

SKIING

A LIFESTYLE SPECIALIST COURSE



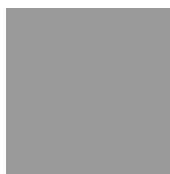


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**LESSON
2**

The Ski Market

▶ LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- ✓ Identify several demographic and psychographic characteristics of the ski market.
- ✓ Describe the significance of families to the ski industry.
- ✓ Explain the relationship between where skiers live and where they ski.
- ✓ Describe how the ski market is segmented into skiers, riders, and tele-marketers.
- ✓ Profile the characteristics of a typical ski trip.

BRAINSTORMING

Please answer these brainstorming questions **before** you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. How would you describe a typical ski client? Is this indicative of the ski market in general?

2. What motivates people to ski?

3. Do families make good ski clients? Why or why not?

4. What does a skier's home city or region have to do with selling and marketing skiing?

Simply put, everyone skis . . . young, old, men, women, singles, couples with children, couples without children, children, and so on. That said, how do you define the type of consumers who make up the ski market?

In this lesson, we'll identify some general demographic and psychographic characteristics of skiers, according to research conducted by various ski industry sources. We will explore in greater depth the family market and then turn our attention to some interesting characteristics about the ski market in general—where skiers come from, what specific snow sport they prefer, and what their ski trips are like.

Demographics

Research indicates that the ski market doesn't necessarily mirror the general population, as we'll see by reviewing the following demographic characteristics: gender, marital status, age, education, ethnicity, and income.

Gender

More men ski than women, according to the National Ski Area Association (NSAA). NSAA interviewed 123,000 skiers at 79 of the nation's 494 operating ski resorts, and their research suggests that about 59 percent of

skiers are male, compared to 41 percent female. The exact proportion changes depending on the source; for example, consumers of Mountain Sports Media, which publishes *Ski* and *Skiing* magazines, are 74 percent male.

Marital Status

Mountain Sports Media reports that about 63 percent of skiers are married, while the NSAA survey found the market equally split between married and single (about 50 percent each).

Age

Skiing may have a youthful, virile image, but the median age of participants is 34, according to the NSAA study. That's up from age 32 five years ago—again, another plus for travel agencies, since somewhat older customers tend to be more affluent. Skiing is definitely *not* limited to 20-somethings but is a sport that appeals to multiple generations.

The gradual but continuing aging of the skier base reflects the aging of the **Baby Boomers**, the influential group of consumers born between the years 1946 and 1964 who have been an important cohort for the industry. It's both good news and bad news for the ski industry and anyone who makes skiing part of a business plan.

On the positive side, it shows that skiers stick to their game—they tend to get hooked early. Of those participating in the NSAA survey, 19 percent started skiing before they were 5 years old, 23 percent were between 6 and 10 when they started, 21 percent were between the 11 and 15, and 16 percent were 16 to 20; the remaining 21 percent started at age 21 and older. In short, nearly 80 percent of those surveyed started before they were 20 years old.

It is important to keep attracting new skiers and riders to the slopes. When skiers (and presumably riders) start young, they keep coming back for more; often they ski when they're into their 40s and 50s, and a substantial number still ski when they're 70. In fact, the number of skiers over the age of 60 has increased immensely over the past several years, as seniors are retiring in good health and want active vacations. It's a self-perpetuating



More men ski than women.

cycle—repeat skiers get better, and the better they ski, the more often they'll ski.

CHALLENGE

Agencies targeting the ski and snowboard markets have to stay current on promotions and activities that are designed to cultivate longtime customers and to attract new skiers and riders to the slopes. Visit the Web sites of several popular ski resorts, and list below any special promotions that target a specific age group, such as Generation Xers or Baby Boomers.

The aging visitor base is particularly significant in resorts in the Northeast and Rocky Mountains. It's less pronounced in resorts located in the Pacific West, Southeast, and Midwest, where skiers are younger. Do you notice any regional differences in the promotions you identified?

What's good for the ski industry and travel agencies that sell skiing is that skiers continue to ski as they get older. This makes it important for the ski industry to work at keeping skiers later in life, particularly as Baby Boomers move into their 40s and 50s. And generally, mature skiers are more affluent and are willing to spend more on better lodgings, lessons, high-grade equipment rental, and child care, all commissionable elements of many ski packages. It's a market built for "selling up."

Education

Compared to the population at large, skiers tend to be well educated. According to Mountain Sports Media, 80 percent are more likely to be college educated or have a postgraduate degree.