you travel and stay overnight at a ski resort?

- What features about the resort makes you want to go there and return?

4. What would you say is the primary reason to stay at a ski resort, for you?

Contextual Questions (25min):

5. Tell me about a time where the current economic climate has affected your club's activities and/or travel to ski resorts?

6. Tell me about a time where the emphasis of being green and environmental awareness affected your decision to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort?

7. Tell me about a time where the local culture affected your decision to travel and stay overnight at a ski resort?

Present Framework (15-20min):

8. How do you feel about these factors?

Participants Develop Own Framework (15-20min):

9. How do you see these factors?

Follow up (10min):

10. Is there anything you would like to add to the discussion or something you think was left out of the discussion that should be included?

Thank you for your time. It is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX B



Letter of Information

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Brandon Finn a Masters of Human Kinetics student from the Kinesiology department at the University of Windsor. The study is a part of Brandon Finn's Master's thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Brandon Finn at (519) 819-5235 or his faculty supervisor Dr. Laura Misener at (519) 253-3000 Ext: 4270 or lmisener@uwindsor.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore why ski resort tourists travel and stay overnight at ski resorts. I will conduct focus groups to ask ski resort tourists directly why they travel and stay at ski resorts. This research will contribute to the limited exploratory work on motivation in sport tourism research. More exploratory work is needed in order to lay a foundation for a theoretical model for understanding the motivations of sport tourists. My study will draw upon the current motivation literature in both the fields of sport tourism and leisure tourism to help facilitate a conceptual framework.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

You will be asked to join one of two focus groups consisting of six to eight participants. You will only be able to join one of the two sessions. The focus groups will take place in one of the graduate seminar rooms at the University of Windsor. You will be asked to sign the consent to participate form as well as the audio consent form. You will be asked to fill out a brief biographical survey (age, gender, ski experience, etc.). The focus groups will last no longer than two hours, however the length of the session will vary depending on the amount of participation from the group. The focus group will involve a series of non-intrusive questions prompted by the researcher that will lead to a discussion about ski resort travel. You will also be asked to comment on a model representing the existing research on ski resort travel.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be minimal risks involved in this study. However, because of the close nature of the club and potential pre-existing relationships with others there are some social risks. Your responses to the questions will be heard by other members of the focus group, who may tell other

members of the club what you have said after the sessions have been completed. The questions are designed to be non-intrusive and negative remarks about the club or its members should not come out in the study, however, it is a possibility. To limit such risk the researcher will first communicate that what is said in the focus group is not to be discussed outside the session. Secondly, the researcher will communicate to the group that any negative or inappropriate remarks about the club and its members will result in the removal of the offending participant from the session.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Members will be able to share their ideas and thoughts on ski travel in a relaxed environment provided with refreshments. The evening may provide an experience that brings the club members closer together as thoughts and ideas are shared between participants on a topic that you are passionate about. The results of my study will also let the club president and trip organizers know what the group is interested in to better provide activities for the club and more effectively attend to the wants and needs of you and its members. The scientific/scholarly community will also benefit as more exploratory research is needed in sports tourism. The results of my study will be used to develop a framework that suggests what the motivations of ski tourists are to travel.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants in the focus groups will receive a coffee mug and refreshments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. To help ensure the confidentiality of your participation in the study a number of steps will be taken. First, when transcribing your responses an alias, not your real name, will be identified by the researcher. Once the data from the focus group has been transcribed the audio tape will be destroyed. An electronic copy of the transcripts will be retained for seven years by the researcher and then deleted. Your information will also not be released to any other party for any reason. No one besides the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the data and the information will not be used for any other study or reason.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The research findings will be made available to you and the group by the researching giving the club a copy of the study's results. The findings will be available after the study has been completed.

Web address: www.uwindsor.ca/reb

Date when results are available: June 15, 2011

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data will not be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C

Consent to Participate in Research Form (Focus Group)

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Title of Study: Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

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PROCEDURES

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POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be minimal risks involved in this study. However, because of the close nature of the club and potential pre-existing relationships with others there are some social risks. Your responses to the questions will be heard by other members of the focus group, who may tell other members of the club what you have said after the sessions have been completed. The questions are designed to be non-intrusive and negative remarks about the club or its members should not come out in the study, however, it is a possibility. To limit such risk the researcher will first communicate that what is said in the focus group is not to be discussed outside the session. Secondly, the researcher will communicate to the group that any negative or inappropriate remarks about the club and its members will result in the removal of the offending participant from the session.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Members will be able to share their ideas and thoughts on ski travel in a relaxed environment provided with refreshments. The evening may provide an experience that brings the club members closer together as thoughts and ideas are shared between participants on a topic that you are passionate about. The results of my study will also let the club president and trip organizers know what the group is interested in to better provide activities for the club and more effectively attend to the wants and needs of you and its members. The scientific/scholarly community will also benefit as more exploratory research is needed in sports tourism. The results of my study will be used to develop a framework that suggests what the motivations of ski tourists are to travel.

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Participants in the focus groups will receive a coffee mug and refreshments.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. To help ensure the confidentiality of your participation in the study a number of steps will be taken. First, when transcribing your responses an alias, not your real name, will be identified by the researcher. Once the data from the focus group has been transcribed the audio tape will be destroyed. An electronic copy of the transcripts will be retained for seven years by the researcher and then deleted. Your information will also not be released to any other party for any reason. No one besides the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the data and the information will not be used for any other study or reason.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The research findings will be made available to you and the group by the researching giving the club a copy of the study's results. The findings will be available after the study has been completed.

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If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

Audio Consent Form

CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING



Research Subject Name:

Title of the Project: Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

I consent to the audio-taping of interviews, procedures, or treatment.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped. I also understand that my name will not be revealed to anyone and that taping will be kept confidential.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio tape will be for professional use only.

(Research Subject)

(Date)

APPENDIX E



Survey

Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

Pseudonym: _____

(Please Check All That Apply)

Age:

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

Household Income:

- \$0-\$40,000
- \$40,000-60,000
- \$80,000-100,000
- \$100,000-120,000
- \$120,000+
- Prefer not to answer

Gender: Male Female Transgendered Other

Skiing Experience (yrs):

- 1-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20+

APPENDIX F

Consent to Participate in Research Form (Action Research)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH



Title of Study: Exploring Ski Tourist Motivations for Active Sport Travel

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Brandon Finn a Masters of Human Kinetics student from the Kinesiology department at the University of Windsor. The study is a part of Brandon Finn's Master's thesis..

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PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Action Research Component

After the data from the focus groups have been analyzed your framework will be presented to the Windsor Ski and Snowboard Club. The club will then have a chance to comment and discuss the framework as was done in the focus groups.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will be minimal risks involved in this study. However, because of the close nature of the club and potential pre-existing relationships with others there are some social risks. Your responses to the framework will be heard by other members of the group and is a public event. Therefore, any responses will be heard by the group and such data cannot be withdrawn from the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Members will be able to share their ideas and thoughts on ski travel in a relaxed environment. The evening may provide an experience that brings the club members closer together as thoughts and ideas are shared between participants on a topic that you are passionate about. The results of my study will also let the club president and trip organizers know what the group is interested in to better provide activities for the club and more effectively attend to the wants and needs of you and its members. The scientific/scholarly community will also benefit as more exploratory research is needed in sports tourism. The results of my study will be used to develop a framework that suggests what the motivations of ski tourists are to travel and stay at ski resorts. This could provide ski resort operators with knowledge and insight on how to better market their product to their consumers as well as better attending to their wants and needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

The results of the study will be forwarded to the Windsor Ski and Snowboard Club president and will be available in case you wish to view them.

Web address: www.uwindsor.ca/reb

Date when results are available: June 15, 2011

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

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Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Brandon M.J. Finn

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