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Segmentation of the Aruban Tourism Market: Classification of Visitors' On-Island Activities

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ABSTRACT

Travel and tourism offices in destinations throughout the world are keenly aware of the importance of attracting visitors to their locale. This is especially true in places where tourism is an important component of the local economy. Nowhere is tourism more important than for the island nations of the Caribbean, an area that has been called one of the most tourism dependent regions in the world. With approximately 1.22 million people visiting each year, the Caribbean island of Aruba “The World Tourism Council (WTTC) reports Aruba’s GDP is more reliant on travel and tourism than any other nation, relative to size, in the world”. In fact, Aruban tourism is the island’s main economic pillar contributing 88% of the nation’s GDP. Tourism supports not only direct commerce such as retail stores, hotels and restaurants, travel agents, transportation, etc., but also indirect commerce to support these industries including artisans, farming, manufacturing, etc..

Although the Aruba Tourism Authority’s website declares that “Aruba’s popularity has remained constant, due not only to sun, sand and sea, but also to other factors including the hospitality and friendliness of its people, safety, political stability, and various niches such as activities, nightlife, shopping, restaurants” there has been no academic research investigating what tourists do while visiting Aruba. Segmenting tourists according to the activities, nightlife, and shopping they have been involved in during their stay can be a valuable tool used by local governments and business owners in anticipating consumer demand and attracting potential tourists. Therefore, the main objective of this research was to determine if tourists can be segmented based on the activities they enjoy.

A total of 503 tourists were sampled using an intercept data collection method at the Oranjestadt International Airport. Approximately 87% of the sample were from the U.S. with the remaining tourists coming from the Netherlands, the U.K., Spain, Italy, Canada and Brazil. Respondents included 187 females (37.2%) and 311 males (61.8%). Factor analysis was performed to determine if tourists could be segmented according to groups of activities in which they participated. Three distinct salient segments of tourists emerged and were labeled as: 1) *Active Newlyweds*, 2) *Cultural Explorers*, and 3) *Social Entertainment Seekers*. *Active Tourists* were those tourists who were more likely to have been married while on Aruba or honeymooning on the island and were interested in participating in more active sports such as wind-surfing, golf, land-sailing, horseback riding, etc. The *Cultural Explorer* group was composed of respondents who were more interested in visiting Aruban historic or cultural sites or visiting festivals, art galleries, museums, etc. Lastly, the respondents in the *Social Entertainment Seekers* latent group wanted activities that had a social aspect to them such as dining out, going to casinos, meeting new people, and going out to enjoy the nightlife of the island. Using the

information from this project can be used to more effectively target groups of tourists interested in visiting Aruba. This type of marketing tool can be especially useful for the smaller, yet tourism-dependent countries of the Caribbean with limited resources.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Dr. Brosdahl received her degrees from Iowa State University (B.S. & Ph.D.) and the University of Missouri (M.S.). She is an Assoc. Professor in the Dept. of Retailing, in the College of Hospitality, Retailing, and Sport Management at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC. She has had her work published in numerous journals including the International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management, the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, and the Journal of Management and Marketing Research.

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