

Not all bleisure travelers are alike: Motivational segmentation approach

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INTRODUCTION

Bleisure travel, defined as the integration of leisure activities into business travel, has emerged as a distinct contemporary tourism phenomenon (Lichy & McLeay, 2018). Unlike traditional tourism, bleisure operates within organizational and temporal constraints, creating a hybrid behavioral system where individuals alternately perform the distinct roles of employee and tourist within the same stay (Gustafson, 2014; Lichy & McLeay, 2018). Notably, these behaviors vary significantly depending on the driver of the travel extension; they range from employer-driven extensions, where business obligations dictate the schedule, to traveler-initiated extensions, where individuals autonomously seek leisure (Radic et al., 2020). Despite this inherent complexity, existing research often treats bleisure as a homogeneous niche. Tourism behavior research emphasizes that such complex decision-making should be understood through motivational structures rather than simple demographics (Crompton; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Therefore, this study aims to identify distinct motivational segments (Dolnicar, 2008) within the bleisure market and examine how these segments differ in their evaluations of destination attributes and behavioral intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical understanding of tourist motivation has evolved toward increasingly multidimensional and integrated perspectives. Early frameworks such as the Push-Pull model (Crompton, 1979) initiated the exploration of internal drives and external attributes, while the Travel Career Ladder approach (Pearce, 1988) introduced a developmental trajectory where motivations mature with travel experience. Building upon this progression, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a sophisticated lens to examine the complex coexistence of extrinsic and intrinsic motives in contemporary tourism. This theoretical evolution is particularly critical in the context of bleisure travel, where frequent role transitions between 'employee' and 'tourist' create a multifaceted psychological structure (Radic et al., 2020). Despite the necessity of capturing this motivational complexity, bleisure research has often relied on homogeneous assumptions. Consequently, this study integrates these evolving frameworks to identify distinct motivational segments, thereby addressing the heterogeneous nature of the modern hybrid travel market.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method research design and followed the analytical flow illustrated in Figure 1. In-depth interviews were conducted with 50 people who had experienced bleisure in the past two years, and thematic analysis was applied to identify core motivational dimensions and destination selection attributes. A quantitative online survey was administered to adults with prior bleisure experience, resulting in 371 valid responses. The survey measured multidimensional travel motivations and perceived destination-selection attributes, including accessibility, infrastructure, cultural and natural resources, economic value, safety and hygiene, and hospitality, as well as behavioral intentions operationalized as revisit intention, recommendation intention, and positive word-of-mouth. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses validated construct reliability and validity. Cluster analysis based on motivation factor scores identified psychological segments, and subsequent group comparisons were conducted using independent t-tests, variance analysis, and chi-square tests to examine differences across clusters.

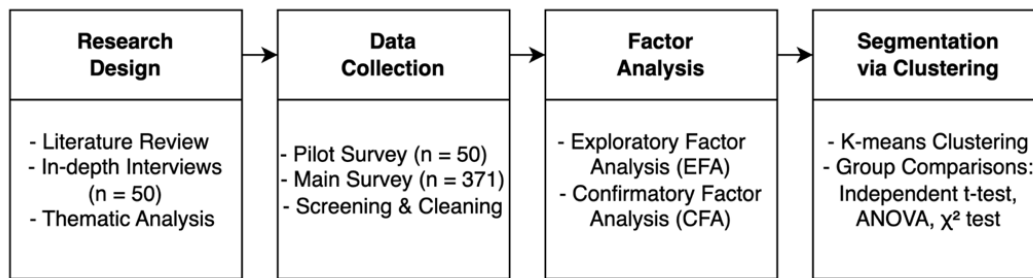


Figure 1. Research Process and Analytical Flow

FINDINGS

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the multidimensional structure of bleisure travel motivations and destination selection attributes. Consistent with prior tourism behavior research (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Pearce & Lee, 2005), four motivational dimensions—learning and experiential enrichment, social prestige, well-being and escape from routine, and relationship bonding—were identified. Destination selection attributes were also validated as multidimensional constructs, including accessibility and convenience, infrastructure, cultural and natural resources, cost, safety and hygiene, and hospitality, supporting a competitiveness-oriented perspective in tourism destination research.

Based on motivation factor scores, the optimal number of clusters was determined to be two, as indicated by the Elbow method where the Within-Cluster Sum of Squares (WCSS) showed a sharp decline until $k=2$, and the Silhouette coefficient reached 0.475, exceeding the threshold of 0.3 (Rousseeuw, 1987). Subsequently, K-means clustering identified two distinct psychological segments among bleisure travelers: a high-motivation experiential group and a practical, economically oriented group. The first segment exhibited higher motivational intensity across experiential, relational, and well-being dimensions, whereas the second segment demonstrated comparatively lower motivational engagement and stronger emphasis on economic considerations. This segmentation outcome aligns with prior motivation-based segmentation research, suggesting that tourist markets tend to converge into a limited number of interpretable clusters (Dolnicar, 2008).

Table 1. Summary of Motivation-Based Segment Profiles

Category	Cluster 1: High-Motivation Experiential (82.5%)	Cluster 2: Practical-Oriented (17.5%)
Core Traits	Highest overall motivation and destination evaluation	Lower overall motivation; companion-oriented
Dominant Motivations	Social prestige and learning & enrichment	Utility-oriented
Destination Evaluation	High ratings across overall attributes	Emphasis on accessibility and safety & hygiene
Behavioral Intentions	High behavioral Intentions	Moderate behavioral intentions
Participation Pattern	Predominantly self-initiated bleisure type	Higher proportion of companion-based type

Between-group comparisons further revealed statistically meaningful differences in destination attribute evaluations and behavioral intentions. Independent t-tests and ANOVA indicated that the high-motivation segment reported significantly stronger revisit and recommendation intentions and assigned greater importance to hospitality and safety-related attributes. Cross-tabulation analyses also showed differences in travel frequency, length of stay, and participation patterns, suggesting that motivational

heterogeneity translates into differentiated behavioral and evaluative outcomes (Radic et al., 2020). The segment profiles are summarized in Table 1.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that bleisure is a structurally complex behavioral system driven by the interplay of extrinsic work obligations and intrinsic leisure autonomy, as framed by SDT. By identifying distinct motivational segments, this study provides empirical evidence that shifts the focus from bleisure as a homogeneous to a heterogeneous market. Consistent with Dolnicar (2008), the findings demonstrate that psychological motivations provide a more robust explanation for behavioral differences than conventional demographics, providing a new lens to capture the internal heterogeneity of bleisure. Practically, the results mandate a transition from generic marketing to segment-specific strategic positioning. For the high-motivation experiential group, destination managers should prioritize high-value premium programs integrating prestige, networking, and cultural learning. Conversely, for the practical, economically oriented group, flexible, modular bleisure packages emphasizing cost predictability and time efficiency are more effective. By addressing these multifaceted psychological needs, destinations can more effectively enhance their competitiveness in the evolving bleisure market.

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