Addendum

The Contribution of the Study to the
Body of Tourism Marketing Knowledge
A. Gap in Existing Literature

The usefulness of the concept of market segmentation in the context of destination marketing has been widely recognized. Thus, the literature abounds in examples of segmentation studies conducted in order to group tourists and residents for effective marketing of tourist destinations (as discussed in section 2.3, page 48 of Chapter 2). In the tourism research literature, taxonomies of tourists have often been created by various researchers (as may be seen from tables 2.3, 2.4 & 2.6 provided in pages 64, 65 and 71 respectively of Chapter 2) using a variety of segmentation variables in order to provide a better understanding of tourists and their travel behavior. The diverse variables that have been used by these researchers have been discussed in detail in sections 2.8 (page 56), 2.9 (page 59) and 2.10 (page 62) of Chapter 2. In these studies, subsequent to the segmentation, the derived segments have been profiled or described using a number of descriptors or profiling variables as listed in Table 2.2 (page 60). These taxonomies have provided constructive insights to researchers as well as the industry regarding how to improve the destination marketing efforts by better focusing on and serving the distinctive needs of distinct types of tourists derived through such segmentation exercises. Some of these segments were derived using a single variable as a segmentation base; others have used more than one variable. Sung et al. (2001) have asserted that since people have individualized needs, tastes, attitudes as well as different life stages and lifestyles, no single variable should be used to segment travel markets. In their view, employing multiple variables should yield greater explanatory power than using a single variable. The use of multiple variables in deriving the segments has been suggested by some authors as being more effective in constructing meaningful taxonomies; since, the phenomenon of travel behavior is considered to be a multidimensional construct influenced by a variety of factors [discussed in section 2.11.4 (page 85) of Chapter 2].
In creating such taxonomies using multiple bases as opposed to just one base, various combinations of variables have been used by different researchers (as shown in Table A). For example, in 1986, Taylor used three variables – travel philosophy, travel benefits, and activities and interests to segment the Canadian pleasure travel market and thereby derive a better understanding of the market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Variables Used</th>
<th>Market</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, 1986</td>
<td>Travel philosophy, travel benefits and activities</td>
<td>Canadian Pleasure Travel Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang &amp; O'Leary, 1997</td>
<td>Benefits Pursued, activity participation &amp; destination preference</td>
<td>Australian Nature Travel Market</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fluker &amp; Turner, 2000</td>
<td>Needs, motivations &amp; expectations</td>
<td>Adventure Travel Market in Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sung, 2000</td>
<td>Traveler characteristics, trip-related factors &amp; perception of adventure travel</td>
<td>US Adventure Travel Market</td>
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<td>Orth &amp; Tureckova, 2002</td>
<td>Motivational &amp; Attitudinal</td>
<td>Tourists to Southern Moravia, Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolnicar &amp; Leisch, 2003</td>
<td>Psychographic &amp; Behavioral</td>
<td>Winter Tourists in Austria</td>
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</table>

Again Sung (2000) in a study of the US adventure travel market attempted to improve understanding of distinct adventure traveler subgroups through development of a classification construct with specific focus on traveler characteristics, trip-related factors and perception of adventure travel. Dolnicar and Leisch (2003) in their study of the winter tourist segments in Austria utilized two different variables – psychographic and behavioral – as segmentation bases. In their review, they pointed out that 70 percent of studies used psychographic variables and the remaining used behavioral information but none of those used two different kinds of information. They put forward their viewpoint that segments should reflect a number of integrated personal and behavioral characteristics and thus represent a vacation style rather than a one-dimensional activity or benefit type. Likewise, there are other studies in the
tourism literature that have utilized a combination of two or more variables as the segmentation bases (e.g. Fluker and Turner, 2000; Orth and Tureckova, 2002). In one significant study, Lang and O'Leary (1997) suggest that activity, motivation and product preference can provide important product-related or psychographic information to assist in developing tourism products and promotion strategies. They have pointed out that most studies reviewed by them have focused on only one of these segmentation variables. They, therefore, contend that segmenting travelers by a combination of benefits pursued, activity participation, and destination preference can reveal the relationships between the psychographic back-grounds and actual behavior to better classify markets and provide more information to aid in the development of tourist products, promotional materials and channels, management programs, and marketing strategies. So, a motivation/participation/ preference multiple segmentation approach has been used by them. They suggest this three-component approach as a new alternative to segment the international travel market. This study of Australian nature travel market has indeed made an important contribution to the body of tourism marketing literature.

It may be observed that each of the above-mentioned studies has dealt with a specific type of the travel market, such as, the nature travel market or the adventure travel market. But, what if the segmentation is effected in relation to a destination that offers a variety of attractions such as nature, culture as well as adventure travel? The literature reviewed does not seem to offer much guidance on this. Again, what if these destinations are rich in biodiversity and culture but located in a developing region of the world? It may be seen that the studies shown in Table A have mostly been carried out in developed regions such as US, Canada & Australia. Also, what if it is an emerging destination? Which, then, would be the appropriate variables to use for the segmentation task? Once again, not much guidance is available from the literature related to this aspect. Thus, it is felt that there is a gap in the tourism segmentation literature regarding emerging destinations situated in developing regions, which offer
not just nature travel experiences or cultural experiences but a combination of various types of attractions. So, it appears that there is the need for segmentation studies to explore the suitability of various segmentation variables concerning destinations that are newly emerging yet offer varied attractions. Also, studies of this nature need to be conducted in the developing regions of the world in order to find out if approaches similar to that adopted by Lang & O'Leary (1997) in the nature travel market of Australia (a developed region) will be useful and meaningful to employ in less developed areas of the world. The present study, therefore, attempts to fill up this gap in the tourism market segmentation literature and embarks on the task of segmenting travelers to one such region – the North-east region of India. Hence the study “Segmenting and Profiling the Leisure Travelers: A study in North-east India” has been undertaken with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of leisure travelers coming to the biodiversity-rich, emerging destinations of the relatively less-developed region of North-east India.

B. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

As has been observed in section A above, there is a gap in the existing tourism literature as far as segmentation studies pertaining to emerging destinations in developing regions of the world that may be otherwise well endowed in terms of biodiversity and cultural attractions is concerned. In keeping with this, the present study attempts to contribute to the body of tourism marketing knowledge by proposing a segmentation approach that may be suitable when dealing with such regions. The discussion below elucidates on this.

In case of destinations such as North-east India that offer a diversity of attractions, which include various natural, cultural and historical attractions along with opportunities for adventure [as discussed in section 1.5 (page 33) of Chapter 1]; the variables to be included need to reflect appropriateness for each of these types of market i.e. nature travel market, adventure travel market, cultural tourism market etc.
Furthermore, this represents a bio-diversity rich yet ecologically vulnerable region that is part of the eight most important biodiversity hotspots. The variables chosen for segmenting the travelers to this region needs to take into account all these aspects. Therefore, the present study uses a combination approach (explained below) using variables that are believed to be appropriate for this unique region. In the above-mentioned study of the nature travel market of Australia by Lang and O’Leary (1997) (as shown in Table A), a combination of motivation, participation and preference have been used. It may be noted that in that study, the variables - benefits pursued and travel motivations - have been used to mean the same thing. Though benefit statements and motivation statements (as outlined in the tables 2.5 and 2.6 in Chapter 2) are seen to be similar or overlapping at times, yet, each of these variables have a distinct contribution in explaining travel behavior as revealed in studies listed in table 2.4 and described at length in sections 2.10.3(a) and 2.10.3 (b) of Chapter 2. It may, therefore, be meaningful to include motivations and benefit sought variables as distinct components of a combination approach (discussed in further detail in section 3.5, page 98, of Chapter 3). In keeping with the adventure travel aspect in the destination offering of regions such as North-east India, activity, that is considered to be an important element in understanding such markets; the variable activity may be added as the third important component of such an approach. It may be noted that activity participation (Mc Kercher et al., 2002) and motivations (Formica and Uysal, 1998) have also been used to segment the cultural tourism market. Apart from these, the sustainable attitudes of tourists may be another vital variable in dealing with biodiversity-rich yet vulnerable ecosystems. As already pointed out in section 1.6 (page 38) of Chapter 1 in relation to biodiversity-rich developing regions, a consciousness towards the environment or an emphasis towards sustainable tourism represents an important proposition. Therefore, including another component in the above-mentioned approach, that is, sustainable attitudes could add an important dimension to such segmentation studies. It is believed that such a combination of variables for segmentation utilizing the four components of motivation-benefits-
activities-sustainable attitudes has not been used in any other studies [as suggested by the review of literature shown in tables 2.3 (page 64), 2.4 (page 65) and 2.7 (page 71)]. Such a framework would provide a more comprehensive understanding of travel behavior particularly in the context of biodiversity-rich and newly emerging developing regions. This represents a gap in the existing tourism literature in relation to such regions. Therefore this study aims to develop a four component 'motivations-benefits-activities-sustainable attitudes' multiple segmentation approach to understand travel behavior and to examine whether this approach can classify the leisure travel market of developing regions with diverse natural and cultural attractions such as North-east India, into meaningful segments. It is believed that such an approach using this combination of four relevant variables i.e. travel motivations, benefits sought, activity preferences as well as sustainable attitudes has not been used in any other study so far. This approach is put forward as particularly relevant in relation to segmenting emerging destinations of developing regions of the world that are rich in natural, cultural and adventure travel attractions. The study thus makes a distinct contribution to the body of knowledge regarding tourism marketing in general and tourism segmentation literature related to such unique regions in particular.

In addition to this, certain variables have been used to describe or profile the derived segments. These include a set of travel/trip-related factors (information sources, duration of trip, travel frequency, travel experience, accommodation preferences, trip planning time, travel expenditure, travel companions, mode of travel and souvenir buying) favorite pastime, satisfaction level, likelihood of recommending as well as geographic, demographic and socio-economic variables have been utilized in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the various segments (as discussed in section 4.2.2, page 105 of Chapter 4). It is felt that the above four-component segmentation approach when used in conjunction with the aforementioned profiling variables should lead to a fuller description of various segments of leisure travelers.
As detailed in Chapter 6, the segmentation exercise undertaken in the study resulted in the derivation of four distinct segments of leisure travelers. It is interesting to note that each of these display unique characteristics, an understanding of which would definitely benefit destination marketers while framing their strategies for the region. The first segment, the smallest group, which has been named as 'Indifferent Travelers' seems to comprise a group of tourists who are simply interested in a relaxed type vacation and do not evince much interest in adventurous activities or in culture. They do have a basic curiosity, a desire to see new places and an interest in nature and wildlife. However, when compared to the other segments, these people attach the least importance to most of the 'motivation-benefit-activity-sustainable attitude' dimensions and may at best be described as a relatively passive group of travelers. In comparison, the second group (also second largest in size) 'Experience and Value Seekers' seem to place an emphasis on having a memorable travel experience. They decidedly exhibit a higher interest in exploring new places, in nature and wildlife, in experiencing new cultures etc. Notably, they show a greater interest in things such as photography and availability of affordable travel packages.

The third segment 'Environmentalists' which is characterized by the highest interest in the environment, appears to comprise a group of people who desire to travel to new destinations, preferably in natural environment, look for comfort and availability of good facilities and seek an authentic learning experience. Finally, the fourth and the largest segment 'Specialists' seem to represent a distinct group of travelers who wish to indulge in a special travel experience. They seek an exciting, nature-oriented travel experience that provides them with an opportunity to explore new places and cultures. Not only do they place an emphasis on availability of facilities such as suitable accommodation, tourist information, ease of reaching the destination etc, but they display a concern for the environment as well. Thus, as has been discussed in Chapter 6, this study has shown that the proposed four-component 'motivations-benefits-activities-sustainable attitudes' approach has resulted in a useful classification of
leisure travelers to North-east India. Through an assessment of the characteristics displayed by each segment, meaningful interpretations may be made regarding not just the type of activities they prefer to engage in but also the motivating forces behind their behavior, the benefits they look for in destinations as well as their attitudes. For instance, the ‘Specialists’ are motivated by a desire to experience nature and wildlife and to explore new places and cultures; they prefer to engage in activities such as photography, fun and shopping, and some adventurous activities; look for benefits such as suitable accommodation, suitable food, affordable travel packages etc and also display a positive attitude with regard to concern for the environment. Such information would allow tourism marketers to better understand their target markets, design better tourism products and develop suitable promotional strategies.

Further, each of these leisure travel segments has been described using a variety of profiling variables as noted previously (discussed at length in section 6.6, page 171, of Chapter 6). The comprehensive description of each segment provided herein would afford an opportunity to tourism providers to derive a more complete understanding of the travel behavior displayed by each segment as well as their other characteristics. For example, the Environmentalists are frequent travelers with high travel experience, who mostly prefer to stay in tourist lodges and hotels, mostly prefer to travel as part of an organized group, came to know about Northeast from friends/relatives/colleagues, are relatively more likely to buy souvenirs, they are more satisfied with their overall travel experience in the region, are more likely to recommend North-east destinations and so on. Such information would no doubt prove vital to the marketers while designing travel packages and communication strategies. Furthermore, an attempt has been made in the study to assess the four segments in terms of their relative match with the attractions of North-east India (discussed in Chapter 7). This has thrown light on which of the segments appear promising from the point of view of destination marketers, thereby providing some insights to tourism marketers regarding which markets to target. The various
conclusions drawn, the implications of the study and recommendations have been provided in detail in the concluding chapters, Chapter 8 and Chapter 9. It is believed that the segments derived, their profiles, and the discussion of the various implications would result in a much fuller understanding of the travel behavior, needs and motivations of leisure travelers to the North-east region. Since prior to this, such comprehensive information related to these distinct types of travelers as revealed in the study has not been reported in relation to destinations of this region or that of other similar regions in the world, therefore, it is hoped that this study makes a significant contribution in this regard. Hence, by demonstrating the utility of the four-component segmentation approach in deriving useful understanding of travelers to unique biodiversity-rich and culturally rich and emerging destinations of developing regions, it is hoped that the study has succeeded in making a meaningful contribution to the overall body of tourism marketing literature.