Profiling Aruban Off-Island Shoppers: Demographics, Destinations, Expenditures, and Shopping Importance

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Abstract

As travel becomes faster and more affordable the number of consumers who travel continues to increase. Although the cross-shopping behavior of citizens from many countries has been investigated, to date no study has examined the cross-border shopping behavior of consumers from small island countries. The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the consumer demographics and travel of Aruban off-island shoppers to determine if distinct market segments of shoppers exist and to describe their off-island consumer behavior. Two groups of respondents were found with one composed of males approximately 44.5 years old, the head of the house, but not the main shopper, with a higher level of education and income, and who spend more per trip than the second group composed of female heads of the households who were also the main shoppers. Vacation was the number one reason for traveling with shopping as the second most common reason for traveling. Shopping was an important motivation for all off-island trips, preceded in importance only by business trips.

Key Words: Shopping Tourism, Cross-Border Shopping, Off-Island Shopping

1. Introduction

The act of leaving a local trade environment to make purchases in an outlying area has long been recognized in the literature as out-shopping behavior. Yet a distinctive sub-category of out-shopping behavior has been documented by researchers: that of shoppers traveling beyond their home country boundaries to make purchases which has been called cross-border shopping. (Di Matteo & Di Matteo, 1996; Dmitrovic & Vida, 2007; Wang, 2004). Indeed, international shopping tourism (tourism with the major purpose of international travel geared toward shopping experiences) has become a major trend in the global travel industry with countries vying for travelers to spend money within their borders to bolster local economies (Shankman, n.d.).

Previous cross-border shopping research has examined the shopping behavior of consumers between a number of countries including: the U.S. and Mexico (Bojanic, 2011; Pavlakovich-Kochi & Charney, 2008; Sullivan, Bonn, Bhardwaj, & Dupont, 2012; Timothy, 2005); the U.S. and Canada (Di Matteo, & Di Matteo,1996; Timothy & Butler, 1995); Hong Kong and Shenzhen (Wang, 2004) Denmark and Germany (Bygvra, 1998); Denmark and Sweden, (Bygvra & Westlund, 2004); Sweden and Finland (Prokkola, 2007); Netherlands and Germany (Van der Velde & Spierings, 2010); countries in southeastern Europe (Dmitrovic & Vida, 2007); and countries of the Dutch-German Rhine-Waal region (Spierings & Van der Velde, 2013).

Yet most cross-border shopping research has examined shopping behavior of consumers between non-island countries, while the shopping behavior of citizens of small island nations is, to date, unexplored. Consumer shopping on small-islands is unique from consumers who live in larger countries or larger islands as there is a smaller, and often very limited, number of retail outlets from which to choose to shop in. In additional, to expand the number of shopping choices a consumer has, one must either shop through the internet or catalog and have items shipped into the country, or they must travel outside of the country to bring products home. In such instances, same-day trips over the border are not an option given the time and money required to fly off island, and in doing so, the cost of traveling great distances and more expensive travel modes must be weighed against the trade-offs of shopping on island.

With over 1.5 million tourists visiting its shores annually, the Caribbean-island nation of Aruba is a popular destination where people come to experience its beaches, weather, and unique shopping (U.S. Dept. of State, 2013). However, to date no research has explored Arubans as tourists nor their off-island, cross-border shopping behavior. Therefore, the overall purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the demographics, destinations, and expenditures of Arubans traveling off-island to shop.

2.0 Context and Review of Literature

2.1 Aruba

Only 15 miles off the coast of Venezuela, the southern Caribbean island of Aruba is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across and home to approximately 109,000 residents (Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, 2014). Inbound and outbound air travel is serviced by the Queen Beatrix International Airport, just outside the capital city of Oranjestadt. Averaging 334 international flights flights leaving Aruba every week, this airport handles up to departing 15,577 travelers (FareCompare.com, n.d.). Aruban citizens generally speak a minimum of four languages with Dutch (as an official territory of the Netherlands) and the native language of Papiamento serving as official island languages. English and Spanish is widely spoken as well (Aruban Tourism Authority, n.d.). Consumers in Aruba have ample experience with foreign visitors, products and cultures, although the majority, or approximately 72%, of Aruban tourists are U.S. citizens.

2.2 Tourism and Cross-Border Shopping

Tourism has long played a powerful role in global economics. Despite a slight decline in travel due to the global recession beginning in 2008, in the long run the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) foresees a continual average annual growth of 4% (World Tourism Organization, 2013). The future of the travel and tourism's GDP looks primarily positive after difficult economic times, with a forecast of a 3.1% growth in direct contributions to the global GDP while the larger world economy is predicted to grow at a slower 2.4%. After growing for four consecutive years and at a pace faster than both the manufacturing and financial industries, the global tourism industry generated over 260 million new jobs (one in eleven) around the world (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2013).

As globalization continues to expand and traveling becomes more efficient, fast and increasingly less expensive, the number of people taking advantage of traveling to other countries continues to grow. This growth in tourism has been found to exist for variety of reasons. One category of travel can be defined as leisure such as traveling to have new and fun experiences (Spierings, 2006). However, traveling can also be for satisfying more utilitarian motives such as conducting business or traveling to shop for products that might be lower in price or better in quality or perhaps gaining access to retailers and product assortments not available in the home country (Dmitrovic & Vida, 2007). Traveling can also accomplish both leisure and utilitarian motivations at the same time, as with the purchase of goods as souvenirs for the traveler or for gifts brought home for others. However, Timothy and Butler (1995) found that even cross-border shopping trips that may be truly utilitarian in focus may also carry with them the expectations of leisure, fun, and excitement.

No matter the reason for the purchase of products accomplished while traveling, when people travel internationally to shop in another country, the act of purchasing products has been coined "cross-border shopping" (Di Matteo & Di Matteo, 1996; Dmitrovic & Vida, 2007; Wang, 2004). As countries have different laws and regulating taxes on goods coming into the country across their borders, it has been said that the act of border shopping is more complex than domestic out-shopping (Piron, 2002). Indeed, consumers must decide whether to buy goods in their own country, taking into consideration product availability while at the same time factoring in the added cost of traveling to another country to purchase products, and whether there are taxes on border quotas. If the draw or pull of traveling to another country is enjoyable and seen as an added benefit, then this may be seen as additional motivation for tourists to travel across national borders into a bordering country, or in the case of Aruba, to fly off-island (Leal, Lopez-Laborda & Rodrigo, 2010).

As documented by numerous researchers, when shopping is a major motivation for people to travel across borders this type of tourism has been classified as shopping tourism (Timothy & Butler (1995) or "purposeful shopping" (Gorter, 2003; Van Leeuwen & Rietveld, 2011). Tourists engaged in purposeful shopping are thought to be more goal-oriented often looking for a certain product or class of products that are more economical or varied than those found in their own locale (Van Leeuwen & Rietveld, 2011). In addition, another form of shopping may occur in travel. Although not considered to be the primary motivation for traveling, "recreational shopping" or non-goal-oriented shopping, is also a major activity that tourists engage in while they are traveling (Lehto, Cai, O'Leary & Huan, 2004).

Even if shopping may be recreational in nature, Heunge and Cheng (2000) and Wang (2004) found that shopping is still an important aspect of tourism. This is true whether the items purchased in another country are souvenirs or non-essential in nature (Timothy & Butler, 1995) or are considered more essential items that are less expensive, of better quality, or have some other product characteristic not available in their own home retail environment (Dmitrovic & Vida, 2007; Di Matteo & Di Matteo,1996; Wang, 2004).

2.3 Market Segmentation

Tourism scholars and practitioners alike realize that not all tourists fall into a one-size-fits-all homogeneous group. At the most basic level of understanding, tourists do not seek the same travel destinations. All tourists are not attracted to, nor engage in, the same vacation activities in any destination. Further, there is a wide variance in the types of experiences sought by tourists. As shopping is known to be a significant part of tourists' travel activities (Paige and Littrell, 2003), consumer-oriented retailers who cater to tourists make continual and ongoing efforts to have a solid understanding of their market's profile through market segmentation. Now a widely recognized practice, market segmentation is the process of subdividing large groups of consumers into smaller groups based on unique characteristics, needs, or behaviors and demand for distinct products, services and marketing mixes (Dolcinar, 2004; Kotler and Armstrong, 2013). Described by DeSarbo, Grewal, and Scott (2008) as the 'traditional foundation and genesis of marketing strategy formulation" (p. 280), marketing segmentation has been embraced by marketers to identify and obtain distinct profiles of tourism consumers (Pavlakovich-Kochi & Charney, 2008; Pizam and Mansfeld, 2000). A widely accepted research method in tourism research is to determine market segments of tourists by analyzing their responses to 'activity' questions, with the underlying assumption that activities are valid variables to investigate tourists' travel purposes and/or motives (McKercher and Chan 2005).

Ideally, research classifies segments of tourists with similar demographic profiles, needs, wants, patronage and/or purchasing behavior, who are reachable by targeted marketing communications (Kotler & Keller, 2014). Market segmentation has strong strategic implications for developing focused marketing mixes and product positioning, ultimately increasing the potential for profitability (Dolnicar and Grun, 2008). Typologies profiling tourist segments attractive to tourism marketers have previously been identified by tourism scholars (Littrell, Paige and Song, 2004; Paige and Littrell, 2003) and provide a foundation for continued research on the connections between purchasing behavior and the various types of tourists.

Market segments or typologies of tourists have been based on demographics, behavior, motivation, and benefits. Yu and Littrell (2005) found that demographics were important segmentation variables when studying shopping behavior of tourists. In their study looking at process-oriented versus product-oriented shopping, tourists who were older, more educated, and had a higher discretionary income were more likely to travel more frequently at an average of four trips annually, for longer periods of time at destinations further away from home and had shopping expenditures of approximately $450 per trip (excluding travel expenses). Additionally, Lehto, Cai, O'Leary and Huan (2004) found that age, gender, travel purpose, and travel mode were important determinants of shopping expenditures and the products purchased of cross-shopping Taiwanese tourists. Therefore, the objectives of the present research are to:

1. Determine if off-island Aruban shoppers can be segmented according to demographics and travel expenditures.
2. Examine how often respondents travel off-island, where they travel, reasons for travel, and importance of shopping while traveling.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Instrument

The instrument was composed of questions designed to obtain demographics, travel destination and frequency, and financial expenditures while off-island. In addition, shopping attitudes and motivations were also asked but investigated for subsequent research. The survey was first constructed in English (a commonly-spoken language in Aruba) and then translated into Papiamento (an official language of Aruba) by a certified English-Papiamento translator. The Papiemento version was then back-translated into English to ensure items and directions were appropriately translated, with minor changes being addressed. The survey was then pre-tested on a convenience sample of Aruban consumers with additional minor corrections being made.

Information necessary to gain an understanding of Aruban off-island shoppers included demographic information such as gender, age, income, education, and number of children in family. In addition, it was important to ascertain information pertaining to their travel and shopping patterns for the previous year. Travel information included how often they traveled in the previous year as well as their travel destination(s). Respondents were also asked why and how often in the past year they had traveled for shopping, vacation, entertainment, visiting family, business, business/pleasure, and medical reasons. The instrument used a 5-point scale with 0 representing that no trips were taken, 1 meant 1 - 2 trips, 2 stood for 3 - 4 trips, 3 represented 5 - 6 trips, and 4 meant more than 6 trips per year were taken. To ascertain the significance of shopping as a motivation for traveling, respondents were then asked how important it was that they had an opportunity to shop while traveling (for the previously-listed reasons) using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being 'very unimportant' to 5 being 'very important'. Travel information regarding amounts spent while off-island for lodging, food, transportation, entertainment/sports, and shopping was also gathered.

3.2 Sample

A chain-referral or snowball sampling technique was employed to collect a purposive sample of Arubans who were the head of the household and who self-identified as having traveled and shopped off-island the previous year (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Respondents were first collected from parents of students enrolled in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies at the University of Aruba who identified their families as those who usually out-shopped off the island of Aruba. Respondents then identified additional relatives, friends, and neighbors that might also fall into the category of outshoppers as previously identified. Respondents were given the choice of taking either the English or Papiamento version of the survey, depending on their preference. This sampling technique yielded a total of 303 Aruban off-island shoppers or approximately 3% of the total of 105,000 Aruban residents. Some survey participants completed the survey but either did not answer the travel outcome variable questions or purposely answered that they spent zero dollars on shopping during the last year. These participants were excluded from statistical analysis as they did not meet our criteria of someone cross-border shopping during the previous year. Limiting the number of Aruban participants to those who completed the travel questions completely and self-identifying themselves as having traveled off-island to shop within the previous year resulted in 149 usable responses. As the population of Aruba is 109,000 citizens, this sample size is approximately 1.37% of the total island population. As this is an exploratory study, the exact number of off-island shoppers is unknown, but it is assumed that the number of people in the population who might be classified as off-island shoppers is greater than the 149 of those responses analyzed.

4.0 Results

Objective one was to determine whether off-island Aruban shoppers can be segmented according to demographics and travel expenditures. A cluster analysis was performed using the characteristics of sex, age, education, household income, head of household as main shopper, and number of people in the household by age. Two distinct clusters of shoppers are evident and are presented in Tables 1 through 4.

Clusters were split down gender lines with cluster one composed of 81 males, while cluster two was composed of 68 females (see Table 1). The average age of cluster one respondents was approximately 44.5 years old, while cluster two was slightly younger at 43 years old. Cluster one was also slightly more educated with almost 2 years of higher education or an associate's degree, while the second cluster had a slightly lower education with this cluster having some college but less than a two year degree. A significant difference was found between the two clusters as to whether the head of household was the main shopper in the household. Since this was measured with a response option of yes (=1) or no (= 2), differences were calculated with a t-test. As can be seen in Table 1, Cluster 1 analysis indicates that the head of the household was male but was not as likely to be the main shopper in the household as those in Cluster 2 where the head of the household was female and was more likely to be the main shopper for the family.

Table 1. Cluster Analysis by Sex, Age and Education

	Cluster 1 (n=81)		Cluster 2 (n=68)	
Sex (head of household)	Male		Female	
	Mean	**Std Err**	**Mean**	**Std Err**
Age	44.52	1.10	42.88	1.71
Education	3.90	0.17	3.53	0.20
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
1=less than high school diploma	4	2.68%	8	5.37%
2=high school or equivalent	21	14.09%	18	12.08%
3=some college but less than 2 years	5	3.36%	7	4.70%
4=2 year degree	12	8.05%	7	4.70%
5=4 year degree (BA, BS, etc.)	28	18.79%	21	14.09%
6=Master's degree	10	6.71%	7	4.70%
7=Doctoral/PhD	1	0.67%	0	0%
8=Professional degree (MD, JD)	0	0%	0	0%
Head of Household as Main Shopper (1=yes, 2 - no)	1.65*	0.05	1.28	0.05

*sig. at .05 level

Household income also grouped according to the 2-cluster solution (see Table 2). Respondents were asked to indicate the income of the household with response amounts given in Aruban florins (Afl) and the equivalent exchange for U.S. dollars. According to the 2-cluster solution, Cluster 1 had an income mean (2.7) or approximately $43,500 U.S. Cluster 2 had a slightly lower mean (2.51) for household income or approximately $37,000 U.S. Cluster 2 had several more respondents with the highest levels of income at

$200,000 U.S. or over, but also had 5 more respondents that were in the lowest levels of income of $25,000 U.S. or less.

Table 2. Cluster Analysis by Household Income

		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	
	Mean	Std Err	Mean	Std Err
Household Income	2.70	0.12	2.51	0.16
	n	%	n	%
1=Afl 43,571 (US $25,000) or less	10	6.71%	15	10.07%
2=Afl 43,752 (US $25,001)-- Afl 87,500 ($50,000)	25	16.78%	25	16.78%
3=Afl87,501 (US $50,001)-- Afl 175,000 (US $100,000)	30	20.13%	15	10.07%
4=Afl 175,001 (US $100,001)-- Afl 262,500 (US $150,000)	12	8.05%	7	4.70%
5=Afl 262,501(US $150,001)-- Afl 350,000 (US $200,000)	3	2.01%	3	2.01%
6=Afl 350,001 (US $200,001) & above	1	0.67%	3	2.01%

The number and ages of people in the home were also analyzed according to the two- cluster solution. Differences between the means of each age group by each cluster were then analyzed using analysis of variance. Cluster 1 had significantly more people than Cluster 2 in every age group in the home except for children between the ages of newborn and 18 years old.

Table 3. Cluster Analysis by # of People in Home by Age

# of people in home by age	Mean	Std Err	Mean	Std Err
Newborn to 18 years	1.83	0.10	1.69	0.13
19-34 years*	1.5	0.10	1.25	0.08
35-49 years**	1.57	0.08	1.27	0.09
50 + years **	1.68	0.09	1.36	0.10

*Sig. at 0.05 level **Sig. at 0.01 level

The second aspect of objective one was to examine whether the two-cluster solution differed according to travel expenditures. As can be seen in Table 4, both groups spent a minimum of 9 nights off-island on every trip, while spending at least 5 days shopping. Cluster 1 spent more on almost every aspect of the trip except on food for which Cluster 2 spent more.

In the total amount of time spent off the island, the average amount for all categories combined, the amount spent by Cluster 1 (the male group) was $5,067 while Cluster 2 (the female group) spent $4,688 or $379 less than cluster one.

Table 4. Cluster Analysis by Trip Expenditures

	Cluster 1 (n = 81)		Cluster 2 (n=68)	
Time per Off-Island Trip	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
# of Nights Off-island	9.01	0.63	9.6	1.11
Days spent shopping	5.27	0.23	5.24	0.24
Expenditures per Off-Island Trip (converted to US $)				
Lodging	$915.07	83.97	$831.48	128.24
Food	$846.93	91.21	$897.22	229.71
Transportation	$536.01	45.57	$465.19	77.88
Entertainment	$358.31	62.27	$327.88	75.81
Shopping	$2410.43	259.46	$2166.67	270.24
Total $ per trip	$5,066.75		$4,688.44	

Objective two of this study was to examine how often in the past year respondents traveled off-island, where they traveled, their reasons for travel, and how important it was for them to be able to shop while traveling.

Table 5 outlines the mean responses when study participants were asked why and how often they traveled off island in the previous year (see Table 5). Traveling for vacation had the highest mean at 2.47 indicating that people traveled between 3 to 6 times per year, while traveling specifically for shopping was undertaken second most often, with a mean of 2.13. Respondents also were asked the importance of having an opportunity to shop when they traveled off-island on trips not designated as shopping trips (using a 5-point Likert-type scale with one being very unimportant to 5 being very important). As can be seen in Table 1, when Arubans traveled for vacation and when visiting family it was important for them (4.21 and 4.25 respectively) to be able to shop while off-island on these types of trips. When the primary purpose of traveling off-island was for medical reason, it was still relatively important (3.75) for them to have the opportunity to shop while traveling. As might be expected, shopping while traveling for business appears to be less important.

Table 5. Reason and Frequency of Travel, and Importance of Shopping While Traveling

Reasons for Travel	Mean	Std Dev.	Importance of Shopping While Traveling	Mean	Std. Dev.
Shopping	2.13	0.85	-----	-----	-----
Vacation	2.47	1.02		4.21	1.01
Entertainment	1.76	1.27		3.25	1.71
Visiting family	2.00	0.73		4.25	0.83
Business	1.50	1.43		2.25	1.64
Business/pleasure	1.43	0.43		2.25	1.64
Medical	1.14	0,43		3.75	1.64

Of those respondents who identified themselves as traveling off-island during the previous year, respondents claimed to take a total of 290 trips, with an average of 1.9 trips taken per year per respondent. Of these trips, the U.S. was the most frequently-identified destination country with 208 trips taken. Miami was identified as the top destination for 114 of those trips, followed by Orlando, FL (42), New York City, NY (16), and Atlanta (6). Other U.S. cities cited as being visited at least one but less than 5 times included Dallas, Washington, D.C., Knoxville, TN, and Seattle, WA. The U.S. was also named an additional 78 times as a destination without a specific city being listed by respondents. It could be that in these cases, numerous cities may have been visited during a single trip and respondents chose not to list multiple destinations, or respondents simply did not want to identify the city(ies) visited. Other countries visited most often included other Caribbean island nations such as Curacao and Bonaire (50), the Netherlands (50), Venezuela (20), Puerto Rico (9), Spain (6), and Surinam (5), and Ecuador (3).

5. Conclusion and Implications

Market segmentation, through the use of cluster analysis, continues to provide value to tourism marketers in understanding their target markets. This study provides an initial understanding of several distinct market segments of Aruban off-island shoppers, giving marketers a better basis for developing differentiated marketing strategies aimed at identifiable groups rather than engaging in mass-marketing to all Aruban off-island shoppers. Given the demographic outline of clusters one and two, it is not surprising that the two clusters were split down stereotypical gender lines. The cluster composed of female shoppers was younger, less educated, with a lower income, more likely to be the main shoppers in the household, and with a smaller number of children and adults in each household than the cluster composed of men as heads of household. Custer one respondents were also less likely to be the main shoppers in the household than cluster two respondents. Participants in both groups spent approximately 9 nights off-island per trip, with both male and female clusters reporting that they spend more than half of their time shopping while off-island except for business trips. During their trips off-island, the average spent by the male group was

$5,067 while the female group was slightly less at $4,688. Interestingly, of these expenditures almost half of the total expenditures in both groups was spent purchasing products, not on eating, lodging, entertainment, etc.

The respondents were serious travelers taking approximately off-island trips twice a year with the U.S. being the most popular destination country, with Miami being the most visited city in the US. Curacao and Bonaire (sister islands of the Dutch Antilles) and the Netherlands were the second most visited countries with 50 trips each. Shopping was second only to taking a vacation as the reason specified for off-island trips. The importance of shopping to the respondents cannot be understated as even when on vacation or visiting family, having the opportunity to shop was important. Even when when traveling due to medical reasons, respondents reported that it was important to have an opportunity to shop.

There are some very salient implications which underly the importance for additional research into the off-island shopping behaviors of many countries. There are a number of shoppers who appear to be going off-island primarily to shop, or going off-island for vacation in which a large amount of time and money is being spent to buy products. This has serious negative implications for lost revenue for both the Aruban government and for Aruban retailers. If all 149 respondents travel twice a year, they are spending approximately 18 days/nights and spending nearly $10,000 somewhere other than Aruba. This equates to nearly $149 thousand dollars spent per year off the island of Aruba. However if the off-island shopper population is even a modest 10% of the Aruban population, with similar shopping expenditures of the present sample, this extrapolates out to a total tax and retail revenue loss that could be over 1 ½ million dollars (U.S.).

6. Limitations/Questions for Further Research

Limitations to the current research to be noted include the size of the usable sample of 149 and not the 303 collected as half of the respondents did not complete the sections on number of trips and travel expenses incurred in the past year while off-island. However, as the total population of Aruba numbers only 109,000, the 149 respondents who completed all items on the survey still represents 1.37% of the total island population, with an unknown number of people in the population who might be classified as off-island shoppers. Another limitation involves the fact that Aruba, because of its specific island characteristics and retailers can not be generalized to other similar size island nations, nor to larger countries.

Additional research is needed to explore the amount and type of products purchased off-island and satisfaction with island retailers. Such research should explore the types of retail formats desired by off-island shoppers and the types of products they want or need to be carried by Aruban retailers.

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