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Specialist lodging in the USA: Motivations of bed and breakfast accommodation guests

Abstract

Interest in specialist lodging has become prominent in the United States as well as elsewhere in the world. Some of the world trends in tourism that are influencing this niche market are greater competition, increased market fragmentation and complexity, more experienced and discerning customers and communication technology. These factors have created a strong demand for unique products and the Bed and Breakfast providers have made efforts to create competitive advantages, leading to even more variety in the sector. This paper provides insight into motivational factors of the specialist-lodging sector in the United States, specifically Bed and Breakfast accommodation. A study was conducted in order to explore, in some detail, the key issues of guests' motivation, guests' satisfaction, and guests' sources of information in the USA. Of these factors, the motivational results of the study were primarily utilized for the purposes of this paper. Motives were aligned to the motivational categories of Maslow (1954) needs and Pearce's (1988) motivational travel ladder. Of the five hierarchical travel career steps, relaxation and physiological needs were ranked of highest importance. Understanding the key motivational factors of service provision may offer some direction in shaping facility, amenity, service and marketing decisions of specialist accommodation operators.

Keywords:

bed and breakfast; tourist motivations; specialist accommodation; niche lodging; USA

Introduction

Accompanying the growth in large-scale accommodation complexes, giant hotel and resort complexes (Poon, 1993; Morrison, 2002) a more niche tourism sector (Novelli, 2005) of specialist lodging has also become prominent, notably the Bed and Breakfast (B & B) accommodation sector. For example, Grimwade (1994) stated that in 1980 there were 1000 B & Bs in the USA but by the mid 1990's close to 30,000 in the U.S, with today over 45,000 worldwide (www.lanierbb.com, 2007). Previous predictions have suggested a growing future trend that bed and breakfast operators would be achieving a more significant role in the hospitality industry (Reynolds & Emenheiser, 1996). This trend has continued with a stronger occupancy over the last five years, as well as steady increases in daily room rates and revenue per available room within the industry (Karen & Berg, 2007).

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There has also been a growth in marketing and network provision of Bed and Breakfasts (Table 1); for example, Bed And Breakfast Network now provides information on over 27,000 bed and breakfast inns worldwide (Bed And Breakfast Network, 2002). Examples of these marketing networks include Table 1 below. In addition, a large number of state tourism offices are now including Bed and Breakfast listings in their tourism materials and there is an increase in standardization by organizations such as the American B & B Association and the American Automobile Association (AAA). The Professional Association of Innkeepers International (PAII), which has been operating since 1988, has become the world's largest trade association supporting bed and breakfast innkeepers (bedandbreakfast.com, 2007). In addition, many regional and local organizations have been operating offering marketing, networking and administrative services. For example, bedandbreakfastwebsites.com lists close to 100 different bed and breakfast directories worldwide which operate in various capacities.

Table 1

EXAMPLE OF DIRECTORIES OF BED AND BREAKFASTS

Various Directories	Bed and Breakfasts within directory	Website as of 2007
<i>Bed And Breakfast Network</i>	Lists over 27,000 B & Bs	bedandbreakfastnet
<i>The Internet Directory of Bed and Breakfasts</i>	Lists over 8,000 B & Bs	innsite.com
<i>The Choice Bed and Breakfast Guide</i>	Lists over 5,000 B & Bs	choice-guide.com
<i>The bed and breakfast.com</i>	List over lists close to 6,500 B & Bs	bedandbreakfast.com
<i>The usinns.com</i>	Lists over 25,000 B & Bs	usinns.com
<i>The Australian Bed and Breakfast Council (ABBC)</i>	Has had overall responsibility for close to 1000 B & Bs in 2002 and over 1200 in 2007	australianbedandbreakfast.com.au
<i>The Visit Us UK Bed and Breakfast Guide</i>	Lists over 30,000 B & Bs	visitus.co.uk

With the growth and maturity of the bed and breakfast industry, its popularity, visitor appeal and future of this style of tourism has increasingly been of interest (Fleischer & Pizam, 1997; Ingram, 2002; Lanier & Berman, 1993; Moscardo, Morrison & Pearce, 1996; Morrison, 2002; Rowe, 1991; Upchurch & Boger, 1996). Concerns have been expressed, however, that due to the continual growth of the B & B industry there is a need for up-to-date information concerning the B & B market, its motivational aspects, and its operational factors (Boger & Buchman, 1991; Brown, 1990; Dawson & Brown 1988; Ingram, 2002; Professional Association of Innkeepers International, 1993; 2001; 2004; Upchurch 1996).

The purpose of this paper is to provide insight into motivational factors of the specialist-lodging sector in the United States, specifically Bed and Breakfast accommodation. A study was conducted in order to explore, in some detail, the key issues of guests' motivation, guests' satisfaction, and guests' sources of information in the USA.

Guests' motives for staying at a B & B

A number of studies, which have reported on guest's motives for staying at a B & B establishment, have been focused on the operators' responses. Previous studies have found B & B operators perceive that natural setting, quality service, authentic experience (Pearce & Moscardo, 1992), location and geographic area, hospitality and service

and the B & B experience (Dawson & Brown, 1988) as the main motives in which guests are drawn to the B & B experience. B & B operators have also been studied by exploring the senior market (Emenheiser, 1996) where serenity, shopping and restaurants were the top perceived attractions to guests.

There have been a small number of studies that have addressed the guests' reasons/motivations for selecting a B & B establishment. Ingram's (2002, pg 9) study of rural bed and breakfast farm-stay properties found that strong visitor motivations related to the enjoyment of country lifestyle and scenery and the relaxing ambience of the countryside. Norman (1988) surveyed B & Bs in Minnesota and found touch, charm of the building, and getaway, nicely decorated bedrooms, romance, and an alternative to a hotel as key reasons for selecting a particular B & B. According to Pearce (1990) the three recurring motives for visiting farm accommodation in New Zealand include: to escape the larger commercial hotel, to meet the local people and to see the countryside. Upchurch (1996) found the number of key motivations to B & B guests in Wisconsin included rest and relaxation and experiencing the beauty of the natural surroundings. In Upchurch's study it was concluded that the B & B guest profile is that of an individual who seeks to get away from the "daily drudgery of work" and participate in activities that are healthy and social in nature while appreciating the local heritage.

Sallee (1996) found that B & B guests surveyed reported a quite home-like atmosphere with a sense of privacy as very important. A strong preference for a private bath was also found to be important to guests. Upchurch's (1996) study also found similar results with guests reporting a strong preference for a private bath and king/queen beds.

Though little additional empirical data exists on the guests' motives for visiting B & B establishments, numerous authors have suggested that the personal service and host/guest interaction is a major factor contributing to B & B visits (Dawson & Brown, 1988; Emerick & Emerick, 1994; Ingram, 2002; Morrison, Pearce, Moscardo, Nadkarni & O'Leary, 1996; Warnick & Klar, 1991)

The foundation of marketing has shown that understanding consumer needs and the long-term success of an organization is based on satisfying these needs (Holloway, 2004; Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2005; Morrison, 1996). Morrison further advocated that an understanding of motivation theories is essential in determining consumers' needs. Kim, Pearce, Morrison and O'Leary (1996) stated that... "motivation is only one of the many variables which influence the destination choice process. However, motivation is a fundamental driving force in helping to explain tourist behaviour" (p. 112).

Theoretical frameworks employed in sociology and social psychology have been proposed to explain tourism motivation by many researchers (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981, 1983; Iso-Ahola 1980, 1982; Kim, Pearce, Morrison & O'Leary, 1996; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Pearce, 1988, 1991, 1993; 2005; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Pearce & Moscardo, 1985; Pearce & Rutledge, 1994; Plog, 1974, 1987, 1990; Ragheb & Beard, 1982; Ryan, 1993, 1995; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2005; Uysal, 1994). A key framework, Maslow's (1954) hierarchy has been used in a wide array of tourist related studies such as theme parks, visitors to outback towns, day trippers to a marine environments, downhill skiers, and wilderness users. Maslow's comprehensive motivational system has been shown to have a wide applicability for it has also been used by a number of authors (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983; Pearce, 1988). In looking at tourist motivation for example, Pearce suggested there are five hierarchical travel career steps (similar to a hierarchy of needs) affecting tourist behaviour and

there are possibilities of changing both within levels (other-directed and self-directed) and across levels during the life cycle. People are seen to move through their travel career similar to a work career (Kim et al., 1996; Pearce, 1988; Pearce, 1993; Pearce & Rutledge, 1994). Several motives may be influencing their tourism activities at one given time, however, one motive is usually dominant. People at the higher levels are concerned with knowledge, special interests and developing their skills. Alternatively, people at the lower levels emphasize relaxation, safety and security, and basic services such as food and toilets.

This concept of the travel ladder has been applied in several empirical case studies within the tourism industry. These studies include visitor preference and satisfaction at a historic theme park (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986), new developments for a modern theme park-Dreamworld (Pearce, 1991; Pearce & Rutledge, 1994), looking at a modified leisure ladder in studying theme park visitors (Chuo & Heywood, 2006), a study of travel motivation and travel experience (Pearce & Lee, 2005), visitor motivation in climbing Ayers Rock (Fielding, Pearce & Hughes, 1992), and mature and youth travelers in the Korean market (Kim et al. 1996)

In developing the research for the study discussed in this paper, motivational characteristics were adapted further from previous motivational studies discussed above and utilized as a descriptive tool to analyze the B & B guests' biological and social psychological motives for visiting a B & B style of accommodation. Aspects of attraction, reasons of choice, variety of needs, interests and features of importance in selecting and experiencing a bed and breakfast facility were provided. These included the following guests' perceived motivation for being attracted to the particular bed and breakfast style of specialist accommodation (see Table 2):

Table 2
**GUESTS' PERCEIVED MOTIVATION FOR BEING
 ATTRACTED TO A BED AND BREAKFAST**

Items
To experience the lifestyle of the area
To meet and mix with other travelers
To interact with "real" Americans
To learn about the culture
To spend time with people I care about
To do something different
To experience excitement and adventure
To rest and relax in nice surroundings
To enjoy home-style cooking/hospitality

Methodology of study

For the purpose of this study, Bed and Breakfast accommodation was defined as properties, which accommodate less than 20 people per night and offer fully personalized services. These include properties personally owned and not managed for a chain and also includes a variety of different categories of Bed and Breakfast accommodation (see Figure 2; Moscardo, Morrison & Pearce, 1996; Scarinci & Richins, 2003). The accommodation operators in the study represent a mix of small business operators serving visitors at all price ranges (Pearce & Moscardo, 1992; Morrison, 1996).

A random sample was selected with the assistance of the Lanier Guide to Bed and Breakfast, Inns and Guesthouses in the United States and Canada. This yearly guide-book has listed over 11,000 Inns and 20,000 guesthouses in 50 states and Canada (and over 45,000 world wide; www.lanierbb.com, 2005). All respondents in the study participated on a voluntary basis and were over 18 years of age. This procedure resulted in a sample selected of 60 B & B operators in six states (10 B & B operators per state times six states). The six states were chosen to fairly represent a cross section of the United States including two states from the Midwest (Indiana and Michigan), two states from the east coast (Florida from the south east and Massachusetts from the north east), one state from the west coast (California) and one state from the southern U.S. (Texas). The subjects were guests of the 60 selected B & B properties (with maximum of 20 guests per property). The sample was also selected to represent each of the six categories of Bed and Breakfast accommodation (adapted from Bed and Breakfast and Farmstay Australia Inc., 2004; Moscardo, Morrison & Pearce, 1996; Scarinci & Richins, 2003; See Table 3).

Table 3

SIX CATEGORIES OF BED AND BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION

Type of Bed & Breakfast	Description of Bed & Breakfast type
A Bed & Breakfast Homestay	An owner occupied home where guests share the living and dining areas.
The Bed & Breakfast Farmstay	A fully hosted rural accommodation.
The Bed & Breakfast Inn	Owner occupied and provides separate living and dining areas.
Bed & Breakfast Country House	Owner occupied and usually serves dinner.
Bed & Breakfast Cottages	Self catering, self contained accommodation.
Bed & Breakfast Apartments	Self-contained and provide breakfast or breakfast provisions for the guest to prepare.

A self-administered questionnaire was employed for this study due to the size of the total population, the challenge of achieving adequate contact of participants and also in order to minimise the costs involved. Twenty questionnaires were distributed to each of the selected operators for a total of 1200 questionnaires and self-selection at each bed and breakfast involved the process of sample formation. In order to achieve consistency in the distribution and collection of the surveys, communications were provided to each operator explaining the research, asking for their participation to be involved in the study, and explaining the survey procedures was included. The participants (guests of each bed and breakfast) were advised that their participation was voluntary and that their responses were anonymous. Separate envelopes were provided for the participant to enclose their survey and a self-addressed, reply paid envelope was provided to each operator in order to return the group of completed surveys when finished. The survey was designed to incur minimal cost in time and money for the both operators and guests.

Results of the study

This section discusses the results of the study, including a description of the bed and breakfast properties surveyed, demographics of respondents, and an analysis of guest motives for choosing a bed and breakfast establishment.

Description of bed and breakfast properties surveyed

Of the 60 B & B establishments surveyed 12 properties participated, which included 20% of the properties electing to be involved in the study. Five properties were from Michigan, 2 properties from Indiana, 2 properties from Texas, 2 properties from California, and 1 property from Florida. Refer to Table 4 for the number of responses per state.

Table 4

NUMBER OF RESPONSES AND PROPERTIES PER STATE (N=193)

Category	Number of Properties	Number of Responses	Percent
Michigan	5	83	43.0%
Indiana	2	17	8.8%
Texas	2	33	17.1%
California	2	40	20.7%
Florida	1	20	10.4%
TOTALS	12	193	20.0%

Demographics of respondents

After on going follow-up procedures were conducted of the properties regarding the distributed questionnaires, and 193 surveys were returned and analyzed. The exploratory nature of this survey provides some important insight into the motivations of bed and breakfast participants in the United States. The following includes a description of the demographics of respondents. Refer to Table 5 for age and gender characteristics of the respondents.

The sample was nearly evenly distributed between genders. Close to 46% (45.7%) of the respondents were 41 years of age or over, 54% (54.3%) were between 18 and 40 years of age, with close to 74% (73.7%) of respondents 50 or less in age. Norman (1988) had similar results in a study of B & Bs in Minnesota. That study found that close to 74% of the B & B guests were 50 years of age or under with an average age of 41. Sallee's (1996) findings from a nationwide B & B study in the United States found the median age of the respondents to be 44.

Table 5

RESPONDENT'S GENDER AND AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Category	Number	Percent
Gender		
Male	79	42.5%
Female	108	58.1%
Age		
18-30	46	24.7%
31-40	55	29.6%
41-50	36	19.4%
51-60	34	18.3%
> 61	15	8.1%

One hundred and eighty seven of the respondents reported from where they were visiting, with only (3.1%) from international. The largest percent of international visitors were from England (2.1%) and the remaining countries represented were Germany (.5%) and Canada (.5%). The other (96.9%) of the guests were from the United States.

Analysis of guest motives for choosing a bed and breakfast establishment

The further analysis of results will address specific aspects of the study, namely the motivation of why guests were attracted to this style of accommodation (B & B), the reasons that guests chose this style of accommodation, and the guests' perception of the most important features of the B & B establishments. These are described further below.

Attraction to B & B style of accommodation. This section addresses why guests were attracted to bed and breakfast style of accommodation. It also ranks the order of importance of the features available at the establishment. The motive questions were in a rank order to determine any patterns and distinguish between the perceived importance of each item. The number one preferred attraction was the location of the property according to 54.9% of the respondents (see Table 6).

Table 6

PREFERRED ATTRACTION TO B & B STYLE ESTABLISHMENT (N=193)

Rank	Attraction	Number	Percent
1	Location	106	54.9%
2	Other	46	23.8%
3	Repeat Visit	20	10.4%
4	Availability	19	9.8%
5	Special Interest	18	9.3%

The percentages are greater than 100% due to some of the respondents providing more than one preferred response.

Dawson and Brown (1988) reported similar findings in a study of B & B operator's responses. In this study 50% of the operators listed location/geographic area as the main reason they feel guests stay at B & B establishments. Additionally, Pearce and Moscardo (1992) reported natural setting, location, and quality service as the main attractions to B & B establishments based on the B & B operators' responses.

Other was listed as the second most important attraction by 23.8% of the respondents. Of the choices listed by the guests in this category the two most important attractions were "recommended" at 27.2%, and "atmosphere" at 17.4% of the total listed as "other".

Motivation for choosing a B & B. This section addresses the motivation of why the guests were attracted to this style of accommodation. It also ranks the order of importance of the features available at the establishment.

In reviewing the results, when the guests were asked WHY they chose this style of accommodation, 55.4% replied, "to rest and relax in nice surroundings", and 23.3% responded "to spend time with people I care about". Refer to Table 7 for the remaining responses. These findings are again consistent with further findings in this study that one of the top attractions to a B & B was the atmosphere. The overlap in the responses implies that the questionnaire was successful in reporting accurate data. Upchurch (1996) also found similar results in his study of B & B guests in Wisconsin. The number one motivation reported was to rest and relax by 82.3% of the respondents.

When analyzing the guests' most important motivation for visiting a B & B the findings suggest that B & B guests are primarily visiting B & Bs to fulfill their physiological needs of relaxation (Maslow, 1954; Pearce, 1988). The guests second ranked motivation for choosing a B & B was to spend time with people they care about which would indicate that the B & B guest is also fulfilling their self-esteem needs of family and intimate relationships.

Table 7

RANK ORDER OF GUESTS' MOST IMPORTANT MOTIVATION FOR CHOOSING A B & B

Rank	Motivation	Number	Percent
1	Rest & relax in nice surroundings	107	55.4%
2	To spend time with people I care about	45	23.3%
3	To enjoy homestyle cooking/hospitality	23	11.9%
4	To do something different	22	11.4%
5	To experience the lifestyle of the area	8	4.1%
6	To experience excitement and adventure	4	2.1%
6	To meet & mix with other travellers	4	2.1%
8	To learn about United States culture	2	1.0%
9	To interact with "real" Americans	2	1.0%
Totals		217	112.3%

*Due to respondents ticking more than one number 1 response.

The number of responses and percents will be greater than 100%.

Most important B & B feature. The guests were also asked to rank the features of the B & B establishment from not at all important to most important. "Private Bath" was ranked as the most important feature by 65.8%, "host friendliness" was ranked most important by 53.4%, "atmosphere" was perceived as most important by 46.6%, and "personal service" was reported as the most important feature by 35.2% of the respondents (refer to Table 8).

Table 8

RANK ORDER OF GUESTS' MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE OF A B & B

Rank	Features	Number	Percent
1	Private bath	127	65.8%
2	Host friendliness	103	53.4%
3	Atmosphere	90	46.6%
4	Personal service	68	35.2%
5	Food	66	34.2%
6	Furnishings	43	22.3%
7	Accessibility	33	17.1%
8	Architecture	25	13.0%
8	Fireplace	25	13.0%
9	Room Size (1-3)	18	9.3%
9	History	18	9.3%
9	Other	18	9.3%
10	Room size (4-10)	17	8.8%
11	Gardens	14	7.3%
12	Self catering	9	4.7%
13	Swimming pool	4	2.1%
14	Room size (10+)	1	0.5%

These results are also consistent with previous studies conducted by Sallee (1996) and Upchurch (1996). In the Sallee study, the most important amenity reported was a private bath and 50% of the B & B guests reported a homelike atmosphere as very important. Upchurch's (1996) study reported similar findings with 80.6% of the guests preferred a private bath.

Furthermore, "host friendliness" was the second most important feature, "atmosphere" was the third most important feature and "personal service" was the fourth most important feature reported by the respondents. These findings support previous research conducted by Dawson and Brown (1988), Emerick and Emerick (1994), Morrison et al. (1996), and Warnick and Klar (1991) who reported personal service and host/guest interaction as a major contributing factor for B & B visits.

Broad categories of guests most important motivation of choosing a B & B. Based on the motivational categories of Maslow (1954) and Pearce (1988), and in combining results of Table 7 (above), relaxation and physiological needs was the number one category of the guests' perceived motives at 67.3% of those surveyed indicating this broad category of motivation. Relationships were the second category at 23.3% of the guests reporting they chose a B & B to spend time with people they care about. Novelty and stimulation was the third category with 13.5% reporting they visit a B & B to do something different. Fulfillment as well as self-esteem and development were the fourth most important categories for choosing a B & B establishment, both with 4.1%. See Table 9 below, which shows these various broad categories of motivation of guests' most important motivation for choosing a bed and breakfast.

Table 9

BROAD CATEGORIES OF GUESTS' MOST IMPORTANT MOTIVATION FOR CHOOSING A B & B

Rank	Features	Number	Percent
1	Relaxation & Physiological needs	130	67.3%
2	Relationships	45	23.3%
3	Novelty & Stimulation	26	13.5%
4	Self-Esteem & Development	8	4.1%
5	Fulfillment	8	4.1%

Summary and conclusions

Overall the results of this study support previous research regarding B & B guests' motives of B & B accommodation. First, the guests' preferred attraction to a B & B establishment was the location of the property (54.9%). Their most important motivation for choosing a B & B establishment was to rest and relax in nice surroundings (55.4%), which suggest that B & B guests primarily visit B & B establishments to fulfill their physiological needs of relaxation. Additionally, the most important feature of a B & B establishment was a private bath (65.8%); with host friendliness ranked second at 53.5%, third ranked was atmosphere (46.6%), and fourth ranked was personal service (35.2%). These findings support those of previous studies by Dawson and Brown (1988), Emerick and Emerick (1994), Morrison et al. (1996), Pearce and Moscardo (1992), and Warnick and Klar (1991).

Despite the differences in the method, instrument and states/country surveyed the results from this study were very similar to previous literature pertaining to B & B

guests' motivations of B & B accommodation. For example, in the current study the guests reported the location of the property as the preferred attraction to a B & B, which supports the findings of Pearce and Moscardo (1992) and Dawson and Brown (1988). Dawson and Brown's (1988) study was conducted in New York State and was based on the responses of B & B operators. They reported that over 50% of the operators listed location as the reason guests visit B & Bs. Pearce and Moscardo (1992) interviewed 151 Australian B & B operators in Queensland and found that location was perceived to be one of the main attractions.

To rest and relax in nice surroundings was reported as the most important motivation for choosing a B & B. Upchurch (1996) found the same results in a study of B & B guests in Wisconsin. The number one motivation reported was to rest and relax by 82.3% of the respondents. The most important feature was listed as host friendliness and atmosphere was ranked second by the B & B guests.

This study of B & B specialist accommodation in the USA has provided some insight into the key motivational factors impacting decisions regarding choice of accommodation. Of particular contribution of this study was the alignment to the motivational categories of Maslow (1954) and Pearce (1988) and the results, which showed priority of needs. Of the five hierarchical travel career steps, relaxation and physiological needs were ranked of highest importance. This suggests that people interested in staying at bed and breakfast establishments in the United States are particularly higher in their sophistication regarding career travel levels. In particular and as noted previously, the largest percentage by far (67%) identified the highest level of the Pearce Travel Ladder (relaxation and physiological needs) as important.

Understanding the key factors and embracing these in motivations of service provision, geographic and physical aspects of the operation may guide and shape decisions of specialist accommodation operators, specifically with bed and breakfast lodging development and product offerings. With this information, strategies and tactics can be more effectively aligned toward management approaches, service provision, public relations, promotions, branding and image development and in turn these can be better matched with the key motivational factors as well as preferred features offered by individual establishments.

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