

**Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra
Degree Programme in Tourism and Hospitality Management**

Alina Gorelova

Target Marketing of SantaPark to American Tourists

Thesis 2019

Abstract

Alina Gorelova

Target Marketing of SantaPark to American Tourists, 108 pages, 2 appendices

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences

Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra

Degree Programme in Tourism and Hospitality Management

Bachelor's Thesis 2019

Instructor: Mr. Sami Lanu, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences

The objective of the study was to examine the target market of American tourists. The specific focus shifted to uncovering commonalities in preferences of the segment of American families. The preferences were limited to the Finnish theme park SantaPark Arctic World.

In the theoretical chapters works by marketing luminaries were introduced. The framework of the target marketing model was examined closely. The study relied on qualitative research methods. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for data collection purposes. The interviews were conducted using video-conferencing. Thematic content analysis was used for interview transcript analysis.

The results present common preferences of the target market. The findings suggest a correlation with qualitative segmentation variables. Recommendations were made to SantaPark on the practical marketing applications of the insights.

Keywords: Target Marketing, Targeting, Segmentation, Positioning.

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	6
1.1	Background information.....	6
1.2	Company.....	8
1.3	Objectives.....	9
1.4	Previous knowledge.....	10
1.5	Delimitations.....	10
1.6	Research problem.....	11
1.7	Research methods.....	11
1.8	Overview.....	12
2	Theoretical framework.....	12
2.1	Historical overview of segmentation and target marketing.....	13
2.2	Target marketing.....	14
2.2.1	STP model of target marketing.....	16
2.2.2	Segmentation.....	17
2.2.3	Targeting.....	17
2.2.4	Segmentation criteria.....	18
2.2.5	Positioning.....	20
2.2.5.1	Positioning map.....	22
2.2.5.2	Positioning strategies.....	22
2.2.6	Marketing mix.....	24
2.2.7	Promotional mix.....	27
2.3	Market segmentation approaches.....	28
2.3.1	Quantitative market segmentation.....	29
2.3.2	Qualitative market segmentation.....	30
2.3.3	Psychographic segmentation approaches.....	30
2.3.4	Behavioristic segmentation approaches.....	33
2.4	Consumer behavior in target marketing.....	35
2.4.1	Consumer behavior in market segmentation and positioning.....	37
2.4.2	Consumer decision-making process and psychological processes.....	38
2.4.3	High-involvement decisions and low-involvement decisions.....	41
2.4.4	Models of consumer choice.....	42
2.4.5	Family decision making.....	43
2.4.6	Family life cycle stages as segmentation criteria.....	44
2.4.7	The role of culture in consumer behavior and marketing.....	46
2.5	Branding positioning and target marketing.....	49
2.6	Targeted content marketing.....	52
2.7	Influencer community in content marketing.....	54
2.8	Digital marketing in target marketing.....	55
3	Empiricism.....	57
3.1	The research question.....	57
3.2	Research methods.....	59
3.3	Sampling method.....	62
3.4	Interview as a research method.....	63
3.5	Data handling.....	67
3.6	Data analysis.....	69
4	Results and summary of the results.....	71
4.1	Themes.....	72
4.1.1	The importance of Christmas.....	72
4.1.2	Escapism and phantasy.....	73
4.1.3	Interest in current services.....	73

4.1.4	Family bonding.....	75
4.1.5	Children as the primary motivator.....	75
4.1.6	Concerns about older children.....	77
4.1.7	Adults' personal outlook.....	78
4.1.8	Compelling reasons to travel across the ocean.....	80
4.1.9	Other concerns.....	83
4.1.10	Influencers.....	86
4.1.11	American cultural Christmas traditions.....	88
4.2	Summary of the results.....	92
5	Conclusions and recommendations.....	93
6	Evaluation of the research.....	98
6.1	Data quality.....	98
6.2	Recommendations for further research.....	100
7	References.....	102

Appendices

Appendix A Consumer decision making model

Appendix B Interview guide

1 Introduction

Marketing of today is about the ownership of information rather ownership of resources. This statement rings particularly true when applied to target marketing.

In the contemporary marketing practice target marketing is the pre-eminent approach. Few successful companies out there market to every customer. Instead, they conduct research to select specific segments and then focus all marketing resources on them. Those companies that see the highest profits have effective target marketing strategies in place. The correlation proves the power of this marketing model.

SantaPark Arctic World is no exception - this business seeks to increase its profits. The best approach for the theme park to achieve this goal is to capture the target market of American families. In recent years SantaPark owners realized the untapped potential of this market and certain steps were taken to learn more about it. However, there still exists a substantial gap in knowledge. Managers are increasingly aware that an effective target marketing strategy cannot be implemented until there is sufficient understanding of the preferences of the specific segment in question.

The current research intends to address this problem by examining the target customer from the perspective of qualitative segmentation characteristics, without negating its quantitative characteristics. The purpose of the study is to uncover insights into the target market which the company would be able to readily employ in its marketing and positioning strategies.

1.1 Background information

SantaPark Arctic World has been consistently focusing all marketing efforts on its primary audience: families with young children. Most of the customers of the theme park would fall into that category. But the scope of its marketing has been limited to Scandinavia. Recently they have started to extend their efforts to Western Europe and Great Britain. The families in these markets are different in their preferences, hence SantaPark had to alter its approach and engage in target marketing. This shift has been largely successful as the company was able to increase demand from those markets. (Santa Park 2019.)

Target marketing worked in that case because, when accurately performed, it works under most circumstances. In fact, this is why this approach is widely accepted as a

staple of contemporary marketing practice. Target marketing is currently the most popular strategy used in business, across a wide range of industries.

Having recognized the power of target marketing, SantaPark has now set its sights on the American tourist market, specifically the segment of American families with children under the age of twelve. The business recognizes that it holds massive potential. But in order to unleash this potential SantaPark needs to gain a deeper understand the target market. The available geographic and demographic information is not enough to create a positioning strategy that would attract the selected target market.

(Santaparkarcticworld 2019.)

Let us examine the reasons why American families represent an important audience for the travel industry and for SantaPark specifically (Santaparkarcticworld.com 2019.)

Firstly, the United States is a very large market. According to the most recent estimates there are 328,621,320 people living in the U.S. It has the highest population out of all developed countries. (Census 2019.) Needless to say, millions of families exist within this market. This makes the U.S. attractive in terms of the sheer potential. If a company were to reach out to a population this large, the return would be much higher than if a smaller country was targeted.

Focusing on the case at hand, the largest living generation in the U.S. are Millennials. They number over 83 million people, and 53 percent of them already have children. Statistics show that every year around a million Millennial women are becoming mothers, indicating the high growth potential of the market. (Livingston 2019.)

The purchasing power of American families is high. More than half of the U.S. population live in middle-income households and 19 percent live in upper-income households. Furthermore, this market is increasingly willing to spend on travel. A record number of American families traveled during the holidays last year, and even more plan to do so this year. One third of those surveyed take as many as three vacations a year, and some 40 percent express interest in visiting theme parks. (Travelagentcentral 2019.)

An additional caveat is that Americans value Christmas highly: over 90 percent of them celebrate the holiday together with their families (newsobserver 2019.) All the more reason for SantaPark to select them as the target customers for their future marketing efforts.

However, as has been stated, there is a substantial gap in knowledge. Going only by census information, it is impossible to devise a successful target marketing strategy. SantaPark needs to explore the segment further to get a sense of its preferences. This would require an investigation of the psychographics, behavior and culture of the people in the segment.

1.2 Company

For any business that aims to capture a new segment, having a comprehensive understanding of the people in that segment, beyond their basic characteristics, is absolutely key.

It is particularly important to know the preferences that are tied to the psychographic, behavioral and cultural characteristics of the segment. There are a number of potential uses for such insights in target marketing. The company can use the research findings to create more accurate target customer profiles. They can also employ the results to create a marketing mix strategy, where every element is connected to the selected segment.

On the basis of the findings, recommendations will be presented at the end of the report on the future course of action for SantaPark. The company can then readily apply these suggestions in practice when creating its new target marketing strategy, as it will save them time and resources.

These target marketing applications would allow SantaPark to focus their marketing resources in the most efficient way. In other words, they would be able to specifically design their future marketing campaigns to reach the target segment, appealing to their preferences and motivations, while addressing their concerns. This a much more cost-effective approach to marketing.

Moreover, the information collected through the research can be used to make improvements to SantaPark's existing services. Likewise, it could potentially help the company innovate new experiences or activities that will fit the expectations of the target market.

On a larger scale, the positive implications for SantaPark are significant. By creating and implementing an effective positioning strategy the theme park will be able to

capture the target market of American families. Given the size of this target market and its purchasing power, the resulting boost in profits would be colossal.

Having a stronghold on it would immediately give SantaPark a competitive advantage. In the competitive landscape where SantaPark operates there are many other options for customers to choose from. But by establishing its position in the target market first, SantaPark would receive a competitive advantage over other service providers and theme parks in the region. Once SantaPark reaches the new audience with its marketing efforts, it can build long-lasting relationships with the target customers. This would allow it to become the provider of choice in the future.

Additionally, capturing this segment may help address the issue that has been plaguing SantaPark for years. The theme park is only open for two seasons because the demand is insufficient to justify keeping it open throughout the whole year. However, with a boost in demand from the new market, the company could extend its winter and summer seasons, before eventually branching out into other seasons.

Ultimately, should the research discover insights into the segment, establish commonalities in preferences or fill the gap in knowledge in other ways, the kind of a marketing strategy that leverages such information will be guaranteed to succeed in attracting the target market.

1.3 Objectives

The main purpose of this research is to answer the research question through the application of qualitative scientific methods. I would like to gain familiarity with the target market, to contribute to closing the existing gap in knowledge.

The overall objective is to identify preferences of the target market, with regard to SantaPark, from the perspective of psychographics, culture and behavior. This will be achieved through in-depth semi-structured interviews with the people who fit the criteria of the target market. Then these preferences will be portrayed accurately and interpreted with the help of analysis. Additionally, the purpose of the study is to propose recommendations as to how the theme park can employ these insights in practice, in their future target marketing strategy.

1.4 Previous knowledge

There has long been interest in the American tourist market, and specifically the target market of American families with young children. So a number of studies have been carried out into this over the years. Recently the interest has intensified as the new generation started travelling more with their families. It became a primary concern for many tourism providers to reach and capture this segment. This is why many collected their own information on it, and other turned to the services of market research firms and the academia.

This existing research takes many forms: interview, focus groups, but primarily surveys. Such surveys cannot capture insights related to qualitative characteristics, they tend to focus on demographics and geographics. This means that the information gathered on the target market is more surface-level, and does not provide a deep understanding of it.

The most comprehensive examination of the segment of American families with children is the latest U.S. Family Travel Survey carried out by the Family Travel Association and New-York University. This survey offers more details and is larger in scope than others. Apart from quantifying the size and purchasing power of the market, it examines how American families travel and even looks into their motivations. However, the survey is not limited to those with young children, nor does it focus sufficiently on their activity preferences which stem from psychological, behavioral and cultural factors. Furthermore, the study can only make recommendations to the overall travel industry, not to the Finnish travel industry, let alone one specific business such as SantaPark. (D'Ambrosio 2019.)

This further makes the case for why this research is worth undertaking. The target market being studied can be narrowed down to families with children under the age of twelve, and the methods used can facilitate a more in-depth examination. The study can specifically look at the preferences of the target market as they relate to SantaPark, making the gathered results more useful to the company.

1.5 Delimitations

The main delimitation is that the single destination examined is SantaPark. While it could be beneficial to look at the customer preferences in the context of Finland, it

would take away from the specificity of the findings. Focusing on SantaPark and on the target market preferences associated with it, will likely produce more relevant results which the company will be able to apply in its marketing strategy.

As for the target market itself, it will be narrowed down based on the nature of SantaPark's business. The theme park primarily serves families with children who are at an age where they still believe in Santa. So the criteria used to form the segment and to select participants can be considered as limiting the scope of research as well. No other criteria will be applied apart from the previously mentioned: the participants have to reside in the United States and must have at least one child under the age twelve to be selected.

1.6 Research Problem

The research question of the thesis is, "Are there commonalities in preferences of the target market of American families with children under twelve, with regard to travel to SantaPark, from the psychographic, behavioral and cultural point of view?"

The research problem is filling the existing gap in knowledge of the segment SantaPark intends to target. This means understanding the segment beyond the immediate demographic and geographic characteristics identified in prior studies, and discovering commonalities in their preferences from the perspective of qualitative characteristics.

Having obtained that knowledge, it will be possible to optimize the company's target marketing strategy by proposing practical improvements, innovations, positioning messages and other recommendations.

1.7 Research Methods

A qualitative research approach is most suitable in this case because the research seeks to examine the participants' preferences on a deeper level. This can be achieved with the method of qualitative interviewing.

Semi-structured interviews will be used to engage in rather unstructured conversations with the participants. The structured aspect of the interviews comes from the fact that each individual interview will be divided into three parts and different techniques will be used in each part. The ideal method will be used in the first part to understand how the people in the target market envision their ideal experience in SantaPark. Next, the

elicitation method will be applied to guide the conversation. Each interview will conclude with a culture-related question.

The interviews will be conducted using video-conferencing applications. They will be recorded on a mobile device. Notes will also be taken during the interviews. The researcher plans to add these notes as entries to a research diary which will assist in later analysis. The interviews will later be transcribed in a Microsoft Word document form. This data will be stored on a password-protected laptop that only the researcher has access to. The audio recordings will be disposed of after the transcription step.

The analysis method that has been decided on is in line with the qualitative research method. The author plans to apply thematic content analysis (TCA) to describe and interpret the results in detail. Normally, in TCA the transcripts are studied, then the text is coded. In the process, certain themes or common patterns of meaning emerge that help categorize the findings. This analysis method is most appropriate as the research seeks to find commonalities in preferences of the target market.

1.8 Overview

The thesis report can be divided into two key parts: theoretical and practical. It is useful to take a closer look at the subjects covered in each of these parts in order to understand the structure of the report.

The theoretical part of the report presents the existing literature on the research topic. It examines the core concepts of target marketing, by briefly delving into the history and then elaborating on the theoretical framework of the target marketing model: segmentation, targeting and positioning. Segmentation criteria are examined, along with the types of characteristics most frequently used to divide the market, namely quantitative and qualitative segmentation characteristics. In the positioning section, the way a positioning and a marketing mix strategy can be created to match specific segments is explained. In addition, various aspects of marketing are examined from the perspective of target marketing. The report explores the role consumer behavior plays in segmentation, and the impact family and culture variables have on the target marketing process. Branding, digital marketing and content marketing realms are framed in the context of target marketing as well.

The practical part of the thesis report may also be referred to as the Empiricism part. It provides the reader with a detailed description of the research problem of this case, as

well as discusses the research methods used to collect, handle and analyze the data. The rationale for choosing these methods are outlined. Further, the actual research findings of the thesis are reported and discussed in the Results and Summary of the Results chapter. Based on these findings certain conclusions are reached and practical recommendations are proposed in the next chapter. Lastly, the research undertaken is assessed in the Evaluation of the Research section, followed up by implications for future research.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Historical overview of segmentation and target marketing

It is generally accepted that consumer segmentation as a marketing practice came about in the 1950s, bringing with it proliferation of target marketing. Since its inception, it has found worldwide recognition and has become “one of the most researched topics in marketing literature” (Wedel & Kamakura 2001, p. 19.) Almost seven decades later, segmentation remains a key part of modern-day marketing, and as a result, target marketing is one of the most frequently used marketing strategies around the world.

The shift in marketing practice can be traced back to the industrial revolution. During the first decades of the twentieth century, industrial production transformed: efficiency increased drastically, and it became possible to reduce costs by mass producing and by employing mass marketing. That approach was flawed as did not prioritize consumer satisfaction. As the middle class grew and its purchasing power increased, demand diversified, which lead to greater product variation. Businesses seized the opportunity to develop the right products and marketing campaigns for specific segments of the market. (Wedel & Kamakura 2001, p. 3.)

Among the early proponents of target marketing and segmentation is Edward Chamberlin (1933), who argued that production should be driven by the needs of consumers. Robinson (1938) articulated the theory of imperfect competition. That theory was vital as it laid the basis for the work of Smith (1956), who elaborated on these marketing concepts, highlighting the heterogeneity in goods and services demand. This scholar defined market segmentation as a process of “viewing a heterogeneous market as a number of smaller homogeneous markets in response to differing preferences, attributable to the desires of consumers for more precise satisfaction of their varying

wants” He advocated for market segmentation on the basis of user needs. (Wind & Cardozo 1974.)

Consumer segments were more clearly defined in the 1974 article “Industrial Market Segmentation” by Wind and Cardozo. Their definition described segments as groups customers, both current and potential, that were likely to respond to marketing content in a similar way. It is implied in this definition that marketing involves targeting as well. This addition to the definition was instrumental, as it meant that segmentation could now be used to identify future consumers and to determine the direction of the company. Most importantly, they proposed that upon segmenting the market, separate marketing strategies for each segment should be created, that would be “feasible and likely profitable”. (Wind & Cardozo 1974, p. 155.)

Scholars have since come to a consensus that consumer segmentation has to accept the following concepts: the market population is diverse; the consumers within segments have to be homogenous in their characteristics; distinct marketing strategies must be developed to cater to their needs. In order to decide if the segments selected are worth pursuing, six criteria are typically used for evaluation. The segments ought to be measurable, substantial, accessible, and differentiable. (Kotler and Armstrong 2007.)

With this historic context, it becomes clear that segmentation has a long tradition in marketing. Today it is still widely used in contemporary marketing, namely target marketing. This shows that over the years “Smith's idea of segmentation has been steadily refined into Kotler's target marketing”, and has it found recognition in both the academia and marketing practice. (Wright & Esslemont 1994, p.1.)

2.2 Target marketing

Target marketing is a strategic approach to marketing considered a contemporary marketing staple. Target marketing is explained by its very name - it is the practice of marketing to a selected target market. A target market is the end consumer to whom the business intends to sell its products or services. (The Economic Times 2019.)

Hardly any company will target one hundred percent of the market. It is unrealistic to assume that all customers have the same needs and will be purchasing the same products and services to fulfill these needs. Nor does it seem possible to customize products and services for every individual. A middle ground then is to employ target

marketing, which recognizes the breadth of customer requirements and shifts the focus to certain groups of customers. (Dibb & Simkin 1996.)

Kotler stated that target marketing is when “the seller distinguishes the major market segments, targets one or more of these segments, and develops products and services tailored to each selected segment.” Kotler argued that target marketing is the “framework for strategic success in the marketplace”. (Kotler 1991, p. 262.)

Target marketing is ant agonistic to mass marketing that was prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century. While in mass marketing the objective is to appeal to the masses or simply everyone in the market without differentiating, in target marketing only a specific group of the market is chosen, and marketing efforts are then concentrated solely on that group.

Not only is it a less costly approach to marketing, but it is far more effective as all of the marketing activities have a clear focus. Furthermore, it deepens the understanding of the target customers, and gives firms greater insight into the competitive situation. This can assist in the development of a lasting competitive advantage. Target marketing is especially advantageous to use to attract new customers or when expanding internationally. (Dibb & Simkin 1996.)

The first step on the way to implementing target marketing into practice is market segmentation. That is when a company decides who the target customer will be by applying various segmentation variables to the overall market. Some examples of these variables are geographics, demographics, psychographics, and consumer behavior. The segments identified with the help of these variables are evaluated and the most potentially profitable ones, those fitting the company vision, are selected. Usually further information on the segments is gathered to better understand their needs. Then the chosen segments are marketed to, not with a generic mass-marketing campaign, but with a target marketing strategy and positioning strategy. A target marketing strategy usually takes a form of a marketing mix, consisting of product, price, promotion and place - each element is designed to appeal to the target customer. Positioning is another critical factor in target marketing which is explained in more detail in the following chapters, but to put it simply, the four marketing mix elements should be such that they position the product or service in the mind of the consumer in the right way.

Naturally, when a marketing strategy is focused on specific customers all of the marketing activities become more relevant to them, hence the customers targeted are far more likely to respond by spending money on the product or service promoted. This anticipated increase in sales, and a potential for an increased market share, are the reasons why target marketing has pre-eminence among all other marketing approaches.

2.2.1 STP model of target marketing

One of the most acclaimed models in modern marketing practice is what has become known as Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning (STP.) Target marketing would not be possible without completion of STP steps. Yet, it was not so long ago that STP was a completely alien concept in marketing and marketing strategies revolved around products and services, and not around customers themselves.

In contrast, the STP model, focuses on the target customer. This is why it is used when creating target marketing strategies, communication plans and other relevant marketing messages for specific audiences. According to the STP model, to be able to effectively market a service or a product to the right people, marketers need to first segment the market, then target a segment, and position within that segment. "A company discovers different needs and groups in the marketplace, targets those needs and groups that it can satisfy in a superior way, and then positions its offering so that the target market recognizes the company's distinctive offering and image." Therefore, STP is a fundamental concept in marketing strategy development. It fits within the analysis phase, and it strongly informs the synthesis and realization phases of marketing strategy creation. (Kotler & Keller 2008.)

Within these three integral stages there exist other smaller steps that should be understood, they are discussed later on.

Ultimately, STP as a marketing model, emphasizes commercial effectiveness, selecting the most valuable market segments for a business and developing a distinct positioning strategy and target marketing strategy for each segment. This process allows marketers to vastly improve the effectiveness of these strategies. (Smart Insights 2019.)

2.2.2 Segmentation

The STP process begins with segmentation. Market segmentation is the division of the market into smaller, relatively homogenous groups (King, Horrocks & Brooks 2010, p. 261.) According to another scholar, market segmentation is necessary because it is "*a condition of growth when core markets have already been developed on a generalized basis to the point where additional promotional expenditures are yielding diminishing returns*" (Smith 1956). A market segment then is defined as a group of individuals that share needs and characteristics in an otherwise homogenous market (Kotler 1991).

Along with homogeneity, other distinctive features of a market segment are distinction and reaction. These features mean that for the needs within a segment to be identified as similar, the segment has to be distinct from other segments and people and organizations included in the segment have to show a similar response. (Kotler 1991.)

Segmentation of the market is usually the first step that needs to be taken in target marketing. But before segmentation is started, it is important to decide on the basis for it. In other words, a decision has to be made as to what characteristics will be used to group people together. A market can be divided into finer and finer segments, the more characteristics are applied.

In the process of segmentation buyers are identified in a market that share characteristics, interests and needs, those who demonstrate similar buyer behavior, and they are categorized into segments. After that they are evaluated, and a segment is chosen that will be targeted by the marketing strategy. Marketers can choose to focus on just one segment – single-segment marketing, or two or more segments – multi-segment marketing. (Kotler 1991.)

Grouping potential customers into segments is effective precisely because segments are comprised of consumers who are likely to respond similarly to marketing strategies aimed at them. There are vast differences between different segments of the same market. When these differences are ignored, the product or service is marketed to all of the consumers in the market. Needless to say, not all of them will be interested in whatever is being offered by the company, hence it is best to segment the market first and then market to the right people, instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach.

2.2.3 Targeting

Targeting is the second part of the STP process. Once the market has been divided into segments, the company proceeds to evaluate the potential and attractiveness of each segment. Having completed that evaluation, they will normally select one or multiple segments to target them.

Some of the common criteria used to evaluate the profit potential and commercial attractiveness of each individual segment are the following:

1. Size - the segment should be big enough to warrant marketing strategy development.
2. Difference – there should exist measurable differences between different segments.
3. Profit – the return to be generated on the marketing investment should be sufficient.
4. Accessibility – the chosen segment should be accessible with marketing messages.

A number of criteria need to be considered when targeting or when selecting between segments. Questions such as, “Is the segment viable?”, “Can profit be made with it?”, “Is the segment accessible?” and “Is the segment measurable and how can data be accessed to evaluate its potential?” need to be answered first. Other criteria can be considered as well: the potential for growth, the fitness of a segment with the current direction and business strategy of a company. The specific segmentation criteria which can be applied are discussed below. (Smart Insights 2019.)

2.2.4 Segmentation criteria

As has been discussed, after the market is segmented, there are a number of segments identified. All of these segments cannot be selected, so the number of segments has to be narrowed down. This is why a set of criteria is applied for evaluation. The goal is to find out how usable the segments identified are, and how well they fit business objectives. A decision has to be made as to whether or not to select them as target markets. (Lasca & Clow 2007)

The first criterion is homogeneity. The potential customers within the segments should share common needs and characteristics that are relevant to the company. The second criterion is heterogeneity. It is equally important that each individual segment is distinct from the other segments in terms of needs. If that is the case, then the market has been

divided effectively on the basis of different variables. If there is too much overlap, than further segmentation is necessary. (Lascau & Clow 2007.)

Measurability is another criterion that deals with whether or not there is sufficient data on the market segment. Measurements are of high importance when it comes to judging segments' attractiveness. Lack of data can prevent the company from accurately evaluating a segment. (Lascau & Clow 2007.)

The segment selected also has to be substantial in size and have growth potential to warrant attention. It should also have strong buying power to sufficiently increase sales. In other words, it is not worth targeting, if a good return on investment cannot be generated. Each company has its own guidelines for the minimum acceptable return on investment. (Lascau & Clow 2007.)

Accessibility of the segment should be taken into account. This encompasses marketing communications, as well as distribution. If there is no way for a company to reach a segment with marketing messages, or there are no appropriate distribution channels, then that segment cannot be targeted. With the advent of the Internet, accessibility as a criterion has reduced in importance: it is now possible to reach customers in virtually any place at any point in time. (Lascau & Clow 2007.)

Another question to be answered is, "How actionable is the segment?" To put it simply, there should be potential for developing a marketing mix for the chosen segment. Some segments are impractical to select as the development of a marketing strategy for them would require too many resources or knowledge that is difficult to obtain. (Lascau & Clow 2007)

The last criterion is responsiveness or the likelihood of the target customers reacting similarly and positively to the marketing strategy created for them. In case a segment is not responsive to a distinct marketing mix and a unique offering, it can be simply combined with a similar segment. Responsiveness is a prerequisite for segment selection. All of the other criteria can be fulfilled but if the response is not good, the segment is not worth pursuing. (Lascau & Clow 2007, p. 175.)

Only if the above-mentioned requirements are satisfied, can a segment be picked for a target marketing strategy. Clearly, not every segment identified at the initial stages is worthy of attention. Only the ones that present the greatest opportunities should be

selected. This criteria-based evaluation process allows businesses to choose the most attractive and profitable segments to target.

2.2.5 Positioning

After segmenting the market, and then choosing a segment, a marketer will proceed to position the product or service. It is the last step of the STP process. It is necessary to complete this step for efficient target marketing, as no company can be good at everything: limited funds mean that decisions about what to spend on have to be made, and being good at one thing may reduce the possibility of being good at something else. (Kotler 1991.)

Positioning as an additional element of target marketing came about relatively recently. A few decades ago, the market started to get saturated with companies, services and products - all of them sending out marketing messages through new mediums. Consumers were becoming desensitized to them just to cope with the onslaught of information. That is when positioning was introduced in a series of articles called The Positioning Era. The authors argued the positioning era would follow the product era of the 1950s and the image era of the 1960s. As it turned out, they were right in their assessment - positioning emerged as a primary marketing strategy in the 1970s. (McDonough & Egolf 2015.)

Positioning was proposed as an alternative approach to marketing communication, and as the answer to the problem of over-communication and message fatigue. It has since changed the nature of marketing and advertising. As Ries and Trout stated in their groundbreaking book, *“Messages prepared in old, traditional ways have no hope of being successful in today’s over-communicated society”*. (Ries & Trout, 1980.)

To examine what positioning is all about it is best to establish the right terminology. Product positioning is sometimes used interchangeably with positioning. While it is true that positioning begins with the product, it is not about what is done to the product, rather, positioning is about the perception of the product or what is done to the mind of the target customer. The objective is to secure a desired position in their mind. The basic premise of positioning is that this can be accomplished by manipulating what is already in the mind of the customer, instead of creating new connections.

Positioning, as a strategy, acknowledges the reality of today's society: people simplify everything to deal with complexity. Ries and Trout argued that the ultimate goal of all marketing communication is the human mind. They stated that the best way to position in the oversimplified mind of the consumer - a mind that can only take in so much new information - is to have an oversimplified message. The message has to be simple, yet precise to get into the mind and make a lasting impression. Furthermore, the message should be rooted in the existing perceptions of the people in the segment, because other messages will simply be filtered out. The customers will only be able to comprehend the information being communicated, if it matches their perceptions. As a result, their receptiveness and retention will be amplified. (Ries & Trout 1980.)

The first company to establish the position of its product or service has the competitive advantage. So the positioning strategies of all the companies that follow have to take that into consideration. This goes to show that positioning does not occur in a vacuum, and every positioning strategy should not only account for the strengths and weaknesses of the company, but also of its competitors.

Another fundamental positioning concept related to competition is the ranking that occurs in the mind. People unconsciously rank things all the time to make sense of them, products and services included. This can be visualized as a series of product ladders in the mind, where each step represents a certain brand. Positioning acknowledges this tendency to rank brands and capitalizes on it. A company that seeks to increase its market share, should aim to either dislodge the competitor above or to position against it. Therefore, every new position should somehow relate to the old ones. It is a classic positioning approach. A stark example of that is the Avis campaign, where the company successfully positioned itself against its competitor, Hertz, with a slogan, "*Avis is only number 2 in rent-a-cars, so why go with us? We try harder.*" (Richards 2019.) With this simple message they connected to what was already in the mind of the customer, and effectively positioned the company on the product ladder. (Ries & Trout 1980.)

The alternative is to look for an open position in the prospect's mind that can be filled. It is a good strategy for new players on the market.

The bottom line is that in order to create a unique position marketers should look for ideas not inside the product or service, but inside the target customer's mind. (Ries & Trout 1980.)

2.2.5.1 Positioning map

As mentioned, positioning is essentially the perception of a product or service. Perception is closely linked to the inner workings of an individual's mind, making it hard to influence. However, there are certain commonalities within segments which can be identified using a positioning map.

Competitors are placed on a positioning map, so as to compare them to each other. This tool identifies opportunities in the market and makes it clear how the offering in question can be positioned to be easily distinguishable from the competition. It is a good way to find market gaps. A market gap is defined as an unmet consumer need. (BusinessDictionary 2019.)

For example, based on a positioning map it can be concluded that the services offered are concentrated in the high-price area, hence there is an opportunity in the economy sector. The map is drawn out and a label is created for each axis. In this case it is price (variable one) and quality (variable two.) Then services are positioned on the map in relation to how they perform on those variables. The empty spaces or market gaps can then be identified as high-potential areas for a new service.

Trout and Ries have also devised a supporting framework of six questions which facilitate the process of successful positioning. What position do you currently own? What position do you want to own? Whom you have to defeat to own the position you want? Do you have the resources to do it? Can you persist until you get there? Are your tactics supporting the positioning objective you set? By answering these questions, a company can critically assess its current and desired positions, and determine an effective positioning strategy for the future. (Ries & Trout 1980.)

2.2.5.2 Positioning Strategies

It is up to each company to decide what their positioning strategy should be. There is no silver-bullet solution because every situation, product and market is unique. With that said, there are a number of different positioning strategies that have been identified by academics and marketers over the years. They are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Broad Positioning was suggested by a Harvard Professor Michael Porter. In his Competitive Strategy, he introduced three broad positioning alternatives that companies

should focus on: being the product or service differentiator, the low-cost leader, or the nicher. Though even Porter himself warned that trying to position too broadly and be good in all of the three ways, without being great in any way, would lead to a failure. Being in the middle generally does not work as a strategy because most companies do not have sufficient funds to be good in all the ways mentioned. Furthermore, a different organizational structure is necessary to implement each strategy. (Porter 1985.)

A decade later, business consultants Michael Treacy and Fred Wiersema proposed a different broad positioning framework. It includes three alternative strategies, which they called value disciplines. They suggested that in the marketplace, a business can either become the product leader, the operationally excellent business, or the customer intimate business. This positioning framework is based on the assumption that customers can be segmented into three categories: those who appreciate product innovation, those who desire dependable performance, and those who want a company that is responsive to their individual needs. Given that it is difficult for a company to be good in all three ways, Treacy and Wiersema suggested that a business should follow the following rules: become superior at one of the three value disciplines, achieve an adequate level of performance at the two other disciplines, continue improving their superior position in the selected discipline in order not to lose to competitors, and keep improving at the other disciplines, since customer expectations are rising all the time. (Treacy & Wiersema 1995.)

Specific positioning occurs when companies go a step further from broad positioning. The idea is to express a more clearly defined benefit and give customers a reason to buy. In this case, using a positioning map would be useful. Typically a single major benefit is identified and used in specific positioning. Some of the possibilities are: best quality, best price, safest, best-designed, most convenient and so on. In the auto market, for instance, Volvo owns the “safest” position. As companies expand to new markets, they usually practice second-benefit positioning or even triple-benefit positioning, recognizing that different market segments value different benefits. (Kotler 1991.)

Even though marketers primarily work with benefit positioning, specific positioning can use other criteria. There is user positioning, where a product or service is positioned to a specific target group. Such as Apple’s Mac Pro being the best for interface designers. Attribute positioning, for instance, is when a business positions itself on some attribute

or feature. A hotel can claim to be the most modern in the country. In this type of positioning, no benefit is explicitly claimed and the response from the target customers can be weak as a result. Similarly, category positioning and competitor positioning suggest that a business is better than its competitors but it is not explained in which way or why. (Kotler 1991.)

Overall, for effective positioning, it is essential to present a strong central benefit or reason to buy to the target segment. That benefit has to be what the segment wants most, what the company can deliver, and it must not contradict other benefits offered. (Kotler 1991.) A company should build its position on the target customers' terms to establish leadership. But market leadership is never the end of a positioning program: in order to keep its leadership position, a company should reinforce the original concept and invest in new opportunities as they arise. (Ries & Trout 1980.)

2.2.6 Marketing mix

Target marketing is implemented with the help of a marketing strategy tailored to the target customer. A marketing mix or a specific marketing strategy is developed for each selected segment. All of the marketing activities combined together constitute a marketing mix and they should be planned for maximum impact. (Borden 1964.)

There are too many variables at play for marketers to be able to attract all consumers with a single marketing mix. Once a segment has been chosen, it is time to create a marketing strategy and to take marketing actions to reach it. (Kurtz, MacKenzie & Snow 2010, p. 261.)

Professor Jerome McCarthy proposed that the marketing mix consisted of four Ps: product, price, place and promotion (McCarthy & Perreault 1960.) But if the four-P concept is viewed from the buyer's and not the seller's perspective, than the four Ps are described as four Cs: customer value, cost to the customer, convenience, communication (Kotler 1991.) The four elements of the marketing mix and the activities covered by each element are discussed below.

The most important element of the marketing mix is the product. The four-P framework has often been criticized for omitting services among other important elements and activities. Some experts suggested replacing "product" with "offering" to deliver a broader meaning. But the product element can include services as well. In that case, they are called service products.

Product is the basis of the business - it is a way for a company to make profit. The offering has to be different or superior in some way to cause the target segment to favor it over others. Virtually any product or service can be differentiated in some way: either in real or in psychological terms. Real or physical differentiators include the actual features of the product. Other differentiators have to do with its availability, customer service, price and image. Finding a differentiator that is most valued by the target segment and delivering it, gives a business a competitive advantage. It is necessary to proactively seek out new advantages, instead of focusing on one long-lasting advantage. (Kotler 1991.)

Next, it is invaluable to consider how a product or a service will be priced. The price should be set as high as the level of differentiation allows.

One of the pricing techniques is cost-pricing, in which case companies will add a certain “markup” on their estimated costs as a starting point. Products or services in different categories have different markups that are set in a way that covers total costs and leaves a reasonably high profit margin.

Value-based pricing is the alternative option. The general approach is to estimate the highest price that the customer is willing to pay and to then charge something less or the “value price”. This reduces the risk of buyer resistance and leaves the buyer with some perceived surplus, while the business generates a high profit.

Kotler (1991) stated that when choosing a pricing strategy, it is crucial to keep in mind that most customers think in terms of value for money, “What will I receive in return for the money I pay?” There are several ways to value-position the offering.

The type of purchase where the customer receives “more for more” will continue to exist for as long as there are wealthy customers around. They are quality conscious and are willing to spend large amounts of money to purchase the “best”. It is possible to find examples of this pricing strategy in almost any category of product or service: accessory brands that sell sunglasses for \$500 a pair and hotels that offer rooms for \$20,000 a night. High-priced luxury goods and service like these, however, are also the most vulnerable to economic instability.

One of the ways in which companies have attempted to compete with “more for more” brands is by claiming to offer “more for same”: comparable quality but at a lower price point. The most sought-after offerings are the ones that provide more value for a lower

price – “more for less”. Mass merchandisers often attempt to dominate the market using this strategy. Wal-Mart is one of the stores where customers can get more for less.

Whereas, with the “same for less” pricing, consumers are offered a product or service that is fairly standard but it is made more attractive by lowering the regular price. This is the reason why there are so many discount shops and why even the most high-tier brands occasionally have sales. Not to mention the fact that online-shopping offers consumers superior purchasing power: a chance to find the lowest-priced products and services of any brand.

Some people simply do not need sophisticated products or services. They would rather pay a lower price and have a product with fewer features. Capsule hotels in Asia provide not rooms but “pods” and charge guests a lower rate. Similarly, Ryanair was able to succeed commercially by offering the lowest fares and skipping the food, baggage allowance and so on. Thus, there is an opportunity to enter a market with a “less for less” offering.

The pricing strategy must be selected with the target segment in mind, based on insights into what prices the customers are willing to pay. It is also useful to look at the price from the customer’s point of view. The price of the product or service represents only one of the costs to the consumer. The total value proposition aims to answer the question: “Why should I buy from you?” It is not limited to the full set of benefits and features that make up a brand’s total offering, but it also includes total costs of acquiring it, such as time, effort, and psychological costs. (Kotler 1991.) Consumers usually consider the value of the benefits and the total cost, and then they proceed to choose the seller that seems to offer the most attractive total value proposition. The goal is to price to deliver a picture of the value that the target segment expects to receive.

Another element is place, it is otherwise referred to as distribution. It is crucial to know where and how the people in the target segment shop, to be able to decide which channels of distribution to use. For most businesses, there are two alternatives: selling directly to the customers or selling through middlemen. Another option is e-commerce: today’s consumers frequently shop online, especially when it comes to making travel bookings. Still, there is a dilemma of whether to use second-party booking websites or to focus on the main booking system facilitated by the website of the company. (Kotler 1991.)

Marketing segmentation, targeting and positioning are the underlying principles of all successful marketing strategies. They allow companies to leverage their limited resources and to create the most profit-maximizing strategies. Applying these principles is a guarantee that the marketing mix focuses on the specific needs of the market segment.

2.2.7 Promotional mix

The final element of the four-P framework is promotion. The next step after the development of the marketing mix is the selection of the promotional methods that are most suitable for the product or service. These promotional methods make up the promotional mix. The marketing communications mix or the promotional mix includes five components: advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations. Choosing the right promotional methods allows the company to deliver a clear and compelling message. The needs of each segment are not the same, which is why a separate promotional mix, should be developed for each segment.

Advertising is an integral part of the promotional mix. The effectiveness of advertising varies depending on the circumstances. Some argue that advertisements that promote credibility, receive the best returns, while other think that the advertisements which grab attention are most effective. There is no consensus on how to maximize the effectiveness of advertising as creativity cannot be anticipated. Creative advertising campaigns can build brand image and some degree of preference. (Kotler 1991.)

Like other marketing tools, advertising is most effective when it is narrowly targeted. Advertising messages can be delivered using different mediums: radio, TV, print, outdoor, digital, mobile and social media. Digital or online advertising holds the most potential when it comes to selectively targeting customers. For example, Facebook allows you to select age, gender, location and many other characteristics when creating a campaign. Such targeted advertisements have greater impact and a higher rate of return on investment (ROAI.)

Advertising should address five elements: mission, message, media, money, and measurement. The mission is what the advertising campaign is trying to accomplish. It can be creating awareness, interest, desire or action (AIDA) (Lewis 1904.) The message is closely tied to the customer segment chosen, and the media largely depends on the message design. Money or advertising budget is assigned either based

on what the business can afford or on an objective basis. In other words, it is established how many people in the target market are to be reached and with what frequency. Finally, measurement can focus on advertisement recall, persuasion scores, but the best measurement basis is the sales impact. (Kotler 1991.)

Direct marketing communicates the message directly to the consumer, through email, direct mail and telephone calls. This type of marketing tends to be aimed at potential customers or 'target prospects', and often employs targeting methods to reach them more effectively. Previous purchases, for instance, create a consumer behavior pattern, and can be used when developing an email campaign.

Personal selling involves one-on-one communication between the buyer and the seller. It is very useful when it comes to cultivating long-term relationships between the customers and the company, but it is considered to be one of the most expensive marketing communication forms. The more complex the product or service is, the more necessary it is to use sales people: they can gauge customers' interest, address their objections and close the sale. These days the process is simplified and enhanced though the technology-enabled communication.

Sales promotions usually inform customers about new products and allow for a short-term boost in sales through discount offers, samples, coupons and loyalty programs. The latter are most effective at generating a high return.

Public relations can also be used to influence a target audience and create a positive image of the company. In public relations campaigns, information about the product or service is shared through various channels. They are classified under the acronym of PENCILS. P includes publications such as company magazines and annual reports. E stands for events and sponsorships. N is for news: favorable stories about the company. C means community involvement activities. I includes all identity media such as corporate dress codes, stationary, and even business cards. L describes lobbying or activities aimed at influencing legislation and S – social responsibility activities. (Kotler 1991.) These PR efforts are often perceived as more authentic than advertising.

To summarize, the right elements of the promotional mix should be utilized to position the company's products or services, and to deliver the right messages to the selected market segments.

2.3 Market segmentation approaches

When defining target markets, marketers typically employ quantitative and qualitative market segmentation tools to analyze factors that affect buying decisions: geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral influences. Quantitative approach answers the question of 'who' the customer is, while qualitative approach provides insight into 'why' the customer buys.

2.3.1 Quantitative market segmentation

Geographic and demographic factors are classified as quantitative segmentation factors.

Geographic factors are used to develop marketing messages specific to different parts of the world, countries, regions, cities and neighborhoods. With geographics, the underlying thesis is that people who live in the same areas are likely to share other similarities: income, interests, lifestyles. Thus, they can be used to segment the market and to identify patterns of consumer behavior beyond the location. (Kurtz et al. 2010.)

Still, by and large, geographic factors simply provide information on who the target customers is, and not why they make certain purchases. Geographic segmentation approach is inherently flawed because there are a lot of differences within any geographic location. A zip code alone, while predictive of certain factors, does not define a person.

Demographic segmentation, also sometimes called socioeconomic segmentation, is considered quantitative. It is often a starting point in market assessments undertaken by businesses. Demographics help to identify market segments by measurable and observable factors such as age, gender, life stage, education, marital status, ethnicity, and religion. Going an extra mile when it comes to demographic research can lead to discovering new marketing opportunities. (Kurtz et al. 2010.)

Demographics are widely used in market segmentation for the following reasons: the data is easy to collect, measure and communicate. Predictability is one of the most useful traits of demographic trends and it is part of the reason why they are often applied when segmenting a market. Existing polls and statistical data provide insight into age distribution in a given population, birth rates, marriage rates, mortality rates and so on. Consumption of many products and services is closely linked to population size, age, education, religion and other characteristics. So it is useful to know this information

to be able to accurately project the composition of a population and to decide whether or not it is advantageous to target a particular market segment. (Kurtz et al. 2010.)

However, there are a number of limitations when it comes to demographic market segmentation. Firstly, censuses are not very reliable as data sources: there are time gaps between census updates, and the data quickly becomes outdated, plus, the existing survey results can be biased. Secondly, while there are certain demographic patterns to purchases, in general, it is a weak predictor of behavior. Demographic data, in and of itself, does not explain consumer preferences or attitudes. It does not consider the multiple dimensions of customers: their psychological, social and cultural influences. Moreover, while in the past demographic factors were very relevant, now gender disparities, and differences in income and education are much narrower, hence they are less relevant. This is why this type of segmentation alone is insufficient, and should be used in tandem with other methods to increase market segmentation precision. Combining demographics and geographics with other characteristics can help construct a more complete and realistic customer profile. (Rao 2019.)

2.3.2 Qualitative market segmentation

Psychographic and behavioral segmentation methods are classified as qualitative. They rely on less easily-measurable, more emotion-driven factors that provide an explanation as to why the target customer behaves the way they do.

Psychographic influences include but are not limited to values, beliefs, attitudes, personality, motivation, lifestyle, interests, opinions and self-image. The lifestyle factor is especially important as it provides insight into the hobbies, entertainment and recreational pursuits of the target audience, including their preferences when it comes to vocations. (Smart Insights 2019.)

Behavioral influences mostly have to do with relationships that consumers form with brands: their knowledge, experience, usage and perceptions. What is more, they encompass perceived brand benefits, brand attributes, brand loyalty, usage rates and occasions. (Smart Insights 2019.)

Qualitative market segmentation approaches are complex and require additional explanation. They are discussed in more depth in the following chapters.

2.3.3 Psychographic segmentation approaches

Psychographic segmentation deals with state-of-mind issues such as motives, attitudes, opinions, values, lifestyles, interests, and personality (Ferrell & Hartline 1994.) This approach to segmentation emerged in response to criticism of the traditional methods: demographics- and geographics-based segmentation. It quickly grew in popularity, as target marketing campaigns that applied psychographics at the market segmentation stage saw an increase in effectiveness by a factor of five. (Kurtz et al. 2010.)

Psychographic segmentation allows to divide the market based on psychological variables, namely on the basis of personality, motivation and lifestyle variables.

Personality and character traits are crucial variables when it comes to segmenting psychographically. Purchases are commonly driven by customers' personalities. So categorizing customers by personality types can boost the likelihood of target marketing success. However, accurately measuring personality characteristics is a challenge. One of the most acclaimed methods used is the Myers Briggs' test: it segments people into sixteen personality types. Another common psychological tool, called the Big Five Personality Scale, can gauge extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience. It allows to measure these personality traits with some degree of precision. One way that information is utilized in target marketing is by developing a personality for products or services that matches the personality of the chosen segment. Nonetheless, personality should not be used as an independent variable, as it is too volatile and intangible in nature.

Motivation relates to the priorities of the consumers. Understanding what is most important to them, also means understanding what motivates them to take action. By identifying motivations, marketers can segment customers by the activities and benefits they seek when making purchases. (McIntosh & Goeldner 1990.) There are numerous different motivation factors. The six most prevalent travel motivations are cultural interest, comfort, familiarity, activity, opinion leadership, and knowledge seeking. In general, there are three underlying motivations to all purchases: ideals, achievement and self-expression. Consumers motivated by ideals value knowledge and morals the most. Those who are motivated by achievement seek to show their success to their peers. Finally, self-expression motivators are physical activity, adventure and risk. (Strategicbusinessinsights.com 2019.)

Lifestyle is a key psychographic category comprised of a number of factors: values, beliefs, activities, opinions and interests. As Boone and Kurtz put it, "*Lifestyle*

segmentation typically encompasses other psychographic factors and compiles them under one name.” Undoubtedly, a lifestyle is central to the life of any individual. The way we spend our time and money shapes the way we live, thus, contributing to our lifestyle one way or another. (CleverTap 2019.)

Our values underpin our lifestyles. Values can be defined as centrally held beliefs that direct actions beyond immediate goals (Rokeach 1973.) They are typically ingrained in people at an early age. This explains why values and beliefs tend to be enduring: they only change in response to big societal and generational shifts. Opinions and interests, on the other hand, can change relatively quickly.

One tool that is often applied in psychographic segmentation is the values and lifestyle system (VALS). It was first devised in 1978 by a SRI International researcher Arnold Mitchell. Instead of solely relying on demographic information, they categorized American consumers by their social values, beliefs and lifestyles. A decade later the model was updated and VALS2 was introduced. This value segmentation tool links lifestyles with consumer decisions. It is based on two key elements: resources and self-motivation. (Kurtz et al. 2010.)

VALS has four categories and eight subcategories. The four categories are these: the need-driven, mostly elderly, the young, the outer-directed, who desire social approval, the inner-directed, who purchase based on their inner needs, and the smallest category, the integrateds, who balance inner-directedness and outer-directedness. The seven psychographic segments are as follows: Actualizers, Fulfillers, Achievers, Believers, Strivers, Makers, Strugglers. Actualizers are successful people with high self-esteem, they have a wide range of rather elite interests and tastes. Fulfillers are conservative and place the most value on order, knowledge and responsibility. Achievers have reverence for authority and the status quo, they seek out products and services that reflect their success. Alternatively, experiencers tend to reject the status quo, they rebel and seek to differentiate themselves from others. The other four segments have similar traits, but fewer resources or lower purchasing power. Believers are traditional people who live within their means and prefer established brands. Strivers seek self-expression and social approval through material possessions. Makers are pragmatic and value functionality over other benefits. Finally, the segment of strugglers is comprised of elderly people that are loyal to certain brands.

An alternative to the VALS model is called the List of Values (LOV.) It was designed by the research centre of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. They identified fifty four consumer values that can be effectively applied in lifestyle segmentation. The nine values that are most commonly used to create customer profiles are security, relationships with others, sense of belonging, self-respect, self-fulfillment, sense of accomplishment, respect, fun and excitement. (Kahle 1984.)

Lifestyles both influence the market and are influenced by market. Hence, lifestyles are subject to change over time. In fact, there is some indication that changes in lifestyles are occurring at an accelerating pace. For example, a new fitness trend might change the morning exercise routine of a runner. Marketers need to be proactive to keep up with such lifestyle changes and to satisfy their selected segments.

A consumer's tendency to make certain purchases extends far beyond geographics and demographics. A plethora of psychological forces play a role in their decisions. Psychographic segmentation offers a variety of methodologies that allow for more specificity when it comes to segmentation. Not only do psychographic variables help gain insight into consumer behavior, but they are a great means for categorizing people into segments, and they can be turned into a strong foundation of a target marketing strategy.

2.3.4 Behavioristic segmentation approaches

Behavior is one of the four most frequently used bases of segmentation. While other types of variables can explain who the consumer is, the behavioral variable can explain why they buy certain goods and services. In the words of Jon Miller, *"Knowing who your customers are is great, but knowing how they behave is even better."* (Seismic 2019.) Without this element, other segmentation data is rendered useless.

Behavioral or behavioristic segmentation is defined as the act of grouping customers based on how they act when making purchasing decisions (Fieldboom 2019.) Meaning, this type of segmentation deals with behaviors that pertain to purchases. Marketers study these previous behaviors of customers to find patterns and establish behavioral marketing profiles. Behavioral segmentation can be used on its own or in addition to other segmentation initiatives. Segmenting the market based on behavior is a much more complex process, and because it goes beyond surface-level characteristics of the customer, it can prove to be much more effective than other methods.

All of the steps of the consumer decision-making process can aid in creating behavioral segments. Behavioral segmentation is based on the following six factors: benefits sought, occasion, usage rate, brand loyalty status, user status, and buyer readiness. Let us take a closer look at each of the factors.

Benefit segmentation uses cause-and effect or causal factors as a way to differentiate buyers. Benefits sought differ for different customers. If each customer is asked why they use a certain product or service, they will offer at least one benefit that is important to them. For some the price or the availability of a discount are primary benefits, while others see the appearance of a product as a benefit. In the case of service providers, it is particularly important for them to have a clear understanding of the benefits their customers expect from the services, as benefits can support a strong positioning strategy.

The second variable is the occasion when consumers start thinking about buying a product or service, and when they purchase it. The likelihood of consumers making a purchase always fluctuates based on timing. Segmenting on the basis of this factor, allows marketers to change the consumption patterns. For instance, products such as chocolates are typically in high demand around Valentine's Day. But, using a different approach, they can be promoted for everyday occasions as well.

This category can be broken down into three sub-categories: universal occasions, regular-personal occasions, and rare-personal occasions. Universal occasions apply to all consumers within a particular segment, such as consumers' propensity to make more purchases during Christmas holidays. Regular-personal occasions relate to the regular purchases that individuals make based on certain factors in their personal life. For instance, in the case of travel, some couples will vacation at the same time each year - on their anniversary. Rare-personal occasions apply to unpredictable and spontaneous purchases. But even these anomalies can be analyzed in order to find buying patterns. (Jobber & Fahy 2012.)

Usage rate can be used to group customers according to their level of product or service usage. Based on that, groups with light, medium and heavy usage can be identified. Airlines give special attention and deals to heavy users or frequent flyers, as they make a greater contribution to sales than the people who fly once a year. Keeping these heavy users is much more cost-effective than fighting for light users. (Jobber & Fahy 2012.)

Customers can also be grouped on the basis of their loyalty to the brand. While some display high brand loyalty and always buy a specific brand, others buy a certain brand occasionally, and the so-called 'switchers' will switch between different brands. (Jobber & Fahy 2012.) Developing and retaining brand-loyal customers is much more lucrative, then acquiring new customers, especially in the tourism industry.

Similarly, user status categorizes customers according to whether they are non-users, prospects, first-time users, regular users, or ex-users of a product or service. The way customers are approached through marketing initiatives will depend on where they fall within these categories. Non-users need to be made aware of the product or service, while prospects may need special incentives to be persuaded to make a purchase. The goal of any company is to convert non-users into regular users. (Jobber & Fahy 2012.)

The last behavioral segmentation factor is the buyer readiness stage – customers are grouped into segments based on their readiness to purchase the product or the service in question. The stages of readiness are awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase. To a certain degree, they are aligned with the decision-making steps. (Jobber & Fahy 2012.)

One caveat that should be considered is that all of the variables can change depending on the circumstances the consumer is in at any given moment in time. Buying situations can affect the benefits sought, usage rate, readiness to buy, and so on.

Behavioristic segmentation is a necessary part of the overall segmentation process. It provides marketers with an in-depth understanding of the customer. Other segmentation data frequently correlates with purchase behaviors. Thus, target marketing strategies should apply behavioristic segmentation in addition to other segmentation initiatives.

2.4 Consumer behavior in target marketing

Consumer behavior studies the processes and activities people engage in when searching for, selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services to satisfy needs and desires. It enables researchers to understand why certain goods and services are purchased, and others are not.

Four main factors influence consumer behavior: personal, social, economic, psychological and cultural.

The personal factors include an individual's age, life-cycle state, occupation, lifestyle, personality, and self-concept. Some definitions note that brand personality should be included as well, since some brands are designed to reflect the personality of the customer.

The social factors are reference groups, primary and secondary social groups, social role and status. A group is defined as two or more individuals who interact to accomplish their personal or common goals. (Ronald, 2008.) A reference group is a group whose presumed perspectives or values are used by an individual as the basis of her judgments, opinions, and actions. They socialize people and allow them to compare themselves to others. Reference groups can stem from either primary and secondary groups. Primary groups are marked by face-to-face personal relationships of their members. These include family, friendships, community and other groups that fulfill our psychological needs. Secondary groups are more formal and structured: work associations, religious organizations and such. People in these groups may not interact as frequently as those in primary groups. However, members of all groups have an influence on each other and share consumer behavior patterns. Social factors, in general, deal with buying decisions individuals make due to their membership in particular groups. For instance, membership in a reference group may lead people to select particular kinds of entertainment, leisure and holiday destinations among other things. Consumers today face a lot more societal pressures to shop 'upward' because the world of reference has expanded. (Chao & Schor 1998.) It is now common to see social groups used in promotional strategies and advertisements.

Economic factors are related to the purchasing power or the financial position of the consumer: personal income, family income, income expectations, consumer credit, assets and savings. These factors determine how much an individual spends on goods and services and how frequently. Discretionary income or the income remaining after meeting all the necessities can be used for the purchase of shopping goods, luxury items, vacations, etc. An increase in income results in higher expenditure and tends to improve one's standard of living. Apart from these personal economic factors, external economic forces also influence consumer behavior. For example, an economic recession can prevent people from making certain purchases. (East, Wright & Vanhuele 2008.)

Psychological factors are arguably most important when it comes to consumer behavior, as most decisions start with psychological processes, such as motivation, perception, beliefs, which in turn form into attitudes, and lead to learning. (East et al. 2008.) These factors are discussed in more detail below.

Cultural factors are also vital and influence buying decisions significantly. Cultural values describe any values or ideologies that are common among groups of people. The culture of an individual can dictate how that individual behaves and what decisions they make. It is closely linked to social factors as cultural values are often passed on from parents to children through socialization. While it is difficult to define a culture, subcultures that comprise cultures are easy to deconstruct. A person's religion is a prime example of a subculture. Someone who is part of a particular religion may make purchases to carry out religious practices. (East et al. 2008.)

2.4.1 Consumer behavior in market segmentation and positioning

Consumer behavior factors are the underlying commonalities shared by market segments; hence it is important to gain a full understanding of them to frame target marketing strategies.

Markets can be segmented on the basis of consumer behavior. Understanding the influence consumer behavior yields, enables marketers to identify market segments that are most likely to respond to their product or service offerings. With that in mind, consumer behavior factors can be used as segmentation criteria – be those psychological factors or social factors – they enable companies to create highly tailored marketing campaigns that effectively reach the people they are aimed at and convert them into customers. The more consumer behavior factors are chosen, the more narrow the market segment becomes, which allows for a more concentrated marketing effort. Due to the fact that buying behavior differs for different demographic, psychographic and geographic groups, it is often combined with and used in addition to these segmentation tools, leading to what is referred to as hybrid segmentation. (East et al. 2008.)

Since positioning is essentially about how consumers see a product, consumer behavior factors can play a vital role in positioning, by helping create a marketing mix that fits the consumer expectations of the segment. Knowing about their initial perception and other psychological factors, for instance, can help position a product on the market in a way

that will help the company gain advantage over its competitors that are not taking those factors into account. This is the reason why consumer behavior is often used as a starting point for the formulation of a positioning strategy. (Tutorialspoint 2019.)

2.4.2 Consumer decision-making process and psychological processes

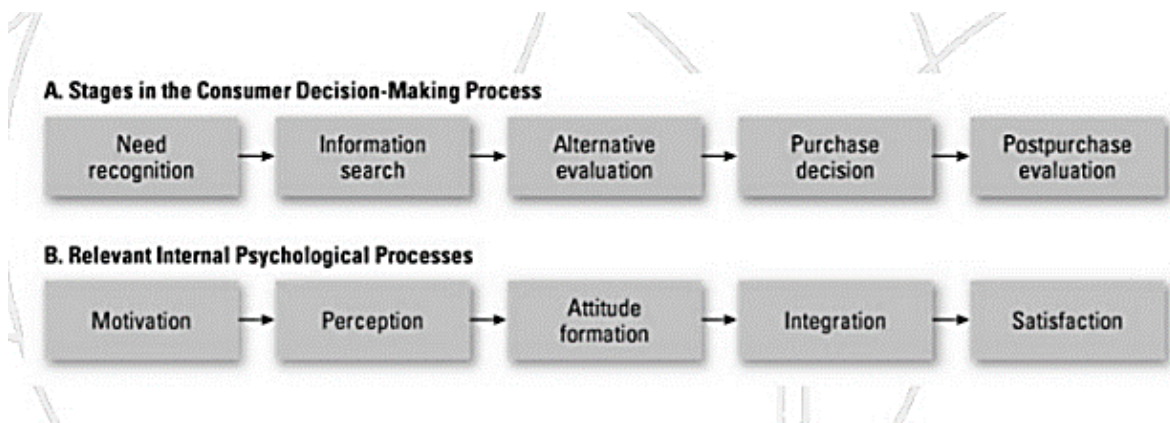


Figure 1. Consumer decision making model (Slideplayer 2019)

Above is Figure 1 which shows the consumer decision-making process. Each of the decision stages corresponds to psychological processes or psychological consumer behavior factors discussed briefly in the previous chapter. (Slideplayer.com 2019.)

Need recognition step starts with psychological motivation. It can be induced by elements such as dissatisfaction, market-induced recognition, emergence of new products or services, or even emergence of new needs. For example, families who have children have also a new set of needs to consider when making purchases. (East et al. 2008.)

Information search can be internal, external or a combination of the two. In internal search, people scan their own memories to recall their past experiences with purchases of that kind. If the internal information is insufficient, which happens frequently, external search is conducted. The four typical sources of external information are personal sources, market sources, public sources and personal experience. The word-of-mouth information received from friends, for instance, can impact the consumer at this stage of decision-making. Having a clear knowledge of how people acquire information is important for marketers to be able to form communication strategies. For example, advertising can include information that is easy to communicate in conversation and the design of the advertisement can reflect the process of giving advice. (East et al. 2008.)

Schemas are abstract knowledge structures that are fitted to information and to make sense of it. (Fiske & Taylor 1991.) Thought is guided by schemas and based on schemas, perception is formed. Perception is the psychological process that corresponds to the information search stage of decision-making. Perception is the process by which an individual receives, attends to, interprets, and stores information to create a meaningful picture of the world. As people receive new information from various information sources, their perception is being formed. One person's perception, however, will be different from another's. This is due to the psychological process called the selective perception process. It happens in the following steps: selective exposure, selective attention, selective comprehension, and selective retention. First, people are exposed to different information, as they choose whether or not to make themselves available to that information, i.e. reading certain newspapers and watching certain TV channels but not others. According to research, the more consumers are exposed to a new stimulus, the more they tend to like it. (Zajonc 1968.) Selective attention happens when consumers focus on certain stimuli and ignore others. Particular color combinations, for instance, can draw attention. Colorful, dynamic, or other distinctive stimuli disproportionately engage attention and disproportionately affect judgments (Fiske & Taylor 1991.) The way consumers interpret information differs vastly as well, leading to selective comprehension. An individual's attitudes, beliefs, motives and experiences influence their comprehension of information. Finally, there is selective retention – consumers do not recall everything they see, hear or read, even after being exposed, paying attention and comprehending the information. There is a so-called retrieval bias effect at work, meaning that the more rapidly an idea can be brought to mind, the more likely it is to figure in cognition and decision-making. (East et al. 2008.) This is why marketing communication should aim to help consumers retain the information being communicated. Visual triggers like logos and slogans assist in consumers' memorization processes, but the frequency of exposure matters as well.

Attitude formation is the next step in the psychological process. Attitudes are what people feel about concepts, brands, or any other entities they can think of and attach feelings to. Attitude formation is based on the evaluation of alternatives during decision-making. Most of the alternatives from which consumers choose have at least a couple of different attributes. Consumers evaluate their choices using those attributes, or based on a set of evaluative criteria, which are either objective or subjective. Objective criteria include price, warranty and service, and subjective criteria include style, appearance

and image. A multitude of attributes is assessed to determine the value of a certain purchase. For example, to assess the value of going on a holiday factors such as cost, weather, traveling, effort, and cuisine, among many others are considered. (East et al. 2008.)

Consumers also view products and services in terms of their consequences: what kind of outcomes will they get after the purchase? Consequences can be functional or psychological. It is possible to measure an expected value for each consequence, determining one's overall or global attitude. Global attitudes are based on the sum of the expected values of the attributes. (East et al. 2008.)

Having completed their evaluation of the service or product in question, consumers form an attitude toward it. Attitudes are helpful at predicting consumer behavior. Marketing aids in the creation of favorable attitudes and in the changing of the negative attitudes.

The next step in the decision-making process is the purchase decision. The purchase decision is not the purchase itself. After the information search and the evaluation of alternatives are over, a purchase intention or a predisposition to a certain option is formed. There is usually a time delay between making a purchase decision and making a purchase. The length of the delay is dependent on the risks involved and the type of purchase. The longer the period the higher the likelihood that the consumer will change their mind in response to new circumstances. (East et al. 2008.)

There are variations when it comes to consumer decision-making. Decision-making types include routine problem-solving, limited problem-solving and extended problem-solving. Moreover, there is group decision-making, which can be influenced by a reference group even when the group is not there. In group decision-making, there is always an initiator of the purchase decision-making process, an information provider who gathers the information necessary to make the decision, and an influencer who exerts influence as to what criteria will be used. Particularly in the case of families, the influencer can be a child or another family member with very specific needs. Then there is the decision-maker who makes the purchase, and the consumer of the product or service. (East et al. 2008.) Thus, more frequently than not, decisions are made in groups and not by one individual acting on their own.

The purchase decision step coincides with the psychological process called integration. Integration describes the ways in which product knowledge, meanings, and beliefs are

combined to evaluate alternatives. Consumers use two types of integration rules: formal decision rules and simplified decision rules. Formal decision rules require that specific attributes be thoroughly evaluated and compared before a purchase decision is made. While simplified decision rules are typically price- or promotion-based, and adapt to environmental situations.

Finally, in the post purchase evaluation stage of decision-making, consumers assess their satisfaction with a product or service. Satisfaction is a judgment that consumers make regarding their pleasure level of consumption-related fulfillment. High satisfaction means favorable post purchase evaluation, and will likely lead to future repeat purchases. Alternatively, if the consumer experiences doubts or regrets after making a purchase, it can lead to a cognitive dissonance, which describes a feeling of tension after making an uneasy purchase decision. Having said that, satisfaction is not always a clear predictor of future behavior – people can have a positive experience without making repeat purchases as their needs may change over time. (East et al. 2008.)

Understanding the stages involved in the decision-making process and the relevant psychological factors of consumer behavior of the segment selected, is invaluable to create a successful target marketing strategy, as such strategy will be able to directly influence the buying behavior of that segment. (Slideshare 2019.)

Having mentioned all of the elements of the model, it is worth noting that occasionally decisions are made with minimal evaluation. Consumers may make them unconsciously or intuitively, following heuristics - inexact rule-of-thumb processes. (Kahneman, Slovic & Tversky 1982.) The rationality of choice should not be exaggerated. It is not uncommon for consumers to choose first and justify their behavior afterwards. (Ehrenberg 1988.)

2.4.3 High-involvement decisions and low-involvement decisions

Consumer decision-making process varies for different types of purchases. Consumers do not necessarily go through all of the steps identified in the decision-making model when considering a purchase and the full, complex process of decision-making is limited to certain kinds of purchases. There are differences in consumer behavior when it comes to high-involvement and low-involvement purchases.

Philip Kotler of Northwestern University has defined high-involvement purchases as the kinds of purchases that carry more risk and are more costly, they usually demand much

cognitive deliberation or thought. High-involvement decisions also have greater implications for the buyer's status and self-image. The novelty factor can lead to a higher level of involvement. Whereas low-involvement purchases do not demand much cognitive deliberation as they typically come at a low risk and a low cost. Such purchases can be driven by perceptions and feelings about brands. Extended thought or cognitive approach to decision-making is rare but important high-involvement decisions warrant it. Limited involvement purchases fall somewhere in the middle - on the spectrum - between high-involvement and low-involvement purchases. (East et al. 2008.)

The type of decision-making used by the consumer has crucial implications for marketing strategies, especially in the case of target marketing. Having knowledge of the level of involvement of your segment in decision-making processes can improve marketing and communications messages. (East et al. 2008.)

For instance, in the advertising of low-involvement products typically emotional appeals are used, and rational appeals are used for high-involvement products. However, it is worth noting, that while it is true that when it comes to most high-involvement purchases it is best to emphasize cognitive brand qualities in marketing, in the case of travel, emotional and experiential messages tend to resonate more with customers. (East et al. 2008.)

2.4.4 Models of consumer choice

To explain consumer behavior in more detail, it is helpful to take a look at three models of consumer choice. The models are: cognitive, reinforcement, and habit.

The cognitive model treats the purchase as the result of rational decision-making. It assumes that the person approaches the decision-making rationally. Different alternatives are investigated and evaluated based on their benefits and costs. This model is also called extended problem-solving. In this case, marketing can be used to provide further information that will lead the consumer to select or reject a particular alternative. It is notable that the cognitive model of consumer choice tends to be used for first-time purchases. Even when it does occur, simplification of choice is likely because of lack of experience on the consumer's part. (East et al. 2008.)

The reinforcement model is a model where choice is controlled by factors in the environment. Certain environments make some actions impossible. The factors of the

environment reward some alternatives more so than the others. The choice then is a modified behavior, responsive to those factors. As the Skinner's learning theory explains, there is a correlation between behavior, its outcomes, and subsequent behavior. If the outcome is positive, a reinforcer works, the action the consumer performed is likely to be repeated. Skinner defined reinforcers as experiences that raise the frequency of responses associated with it. Thus, it is possible to influence consumers through reinforcers, but the issue is that what is important to some people may not be important to others. (Skinner 1953.) The marketing of today uses the principle of reinforcement: it is the same principle used in sales promotions and discounts. Skinner also introduced the notion of shaping. Not only do salespeople use shaping in negotiations to incentivize certain choices, but products and services also shape consumers. For example, we learn more about smartphones as we use them because of the positive reinforcements that smartphones provide. (East et al 2008.)

In the habit model of choice, purchase is an already learned behavior, facilitated by a range of stimuli in the environment. A lot of consumption has a settled or habitual form: people buy the same brands and shop in the same stores for prolonged periods of time. That constitutes habits of purchase. People develop responses to particular stimulus, when they engage in these behaviors regularly. These responses are unconscious and automatic. Some examples of stimuli are the color, size and shape of goods. Williams (1966) discovered that color has the most impact, followed by size, then shape. Not surprisingly, habits tend to supersede cognitive decision-making, saving consumers time and energy. However, it does not mean that habitual consumption is never questioned, consumers may step back and reflect on their habits, especially so if the purchase outcomes are very positive or very negative. (East et al. 2008.)

2.4.5 Family decision making

Families are considered to be primary social groups and, out of all groups and environmental factors, they arguably exert the most influence on consumers.

Because of how prevalent families are in societies – with almost every individual having some family bonds – it is understandable why they are considered paramount in consumer decision-making. All kinds of interactions occur frequently within family groups, including discussions related to purchases. Families tend to be well-knit, with relationships within them are very personal; hence a family member's input is of high value to other members. This makes families key influencers in consumer behavior.

As has been noted previously, family traditions and customs are learned early on by children through the process of consumer socialization. Parents and other relatives act as socializing agents. Many behavioral patterns, including those related to consumption like taste and shopping styles, can also be learned in childhood and solidified later in life, either inadvertently or intentionally, through the process of modeling. But the influence a family has on consumer behavior does not stop there, as throughout their lives, consumers make many buying decisions jointly with their families. (East et al. 2008.)

The family decision-making model pinpoints the stages of these joint decisions. It shows how family members interact with each other and gives context to their decision-making. Different members of the family play different roles. Influencers provide information to the rest of the family. Gate-keepers control the flow of information and sway the opinion to their product or service of choice, by emphasizing positive information or minimizing negative information. Deciders, as the name suggests, decide what to buy as they have the power and money to do so. Similarly, buyers are the ones who carry out the purchase. Lastly, there are users who will be using the product or service either individually or with other family members. Joint decisions are limited to certain high-involvement purchases, but the influence a family has on consumer behavior is still significant, as all family members influence each other. As Kurt Lewin, an expert on group behavior, noted, *“the essence of a group is not a similarity or dissimilarity of its members, but their interdependence.”* (Lewin 1948, p. 84.)

2.4.6 Family life cycle stages as segmentation criteria

Family life cycle stages are instrumental in understanding consumer behavior and decision-making and different stages can be used as a segmentation base. *“The family life cycle (FLC) has been used by consumer researchers and marketers as a way to classify family units into meaningful stages in order to examine their purchase and consumption behavior”* (Schiffman, O’Cass, Paladino & Carlson 2014, p. 333).

If families are viewed as consumption units that buy certain products and services, their family life cycle stages provide a way to categorize them and target them with marketing efforts.

The family life cycle, as a segmentation concept, emerged in the 1960s, as a result of research by Wells and Gubar (1966). The factors based on which different stages are

formed are age, marital status, presence of children, career, and disposable income. It is easy to substitute these different demographic factors for family life cycle stages, and segmentation and targeting can be carried out accordingly.

To put it simply, a family life cycle stage is a type of a family or a particular stage in life that a person is in. Throughout a lifetime people will pass through several stages as their families will change over time. Each of the stages has certain characteristics that can be used in segmentation and target marketing. (Schiffman et al. 2014.)

There exist different versions of the characterization of the stages, but the typical family life cycle stages that can be easily identified are described below. The first one is the Bachelor stage. It describes people that are not married. They tend to be impulsive buyers and put a greater emphasis on their image and status than people in other categories. As a result, they are more prone to spend on their appearance and to follow fashion trends. Not having to consider the needs of other family members, they have fewer responsibilities, and are more likely to make spontaneous purchases, especially with regard to entertainment and travel. (Schiffman et al. 2014.)

The next family life cycle stage is Newly Married people – being a new family unit – they are more careful in their decision-making, and strive to improve their lifestyle before starting a family of their own. Most newly married couples, according to Ciccone (2015) are concerned with having children and owning a home. By and large, they value quality over quantity, and are less prone to impulse buying.

Parenthood is the next step in the family life cycle. Those families that have children under the age of six fall into the stage called Full Nest 1. Their purchases are heavily influenced by the needs of their young children and their focus, as a new Millennial Marketing study demonstrates, is on the value for money. Full Nest 2 family life cycle stage is for couples with children between the ages of six and twelve years old. Couples with older children, who are still dependent on them, are in the Full Nest 3 stage. The purchases at these stages are dominated by children's needs, and the purchasing influence children exert on their parents is often used in marketing. (Schiffman et al. 2014.)

Once their children leave the house and become independent, older couples become Empty Nesters, and enter a post-parenthood part of the life cycle. Not having to financially provide for their adult children, they have a surged in disposable income and

a renewed focus on their own needs. This is why many travel companies focus on Empty Nesters, with special offers for senior citizens. (Sahney 2013.) The last family life cycle stage is Solitary Survivor. The people at this stage are retired and single. Their average spending potential is low, but they spend the most on medication and accommodation, and many support their grandchildren.

The traditional family life cycle is changing, and there are new trends in family structures that should be taken into account in modern marketing. The revised model includes these changes: people marry later in life or never marry, people have children at an older age, some decide to be 'child-free', same-sex couples and single-parent families gain societal acceptance, people divorce and some remarry, which results in blended families. (Great Ideas for Teaching Marketing 2019.)

The traditional and emerging family life cycle stages offers a number of insights to marketers, including spending ability, influencers, information use and preferences. Bhasin (2016) stresses the importance of the family life cycle in decision-making differences and consumption choices. Questions about the type, structure of the family and its consumption characteristics can be answered by identifying the family life cycle stage of the target segment. (Bhasin 2019.)

2.4.7 The role of culture in consumer behavior and marketing

Culture has overarching significance to everything people do, including their consumption. It can be viewed as a central environmental factor that unites consumers within segments that share similar needs and preferences. These preferences are often driven by underlying cultural values that stem from their culture. To develop a successful marketing strategy, cultural influences of the market segment should be taken into consideration.

To determine what is meant by the word culture is difficult. Taylor (1907) defined culture as "*that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morale, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*"

Typically a person's membership in a particular culture is established early on in their life, and its influence on them strengthens as they mature. It is not surprising then that culture can dictate people's values and attitudes, and that it ultimately translates into consumer behavior and purchase decisions. This explains why anthropologists study

both domestic and foreign societies with the goal of finding and explaining patterns of behavior. (Sheng, Tian & Chen 2010.)

Cultural values are those values that are common among people belonging to a certain culture. Understanding cultural values of potential customers enables companies to market their offerings in relevant ways. Not everyone fully subscribes to cultural values but they do influence a large proportion of society. To give an example, in some cultures risks are embraced, while other cultures are more risk-averse. It can lead to people being more safety-oriented when it comes to travel: they will choose familiar holiday destinations and avoid long-distance travel.

Different cultures tend to correspond with geography: different parts of the world have different cultures. So a consumer in South Korea will have a different approach to the buying process than a consumer in the United States. Going back to the connection between decision-making and psychological processes, the way marketing messages are perceived differs depending on the culture. Contemporary consumer behavior research shows that culture, perception and behavior of consumers are linked. Studies demonstrate that culturally-customized marketing content, aligned with the cultural perceptions of customers, reduces cognitive effort needed to process information, leading to favorable impressions. Recognizing the fact that culture acts as a medium for information transmission, means also recognizing that culture can change the meaning of the information being communicated.

With that said, a number of cultures exist within any given country, and ultimately, every individual internalizes their culture in a different way. Just because consumers share a geographic space, does not mean that their cultural values are identical, and that they will be receptive to the same marketing messages. This underscores the importance of conducting research to understand the resounding impact culture has on the consumer behavior of people in any given segment, as it can influence them in non-obvious and interesting ways. (Cossin 2019).

Target market analysis can incorporate cultural research by recognizing cultural context in which marketing takes place. Marketing plans should operate in the cultural context: define the 'where' or the geographical location, 'who' – the people, their cultural affiliation, consumer behavior and psychographics, and what – the product or service itself. Considering cultural affiliation in target market analysis contributes to a holistic understanding of consumers. It is not a matter of exploiting cultures and cultural groups

for material gain, but a way to identify cultural consumer segments and to create culturally relevant marketing content that fits cultural perceptions and expectations, and has a beneficial impact on consumer behavior of the people in those cultural segments. Developing several cultural segments would lead to a multicultural marketing strategy. (Cossin 2019.)

Alternatively, a single cultural segment can be selected, and just like it is possible to narrow the market using more specific geographic factors, it is possible to do so by identifying homogeneous groups within a single culture. These groups are called sub-cultures – relatively small segments of people that share similar attitudes, behaviors and customs. Large businesses may have the budget to engage big cultural groups, but smaller ones focus on subcultures, marketing more narrowly or localizing promotional content to meet certain cultural expectations of consumer segments being targeted. (Cossin 2019.)

Society and cultures are strongly interlinked. Therefore, one's social class is also often considered to be of cultural significance. People within a particular class share the same position in their society, and have cultural similarities. Class can be defined by parameters such as education, profession and income, but its influence on people's preferences and their very framework of living is what is of greater importance.

There are several characteristics of culture in consumer behavior that can be highlighted. The first characteristic is its comprehensiveness: all cultural beliefs of it are interrelated, exerting influence on each other, and they fit together in a way that makes sense. Secondly, culture is something that is learned through observation and socialization. Culture is defined by societal boundaries or norms - they specify the range of acceptable behavior. In other words, something that is unacceptable in a society cannot become part of a culture. Another factor is that members of a culture are unaware of its impact on them, it permeates the subconscious and manifests in actions without much thinking. Finally, all cultures evolve over time, instead of being static; though some are more likely to embrace change and are more dynamic. (Cossin 2019.)

The ways in which culture manifests in consumption are numerous. On a material level, consumption is reflective of culture. The items people buy are bought because of their internal cultural beliefs, but these items are also shaped by culture. This is particularly visible when it comes to fashion – clothing styles change with the culture, but they also often drive change which makes them the byproduct of culture. (Cossin 2019.)

The knowledge of the culture and the way it correlates with consumer behavior is of key importance to marketers. It is vital to have an understanding of the existing culture, its manifestation in consumption, and the direction that culture is taking. Furthermore, target market analysis has to account for the cultural context, applying cultural insights, consumer behavior and geo-targeting. Fields (2014) argues that companies “...*never speak directly to consumers or customers. It’s always through the medium of culture.*” Looking at a segment through a prism of its culture, a business will be able to target it with tailored products and services, and with focused marketing campaigns.

2.5 Branding positioning and target marketing

As mentioned in the previous chapters, brands figure in consumer decision-making, simplifying their choices, which saves them time and energy. Thus, brand positioning should be considered when creating a target marketing strategy.

A brand name instantly inform customers about the company - it evokes either positive or negative reactions as they recall their past experiences with it. A brand can be understood as an identity or a personality of the company, its products and services. This personality is influenced by the customers and their perception of the company. It is possible to shift their perceptions in a positive direction with the help of a brand strategy. That way, they will have a distinct good impression of the company and associate desirable qualities with its brand. (Wheeler 2009.)

Brand strategy involves brand positioning - the positioning of the brand in the mind of the customers. Reis and Trout’s definition says that positioning is “*an organized system for finding a window in the mind. It is based on the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances.*” A brand will have a certain position regardless of whether a proactive approach to positioning is taken. But it is best to take a forward-looking approach, and to aim to for ownership of a desired market space for a brand, using marketing strategies. (Ries & Trout 1980.)

But how is it relevant to target marketing? Part of the branding positioning process is the identification of the target audience through segmentation. Even though it was popularized by Reis and Trout’s bestselling book, brand positioning first emerged around the time target marketing became commonplace - in the 1960s - which explains why target audience selection is important in branding and why brand positioning is interwoven with target marketing. In the segmentation and targeting stages information

on consumers' needs, attitudes and preferences is collected. Brand positioning then uses that information in advertisements and marketing communication to create a perception consistent with the brand. The more clearly the segments are defined, the more specific can the outreach programs be. (Baines, Fill, Rosengren & Antonetti 2010.)

The first step in the brand positioning process is finding the brand's primary target segment, using segmentation criteria. Any given brand does not have to limit itself to just one segment though - that is an outdated approach. The best practice for brands, appropriate in today's competitive marketplace, is to segment the market into multiple audiences, based on their common characteristics, and to target them. A separate brand positioning strategy for each segment would have a negative outcome, fracturing the brand. The positioning has to be broad enough to stay relevant to these groups, and it should be translated in a way that is most appealing to each segment - the marketing communications will differ, but the value proposition will not. (Duckler 2019.)

To give an example of how that would work in reality, consider a fast food chain such as Subway. It targets a number of segments: young people and college students tend to be more health-conscious and are marketed to differently because of that. Whereas people in the 35 to 50 age category value efficiency and fast service. There are other groups as well, and they all pursue distinctly different benefits from Subway based on their preferences and lifestyles. Even though they share some commonalities, they are distinct. They might all like the same menu item, but buy on different occasions or at different times of the day. If Subway was to view them as a monolith, instead of considering their differences, learning about and targeting them, its brand would dilute the appeal it has. (Duckler 2019.)

Traditionally, brand positioning was seen as an activity that only the company engages in: the target audience is identified, the benefits are created and marketed to them. The customers are assumed to simply passively receive messages and consume these brands. But this production-consumption binary has been blurred, and the role of the consumer has become more active in the production of value and in the branding process. They have more choice than ever before, and have a renewed desire for authenticity and the kinds of values they can identify with in brands. In response, brands adapt those values to appeal to them. Also, it is no longer just about the product or service benefits, but about meanings that brands can provide: self-expression and

social approval. Consumers buy into these values and meanings, forging deep bonds with brands. Nowadays, these strong relationships with brands are facilitated by online platforms. *“The market is becoming a forum for conversations and interactions between consumers, consumer communities and firms.”* (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, p.5.) Consumers’ power and contribution to a brand’s meaning should be noted.

Additionally, brands have to consider other audiences. Customers should be the focus, but identifying stakeholder groups can open new opportunities for a brand. There are opinion leaders, ambassadors, investors, wholesalers and suppliers to take into account, depending on the nature of the business. Capturing the attention of and remaining relevant to these audiences can seal the fate of a brand. A brand identity can be instilled into the stakeholders, creating a ‘corporate brandscape’. In that sense, brands are three-dimensional, reaching inside, outside and across a company. (Balmer & Greyser 2006, p.34.)

Talent or employees can also be considered a target audience from a branding standpoint, as they provide a basis for the brand’s position (Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998). Some academics claim that brands start from inside the company and are co-created with employees. The vision of the company should be shared by the people who work for it because they are the ones enacting that vision. When the employees share a vision and passion, it translates into the corporate identity or the brand. Often the brand experience of the customers comes from their interactions with the company’s employees. So all employee actions ought to reinforce the brand. Starbucks encourages this in its employees: they run training programs to teach restaurant servers how to create the right brand experience for the customers, while allowing them to express their individuality in customer dealings. (Parsons, Maclaran & Chatzidakis 2009, p.74.)

Other key steps in the brand positioning process are competitor identification and analysis. This allows the company to see how other brands are positioned in the marketplace, how its own brand is currently positioned with regard to the primary and secondary competition, and how it can be differentiated from them. After that, a brand positioning statement is created. A brand positioning statement communicates the unique value of the brand in a few sentences. It is communicated across the company and is used internally, though it should address the target audience, and can help craft taglines. Finally, a positioning strategy is developed, and marketing and media plans

are implemented. Brand positioning also extends to other aspects of the company: website, packaging, uniforms, stationary and so forth. (East et al. 2008.)

Once a desired brand position in the marketplace has been established, a company should strive to improve upon it, strengthen its stance and brand identity. Claiming a brand position requires consistent and ongoing action. It should be adjusted to reflect the changes in the operating environment. If the brand position evolves with the target customers, they will develop loyalty to the brand, generating repeat business. (East et al. 2008.)

Target marketing and brand positioning are interlinked, and the practice of target marketing includes brands positioning. Market segmentation informs brand positioning, which is used in order to effectively communicate the brand to the chosen segment. To implement a successful target marketing strategy, a company has to target the audience and position its brand.

2.6 Targeted content marketing

Content marketing is a key element of any marketing strategy, and it plays a crucial role in the target marketing process. A HubSpot survey showed that most marketers see content marketing as a subset of inbound marketing. Inbound marketing is specifically focused on sales, while content marketing is not limited to that. Even though to many people content marketing is synonymous with inbound marketing or even social media marketing, it is actually a much broader term. According to Content Marketing Institute, *“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”* (Content Marketing Institute 2019.) It encompasses content created online and offline, for a range of channels, in different formats, to appeal to a specific target customer. That is where the overlap with target marketing occurs - content marketing requires taking a close look at the segments selected. Successful content marketing is targeted.

In large part, content marketing these days does occur online, and the goal of it is to build relationships with the audience and to affect consumer behavior. Social media distribution channels provide a perfect avenue for this. It is impossible, however, to build any real relationship if a specific segment has not been selected, and if data on it has not been collected and analyzed. Without completing these segmentation and targeting

steps, a content marketer cannot understand the audience, hence no content can be created that would match the interest and needs of that audience. (Content Marketing Institute 2019.)

Social networks like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter offer content marketers yet another excellent source of data on potential customers: it is possible to see a breakdown of their demographics, distinguish groups by interests, location and so on. Most of such data is called granular data - it is very detailed, specific, and subdivided. Thus, it is of high value. (Content Marketing Institute 2019.)

Having collected the data, an analysis is performed to understand which content topics and formats will appeal to the audience. Based on that, a content strategy is designed to efficiently produce content that will match the needs of the audience, and the goals of the organization.

A content marketing strategy analyzes the ways content marketing can be used across the content marketing funnel. It outlines the steps of the customer journey with respect to the kind of content they consume at each step. So tailored content can be created for each step of customer journey. For example, at the early stage, customers are learning about the company through photos and videos. But by the late stage they have signed up to the newsletter, visited the company website and are ready to buy the product. It is the main goal and the ultimate challenge of content marketing: moving the potential customer from the social platforms to the web, and converting them into actual customers. (Content Marketing Institute 2019.)

There are other platforms apart from social media, that can be used in a content marketing strategy. Blogs act as a vehicle to share high-quality content, positioning the company as an industry expert and improving search engine results in the process. In fact, companies that blog get 55% more website visitors. eBooks can accomplish the same task, but are on the longer side, offering more extensive information. Overall, informative content can help build trust with readers and can assist in converting them into buyers. (Impactbnd.com 2019.)

A content marketing strategy should also include an inventory of existing content, a schedule of the content to be published, with distinctions for various distribution channels, an overarching narrative for all of the channels, and content-specific metrics by which to measure performance. (i-SCOOP 2019.)

The expectations placed on content marketing professionals in the fast-changing social media environment are substantial. Thousands of content messages are sent out every day, resulting in message fatigue - the average person will not be interacting with all of it. Targeted content can bypass the clutter of the mass-produced content. The content published always has to be relevant, valuable, engaging and personalized to the audience. The engagement aspect is particularly critical: having followers comment on and share posts. Engaging content can increase organic reach, website traffic and conversions. (Content Marketing Institute 2019.)

This underscores the importance of knowing your segment, and having every piece of content in line with the insights identified by data analysis. Plus, this data-driven approach to content marketing allows the business to decide how to use resources most effectively, investing in the content that resonates with the audience the most. (Socialbakers 2019.)

Content marketing is informed by target audience analysis, it requires a strategy of its own, and should be incorporated into a broader target marketing strategy. Having targeted content enables the company to build communities, and to guide them through the stages of the content marketing funnel to achieve its business objectives.

2.7 Influencer community in content marketing

Influencer marketing was just a creative experiment a few years ago, but it has since become part of the reality of modern marketing on social media. It is a new component of content marketing, which makes it part of target marketing. Given the fact that influencer marketing is a relatively recent development, it is important to look at the way it emerged.

Pew Research Center reported that 65% of American adults were actively using social networking platforms, an increase from 7% 10 years prior (Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech 2019). Social media growth is what compelled companies to search for new ways of reaching customers and influencing their purchase decisions on social platforms. The most effective way to do that seems to be by appealing to the social nature of people, our tendency to look to others for advice. The notion that influencer marketing could be the answer to this problem, was first voiced in the 2012 report *The Rise of Digital Intelligence*. It investigated how influence operates in online and social media environments (Slideshare 2019.)

The definition of influencer marketing is still expanding and evolving. But it can be generally understood as a form of marketing that *“identifies specific individuals that have influence over potential buyers, and directs marketing activities around these influencers”* (Adweek 2019).

All social media posts that include branded content fall under the umbrella of influencer marketing. They carry a lot of power because people trust influencers and view their endorsements as genuine. Even though the sponsored nature of the posts is disclosed by hashtags, as required by the Federal Trade Commission regulations, the perception is still largely positive. Influencers are natural opinion leaders because they have a lot of followers and their relationships with these followers are marked by trust. Companies are capitalizing on this, by communicating their promotional messages through social media influencers. They hire them to do content promotion or to create new content. This element of creative control makes influencer marketing authentic to the followers: the message is not in advertising language but in the voice of the influencer. (Woods 2016.)

In other words, social media influencers are paid to post favorably about products or services on social media. The return on these kinds of investments is around 11 times more than with other forms of advertising annually. Not to mention other returns, in terms of engagement and followers: brands tagged in sponsored posts receive ‘residual’ following. So more people can engage with the content of that brand in the future. (Woods 2016.)

These days, there are influencers agencies that represent them like talent agencies. These agencies can help companies find influencers to partner with. The most favorable results are produced when the right influencers are chosen. The content they deliver would have no value if it never reached the target customer, an influencer’s audience has to align with that of the company. (Woods 2016.) Therefore, influencer marketing, as a content marketing strategy, can only be used in tandem with target marketing.

2.8 Digital marketing in target marketing

With the advent of the internet, traditional marketing changed significantly. New mediums emerged: websites, blogs, social media, streaming services, and other digital platforms. Marketing, being at the forefront of all new trends, utilized these platforms from the start. The businesses that did not embrace the shift saw a rapid decline.

For target marketing, the online marketplace presented a new opportunity and a new challenge. Every company now had access to a plethora of information, and a way of reaching millions of people. Instead of than assuming that everybody with access to the Internet, has the same likelihood of becoming a customer online, it is best to apply the principles of target marketing to the online marketplace, identifying groups of people with the highest potential to buy. (Cossin 2019.)

Online consumer segmentation utilizes traditional segmentation approaches, using the Internet as a tool. The information obtained online can be used to categorize buyers based on their shared needs. That information can also inform promotional content – the content that is strategically aligned with those needs. Therefore, online marketers can maximize marketing effectiveness: promotional offers reach the segments that are most receptive to them, and hence are most likely to benefit from them. (Cossin 2019.)

Therefore, modern technology has improved marketers' understanding of the consumer. Digital tools have contributed to segmentation and targeting efficiency, by facilitating tracking of online consumer actions, and subsequent analysis of their behaviors and thinking processes. Insights gained through online consumer behavior analysis enables them to formulate target marketing strategies. (Cossin 2019.)

Additionally, we need to consider the impact of new technologies on target marketing. The Internet of Things is a good example: almost everyone has a built-in voice command system on their smartphone and devices like Google Home and Alexa are going mainstream. Their main function is to listen to questions and give answers. However, in the process, they are bound to collect a lot of data on us: our personal information, our likes and dislikes, and even our purchasing habits. All of the devices in the home, in fact, can be connected, accumulating and combining data. It is unclear how ethical it is to use that type of data, but could potentially be utilized by Google or Amazon to target us with certain offers and advertisements. Companies around the world would want to apply it in their target marketing strategies as well, and could purchase rights to that data. (Cossin 2019.)

AI or Artificial Intelligence may find its own application in target marketing, multiplying its efficiency. Devices that use machine learning could analyze our data and the frequency of certain actions to ultimately predict certain purchases almost instantly, in real time. That way, being able to anticipate what product or service the customer intends to buy,

gives a business an edge over the competition: the ability to personalize messages and sway their opinion in favor of their offerings. (Cossin 2019.)

The increasing use of mobile phones presents another opening for target marketing. Most of the traffic these days comes from mobile devices. This means that the promotional content has to be mobile-friendly and that marketers have to consider anew how consumers absorb marketing information and messages. (Cossin 2019.)

In the near future, virtual reality will be a common way for customers to try out various experiences. VR can be integrated into mobile devices. Undoubtedly, the ability to get a glimpse of what a hotel or a restaurant is like from their phones would have implications for customers' decision-making, and would morph marketing as a result. (Cossin 2019.)

The Internet has expanded marketing opportunities, giving companies a means of reaching big audiences across the world. However, this does not mean that when it comes to online marketing, they should return to appealing to the masses. If anything, firms now have a new way of identifying the most receptive audiences with the help of new powerful technologies and platforms. (Cossin 2019.)

Technology will continue to transform target marketing, and the ever-evolving digital outlets will offer practical marketing applications and new opportunities for information collection and analysis. Among many changes are mobile and wearable devices, the Internet of Things, Big Data, cloud technologies, augmented and virtual reality, as well as artificial intelligence. There is a lot of potential and room for improvement. The practice of marketing will need to adapt to the changes, and find a way to utilize these inventions in segmentation and targeting.

3 Empiricism

3.1 The research question

A research question is the question around which the research is centered. It should point to a need for meaningful understanding and investigation (Bryman 2007).

The framing of a research question or research problem is not a simple technicality. In fact, a number of factors need to be considered before any decision is made and the question is written.

The first issue that is taken into account is the question type. To put it into simple terms, it is the kind of information that the researcher seeks to uncover from data analysis. The second issue is always the scope of the question: how broad it is in its examination. A third factor that needs to be addressed are any unnecessary presuppositions in the question - they can hinder the research process if left unchecked. Additionally, it should be considered how the final research question can influence the direction of a qualitative study. (King et al. 2010.)

As it relates to the question type, it would be a mistake to frame a research question so that qualitative research methods cannot provide an answer to it. So the researcher must be careful not to include any causal relationship questions, as only quantitative research is capable of providing causality type of answers. Qualitative interviews, selected as means of research for this thesis, could never offer a legitimate answer to any question that seeks uncover causality, nor should a qualitative research question seek to establish any trends. (Bryman 2007.)

The question is, “Are there commonalities in preferences of the target market of American families with children under twelve, with regard to travel to SantaPark, from the psychographic, behavioral and cultural point of view?”

This question underscores the importance of understanding the new target market of SantaPark from perspectives other than demographics and geographics, which cannot help predict potential customers’ preferences, and therefore, could never offer significant insights or serve as a basis of an effective target marketing strategy.

The research question can definitely be classified as relational as it implies a relationship between the different factors being investigated: quantitative segmentation variables and qualitative variables, and how they are potentially tied to preferences. (Bryman 2007.)

There is currently ambiguity there as the target market has not been explored sufficiently by the company. Moreover, it is an understudied area, so the research would add to prior knowledge and clarify it. It is worth investigating if the connection between the mentioned factors exists. If it does, there are practical marketing implications for SantaPark as they proceed to target this segment. In fact, the next question, which is beyond the scope of this research, could be, “How can these commonalities be used in a target marketing strategy of SantaPark?”

In a sense, it is also an explanatory type of a research question, seeking to provide an answer within a specific and realistic context. It leaves the answer, to a large extent, up for the researcher's interpretation, as it is in line with the qualitative approach. This question focuses on meaning and experience, with regard to the group of participants. So it is appropriate in terms of its focus. (Kurtz et al. 2010.)

As for the question scope, it is realistic, and not too broad or too narrow. It takes into account the context: preferences related to travel to SantaPark. If the context was wider, it would render the research incapable of providing relevant answers. The category of American families is not too broad either: only those with children under the age of twelve are considered, narrowing the scope of the question. Though the question enables some diversity of meaning and experience, as the respondents' children are not all of the same age, but are of different ages.

Lastly, it is essential to check if any presuppositions were built into the question. The phrasing of the question does not lead one to assume that there are commonalities in preferences. Instead of asking what they are, the question asks if they exist. Therefore, it is not a leading question and it will not adversely affect the way the researcher explores the topic with the participants. As the research progresses, the research question allows for shifts because of the exploratory character of qualitative research. But it can only move in those directions relevant to the topic, and without undermining the intellectual quality of the work. (Kurtz et al. 2010.)

The question does an excellent job of focusing, narrowing down and directing the research, which significantly increases the potential of producing relevant, useful and interesting findings. Such findings can then inform marketing action of SantaPark and can move the discussion around the subject forward.

3.2 Research methods

Qualitative methods of research are most useful when it comes to understanding people's attitudes and behaviors. Sometimes qualitative methods are also referred to as holistic or naturalistic. They are applied across a wide range of industries and disciplines, with the goal of identifying the motivations and meanings that drive behavior. Researchers achieve that by closely interacting with subjects' ideas, actions and words.

Qualitative approach to research was popularized in the 1940s. From that time to this day it has been seen as the opposite of the quantitative approach, but that view is not entirely true. The findings of qualitative research are not expressed with statistics and numbers, but they still allow researchers to establish hypotheses effectively. Numbers can then affirm the hypotheses further. So the two methods are not antithetical to each other. (Mariampolski 2001.)

Qualitative research methods can be applied to both the collection and the analysis of data. With regard to data collection, the emphasis is on observations and personal expressions, and there are far fewer limitations than in quantitative research. Interviews are most commonly used because, unlike surveys, they allow for more in-depth answers. In response to interview questions, participants can provide full answers, describing their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. (Mariampolski 2001.)

As for analysis of qualitative data, descriptive approaches are normally taken. They rely on the interpretation of statements and behaviors of the respondents, usually through a lense of a psychological theory. For example, Freudian theoretical perspective can be used to interpret decision-making stages. In other cases, the interpretation can be fully up to the researcher.

Thus, qualitative studies provide insights, as well as explanations. This type of research offers an essential and complementary perspective on human behavior. Qualitative research tools can advance market knowledge, inform decisions, identify trends in the marketplace, support new ideas for marketing strategy development. (Mariampolski 2001.)

I would like to explain why this type of research is most acceptable in this case. The choice between quantitative and qualitative research methods generally comes down to a number of factors: what kind of questions the researcher seeks to answer, who the subjects being studied are, and what the research objective is.

The research objective for this thesis can be classified as explanatory. Hence, a qualitative approach is called for. An explanatory objective suggests that the information gathered is expected to offer insights into subjects' needs, behaviors and feelings. In this case, a number of elements are combined. Part of the research is about establishing motivations and aspirational meanings related to travel to SantaPark. Another big aspect is culture-related: the Christmas traditions that American families

practice and how these can affect their preferences and expectations. Partly, the research is segmentation-focused: it will seek to yield further insights into the market segment, by examining it from multiple perspectives. Finally, it can potentially assist in positioning. Through qualitative research it is possible to determine how potential customers think about the service, and what their current perceptions are. This information can inform future positioning strategy. (Mariampolski 2001.)

Using quantitative strategies in these circumstances would be inappropriate. I believe that, given all of the objectives and the situation, this subject is best studied through the means of qualitative research. That will allow for a more in-depth exploration of the research question.

Historic context and current trends support the case for using qualitative research methods. In the past, the consensus was that quantitative methods were superior to qualitative ones. Following the formation of the Ford Foundation, which started a 'new age of marketing', research methods used by marketers became increasingly more technical, scientific and mathematical. (Tadajewski 2006, p.179.) Emphasis was placed on laboratory research, computer simulations and statistics to come up with marketing insights. In other words, the research methods used were highly quantitative.

Over the next decades, marketing scholars and practitioners became more critical of this approach to research. They realized that this mathematization of marketing research was not delivering desired results. Most importantly, it was shifting the focus away from the consumer, and the results produced proved to be largely irrelevant to real life. Hodock (1991) expressed this sentiment most eloquently, "*Technical sophistication does not necessarily guarantee success. Our academic institutions must share some of the blame for our obsession with sophisticated techniques. Too many textbooks are long on technique and short on reality*". Like many marketing academics he realized that failure to ask the right questions prior to computerized data analysis was at the core of the problem. Hodock continued, "*Too many researchers are tied up in their numbers, statistics, and rating scales – all of which have their place – but they lose sight of the reason for it all, which is insight into the consumer*". (Hodock 1991.)

This supports the decision to choose qualitative research methods so as to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the group in questions. Using qualitative research will enable the researcher to examine the previously neglected aspects of the target segment: the social, behavioral and cultural dimensions.

3.3 Sampling method

As opposed to using one of the probability sampling techniques, it was decided to use a non-probability technique, namely convenience sampling. Non-probability techniques are more dependant on the judgement of the researcher. Convenience sampling is also sometimes referred to as availability sampling, and it is fairly easy to understand its tenants: the people who are conveniently available participate in the research. (Kurtz et al 2010.)

This is a method that is commonly used in business and marketing settings to gather primary data, especially the kind of data that relates to initial perceptions and potential customers' opinions about a service or a product.

Normally convenience sampling involves simply recruiting any willing participants that are available with no additional requirements. Though given the nature of the study, certain requirements had to be satisfied before selecting people to participate. All of them had to fulfill the following criteria: to live in the U.S., and to have at least one child under the age of twelve. Apart from that no further inclusion requirements were imposed. (Dudovskiy 2016.)

As mentioned, convenience sampling involves finding participants anywhere and at any time convenient. The researcher invited the people in her online social network to participate. So a few respondents came from Facebook through existing contacts. It is worth noting that none of them had any personal relation to the researcher. The majority of the participants came from an email enquiry that the author had sent to her former professor. The professor, who resides in the state of Oregon, recommended a number of American people willing to take part in the study. It can be concluded that this professor was a 'gatekeeper' through whom interviewees were reached. A gatekeeper, in this context, is someone who facilitates access to potential participants. Going through a gatekeeper had the advantage of increasing the researcher's trustworthiness in the eyes of the participants. (Kurtz et al 2010.)

A sample size of seven people was chosen, since it is within bounds of what is prescribed in qualitative research. In fact, Creswell (1998) suggested 5 – 25 and Morse (1994) recommended at least 6 participants. The consensus in qualitative research is that the sample size should be limited to 5-15 of each homogeneous participant group. These recommendations assisted the researcher in the estimation of how many

participants were needed, though in the end, the sample size was set to match the saturation. (Dudovskiy 2016.)

All in all, convenience sampling was decided on because it was most effective, given the circumstances: the time and resource constraints, geographical distance and the growing aversion people have to study recruitment had to be taken into account. It was the only feasible option for recruiting sources of primary data in the situation. Although, it should be acknowledged that convenience sampling is prone to bias and sampling error, making it difficult to generalize the results. These factors, however, were mitigated by the fact that the participants did not all come from the same geographical location in the U.S., providing some degree of diversity, and hence randomness and transferability. Other influencing factors were beyond the control of the researcher. (Dudovskiy 2016.)

3.4 Interview as a research method

In research, when it comes to data collection, a certain method has to be decided upon. A method covers all procedures and techniques used to collect and analyze data. (King et al, 2010.)

In qualitative research interviewing is one of the most frequently used methods when collecting data. Interviews, by and large, allow researchers to gain insight into issues from the perspective of the participants, and to gather detailed qualitative data, which takes form of interview transcripts. Thus, qualitative interviewing provides a suitable means for collecting and analyzing data.

Qualitative interviewing is a unique interviewing approach that has grown prominent in the academia in recent years, especially in social sciences. (King et al, 2010.) But mainstream preference alone is not a good justification to choose a method. It is helpful to look into the reasons why interviews are preferable as a research method.

First and foremost, interviews are most fitting for the purpose of qualitative research, which is to gain deep insights into issues at hand, preferably from the point of view of the subjects. They provide an opportunity to engage in rather informal conversation to obtain an understanding of their thoughts and opinions that extend beyond a surface level. (King et al, 2010.)

At the same time, interviews in qualitative research have a formal side. The formal aspect of interviews is rooted in the fact that each interview can be divided into multiple

parts, where not only is each part focused by certain themes and topics, but different interviewing approaches can be used in each one. They are discussed at length in this chapter.

Every research method is informed by theory and methodology. Methodology is defined as a process of research design. It defines specific approaches that come with expectations about how research is to be carried out. With interviews, it is almost always rooted in interpretivism. Interpretive research methodology means that the focus of the research is to make sense of people's experiences about the world from their vantage points. Qualitative interviewing matches this methodological framework and theoretical perspective because it allows participants to share their individual experiences and understandings. (King et al, 2010.)

The interviews used in this research were semi-structured. While it is still a formal approach to interviewing, it allows to combine the best of both worlds: the flexibility of the open-ended interview, and the focus of a structured approach. Bernard (1988) said that the semi-structured interviewing technique is most appropriate in situations where no more than one chance at an interview is afforded to the researcher. This approach also allows the researcher to collect nuanced descriptive data on the personal experiences of the interviewees: their opinions, thoughts and attitudes. In addition, semi-structured interviews can move from more general topics to highly-specific ones, providing more reliable data. (King et al 2010.)

Typically in semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions are used, instead of close-ended questions, allowing interviewees to express themselves on their own terms. Leading questions that can bias responses are avoided. Questions that are phrased strongly as negatives or positives are not used either. At the same time, semi-structured interviews allow for some solid organization. An interview guide, for instance, is something that needs to be prepared. It lists the questions that are to be asked and their order. Questions are ordered to move from concrete issues to more abstract, while remaining equally relevant to the research topic. The order is also designed in a way that the easiest questions come first so as to make the respondents feel more comfortable. Subsequently, the questions escalate in complexity. Having said that, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to stray away from the guide when she sees fit. The biggest benefit afforded by the semi-structured approach to interviews is that the questions can be grouped by topic or theme, which was done in this case. The

use of specific topics was necessary to keep the conversation focused and to make the best use of the limited time. (King et al 2010.)

Each interview lasted approximately half an hour but the participants were never interrupted or prevented from responding at length on any issues they were interested in speaking about. At the end of the process they were asked if there was anything they wanted to share or add.

Face-to-face interviews were not viable because of the geographic distance. For the convenience of the participants, the interviews were carried out using a range of video-conferencing platforms, including Skype, Facebook Messenger and Duo. At the beginning of each interview every respondent's consent was asked and recorded. The responses of the interviewees were recorded through both note-taking and audio recordings, which were subsequently transcribed in a Microsoft Word document. Some comments and notes that were also recorded in a document for future use in analysis. (King et al 2010.)

As is customary with the semi-structured approach, the interviews were divided into multiple parts, with questions grouped to fit each part. A range of interviewing methods that fall under the umbrella of the semi-structured interview were used. (King et al 2010.)

Each interview started with the ideal method. To understand why the ideal method was applied it is useful to look to Kotler's definition of a market opportunity. To be able to identify market opportunities, it is necessary to find out if there is a way to deliver the company's services to the target segment in a superior way. (Kotler 1991.) Ideas for improving the service can come from applying the ideal method interviewing technique.

In the ideal method, the researcher interviews a set of people, and as the name suggests, they are asked to describe what an ideal version of the product or service would be like. The wishes that appear most frequently suggest market opportunities.

This method helps identify the psychological consequences that the customers are seeking out: what outcomes they want, what they expect from the experience and what their ideal is. This information gives insight into psychographic elements such as people's interest, activities and opinions.

Using this method enables the researcher to see the service from the customer's perspective and to identify possible service improvements and potential innovations in the process.

In the second part of the interview, the technique of elicitation was used to identify the key elements of consumer buying behavior of the segment. Elicitation is the process required to determine commonly held beliefs about any concept. In elicitation, a series of questions is directed at the interviewee, the questions are about positive and negative associations of the concept in question. The beliefs that are repeated most frequently in the group being questioned, the ones that come to mind easily, are recorded. These beliefs are called modal salient beliefs. They are more likely to translate into behavior of the customers than the beliefs that take a long time to recall. Elicitation does not simply cover the benefits and drawbacks of a particular action, but also the impact that other people and environmental factors can have on the action, and how easy it is to perform. (Fishbein1975.)

There are a number of steps that are undertaken for modal salient belief elicitation:

1. First, the action needs to be defined for the segment in clear terms. In this case, the action is going to SantaPark on a holiday as a family.
2. The segment, as well, needs to be clearly defined. American families with children below the age of twelve.
3. Eliciting modal salient beliefs is the next step: people are asked about the advantages and disadvantages of the action. Following their response, the interviewer asks, "Anything else?" This probing question is crucial to gather as much useful information as possible. Responses of each person are recorded and similar responses are grouped together as modal salient beliefs.
4. The next set of questions relates to salient referents or action influencers. Respondents are asked if there are people or specific groups that think they should do the action in question. The same question is repeated with "should not". The people influencing the action can be friends, family members or other members of reference groups. Moreover, they are then asked if there are any particular people or organizations that come to their mind when they think of the action, which helps identify their perceptions and preconceived notions.
5. Finally, the list of beliefs is refined, using the most common responses.

These questions address the personal and the social aspects of decisions and the underlying psychological processes related to consumer decision-making, such as their motivations, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and learning, which are discussed in detail in the theoretical chapter of this report. (Fishbein 1975.)

In the final part of the interview, the participants were asked an open-ended question about the Christmas-related traditions most important to them and their families. The purpose of this part of the interview was to shed some light on the cultural values of the segment as they pertain to Christmas. Cultural values, in this case, are just as important as psychographic information and consumer decision-making behaviors. Knowing these values is essential not only to be able to gain a deeper understanding of the selected group, but to be able to target market SantaPark to them effectively.

Interview guide

To find insights into the preferences of the target market from psychological, cultural and behavioral dimensions an interview guide was created. It included questions related to their ideal experience, perceived advantages and disadvantages of going to SantaPark, decision influencers, perceptions, and their Christmas traditions. Due to the nature of qualitative research and the use of the elicitation method, the interviewer also asked probing questions when it was necessary. The questions are listed in this section.

1. "What would an ideal experience in SantaPark look like for you?"
2. "What are the advantages of going to SantaPark?"
3. "What are the disadvantages of going to SantaPark?"
4. "Can you think of anyone who would be in favor of you going there?"
5. "Can you think of anyone who would be against you going there?"
6. "Do any organizations or people come to mind when you think of SantaPark?"
7. "What are some Christmas traditions that are important to your family?"

3.5 Data handling

The handling, management and storage of data are topics that should not be overlooked when it comes to qualitative research. It has become much easier to do all of the following with the arrival of modern technology, but there are still many other complexities to be considered throughout the research process.

Qualitative data handling, by its nature, is vastly different from quantitative data handling. The former comprises different kind of information. There are some overlaps in rules related to storage, sharing, ownership, confidentiality and so on. But depending on what the researcher plans on achieving, different data handling approaches can be used. It is the responsibility of the researcher to inform others of the management approach they are taking during the research project.

All of the interviews were transcribed into retrievable form after they were conducted to prevent data loss or deterioration. These transcripts can be considered the primary research data. They were stored in Microsoft document format, in a secure computer file, to protect their integrity. Only the researcher had access to them. No hard copies of transcripts were made, but a copy of the document was stored on a USB drive. The audio recordings were only available to the researcher as they were kept on a password-protected laptop. It was helpful to have the data easily available and well-organized, as the transcripts and the recordings were used later on, at the analysis stage. A reflective approach to data management was taken, as note-taking, note revision and audio recording listening were part of the process. A reflective diary was kept for journaling in order to refine the qualitative work and to make more informed decisions about the research.

All of the participants were informed of the objectives of the project, and it was explained to them how their responses would be used. Those people that were uncomfortable and unwilling to commit were free to withdraw their participation and the consent they gave at any time following the interviews. None chose to do so. The researcher would have been open-minded and accommodating had they made that decision because participants are the most important part of any study. (Clarke 2006, pp. 9-29.)

Since the participants provided their consent, the transcripts can be retained and safely stored by the researcher for the duration of the project. Other data, such as notes and recordings, will be discarded due to the fact that it will be of no further value. Following its commencement, most of the transcripts can be disposed of as well. But a record of them or a summary may be kept for future confirmation purposes. This means that they can be used in the future to verify research findings or to help reanalyze them.

This, of course, has the implication that certain data may be shared with other researchers or readers in the future, even if it is not in its original form. The digital

format of it means that international availability is also possible. While such data sharing is necessary to advance theories and validate findings, there are ethical concerns. The preliminary data will never, therefore, be shared. Only the finalized and summarized data will be made available.

Confidentiality is vital: a procedure for the protection of personal information collected by the researcher should be put in place. None of the participants' identifying details or names were included in the study. Other personal identifiers that had been available to the researcher, were destroyed permanently. This means that there are no persuasive confidentiality reasons to refrain from making the research public. (Boschma, Yonge & Mychajlunow 2003, pp. 129-135.)

Finally, because of the nature of qualitative research and the way in which interviews are conducted, data can be considered a result of a shared effort between the respondents and the researcher. The researcher has a right to use the data for analysis purposes, while the participants can lay claim to it and demand that changes be made. However, this is largely inconsequential - the transcripts will only be kept for the duration of the analysis - no legal claims or other conflict is possible after the project is over. (Li-Chen 2008.)

3.6 Data analysis

Since qualitative research methods are used in this case, qualitative research analysis will be employed as well. When it comes to qualitative research analysis, unlike with other analysis methods, there is no single formula that could be applied in a systematic way. It does not mean that this approach lacks precision or that the results drawn from it are less valid: meanings and solid findings can originate from it. (Sandelowski 2010.)

As for a concrete method of analyzing the results, it was decided to use thematic content analysis (TCA.) Not only is it one of the most frequently used data analysis methods in qualitative research, but it is one of the most foundational methods. It is suitable for semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. It is an independent and reliable qualitative approach to analysis that can provide a detailed account of common issues mentioned in data. (Braun & Clarke 2006, pp. 77-101.) I believe this type of analysis is the best option, given the size of the dataset and the amount of qualitative data obtained. Furthermore, TCA is most suitable because it allows to

answer specific questions, such as, “What are the concerns of people? What reasons do people have for using or not using a service or procedure?” (Ayres 2007, pp. 30-32.)

Thematic content analysis aims for a descriptive presentation of qualitative data, in this case it is data obtained from interviews. The objective of TCA is to portray the thematic content of interview transcripts, by uncovering common themes across the dataset. A theme should capture something important about data in relation to research goals. The researcher shall use her own judgement to decide what is to be considered a theme (Braun & Clarke 2006.) Essentially, the text is broken down into relatively small bits of content which are then unified by themes and submitted to descriptive treatment (Sparker 2005, pp. 191-208).

In conducting a TCA, the researcher operates from an objectivistic stance, which means rationality placed in the context of human life. This means that materials from real life are examined analytically. Thematic content analysis is also based on a factist perspective or the kind of perspective that assumes data to be truthful, and more or less in line with the reality out there. (Sandelowski 2010.) Overall, the researcher aims to learn about the real behaviour, attitudes, or motives of the people being studied (Ten Have 2004).

The first step is familiarizing oneself with the data collected. Interview transcripts are made and any relevant interview notes are added. The researcher has to immerse herself in the interview data by reading the transcripts and notes closely several times. The second step is to code the text: descriptions relevant to the topic are marked with a highlighter. It can be completed in Microsoft Word. After that, the researcher should be able to identify themes or common patterns of meaning, and to then group these themes in a way that reflects the interview transcripts as a whole. The interview participants are bound to have some commonalities that can serve as the basis for patterns. Upon finding the themes, the researcher reviews them to ensure they form a cohesive pattern, next they are named and defined more clearly. It is best to employ the words of the participants when naming the themes, instead of relying on interpretation. Finally, they are written up in a coherent way, and quotes from the interview are used to support them. That way, themes are not imposed on the material but are driven by it, providing an explanatory account that offers depth and new understanding. It will result in full theoretical saturation - a state where any additional analysis would contribute to

the theory only minimally, that will suggest the end of the analysis process. (Silverman 1997.)

TCA, when properly carried out, provides a nuanced account of data suitable for further interpretation (Braun & Clarke 2006). The researcher's own interpretation of the results can be provided concurrently as the data is gathered, side-by-side the analysis or later in the report once all data is collected. Part of the interpretation in this type of analysis comes from the exploration of the broader narrative: the emergence of themes can be considered a final result (Sandelowski 2010). The underlying assumptions of the narrative can be additionally clarified, and themes themselves can be subject to interpretation. Questions can be asked, such as, "What are the implications of this theme?" (DeSantis & Ugarriza 2000, pp. 351). For instance, recommendations and suggestions made can be grounded in the themes identified.

It is much debated how findings should be presented, so the creativity of the researcher for reporting results is encouraged. However, it is important to pay attention to the context at the interpretation stage of TCA. The researcher should keep in mind the contexts in which the participants operate and where themes occur, adding to the depth and quality of the results. (Downe-Wamboldt 1992, pp. 313-321.)

4 Results and summary of results

Participant Information

Participant 1: woman, married, two children, based in Alabama.

Participant 2: woman, engaged, one child, based in Missouri.

Participant 3: woman, married, three children, based in Illinois.

Participant 4: woman, married, two children, based in Oregon.

Participant 5: woman, married, two children, based in Oregon.

Participant 6: woman, married, two children, based in Washington, D.C.

Participant 7: woman, married, two children, based in Oregon.

Themes

When questioned about their preferences, influencers and reasons for going to SantaPark, the participants provided interesting and ample responses. A number of themes emerged, which are discussed below.

4.1.1 The importance of Christmas

The first key theme to emerge was the importance of Christmas as a driving motivator for visiting SantaPark. The interviewees frequently mentioned Christmas and the holiday season as the reason for going when the topic was mentioned.

“(The advantage), of course, the fact that it’s centered on Christmas and the relationship with Santa.” (Participant 1).

“The excitement of Christmas and seeing Santa Claus... I think it’s the whole effect of the winter and the fact that it’s the home of Santa Claus.” (Participant 3).

Most also expressed the sentiment that Christmas would need to be central to their ideal experience in SantaPark.

“It would be about tradition, about celebrating Christmas.” (Participant 6).

According to the participants, theme parks providing children-friendly activities are common in the U.S., however, many mentioned they had never come across a Christmas-related theme park before. Their interest was piqued by this unique theme.

“The theme of the park itself... Being immersed in the winter experience.” (Participant 7).

“We don’t have anything like that: the Christmas theme that the park is centered around, the Christmas spirit.” (Participant 3).

“I’ve never really talked to anybody about a place like this. I’ve never even seen anything like that advertised.” (Participant 5).

“I think it is very memorable because we don’t have anything like that here.” (Participant 7).

Another participant also emphasized the uniqueness of SantaPark, and disclosed that it would be a nice change from other Christmas trips they take as a family.

“It’s not just like any snow trip away from home - it’s going to be special and memorable. This would perpetuate the myth of Christmas and the joy of the season.” (Participant 4).

4.1.2 Escapism and phantasy

There was another strong common thread that extended across the set of interviews - escapism and phantasy. Time and again the participants talked about the escapist experience they wanted to be a part of on their ideal visit SantaPark. The magic of Christmas and the visual appeal of the theme park were consistently mentioned in interviews.

“It seems like such a magical, winter place. Everything is so decorated and festive.” (Participant 5.)

“I think the place looks absolutely beautiful.” (Participant 2).

Adding to the phantasy aspect of the theme park, the key advantage would be to feel like a child again, as several participants stated.

“I think it brings you into a different world, a fantasy world... And just being a child again in that kind of a zone.” (Participant 3).

“I am still a bit of a child at heart myself, so I think it would be beautiful to go there” (Participant 2).

One other element that seemed to perpetuate the escapist quality of SantaPark were the Northern Lights. Several participants mentioned the phenomenon as an appealing advantage.

“I would definitely like to see the Northern Lights because that’s something on my bucket list.” (Participant 1).

“I would like to see Northern lights. But I don’t know how possible that is...” (Participant 7).

“I saw where you can stay there, the hotel. You can see the northern lights from the suits. Personally, that’s something that I have always wanted to see.” (Participant 2).

4.1.3 Interest in current services

When discussing their ideal experience in SantaPark, the participants brought up the current activities and services of the park. Understandably, these services are what

makes SantaPark attractive at present moment. According to the respondents, there would be no point in going to the theme park without taking advantage of as many of the activities they provide as possible.

“Participating in as many activities as possible. I think my kids would like the Elf School and the Ice Gallery, the elf workshop, and obviously meeting Santa.” (Participant 7)

“From what I read, it sounded like SantaPark had some great activities actually: the ice gallery, the bakery where kids can decorate cookies. And the elf school where they give you a little graduation cap at the end.” (Participant 1).

“Then we would really get to explore and experience everything and get to try out all the different activities there: the bakery where you can go decorate cookies, and the workshop where you can make all the toys.” (Participant 2).

“Visiting the workshop and painting, doing arts and crafts. Making treats at the bakery.” (Participant 3).

“Doing all of the Christmas things: decorating cookies, drinking hot cocoa. I think the kids would find the Elf Workshop pretty fun - working with elves. And taking a look at the ice sculptures.” (Participant 6).

Some participants expressed reservations about outdoor activities. But there was also considerable interest in the outdoor activities of SantaPark: those that are organized by the hotel and are facilitated by Santa Oy. One participant stated that she would like to make them part of her ideal experience.

“I also saw that they have outdoors activities, like those firepits. I would love to go out and experience that. As well as sleighing outside.” (Participant 2.)

“If I were to go there, I think it would be awesome to go on the sleigh ride with the huskies.” (Participant 3).

“So many of the things that I would think of were touched on in the promotional video. I would probably want to spend lots of time outdoors.” (Participant 5).

“If I were to go, I would want to do the sledding in the snow - the dog sled rides look pretty cool.” (Participant 6).

Even in the cases where the participant was not interested in very active outdoor services herself, she mentioned somebody in her family who would make the most of them.

“The sleigh ride look great for me. My husband can do other active, outdoor things with the kids.” (Participant 4).

4.1.4 Family bonding

It became apparent throughout the interviews that for most people Christmas was associated with family bonding, and therefore, a visit to a place like SantaPark would be about that as well. The interviewees talked about the importance of spending time with their families.

“It would be great to go together and spend time as a family.” (Participant 1).

“It would absolutely be family bonding. That would be a massive advantage.” (Participant 2).

Family-bonding, for many, went hand-in-hand with creating family memories. The participants mentioned their desire to make special memories together with their families on an ideal trip to SantaPark.

“Family time together, making a memory package, making the holidays special and having a meaningful experience. Just to put the extra icing on the cake.” (Participant 4).

“...To create a tradition, spend time together and make memories.” (Participant 6).

4.1.5 Children as the primary motivator

For many adults with families of their own visiting a theme park of any kind would not be high on their priority list if it wasn't for their children. In the interviews people stated that their main motivation was to create a fun experience for them.

“I guess for me it's all about the kids - that would be the reason we went.” (Participant 6).

When thinking about the advantages of going to SantaPark, and when envisioning their ideal experience there, they did not think about themselves first, rather they considered things from their children's perspective, and put their needs first.

“It would be a wonderful place to go with little kids. I have a daughter who is three and my sister has young kids as well. So it would be great if we could go together with all of them as a family. I think the kids would love it because they are at that age where they are obsessed with Santa.” (Participant 2).

It goes without saying that the experience of visiting SantaPark is more exciting for children because they believe in Santa Claus. Several of the participants thought so. For them, an ideal experience was about feeding into their children’s belief in Santa. “I think it’s a great place to get kids excited about holidays and experience what it’s like to meet Santa.” (Participant 6).

“I imagine we would go as a family, my kids and all of my nephews and nieces - to make it fun for them - the excitement of Christmas and seeing Santa Claus.” (Participant 3).

“I liked the Santa Office that I saw on the website - a place for kids to visit - sort of what they imagine in their head, I think...” (Participant 5).

“Meeting Santa and the elves would be awesome for the kids.” (Participant 7).

Their children’s approval and potential positive experience was so key, it was a kind of a litmus test: will they like it or not? That was something that a number of the participants considered.

“I think both of my kids are at a good age to do something like that, they would be really excited. And if I showed my little one that video, she would be like, “Let’s go on the next plane” But there is a possibility of my older daughter saying, “I don’t want to be on the plane that long.” Though I think she would still be excited about going.” (Participant 5).

“I showed my guys the clip with the train ride, and that’s the part they were excited about.” (Participant 6).

“The dog sled rides look pretty cool... The kids’ would like that. Anything to keep the kids active.” (Participant 6).

One related motivator had to do with travel and the participants’ desire to not only share their love of travel with their kids, but to pass it along to them. One interviewee thought that a trip to SantaPark could do more than simply create a fun holiday memory, she thought it would expand her daughter’s view of the world.

“I love going overseas and seeing new things. And I would want to share that with my family because they have never really been outside of the U.S. So it would be a chance for them to branch out and experience new things, especially the kids. Because when you travel and then come back - it changes your outlook on life. So I would want to pass that love of travel down to my daughter and to my nieces. I want them to understand that the world is bigger than Southeast Missouri.” (Participant 2).

Overall, parents tend to prioritize their children’s needs and experiences over their own. It seems that this tendency comes to the forefront more than ever during the winter holiday season and when they travel as a family. One of the participants captured the sentiment perfectly.

“We always try to make it special for the little ones.” (Participant 7).

4.1.6 Concerns about older children

Most seemed to echo the view that SantaPark would be a great place to visit with young children. However, when thinking about the ideal experience of their older kids, some seemed unsure if there was enough to keep them entertained along with the younger kids. One after another, the participants mentioned their concerns about the perceived lack of age-appropriate activities.

“My son said, “That looks like it’s for babies.” I think they need to cater activities to different age levels. If they had some activities for the smaller kids, and then some for the older ones.” (Participant 6).

Another prominent thread in the interviews was the older kids’ belief in Santa Claus, or rather lack thereof. Would they be just as thrilled if they were not interested in meeting him? The participants were unsure if the experience at SantaPark could still be exciting for those who had outgrown their belief in Santa.

“I think six to eight is probably when it’s going to be the most magical. But even ten or eleven probably is the age when they would still be into it...” (Participant 5).

“I feel like my son is kind of too old for that sort of stuff. He is ten. If he were a little younger it would be an absolutely awesome experience for him. He also recently discovered Santa is not real, so he longer believes in that.” (Participant 1).

“My kids are at the point where they probably know that Santa isn’t real - they are on the brink now... They still believe but this year they probably won’t.” (Participant 6).

“My kids no longer believe in Santa, but they still hold the magic of Christmas in their hearts.” (Participant 4).

“One other issue relates to older kids... I am not sure if they would have things to do while there. Especially if they don’t truly believe in Santa anymore. Could they still enjoy the experience? I have one little one that believes in Santa, I have another one that’s eleven and she has figured it out. What do they have for that age? The kids who are slightly older. It still should be magical for them.” (Participant 5).

One respondent stated her firm belief that the theme park was geared to young children only.

“I would go with younger children, definitely from the ages of four to nine. I think after that the park might be a little too young for my other kids.” (Participant 4).

4.1.7 Adults’ personal outlook

Even though the participants were by and large enthusiastic about going to SantaPark, it was mostly for the reasons related to their children and families. But when it came to their personal feelings, they seemed on the fence about whether they would enjoy the experience as much as their children. Many said that if they were to go so far away, there would need to be a bigger motivator and more incentives for them personally. The interviewees discussed the fact that the park did not have the activities and services necessary for the ideal experience they envisioned.

“I think it is important to have something for adults. Obviously it’s going to be more about the kids but I think for family vacations it’s important to have those options... It would be nice if they had activities and services separately for the parents, as well as some group activities that would fun for them and the kids too. We, as a family, are more inclined to do things with our kids. But I think... I know a lot of families that go on vacations and want some sort of childcare, and they want time away for just a little activity: whether it’s a massage or SPA services, some sort of relaxation. Especially thinking about the American market, people coming from so far away, it would be really important to have some of those features for adults. I am not sure people would spend the money to travel so far if it was only about the kids.” (Participant 5).

“My husband and I would like to go cross-country skiing or maybe snowshoeing.”
(Participant 4).

“A nice addition would be a dinner at the Ice Gallery. I think it would be very cool for adults.” (Participant 1).

For one of the participants it did not even matter much what the exact activities or services would be, she simply wanted to have some down time with her husband.

“They should definitely have some activities for adults as well. If they had snowboarding or skiing, snowshoeing, hiking. Wine-tasting class would be fun, or scotch, or whatever they have in the area... Cooking and food classes... Also, couples massage maybe, or just sitting by the fire and drinking hot chocolate, playing board games. You know, to spend time with your spouse because you never really get that when you have kids.”
(Participant 6).

A few of the respondents talked about relaxation as their main motivator and key advantage they looked for.

“The SPA treatments - definitely something I would want to experience while there. To go and relax while the kids are occupied.” (Participant 6).

“It just looked so relaxing - the hotel room with the big fireplace, the coziness of it, with the beautiful snowfall outside the window.” (Participant 3).

“I would really want to relax while there, so the comfort level is pretty important, and a high standard of accommodation.” (Participant 1).

“I would like some relaxing activities - sit by the fire and drink hot cocoa.” (Participant 4).

One service that the interviewees spoke about at length was childcare. There was a general agreement that having the benefit of babysitting services would allow them to enjoy their time in SantaPark a lot more. After all, parents wanted to have a good time on their vacation too.

“I would want to have some time to myself. So it would be nice if they had babysitters or some sort of childcare there to keep the kids busy throughout the day while the parents go skiing or snowboarding.” (Participant 6).

“The staff there should be child-friendly. To entertain the kids and keep them occupied.” (Participant 1).

Many participants automatically came to the assumption that they could participate in the theme park activities together with their children. They expressed an inclination to join in the activities.

“I would be excited to join them for some activities: decorating cookies and seeing the ice-sculptures.” (Participant 6).

However, a few were acutely aware of the fact that these activities were designed specifically for kids, and might not be accommodating of adults. One participant said that she would be dissatisfied if that was the case and she would have to be an onlooker as her kids had all the fun, instead she wanted to take part with them.

“I would not want to be left on the sidelines when the kids are busy doing their own thing - that’s not fun at all. I want to be hands-on, making arts and crafts with the elves would be cool, like making ornaments or something.” (Participant 4).

She also suggested a new Ice Gallery activity.

“Seeing that they have that Ice Galley there, I would love to learn how to carve ice. I know it wasn’t one of the options but that would have been neat.” (Participant 4).

4.1.8 Compelling reasons to travel across the ocean

When asked about their perceived disadvantages related to going to SantaPark, all of the participants were united in their concerns about the long distance of the park from their respective homes. A number of important insights came from this concern. The first one being related to travel. A visit to SantaPark implied a long-distance journey and that could pose a number of challenges to families with children.

“A disadvantage is the long travel. It would mean traveling with the kids for twenty or twenty four hours - not an easy feat. We would all probably need a day just to reboot from that - just somewhere relaxing, like a stop in-between.” (Participant 2).

“I think ideally the travel would have to be straight-forward. We’d probably have at least two layovers so maybe having a well-planned route would help.” (Participant 1).

“It’s really far away. So the distance would be extremely challenging, and I feel like there wasn’t enough information about how to get there.” (Participant 4).

Secondly, many of the respondents said that going to a far-away location would only make sense to them, if they were to stay for a longer period of time. Understandably, a short getaway at a theme park seemed unreasonable when juxtaposed with the long-distance travel, the cost of travel and the sheer effort involved.

“I would ideally like to stay for six or seven days - I’m not sure.” (Participant 7).

“I would want an opportunity to stay there for longer, not just a day visit. If I were to have a pass for just two days, they would probably need to be pretty packed. But if there is an opportunity to stay longer there and do more things - that would be ideal. Coming from so far away, I would want a longer-term vocation, more than two days.” (Participant 5).

“If I were to go with my family, because we live so far away, it would probably cost quite a bit. So it would be best to go for a least a week. I would definitely want to stay awhile.” (Participant 2).

“It would involve a very long travel. So I would probably not go for a quick visit, I would want to have a pretty long stay, at least a week, and to go somewhere else as well. Make the most of the vocation.” (Participant 1).

Out of this concern another mode of thinking emerged. Quite a few of the participants said that they did not feel like the benefits of going outweighed the perceived costs. In other words, they did not feel like SantaPark was worth it on its own.

“My main concern is - Is there enough to draw me there? Is it a unique enough experience? There is a potential that my husband would say, “Do we really have to go that far for this kind of experience? Can we get something similar but that’s going to be closer - less travel, and less expensive to get there.” (Participant 1).

“I think the fact that it involves traveling so far, and the cost. It would have to be pretty spectacular, in my opinion, to draw people there for just the theme park itself. It has to be very impressive. I can see the locals and the people that are closer coming just for the park on a weekend, but it wouldn’t be enough for me, traveling so far.” (Participant 5).

“I think my family members would love to go, but I don’t know how willing to travel they would be. I don’t know how inclined people would be to do that for a visit to a theme park.” (Participant 3).

“I ask myself, “What would compel me to fly across the ocean to go to Lapland and to visit SantaPark?” I feel like there would have to be another attraction for me to fly across the ocean and to go all that way. What else is there? I certainly wouldn’t go just for that.” (Participant 6).

When discussing this topic, a few of the respondents stated that it could be a good idea for the park to partner with other local business and organizations in order to provide the visitors with a more diverse and interesting experience.

“Maybe it could be connected to other activities in the area - it would be more compelling.” (Participant 6).

“They could add other activities and things in close proximity to the park.” (Participant 7).

For others even that addition to their experience would not be compelling enough. They wanted to have their visit to SantaPark combined with other visits, preferably as part of a longer tour of the Lapland region, or even Finland at large.

“The distance is a challenge: coming all the way to Europe. This is why I feel like a trip to SantaPark has to be combined with something else. It could be part of a bigger tour around Finland. We could tour Finland and then have one or two days for activities in the park.” (Participant 7).

“When I went to LegoLand in Germany, I was visiting other places in the country, and then made a stop in the theme park. There has to be something else there, more places to visit as part of a bigger tour, connecting it to other places in the area. If there are some other attractions in the area, I’d like to see that. But it’s pretty far away from all the major cities.” (Participant 6).

“I would like to have it in a package with something else, a few days in the park, a few days somewhere else.” (Participant 7).

“I would want to engage some other sorts of travel in the area while there, not just the visit to the park. I would like to incorporate SantaPark in the midst of a bigger trip. If I were to go that far I would like to explore other parts of Finland as well.” (Participant 5).

“Finland, as country, it has a pretty low profile, but I would like to go. It is a curiosity for me really, to go there and learn more about it.” (Participant 1).

“I haven’t been to Finland so visiting the country for the first time would be pretty amazing. We don’t have a lot of snow in Alabama so that aspect is really nice to experience a different climate.” (Participant 1).

Before asking the question about Christmas traditions and culture, almost every participant brought up their interest in Finland from the cultural standpoint. When deciding on the advantages most important to them and when talking about their ideal experience, they all wanted to see Finnish culture be incorporated in one way or another. As mentioned, for some of the participants, it was crucial to experience Finland beyond the theme park during their visit.

“For me, I think about the location and the opportunity to introduce my family to a different culture and a different country. So it is about not just about the park itself, but the location in general. I mean we can go closer and find snow, and some winter activities, but to have the opportunity to not only do fun things that the park offers but to be introduced to a new culture would be a plus for me. I was thinking more in general just the surrounding area. Because it is in Finland, there must be some opportunities to get to know the culture of the country. Maybe some things could be incorporated into the park that have to do with the local community and culture. I also mean some new cultural things as it relates to Christmas. Maybe some things that we don’t think about as Americans as far as celebrating Christmas.” (Participant 5).

“It would be fascinating to experience Finnish culture. To see what life in Finland is like compared to ours, their traditions. I think it would be extremely fascinating to experience Christmas from the Finnish culture, honestly.” (Participant 2).

“Perhaps there are some cultural aspects to be picked up while we are staying there.” (Participant 1).

4.1.9 Other concerns

Throughout the interviews other concerns of the participants surfaced. A big commitment like a family trip, especially to a faraway location prompted the participants to consider and weigh other factors that could sway their decision. Certain factors could

not be mediated in any way, so they were mentioned more frequently when it came to the ideal experience.

One of such factors was the Finnish weather. SantaPark is located above the Arctic Circle, where it is very cold, particularly during winter time, and many of the participants voiced their concerns regarding that.

“For me, personally, I wouldn’t choose to go somewhere wintery. When I think of a vocation, I think of more warm and tropical places. Also, my kids totally do not like winter and the cold at all. They would not see that as anything fun.” (Participant 3).

“The cold weather is a disadvantage, mainly for the kids. I don’t know how they’ll manage that, how willing they would be to stay outside.” (Participant 7).

“The weather might be much colder than we are used to.” (Participant 4).

However, it was a minority of the interviewees that framed the weather as a disadvantage. Most of them were either neutral to the weather, or even viewed it as a key part of a visit to SantaPark.

When it came to disadvantages, another prominent factor was the Finnish language. While the participants definitely wanted to experience Finland and get in touch with the culture, they were concerned about encountering a language barrier on their visit to SantaPark. It was important to them to be understood and to have information in English. That extended to promotional materials, signage, and customer service.

“A lot of the promotional materials are in Finnish, which is great that they are doing their own culture and stuff. But I would be a bit concerned about going there and not being able to understand anything in another language. That would be a bit of a disadvantage if they didn’t have any translators or if they didn’t take the time to explain things in English.” (Participant 2).

“The language barrier might be a challenge too. I’m not sure how prevalent English is in that area, I know it’s spoken by quite a few people, but of course, we don’t know any Finnish.” (Participant 4).

There were a number of other concerns that occasionally came to the forefront during the interviews. These were not primary concerns because they were not mentioned first or reiterated by many people. Rather they were minor concerns that some individuals harbored for personal reasons.

A few of the respondents mentioned that they were concerned about the general lack of information about SantaPark.

“I feel like there wasn’t enough information about how to get there” (Participant 4)

“It was hard for me to figure out what was included in the package or the stay there... As an American, I would need more information, more details. Where would I fly into? How would I get there?” (Participant 6).

“When we get there, we would need to stay somewhere nearby. But is there a hotel located somewhere close by?” (Participant 1).

“Also, it was hard to tell from the promotional video how big the property is, how many options for activities there are...” (Participant 5).

Along with having access to more clear information, to some interviewees it was vital to have a clearer plan or an itinerary.

“It would be nice if they prepared a plan for us... of all the things we would do while there.” (Participant 1).

“I usually do a lot of research before I travel. I ask around online and find out what people’s opinions are. So I would need to make a plan and an itinerary of things to do. Having a guide for the first couple of days would be fantastic, to prevent you from getting lost and give you pointers: more exciting and lesser-known things.” (Participant 2).

“My husband likes to have everything planned out, to have an itinerary of things to do for each day.” (Participant 7).

One participant stated that she thought the theme park was too small. But on second consideration, she decided that it was not much of a disadvantage.

“I didn’t really get an idea of how big the park is. It seems more small-scale than the parks we have here. We’ve been to Disney. I feel like SantaPark might be too small, but then with these other theme parks... They are so big, you can’t finish everything in one day. So maybe a smaller park with less crowds is actually better.” (Participant 7).

Another participant’s statement agreed with that view.

“I would hope it wouldn’t be too crowded. I guess I always worry about those things when it comes to theme parks. More of an intimate experience would probably be nice.” (Participant 5).

Most Finnish residents know that Angry Birds is a Finnish game. But to one American participant the connection was unclear. She expressed confusion about the relevance of the Angry Birds playground that she had seen in the promotional materials of SantaPark.

“The Angry Birds play area was a bit random. I know kids like that but that’s not very Christmas-related...” (Participant 6).

Lastly, there was a mention of the perceived old-fashioned style of theme park and the fact that the elves’ costumes were not up to the standard, which was a disadvantage to one of the participants.

“From the video, it looked a little dark... the park itself, the ambience needs to be refreshed and made brighter. I understand that it’s underground, but I think a lighter atmosphere would make it more attractive, make it into a real winter wonderland: with lots of beautiful crystal snowflakes and lots of fairy lights... I know that part of it is the history and the tradition, but maybe it’s a bit old-fashioned. The costumes the elves were wearing... I feel like they need to be updated. My son just said, “That’s not real.” (Participant 6).

4.1.10 Influencers

In the elicitation process, the participants shared who was likely to impact their decisions favorably and negatively. Unsurprisingly, the people closest to them, those who could be considered part of their reference groups, were mentioned. The most frequent influencers named were children and spouses.

“The kids would be excited about going” (Participant 6).

“My husband would be on the fence. He doesn’t like to travel out of the States.” (Participant 4).

“My girlfriend would be very supportive, and I don’t think I could go without her.” (Participant 2).

“My family would be really excited about going, we enjoy traveling, for sure.” (Participant 1).

Many included their extended family members when listing their potential influencers: “My sister is usually quite supportive and her family would definitely be on board with that. We could go together.” (Participant 2).

“I was wondering about my sister... Joan went to Finland. But did she go to Lapland? I’m not sure. She would totally go, and she would probably go with her kids.” (Participant 6).

“I think I could get my brother to go because he has young children too. They would totally love it.” (Participant 3).

“I think my mom and dad - the grandparents. Perhaps my brothers and his family would enjoy going. My mother has had some health problems recently, so it might be a bit challenging for her, although they would like to go.” (Participant 4).

Reference groups can include people other than family members. It is the strength and trust level of a relationship that determines how likely one is to be influenced by another person. So a few of the participants mentioned their friends.

“Definitely my friends as well, they think it’s really cool that we travel and they often come along as well.” (Participant 2).

“And I think my friends and their families would want to go with me. Only the ones that travel internationally with their kids. Parents who are also looking to take their kids somewhere totally different, have their kids exposed to another country, cultures...” (Participant 5).

Interestingly, the participants were able to name positive influencers more readily than negative ones. This suggests that they are more likely to be talked into a decision than out of it.

As for their perceptions and associations related to SantaPark, there was a lot of ambiguity. Most were unable to name any organizations or people when thinking of the theme park, which likely stems from its low profile and a lack of awareness in the target market.

4.1.11 American cultural Christmas traditions

The discussion about American culture, as it relates to Christmas, revealed certain similarities in traditions across the families. With that said, the subjective nature of culture means that it can manifest differently in each family. So there were also some differences in the Christmas traditions of the participants.

One prominent feature of the American culture is the plurality of international influences within it. A few of the participants mentioned the fact that their families had more than one cultural orientation when it came to Christmas.

“For us, Christmas is a mix of different cultures because we are a pretty multicultural family.” (Participant 2).

“My husband is originally from England so we have a lot of traditions that carry over, that he has brought.” (Participant 1).

All of the respondents were united in their assessment of Christmas as being a family-centered holiday. It seems to be a given that for them Christmas and the winter holiday season is about spending time with their children and spouses. Moreover, it is an opportunity to gather together with their extended families.

“Christmas is always centered on family. We go to my aunt’s house with all of my other aunts and uncles, my parents and all the relatives come. So we always experience it together. That’s a huge part of Christmas. We want to focus on family, and just sit around the table and talk to each other.” (Participant 2).

“I have five sisters and we all get together during the holidays. We pick one of the houses to gather around in. Though Christmas Day to us is just the immediate family. We usually stay home for the whole day. We open our gifts, have breakfast together, drink hot chocolate - it’s just a relaxing day.” (Participant 3).

“I have a lot of siblings. So we actually have about fifty people that get together on Christmas Eve for dinner at my parents’ home. It’s all about family.” (Participant 4).

Many of the respondents were dissatisfied with a certain cultural decay that they thought was happening to Christmas in the U.S. They talked about the fact that Christmas was becoming more commercialized, with an increasing emphasis on gifts

and shopping. This development seemed to reinforce their desire for authenticity of Christmas.

“Everyone over the age of eighteen buys presents for the little kids. Then you never know what to do with all of them after they open them and lose interest.” (Participant 2).

“Christmas is so commercialized in America - it gets kind of crazy and it becomes all about presents, which is sad. So we try to keep close family events alive, and make them not so much about the presents. But it’s hard to do that with the kids. We encourage them to make presents themselves to teach them that it should be about attention and not the monetary things. The kids always make handmade gifts for us, since they can’t go out and shop for them.” (Participant 5).

“All of the kids, the nieces and nephews, all exchange handmade ornaments the night of Christmas Eve.” (Participant 4).

“My twins make Christmas decorations and handmade gifts.” (Participant 6).

“Usually we do a toy donation that is along the streets. A donation drive. We’ll bring along toys and clothes for kids who need those things. It makes you feel like you are giving back at that time of the year. That’s something that a lot of people try to do around here.” (Participant 5).

While Christmas in the U.S., from the point of view of most participants, is not about religion, they still wanted to take part in certain religious practices.

“Christmas here is not very religious. It’s not very politically correct to get into the true meaning of Christmas.” (Participant 7).

“Church is not that important to us, but we usually go to midnight mass.” (Participant 1).

“Sometimes we’ll go to church on Christmas Eve.” (Participant 5).

“We do go to church just so the kids get to sing Christmas carols.” (Participant 6).

Travel, it appears, is not an uncommon practice around Christmas season. The majority of the respondents mentioned that they had travelled around that time of the year. Though none went on their own. So travel is not off limits for them during Christmas time, so long as they are going with their family members.

“We often travel during the holidays to see our extended family. We do a lot of trips up to the snow, to go skiing and outdoor stuff like that. We’ve gone to Disney quite a few times during Christmas time. We don’t have an aversion to theme parks during that time of the year.” (Participant 4).

“This last year we were in England for the holidays, and the year before we went to Disneyland.” (Participant 1).

“This year we went on a train ride. We had a really good time - just a little family getaway.” (Participant 3).

“We usually go to Washington, D.C. to see the White House with all of the Christmas decorations. We’ve considered traveling internationally during the holidays too, to go to Germany again or to go somewhere else during the holidays. That would be fun for the kids.” (Participant 6).

A number of interviewees mentioned the American tradition of going around the neighborhood to look at the different house decorations.

“During the holiday season we go to a street where they put up the best Christmas lights. They light up a whole area and we go visit that place every year.” (Participant 3).

“We have some nearby neighborhoods that decorate their houses with massive Christmas lights, and we drive around and look at the Christmas lights that people put up on their houses.” (Participant 5).

“In my neighborhood, one thing I like is that we do Christmas lights - they run all up and down the neighborhood. We might go out to just see all of the beautiful lights.” (Participant 6).

Christmas, like any holiday, comes with certain traditional dishes. All of the participants talked about food-related practices as being important to them.

“We do a lot of baking around this time of the year.” (Participant 4).

“We do gingerbread cookies and decorate gingerbread houses. We make peanut butter cupcakes and treats, caramel rolls, and then of course we have a big Christmas dinner.” (Participant 6).

“There is a lot of food involved. We always make cookies and the kids leave them out for Santa.” (Participant 5).

“We have certain foods: Christmas pudding, mulled wine, turkey, some Swedish foods, stilled cheese.” (Participant 1).

“We usually have ham, turkey, lot of different pies.” (Participant 7).

“We always have ham, turkey, potatoes, and the traditional apple pie - extremely American. There is always so much coffee. For us there is usually a no-alcohol rule because there’s always kids around. My aunt always makes lots of cookies for everyone.” (Participant 2).

“As far as food, we actually do a variety of things: ham, turkey, Polish food and Portuguese food. There is usually a buffet of different things.” (Participant 3).

Santa Claus appeared to be at the center of the holiday for most families. Those whose kids still believed in Santa did their best to perpetuate the myth for them - from leaving out treats for Santa and tracking his Christmas Day journey, to writing wish lists and letters - the relationship with Santa seemed indispensable.

“We put out mince pies, cookies and milk for Santa. The other thing that we do most years with the kids is the Norad Santa tracker. You can see what countries Santa is in at what time. It’s a great thing for kids to do. Until last year, my son used to make wishlist of presents for Santa Claus, and I would pretend to mail them for him.” (Participant 1).

“The kids make Christmas lists of all the things they want for Christmas, and send them to Santa. But we usually only pretend to mail them.” (Participant 2).

“The kids make Christmas lists and we do advent calendars.” (Participant 5).

“The kids write letters to Santa and make Christmas lists. They usually cut out the pictures of the toys they want from mailers and paste them on a piece of paper. Then we hang those on the fridge. We also do wish lists online. Target has that, Amazon has that too. They just select the toys they want and the family can access that information.” (Participant 6).

4.2 Summary of the results

The current research explored the target market of SantaPark from the perspective of its qualitative characteristics, and several key themes were revealed after the analysis of the data.

The main motivating factors that the participants mentioned when describing their ideal experience were the Christmas theme, the escapist quality of the park, family bonding and children's experiences. Out of these topics arose a common thread of concerns. The participants doubted that SantaPark would have activities that would make the experience of older children exciting. This led to an overarching uncertainty about whether the theme park was "worth it", given the perceived disadvantages, such as distance, cost, and time commitment.

The interviewees offered a number of advantages that could potentially outweigh these negatives. First of all, while the current activities were mentioned as advantages for children, the adults did not view them as compelling for themselves. They wanted to have an opportunity to participate in outdoors and relaxing activities, to join in the park activities with their kids, but they also wanted to have some time to themselves, which is why so many of them mentioned babysitting services. Secondly, they envisioned that their ideal trip would combine a visit to SantaPark with visits to other local attractions, and some thought that it would be ideal to have it incorporated into a longer tour around Finland. When the participants were speaking about that, they expressed that it was important to them to get to know the Finnish culture.

Some other concerns were mentioned from time to time. Namely, the cold weather, the language barrier, and their perceived lack of information. Several participants wished to have a clear itinerary. The park's size was contemplated as a disadvantage, but ultimately, the respondents were enticed to view it favorably as long as it was not crowded.

Decision influencers were discovered via question four and five. Positive influencers came to mind more readily than negative ones. Predictably, family members such as spouses and children were named most often. But other influencers were extended family members, as well as close friends.

When the participants were thinking about what cultural Christmas traditions their families practiced, which was enquired in the last question of the interview guide, they

expressed that their families had multicultural orientations. But they unanimously responded by saying Christmas was a family-centric holiday that offered them a chance to spend time with their extended families. Interestingly, for many this did not mean staying at home, they stated that they liked to travel together during the winter holidays. A few of the participants were dismayed at the trend of commercialization of Christmas, and they talked about the ways they were trying to inject new meaning into it: encouraging handmade gifts, donating to charity, and going to Church, even though they agreed that for them Christmas was not a very religious holiday. When it came to food-related traditions, there were a number of similar dishes mentioned: ham, turkey, apple pie. Lastly, Santa Claus was regarded as a representative symbol of Christmas. Those with younger children encouraged their belief in Santa in a variety of creative ways, most commonly by leaving cookies and milk for Santa, tracking his journey with a mobile app, writing letters and creating Christmas wish lists.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

Following a review of literature of target marketing, a research question was posed. The results gathered point to a resounding answer to the question. It appears that there indeed are many commonalities in preferences of the target market of American families with children under twelve, when it is examined from the perspective of psychographics, behavior and culture.

The findings suggest a number of practical marketing implications for SantaPark. These practical implications are discussed in this chapter.

1. Opportunities

In the process of researching the preferences of the target segment, a number of marketing opportunities were identified.

With the mounting impediments standing in the way of the American families considering traveling to SantaPark, they have to be convinced that the long-distance costly trip is worth it. So SantaPark has to offer them with a more compelling and rich experience than what is currently being offered. As suggested by the responses of the interviewees, there are different approaches to how to best accomplish this. One method is for SantaPark to partner with other local businesses in order to provide the visitors with a more diverse experience during their stay. There are many service

providers in the area that offer winter activities such as skiing, snowboarding and so on. They are specialist in these areas and provide first-class services to their clients. Therefore, partnering with them could present an opportunity to the park. They could add these services to the list of existing outdoor activities offered by Santa Oy, and advertise them as part of a package. Another approach that the park could take is to hire a team of winter sports instructors that could work with the customers on an individual basis. Thirdly, a trip to SantaPark could be integrated into a larger tour around Finland. By incorporating the theme park visit among other destinations, as part of a tour, they could significantly tip the scales in their favor. As many respondents stated, the theme park alone is simply not enough of a reason for them to travel across the ocean. However, they would be interested in touring the country for a longer period of time, and to then complete that tour with visit SantaPark for a couple of days. Again, there are many a tour agency that would be willing to organize such arrangements. This could significantly boost demand for the theme park in the target market, as the visit would be perceived as “worth it”.

These are just three common ways for SantaPark to outweigh the perceived disadvantages that the research points to. Depending on their current strategy, an alternative method could be chosen, or a combination of different methods could be used to provide a more full experience to the target market.

2. Improvements and innovations

The application of the ideal method in the interviews, allowed me to acquire information on what improvements could be made to the existing SantaPark services and marketing activities, and what innovations could be introduced.

Starting with the possible areas for improvements identified in the research. The parents were concerned about their older children, those whose belief in Santa Claus was waning. They thought that their experience in SantaPark would not be as exciting because of the lack of age-appropriate activities for them. This problem should be addressed first since the interviews also showed that the participants placed their children’s experience above their own. SantaPark could develop more stimulating and interesting activities for older children and incorporate them in the Elf Workshop, and the Elf School. There could also be a separate area created for older kids where they would be able to gather together and play, without being surrounded by babies and toddlers. Plus, as one of the participants suggested, Angry Birds could be leveraged

even more. Why not create a video game area? That would be very popular with the tech-savvy tweens and maybe even teenagers. Of course, these improvements would need to be accompanied by new promotional materials. They would need to effectively communicate to the target market that there are exciting activities for their older children.

Another area for improvement has to do with the preferences of the parents. Granted, the theme park is geared to children and they cannot change that orientation without damaging their reputation. However, the adults visiting the park want to be included in some way. As of today, parents are allowed and encouraged to join in the activities with their children at SantaPark. They could go a step further and give them a more active role to play. For instance, the parents could help the elves with the instructions, or perhaps they could take on more challenging tasks at the workshop. As one of the respondents said, that would prevent a situation where the parents stay “on the sidelines” with nothing to do. Outside of the park, the participants wanted to take part in outdoor activities and to relax but were not sure if such opportunities were available. This shows that SantaPark could do a better job of marketing its SPA and sauna services.

Since a common concern was whether a short trip to a theme park was worth it, it would be make sense for SantaPark to extend ticket passes when it comes to the new target market. American families, coming from so far away, would probably appreciate a chance to have unlimited access to the park or to at least have their tickets warrant entry for longer than just two days. Such an offer could be conditional on them staying at the Arctic TreeHouse Hotel. It would make financial sense for the park as the customers hotel stay would make up for the ticket price. Regardless of how the park chooses to handle this moving into the target market, they will need to advertise longer stays and accommodate them differently.

Lastly, as many of the interviewees indicated, there has to be improvement in the theme park’s marketing and informational materials. The website could benefit from an update: it should be easier for potential customers to navigate the website and to find the information they are looking for. Furthermore, an extra section could be added specifically for the target market. In that section SantaPark could address their concerns about travel, lodging and other services.

From the responses it appeared that many were avid planners and wanted to have a clear itinerary of things to do. Perhaps SantaPark should create a few alternative itineraries on the website for them to choose from, or better yet, provide personalized itineraries based on their interests. Such a feature could take a form of live chat, where they are given suggestions in real time.

With regard to innovations, topping the list of demands are babysitting services. It would be the researcher's interpretation that the American parents prefer to have some time to themselves on their vacations. Such a preference would be impossible at SantaPark as they would need to watch their children all the time while there. It would be a major competitive advantage in the eyes of this target market if they were offered babysitting and childcare options.

Last but not least, there was considerable interest in the Finnish culture among the participants. This leads to a suggestion that SantaPark could benefit from emphasizing the Finnish culture in its marketing materials, and from including more culture- and history-related elements into the theme park experience.

3. American Christmas

Special attention was paid to Christmas-related cultural values of the target market, since SantaPark is a Christmas-themed park. Some of the identified elements can be leveraged by SantaPark.

For all of the respondents Christmas was still about family. At the same time, they were not opposed to traveling during the holiday season under the condition that their family travels with them. So when targeting this segment, SantaPark should advertise to the whole family as a unit. Another interesting discovery has to do with authenticity or lack thereof. The Americans interviewed talked about the fact that Christmas was becoming increasingly commercialized and transactional, with shopping and gifts becoming more important than traditional values. This could indicate to SantaPark that there is an opportunity to market the park as offering authentic Christmas experiences. Moreover, it could stress its anti-commercial bend by working with a charity. It is common knowledge that customers value companies that give back, this seems to be particularly the case around Christmas time. Thus, SantaPark could enhance its reputation and build on its authentic Christmas feel by prioritizing corporate social responsibility (CSR.)

Another area of American Christmas traditions relates to Santa Claus. Perhaps nowhere else in the world is this figure more central to the Christmas experience. As the research shows, building a relationship with Santa is paramount to the American children and their parents do their best to facilitate. SantaPark, being the home of Santa Claus, can use this to their advantage. What is the children could connect to the real Santa prior to their visit to SantaPark? There are a number of ways that could be done. One option is to use the power of social media. SantaPark's Santa could speak directly to the American children by live-streaming or through pre-recorded videos. There are a myriad of strategies that could be used: encouraging the kids to participate in games and challenges, or perhaps answering their questions in a real time Q&A session. Another thing that was mentioned were the letters and wish lists that the kids would write and the parents would pretend to mail. SantaPark could provide the potential customers in the target market with an easy option to send in these to Santa. Again, this could be achieved with social media platforms or with a mobile app.

Finally, traditional American Christmas dishes could be introduced to the menu of SantaPark's restaurant and marketed more actively in the future. The traditional apple pie and different peanut butter desserts are just some examples of that.

4. Influencers.

Influencers that were identified can be emphasized in the marketing strategy focused on this segment. As has been discussed, the immediate family is most important when it comes to influencing decisions related to travel to SantaPark: whether it be persuading or dissuading the respondents. Hence, the marketing efforts should be directed at the whole family and not just the decision-makers.

A lack of positive associations and a general lack of awareness revealed in the question six suggest that SantaPark should focus on creating a better influencer strategy on social media. Influencers were discussed at length in the theoretical part of this thesis. So suffice it to say that SantaPark could partner with a few influential social media personalities, recruit them to become brand ambassadors in the selected target market. People tend to view influencers as trustworthy and credible, which is why any brand or company they promote is bound to receive some residual following, not to mention the exposure and awareness increase such partnership would bring to SantaPark.

5. Positioning.

The study has implications for the positioning strategy of SantaPark, since positioning is a key element of target marketing. Positioning is about securing a place in the mind of the consumer with a simple message that is rooted in the existing perceptions. Such perceptions were identified throughout the interviews, and they can be applied to the positioning strategy of SantaPark.

The main positive perceptions that were reiterated during the interviews and that can be further built on are the Christmas theme of the park, the escapist experience, and the importance of the whole family: the younger and the older kids, their parents, and the extended family.

Therefore, SantaPark can be positioned as offering phantasy Christmas-themed experiences for the whole family, with something special for everyone.

That is the core positioning message that the theme park should build upon with its marketing strategy. All of the elements of the marketing mix should reinforce this orientation among the target customers. Only when the product, price, place and promotion elements are linked to and aligned with the position can the company successfully deliver this message to the target market.

6 Evaluation of the research

6.1 Data quality

Firstly, in order for data to be considered high-quality it has to be representative, outliers should be represented, any contradictions in the data should be noted, despite the tendency to ignore conflicting information and to focus on the data that confirms the theory. (Creswell 2009.)

It is difficult to judge how representative the results are of the population being studied. In large part, that stems from the sample size and the sampling method that was used. The sample was not chosen at random, convenience sampling was used. It is also necessary to point out here that different standards of generalizability apply in qualitative research. It is true that in quantitative research it is a prerequisite to have a sample that is statistically representative of the population to confirm the generalizability of the results drawn from research. In contrast, qualitative research does not seek statistical generalization, thus, sampling strategies that produce representativeness are

rarely used. (King et al. 2010.) Nevertheless, the results carry some degree of transferability as the sample relates to the population the study seeks to shed light on.

It is fair to say that the fringe cases received sufficient attention and that the results reported were not simplified for convenience reasons. In other words, the complexity of the findings was not trivialized in the process of interpretation.

Secondly, data validity needs to be assessed. One common criticism of TCA and of qualitative approaches in general is that they lack scientific basis and credibility that comes with it. It is not the case if the qualitative methods are applied properly. Then qualitative research is considered scientific and can produce valid results (Krippendorff 2004.) Having said that, it is undeniable that there can exist multiple interpretations of the data when it comes to qualitative research. That does not necessarily minimize the scientific rigour of its content. The assessment of rigour is based on how credible, dependable and confirmable the qualitative study is. (Guba and Lincoln 1991.) Different qualitative research methods warrant different evaluation methods. One method of measuring TCA credibility is having the transcripts coded by multiple researchers. The more researchers identify similar codes and themes, the more credible the results. (Cavanagh 1997.) In this case the researcher did not have the benefit of peer researchers, so peer checking of credibility could not be used. Perhaps it is for the best since there is skepticism around this method: the check cannot prove that the findings are objective because more than one person can have a subjective perspective of the text. (Joffe & Yardley 2003.) Therefore, an alternative for proving scientific rigour and validity may be used - keeping a research diary or research notes (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000). That is what the author did throughout the months that the interviews were conducted. These notes helped review the data from different perspectives, hence they lend credibility to the interpretation.

As for timeliness, the results were produced in a timely manner as the schedule was followed and the interviews were done in a relatively short space of time to allow additional time for analysis. Having said that, if the study were to be designed again, a change would be made to the length of the interviews. I would go for a more in-depth approach, with longer periods than half an hour for each interview, in order to capture more information.

Finally, the most important measurement of the findings' quality is whether the research question was answered and whether new insights were uncovered (Krippendorff 2004).

It is my assessment that a gap in knowledge was filled: the question identified at the beginning of the thesis process was answered in the affirmative and the study has provided a number of critical insights which serve to increase the understanding of the preferences of American families with children under the age of twelve, and can effectively inform practical target marketing actions in the future, should the company decide to act on them.

6.2 Recommendation for further research

The research that has been conducted for this thesis has highlighted a number of topics, further investigation of which would be beneficial.

Information was lacking in several areas related to the target market, especially information on the preferences driven by psychographics, behavior and culture. While some of these were addressed by the research undertaken for this thesis, other gaps in knowledge remain. In particular, there is a lack of studies on the way decisions are made in the target market. Clearly, there are indications that family groups and other reference groups play a role in decision making. However, it is unclear how the decision-making process looks like when the target customer is considering travel to a far-away destinations such as SantaPark. The degree to which social influencers impact decisions of American families, in the context of travel, might also be investigated. This might give SantaPark and other companies interested in this target market some indication of how realistic it is to appeal to it through these influencers.

There are a number of other areas for further research that have been underlined by the interviews carried out for this thesis. These include a further investigation of cultural characteristics and how they impact the preferences of the target market. It is worth considering what the study would discover about the target market if it were to go beyond the surface-level markers of culture. Afterall, culture permeates our very existence, so there must be more to the way it influences people's preferences. For more generalizable results a more expansive study could be undertaken, where a wider variety of cultural backgrounds would be considered. This would provide a better impression of the American market. Although methodologically challenging, it would be useful to conduct some long-term studies to fill this gap in knowledge. Similar approaches might be taken to other target markets and their preferences in future studies.

As has briefly been mentioned, there are several applications for the work conducted in this research. The findings are specific to SantaPark, hence they are best applied to its marketing strategy. But they could be of relevance to other travel-related businesses that want to target the segment in question. Consequently, it is possible, and not only for SantaPark, to usefully apply both the results and the recommendations of the thesis in real-life marketing scenarios.

7 References

- Adweek. 2019. 10 Reasons Why Influencer Marketing is the Next Big Thing. <https://www.adweek.com/digital/10-reasons-why-influencer-marketing-is-the-next-big-thing>. Accessed on 16 February 2019.
- Ayres, L. 2007. Qualitative research proposal – Part I: Posing the Problem. *Journal of Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing*
- Baines, P., Fill, C., Rosengren, S. & Antonetti, P. 2010. *Principles of Marketing Management. Market Segmentation and Positioning.*
- Balmer, J., M. T. & Greyser, S. A. 2006. *Corporate Marketing Integrating Corporate Identity, Corporate Branding, Corporate Communications.* Bradford: Emerald.
- Bernard, R. 1988. *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology.* Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Bhasin, H. 2019. What is the Family life cycle? Stages and Strategies of Family life cycle. Marketing91. <https://www.marketing91.com/family-life-cycle>. Accessed on 28 March 2019.
- Bhasin, S. 2016. Family life cycle. Marketing 91. <http://www.marketing91.com/family-life-cycle>. Accessed on 6 February 2019.
- Borden, N.H. 1964. The Concept of the Marketing Mix, *Journal of Advertising Research.*
- Boschma, G., Yonge, O. & Mychajlunow, L. 2003. Consent in Oral History Interviews: Unique Challenges. *Qualitative Health Research.*
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2006. Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology.*
- Bryman, A. 2007. The Research Question in Social Research: What is its Role? *International Journal of Social Research Methodology.*
- BusinessDictionary. 2019. What is gap in the market? definition and meaning. <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/gap-in-the-market.html>. Accessed on 8 February 2019.
- Cavanagh, S. 1997. *Content Analysis: Concepts, Methods and Applications.* Nurse Researcher
- Census. 2019. Population Clock. <https://www.census.gov/popclock>. Accessed 1 March 2019

- Chamberlin, E. 1933. Theory of Monopolistic Competition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Chao, A. & Schor, J. B. 1998. Empirical tests of status consumption: Evidence From Women's Cosmetics. Journal of Economic Psychology.
- Ciccone, A. 2015. Marketing to Millennial Newlyweds. Think Digital. Hudson Valley Public Relations. <https://hudsonvalleypublicrelations.com/digital-marketing-millennial-newlywed>. Accessed on 2 March 2019.
- Clarke, A. 2006. Qualitative Interviewing: Encountering Ethical Issues and Challenges. Nurse Researcher.
- CleverTap. 2019. Psychographic Segmentation: A Definitive Guide. <https://clevertap.com/blog/psychographic-segmentation>. Accessed on 28 Mar. 2019.
- Content Marketing Institute. 2019. What is Content Marketing? <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing>. Accessed on 11 March 2019.
- Cossin, K. 2019. Consumer Behavior and the Cultural Marketing Landscape. Cossin's Corner. <https://kcossin.com/2016/04/15/consumer-behavior-and-the-cultural-marketing-landscape>. Accessed on 7 March 2019.
- Creswell, J. W. 1998. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. 2009. Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- D'Ambrosio, R. 2019. Family Travel Association. 2018 Family Travel Survey Reveals the Deepest Wants and Needs of Families. Family Travel Association. <https://familytravel.org/2018-family-travel-survey-reveals-the-deepest-wants-and-needs-of-families>. Accessed on 8 March 2019.
- DeSantis, L. & Ugarriza, N. D. 2000. The Concept of Theme as Used in Qualitative Nursing Research. Western Journal of Nursing Research
- Dibb, S. & Simkin, L. 1996. The Market Segmentation Workbook: Target Marketing for Marketing Managers. London: Routledge.
- Downe-Wamboldt, B. 1992. Content Analysis: Methods, Applications, and Issues. Healthcare for Women International.

- Duckler, M. 2019. Rethinking Your Brand Position's Target Audience. Target Marketing. <https://www.targetmarketingmag.com/article/rethinking-your-brand-positionings-target-audience>. Accessed on 15 March 2019.
- Dudovskiy, J. 2016. The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Dissertation in Business Studies: A Step-by-Step Assistance.
- East, R., Wright, M & Vanhuele, M. 2008. Consumer behaviour: Applications in Marketing. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Ehrenberg, A. S. C. 1972. Repeat Buying. London: Charles Griffin.
- Elliott, R. & Wattanasuwan, K. 1998. Consumption and the Symbolic Project of the Self. International Journal of Advertising.
- Santa Park. En.wikipedia.org. 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Park. Accessed on 7 January 2019.
- Ferrell, O.C. & Hartline, M. D. 1994. Marketing Strategy: Text and Cases. Mason: South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Fieldboom. 2019. <https://www.fieldboom.com/behavioral-segmentation>. Accessed on 5 March 2019.
- Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. 1975. Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. 1991. Social Cognition. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Great Ideas for Teaching Marketing. 2019. The Family Life Cycle (FLC) - Great Ideas for Teaching Marketing. <https://www.greatideasforteachingmarketing.com/the-family-life-cycle-flc/>. Accessed on 28 March 2019.
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. 1991. Effective Evaluation: Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation Results. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hodock, C.L. 1991. The Decline and Fall of Marketing Research in Corporate America, Marketing Research.
- Impactbnd. 2019. Blogging Statistics: 52 Reasons Your Company Blog is Worth the Time and Effort. <https://www.impactbnd.com/blogging-statistics-55-reasons-blogging-creates-55-more-traffic>. Accessed on 6 March 2019.
- i-SCOOP. 2019. Content marketing: defining a content marketing strategy. <https://www.i-scoop.eu/content-marketing/defining-content-marketing-strategy>. Accessed on 19 March 2019.

- Jobber, J. & Fahy, D. 2012 Foundations of Marketing. Madrid: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Joffe, H. & Yardley, L. 2003. Content and Thematic Analysis. Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology.
- Kahle, L. R. 1984. Attitudes and Social Adaptation. Kent: Elsevier Science.
- Kahneman, D., Slovic, P. & Tversky, A. 1982. Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- King, N. Horrocks, C. & Brooks. J. 2010. Interviews in Qualitative Research.
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K. L. 2008. Marketing Management: International Edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. 2007. Why do we Study Buying Behavior in Marketing? Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P. 1991, Marketing management. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Krippendorff, K. 2004. Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology. London: Sage Publication
- Kurtz, D. L., MacKenzie, H. F. & Snow, K. 2010. Contemporary Marketing. Toronto: Nelson Education.
- Lascu, D. & Clow, K. E. 2007. Essentials of Marketing. Mason: Atomic Dog Publishing.
- Lewin, K. 1948. Resolving Social Conflict. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Lewis, E. S. E. 1904, The Credit Man and His Work. Detroit: The Book-keeper Publishing Company.
- Li-Chen, L. 2008. Data Management and Security in Qualitative Research. Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing.
- Livingston, G. 2019. More than a million Millennials are becoming moms each year. Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/04/more-than-a-million-millennials-are-becoming-moms-each-year>. Accessed on 1 February 2019.
- Mariampolski, H. 2001. Qualitative Market Research. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- McCarthy, E. J & Perreault, W. D. 1960. Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach. Homewood: Irwin.

- McDonough, J. & Egolf, K. 2015. The Advertising Age Encyclopedia of Advertising. New York: Routledge.
- McIntosh, R. W. & Goeldner, C.R. 1990. Instructor's Manual and Test Bank to Accompany Tourism: Principles, Practices, Philosophies. New York: Wiley.
- Michman, R. D. 2008. Lifestyle Marketing: Reaching the New American Consumer. Praeger.
- Morse, J. M. 1994. Designing Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Parsons, E., Maclaran. P. & Chatzidakis, A. 2009. Contemporary Issues in Marketing and Consumer Behavior.
- Patrick S. & Crompton, J. L. 1983. Journal of Travel Research.
- Pereira, A. & Singh, N. 2005. The Culturally Customized Web Site. Burlington: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Pew Research Center: Internet, Science and Tech. 2019. Social Media Use 2018: Demographics and Statistics.
<https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018>. Accessed on 7 February 2019.
- Porter, M. E. 1985. The Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance. New York: Free Press.
- Prahalad, C. K. & Ramaswany, V. 2004. Co-creation Experiences: The Next Practice in Value Creation. Journal of Interactive Marketing.
- Rao, S. 2019. Limitations of Demographics in predicting consumer behavior. Citeman.com. <https://www.citeman.com/7738-limitations-of-demographics-in-predicting-consumer-behavior.html>. Accessed on 12 March 2019.
- Richards, K. 2019. How Avis Brilliantly Pioneered Underdog Advertising With 'We Try Harder'. Adweek.com <https://www.adweek.com/creativity/how-avis-brilliantly-pioneered-underdog-advertising-with-we-try-harder>. Accessed on 21 February 2019.
- Ries, A. & Trout, J. 1980. Positioning: The Battle for your Mind. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Robinson, J. 1938. The Economics of Imperfect Competition. London: McMillan.
- Rokeach, M. 1973. The Nature of Human Values. New York: Free Press.
- Sahney, S. 2013. Family and Family Life Cycle. Kharagpur: Vinod School of Management.

- Sandelowski, M. 2010. What's in a name? Qualitative Description Revisited. Research in Nursing and Health.
- Santaparkarcticworld.com. 2019. <https://santaparkarcticworld.com/santapark>. Accessed on 10 January 2019.
- Schiffman, L., O'Cass, A., Paladino, A. & Carlson, J. 2014. Consumer Behaviour. Frenchs Forest: Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd.
- Seismic. 2019. 13 Lessons Jon Miller Has Taught Us About Marketing Success - Seismic. <https://seismic.com/company/blog/13-lessons-jon-miller-has-taught-us-about-marketing-success>. Accessed on 6 March 2019.
- Sheng, C., Tian, Y. & Chen, M. 2010. Six Different Conceptualizations of the Relationship Between Visitor Satisfaction and Service.
- Silverman, D. 1997. Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice. London: Sage.
- Skinner, B. F. 1953. Science and human behavior. Oxford: Macmillan.
- Slideplayer. 2019. 2005 McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited <https://slideplayer.com/slide/8539463>. Accessed on 16 March 2019.
- Slideshare. 2019. The Rise of Digital Influence by Brian Solis. <https://www.slideshare.net/briansolis/theriseofdigitalinfluence-120320132857phpapp02-38775661>. Accessed on 7 February 2019.
- Smart Insights. 2019. The Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning model. <https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/customer-segmentation-targeting/segmentation-targeting-and-positioning>. Accessed on 12 February 2019.
- Smith, W. 1956. Product Differentiation and Market Segmentation as Alternative Marketing Strategies. Journal of Marketing.
- Socialbakers. 2019. Why Knowing Your Target Audience Is Key in Content Marketing. <https://www.socialbakers.com/blog/knowning-your-target-audience-is-key-in-content-marketing>. Accessed on 3 March 2019.
- Sparker, A. 2005. Narrative Analysis: Exploring the Whats and Hows of Personal Stories. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Strategicbusinessinsights. 2019. VALS™ Types. <http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/ustypes.shtml>. Accessed on 4 March 2019.
- Tadajewski, M. 2006. The Ordering of Marketing Theory. Marketing Theory.

- Taylor, E., Balfour, H. & Freire-Marreco, B. 1907. Anthropological Essays Presented to Edward Burnett Taylor in Honour of His 75th Birthday. Oxford: Clarendon Pr.
- Ten Have, P. 2004. Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology. London: Sage Publications.
- The Economic Times. 2019. Definition of Target Market. What is Target Market? Target Market Meaning - The Economic Times.
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/target-market> Accessed on 18 February 2019.
- Travelagentcentral. 2019. Travel Agent Central. Stats: 35 Percent of Americans to Take Family Vacation This Year. <https://www.travelagentcentral.com/running-your-business/stats-35-percent-americans-to-take-family-vacation-year>. Accessed on 12 January 2019.
- Treacy, M. & Wiersema, F. 1995. The Value Discipline Strategy Typology. Harvard Business Review.
- Wedel, M. & Kamakura, W. 2001. Market Segmentation: Conceptual Methodological Foundations. Second Edition. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Wells, W. D. & Gubar, G. 1966. Life Cycle Concept in Marketing Research.
- Wheeler, A. 2009. Designing Brand Identity. New Jersey: Wiley.
- Williams, G. C. 1966. Adaptation and Natural Selection: A Critique of Some Current Evolutionary Thought. Princeton University Press.
- Wind, Y. & Cardozo, R.N. 1974. Industrial Market Segmentation. Industrial Marketing Management.
- Woods, S. 2016. The Emergence of Influencer Marketing. University of Tennessee Honors Thesis Projects.
- Wright, M. & Esslemont, D. 1994. The Logical Limitations of Target Marketing. SSRN Electronic Journal.
- Tutorialspoint. 2019. Consumer Behavior Market Positioning. https://www.tutorialspoint.com/consumer_behavior/consumer_behavior_market_positioning.htm. Accessed on 9 March 2019.
- Zajonc, R. B. 1968. Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Appendices

Appendix A - Consumer decision making model

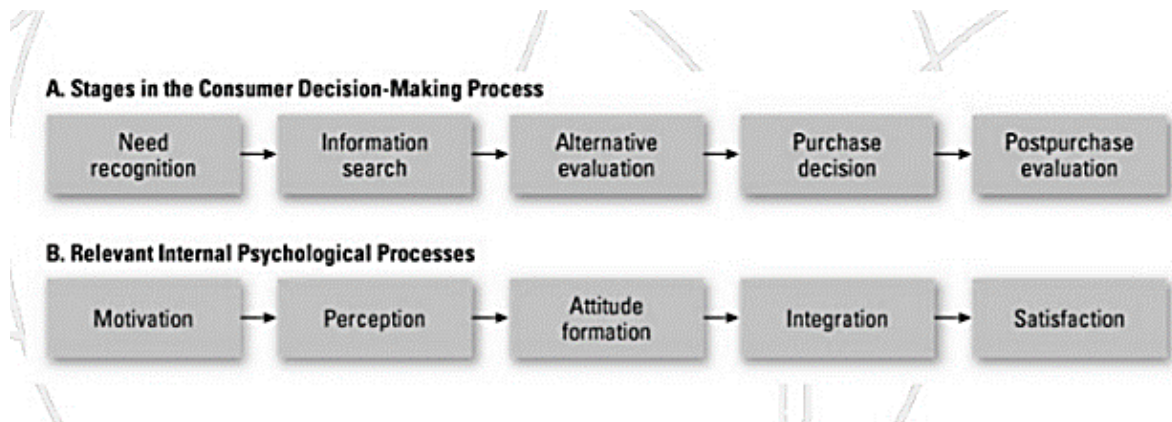


Figure 1. Consumer decision making model, p. 37

Appendix B - Interview guide

1. "What would an ideal experience in SantaPark look like for you?"
2. "What are the advantages of going to SantaPark?"
3. "What are the disadvantages of going to SantaPark?"
4. "Can you think of anyone who would be in favor of you going there?"
5. "Can you think of anyone who would be against you going there?"
6. "Do any organizations or people come to mind when you think of SantaPark?"
7. "What are some Christmas traditions that are important to your family?"