Introduction

Pleasure travel motivation has been identified as the initial stage of the process by which travellers set goals that are attainable by their travel behaviour (Mansfeld 1992). In this sense, people engage in pleasure travel because they have some socio-psychological needs eventually satisfied by experiencing a different environment for a limited time. This study assesses the structure of Portuguese domestic pleasure travel motivations in an approach-avoidance framework, conceptualized by Fennell (1975, 1978) and Rossiter and Percy (1987) for the generic consumer motivation, and by Iso-Ahola (1980, 1982, 1983) for the specific leisure, travel and tourism motivations.

From a marketing perspective, one should be aware that marketing programmes only work effectively if based on the motivation that is relevant for the target market (Rossiter and Percy 1987). In the approach-avoidance conception of consumer motivation, one should expect the prevalence of escape motivation to occur when the dominant experiences are stressful, i.e. when people experience unpleasant high levels of arousal, in the terms of environmental psychology (Russell and Pratt 1980). On the other hand, approach motivation forces arise either from a sense of unpleasant low levels of arousal or from a neutral state. In reversal theory (Apter 1989) one would say that escape is a telic mode of need satisfying, by "relaxing", while the increase in excitement sought by approach motivation dimensions is the paratelic mode of need satisfying. Note that what matters is the level of arousal felt and, for instance, in a telic state a (physically or intellectually) demanding leisure activity may be felt as "relaxing" (O'Connell and Calhoun 2001).

According to Iso-Ahola (1982) the relative importance of approach and avoidance motivations is due to the experience of contradictions and conflicts within the individual and between him or her and others, thus when setting goals for travelling, tourists tend to optimize/compensate their levels of arousal. Nevertheless, he repeatedly stresses that tourists usually are motivated by both seeking (approach) and escape (avoidance): "tourism is a dialectical process because it provides an outlet for avoiding something and for simultaneously seeking something" (Iso-Ahola 1982, emphasis in the original).
Building up on Iso-Ahola's theory, this article aims to suggest that tourism products and services positioning options should be assessed on the basis of the relative importance of approach dimensions.

Data and Methods

This study is part of a research on motivation, attitudes and behaviour of Portuguese domestic travellers. Data for this analysis were collected from telephone interviews conducted during July 2004 with a stratified sample of households from mainland Portugal (i.e. NUTS I Continent). The strata were formed by grouping municipalities on the bases of geographical location and of some demographic variables known to be linked to the probability of engaging in domestic pleasure travel - age and education. Municipalities were selected at random in each strata, household telephone numbers at random in each municipality and respondents at random in each household, provided they were aged between 18-84. Total sample size was 1700, but only Y3 of interviewees were identified as pleasure travellers and given all questions, including travel behaviour and recreational activities and pleasure travel motivation; the remaining 73 answered only to the common questions on attitudes to particular destinations and some psychographic and demographic variables.

The subsample analysed is composed by respondents who answered all motivation items (n = 558). In the research project respondents were weighted to match the variables gender, age and education at the municipality level, but the analysis reported here was done on the unweighted sample, since it acceptably matches the characteristics of Portuguese domestic travellers in all variables, according to data from National Bureau of Statistics (PORTUGAL 2004).

The motivation items were assessed by a seven point scale with poles labelled "not at all important" and "fully important" and the points in-between unlabelled. Based on literature review and personal interviews, 33 items were developed and tested in 100 telephone interviews with pleasure travellers. The data from this test were factor analysed and items that had less common variance and/or most extreme positive or negative skewness were eliminated, with the aim to have about 20 items in the final questionnaire. The actual number of items included in the study was 19, but two of them - "do nothing at all" and "seek solitude" - were further removed from the analysis because they showed poor correlations with other items on the respective factors, thus degrading scale reliability. The final solution is a four factor analysis resulting from principal axis factoring (PAF) extraction of a correlation matrix with squared multiple correlations in the main diagonal, and oblimin rotation, done with SPSS 12. The number of factors retained was determined by parallel analysis (PA) via a Monte Carlo simulation with 1000 matrices of the same size of the data matrix and composed of random generated numbers; the eigenvalues of the data analysis were compared with the 95th percentile of the values from the PA (O'Connor 2000).

The use of common factor analysis instead of the widely used principal component analysis (PCA) is justified for theoretical reasons, viz. the fact that we intend to measure latent variables that "cause" the common variance of the observed variables (Bartholomew, Steele, Moustaki and Galbraith 2002; Ford, MacCallum and Tait 1986; Preacher and MacCallum 2003) and oblique rotation is justifiable since we don't have any reason to sustain an orthoionality assumption (Ford et al., 1986).

To analyse the influence of background variables, as proxies for the routine environment experienced by respondents, on travel motivations, we executed a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with some of those variables as factors and standardized noncentred factor scores (Thompson 1993) as dependent variables.

Results and Discussion

Factors are interpretable on the basis of the pattern matrix, so the first factor, being related to items expressing the needs for relatedness and ego-enhancement, is labelled social factor. The second factor relates to items expressing avoidance motivation and, to a less extent, the need to have fun, thus it is equivalent to Iso-Ahola's escape dimension. Intellectual needs are linked to the third factor, labelled knowledge, while in the fourth the highest loadings are from items related to the need to experience something new and different, so the label novelty was chosen.

In the approach-avoidance conception of motivation, this structure is determined by one sole avoidance dimension identical to Iso-Ahola's escape dimension, and three approach dimensions, two of which resembling the social and intellectual components of the Leisure Motivation Scale (Beard and Ragheb 1983), the third best described as expressing the need for novelty and adventure.

As to the relative strength of motivation factors, results clearly show that escape is the main motivator of (domestic, at least) pleasure travel, in accordance to Iso-Ahola (1982) assumption. After all, getting away is the most obvious reason for taking a holiday (Ryan 2002) and the escapade concept is dominant in the
increasing short-break market (Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987). We found significant relations between motivation factors and age, education, urbanization and employment status of respondents, but the most parsimonious model of the relation between motivation dimensions and background variables was found to be the one considering only the fixed-effects from age and employment status. The effect of being young in novelty is the largest from the model. Compared to other age groups, young adults tend to score higher on social motivation, while mature present the highest knowledge scores. Regardless of age, those employed have a stronger need to escape. As expected, escape was estimated to be the main motivator for all combination of age and employment levels, despite being considerably higher for young employed than for mature non-employed (mostly retired). Young non-employed (mostly students) have relatively higher social needs and relatively lower knowledge needs, while mature employed show the opposite trend. The largest difference in motivation importance, however, is between young and mature, in the need for novelty.

Resorting to Rossiter and Percy (1987), we assert that avoidance motivation is primarily related to the category need in tourism, whereas approach motivations are relevant to brand attitude. The basic idea is to assume that escape needs are a necessary condition for people to go on holidays, thus avoidance motivation is present on every market segment; it is on the basis of approach motivations that destination marketers must position their offer, finding the benefits that best match the relevant (approach) motivation(s) to their target(s) in a unique way. According to the results of our analysis, if the target are students, for example, marketing efforts should accentuate benefits linked to opportunities to socialize and adventure oneself; if the target are young employed, emphasis on adventure should surpass contact occasions; to the mature segments, on the other hand, efforts may be directed to the opportunity to gain knowledge on established sights.

Finally we maintain that this idea adds to the theory of Iso-Ahola by showing that market segments may be identified not by splitting between seekers and avoiders, but by the way travellers seek to avoid, i.e. to which (or in which combination of) approach dimension they resort to increase excitement (i.e. pleasant stimulation) in order to avoid unpleasant states, and we suggest that these approach dimensions are social, intellectual and adventure or novelty, admitting others not apparent in our data, such as hedonism or indulgence.

References


Acknowledgement: This research was funded by the project INTERREG III A SP2 P11 - Douro-Duero Sec. XXI.