

## Motives for Recreational River Floating: Relative Consistency Across Settings

Knopf, R. C., Peterson, G. L., & Leatherberry, E. C. (1983). Motives for recreational river floating: relative consistency across settings. *Leisure Sciences* 5(3), 231-255.

River(s): Apple (WI), Colorado (CO), Main Salmon, Middle Fork Salmon (ID), Missouri (MT), Deschutes (OR), Hiawassee, Ocoee (TN), Illinois (OK), Mohican (OH), Nantahala (NC)  
Research Topic(s): User Experience, Recreation Setting  
Type of Publication: Journal

### 1. Study Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine the linkage between two constructs - environmental characteristics of rivers (defined conceptually as situational attributes) and user motivations (defined conceptually as desired psychological outcomes, goal orientations) - to address the "ultimate research challenge" of translating motivation into "precise directives for environmental design." Common thought (70s and early 80s) accepts that there is a relationship between motives and recreation setting, however, this global assertion goes contrary to some studies that suggest activities, not motives, are the strong linkage to environmental characteristics. Thus, the authors' proposition suggests there is not a strong linkage between motives and environmental characteristics.

### 2. Findings

Survey 1 response rate: 56%; Survey 2 response rate: 50%.

#### 2.1. Motives

- Eight dominant motive categories were identified: friendship, escape, exercise, learning, family, simplicity, social power, and heterosexual contact.
- Although there is some indication of setting influencing motives, overall the results suggest that "motive profiles can be better characterized by their uniformity across settings than by their diversity." (p. 247) The means of survey respondents for each river consistently group together around the average mean for each motive.
- One motive that did reveal some differences across settings was Escape.
- Upon further examination, the following results are noted:
  - Missouri and Middle Fork Salmon users are motivated by escape
  - Apple river users are not interested in escape as a motivation
  - Ocoee users are strongly motivated by exercise, but not by simplicity and family.

## **2.2. Typology of Rivers**

When individual river motive profiles were compared to the average river profile, some variations emerged resulting in four typologies:

- Type 1 – visitors are “strongly oriented toward escape but less interested in a simple experience.” (p. 245) These rivers include: Deschutes, Main Salmon, Missouri, Middle Fork Salmon, Ocoee, and Colorado. The river most negatively correlated is the Apple.
- Type 2 – visitors are interested in a “simple, family-oriented experience.” (p. 245) These rivers include: Missouri, Middle Fork Salmon, Colorado, Hiawassee, Mohican, and Apple. The rivers most negatively correlated are Ocoee and Illinois.
- Type 3 – visitors are interested in “directing others and meeting members of the opposite sex and are less interested in gaining exercise and learning” (p. 245) These rivers include: Ocoee, Hiawassee, Mohican, and Apple. The river most negatively correlated is the Middle Fork Salmon.
- Type 4 – visitors are interested in a “family oriented, learning experience.” (p. 245) These rivers include: Main Salmon, Middle Fork Salmon, Colorado, and Nantahala. The river most negatively correlated is the Deschutes.
- There are three motives that “most effectively discriminate the four river types” (p. 245): escape, simplicity, and family-oriented.

## **2.3. Comparing Motives of River Recreation to Other Activities**

- Recreation motive profiles can be described by three factors: river recreation, passive recreation, and active recreation.
- Factor 1 (river recreation) shows strong motivational similarity among all 11 rivers in addition to sailing, motorboating, and fishing.
- The Apple River values for the three factors indicate visitors differ from those normally attracted to river settings.

## **3. Key Discussion Points**

- There may be specific subgroups within each river sample that do not abide by the consistency observed across all 11 rivers – groups may have “strong motivational differences for a given river” (p. 244).
- “Motivational aberrations are relatively confined to particular motives (e.g., Escape) and particular settings (e.g., Apple and Ocoee).” (p. 247)
- “Perhaps recreation motivation is far less dimensional than what has been previously implied by the literature.” (p. 249)
- This study shows the “possibility that the recreation motive-environmental attribute link is not strong.” (p. 250)

- Further study is needed to “examine how the mind differentiates and organizes the array of recreation settings available to it.” (p. 251)

#### **4. Management Recommendations**

N/A

#### **5. Research Design**

Survey research, random sample (except the St. Paul, MN sample that was designed represent the black community).

##### **5.1. Study Area**

- Survey 1: 11 rivers surveyed as part of the USDA Forest Service’s National River Recreation Study: Apple (WI), Colorado (CO), Middle Fork Salmon (ID), Main Salmon (ID), Missouri (MT), Deschutes (OR), Hiawassee (TN), Ocoee (TN), Illinois (OK), Mohican (OH), and Nantahala (NC).
- Survey 2: Four urban areas were surveyed by Northwestern University researchers: Chicago, IL; Des Plaines, IL; Evanston, IL; and St. Paul, MN.

##### **5.2. Data Collection Instruments**

- Survey 1: Mail questionnaire sent to boaters from 11 rivers.
- Survey 2: Mail questionnaire sent to street addresses from commercial street address guides.

##### **5.3. Study Population**

- Survey 1: Boaters during peak use season of each river in 1977.
- Survey 2: Midwestern residents of four urban areas during 1977.

##### **5.4. Sample Size**

Survey 1 - A range of 10 to 90 days sampled. Sample size for each river as follows:

Apple (WI)	100
Colorado (CO)	508
Middle Fork Salmon (ID)	132
Main Salmon (ID)	127
Missouri (MT)	281
Deschutes (OR)	174
Hiawassee (TN)	60
Ocoee (TN)	178
Illinois (OK)	92
Mohican (OH)	146

Survey 2 – 1,785 residents were sampled.

## **5.5. List of Variables and Operational Definitions**

### **5.5.1. River setting**

For the river survey, the following characteristics were used to describe each river: physiographic province (e.g., midwest agrarian, rocky mountain range), water flow (i.e., flatwater, whitewater), predominant craft type (i.e., raft, canoe, tube), length of trip (i.e., one day, multiple day), reported encounters per day, and management style (i.e., subliminal, restrictive).

### **5.5.2. Motives**

- 20-item psychological inventory of recreational motives was utilized. For example (p. 237):
  - “To do something with my friends”
  - “To get some exercise”
  - “To learn new things”
- Used a five-point scale where users rated the items from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” (p. 237-238)
- This 20-item motive inventory was used in both the river survey and urban area survey.

### **5.5.3. Recreation activities**

Seventeen activities were used in the urban area survey to identify reasons for participating: bowling, bicycling, dancing, fishing, golf, jogging, motorboating, movies, museum visitation, picnicking, sailing, sports participation, sports watching, swimming, tennis, theater/opera visitation, and zoo visitation.

## **6. Theories Used in Study**

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) approach was used as a guide in the thought processes behind this research. The ROS model (theory?) assumes a strong linkage between environmental setting and experience generated. Crandall's (1980) motivational categories were used to develop 16 of the 20 inventory items, and Driver's (1977) 20-item psychological inventory guided item development and led to the remaining four items of the inventory.

## **7. Cautions or Limitations**

- With 56% response rate for the river survey and 50% response rate for the urban environment survey, there could be possible non-response bias effects.
- The river survey was limited to 11 rivers, which may not include the full range of river settings (e.g., urban rivers were missing).