

AFRICAN-AMERICAN TRAVELERS

**The Strom Thurmond Institute
of Government and Public Affairs
Clemson University**

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1991) approximately 60 percent of African- American households had incomes less than \$25,000. However, other research has shown that the middle and upper income segments of the African-American community have grown enormously in the past ten years. More than 13 percent of households headed by African-Americans have incomes of \$50,000 or more. Close to half of all affluent African-American households (those with household incomes of more than \$50,000 a year) are located in the South.

The African-American middle class and upper middle class are increasingly affluent, educated and professional. Results of a study completed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics on African-American progress in the professions shows gains up to 470 percent between 1972 and 1991 in areas such as accounting, engineering, computer programming, law, medicine, journalism and management.

The African-American market is a large and growing market, approximately 32 million people with close to \$300 billion in spending power. According to the Urban Land Institute, the African-American market will increase to about 38 million individuals by 2010, up from about 32 million. Middle and upper class African-American baby boomers present the same travel marketing opportunities as do white boomers for the travel industry. African-Americans took 77.8 million trips in 1991, nearly 8 percent of the U.S. trip market. However, when compared to the general public, African-Americans are less likely to take a trip.

However, if tourism marketers are to tap this viable market segment, they first must understand the African-American travel consumer. A more effective understanding of the African-American market is necessary for destination marketers to develop the products and services necessary to effectively serve this growing market. The report that follows is based on the analysis of the African-American Travel Study conducted by the Storm Thurmond Institute at Clemson University.

II. METHODOLOGY

Sample: A random sample of African-American travelers was purchased from a marketing mail list company. The exploratory sample included 1,200 individuals from twenty-six states in the eastern United States.

Out of an initial mailing of 1,200 survey packets, 243 were undeliverable. Of the remaining 957 surveys, 150 were returned for an approximate return rate of 15 percent. But, of the 150 returned surveys, 32 were incomplete and this resulted in 118 useable responses to be included in the present study.

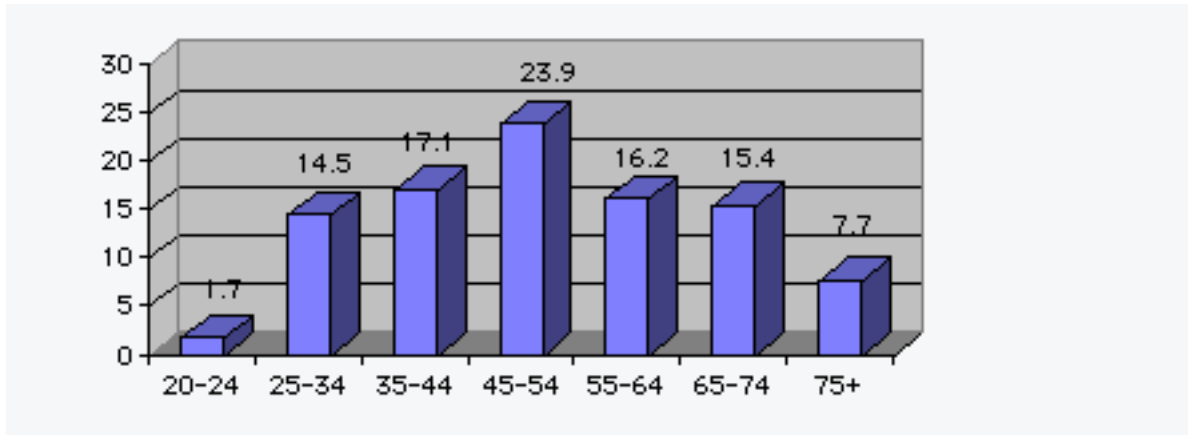
This sample of potential African-American travelers were attractive to this study because they lived in relative proximity to southeastern region of the United States of America. The southeastern region is the top destination area for African-Americans (Travel Industry Association of America, 1993). Located within this region are some of the most visited tourist attractions and destinations in the U.S. Hence, gaining insights into the relationship between involvement and travel behavior is advantageous.

Data Collection : The data were collected using a modified Dillman Total Design (1991) method. Dillman's method was modified not to include a certified final mailing to unresponsive sample members. Each of the sample members received a survey package which included a survey, a cover letter, and a prepaid return envelope. Following the initial mail out, subjects were mailed a follow-up letter to encourage their participation in the study, and a second survey package two weeks following the follow-up letter.

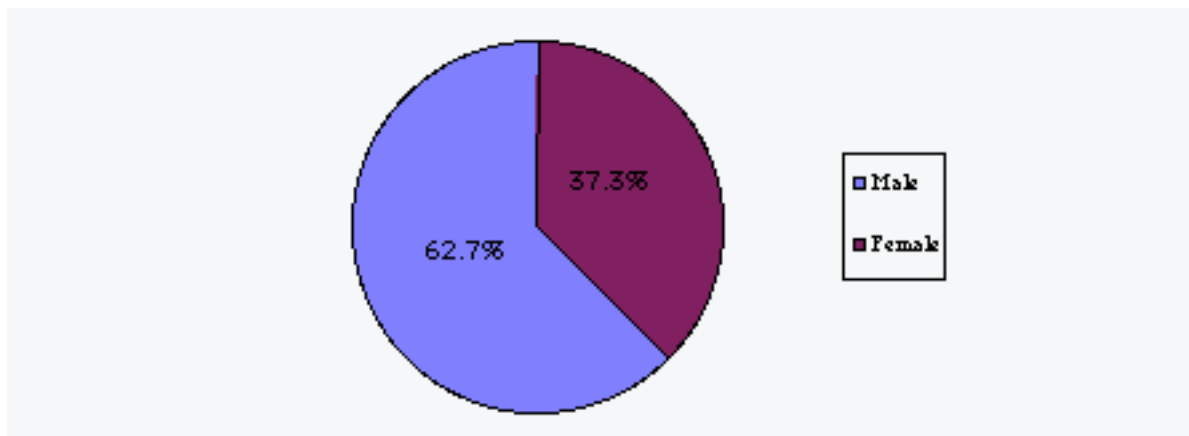
Instrument: The instrument developed for this study was comprised of sections which collected information about demographics trip characteristics, environmental attitudes, vacation preferences and pull factors related to African-American travelers. The instrument was pretested and modified to clarify instructions and wording.

III. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

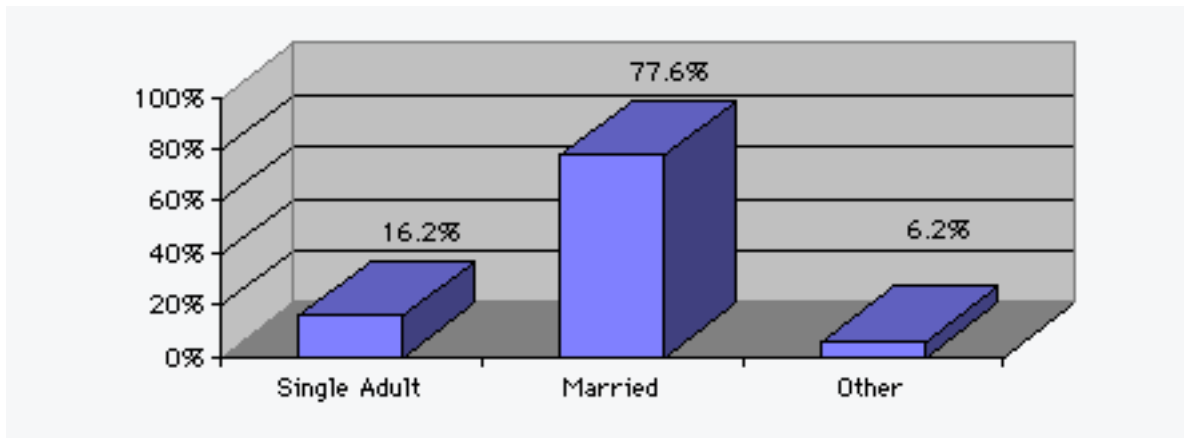
Age: African-American travelers tended to be between the ages of 45-54. The data in the figure below suggests that African-American peak travel years are between 35 and 64 years of age. For tourism marketers interested in attracting this population, the finding of an older travelers segment is important. As individuals age, so do their travel preferences.



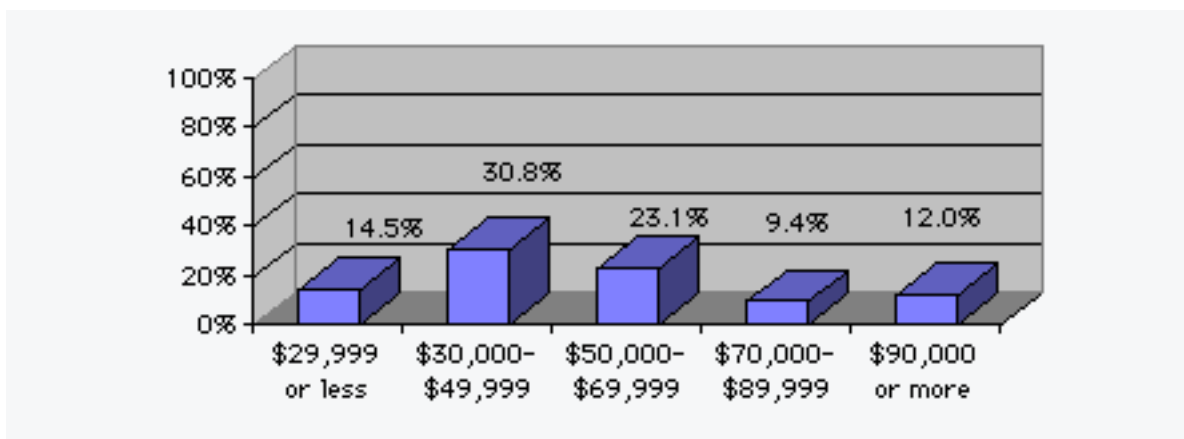
Gender: The majority of the African-American travelers in this study were male. Similar findings were found by TIA (1993).



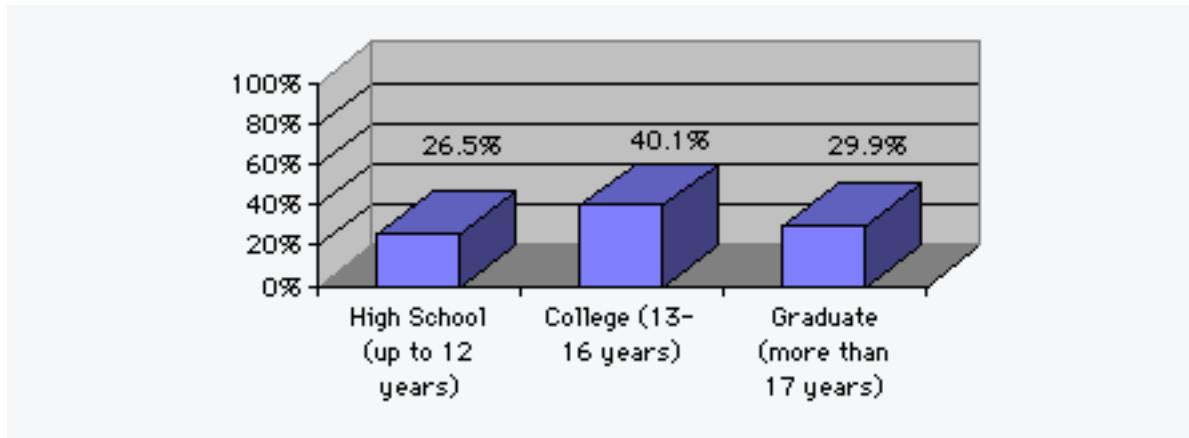
Marital Status: More than three fourths of the population is married. The finding that the majority of travelers were married is not surprising. Despite its relatively small size, the single adult segment presents an opportunity for destination marketers.



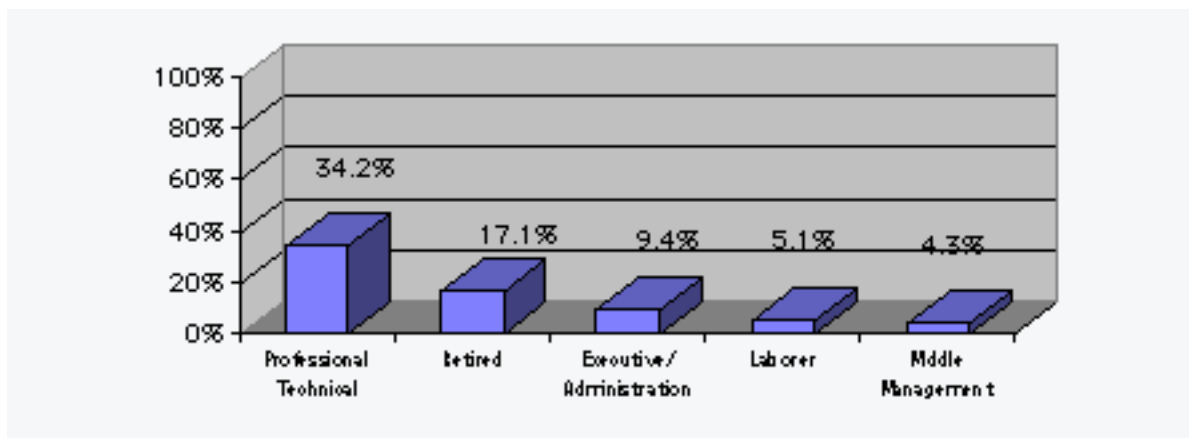
Household Income: Reflecting the greater incidence of older adults, African-American travelers report middle to upper class incomes. Approximately 21.4 percent of this group reported incomes greater than \$69,999. These data point out that this segment of the travel market has access to income to fund their travel. Two other income groups are worth noting. First, the largest segment of African-American travelers report incomes between \$30,000-\$49,999. Second, the next largest segment of African-American travelers report incomes between \$50,000 and \$69,999. These data suggest that destination marketers and travel suppliers need to recognize that budget, middle and high end products and services should be available.



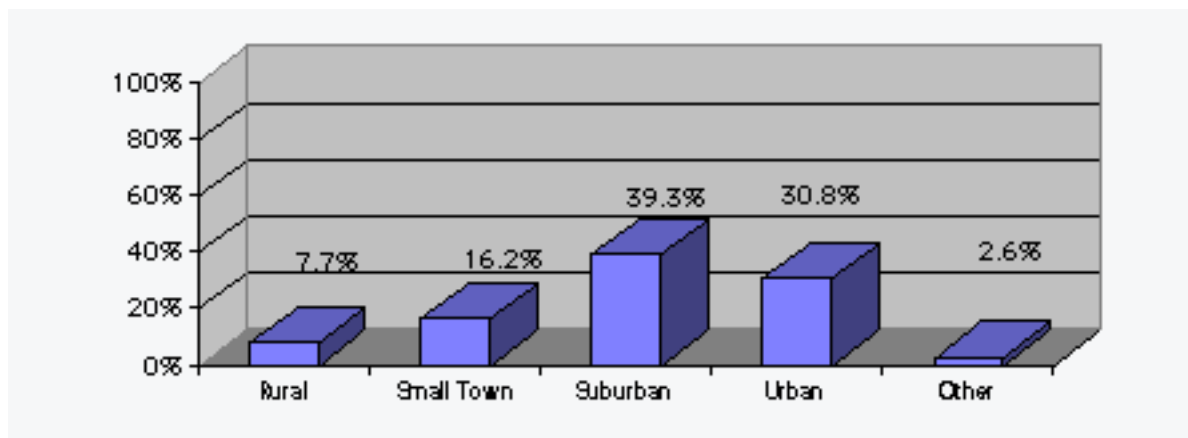
Education: Consistent with the higher incomes, approximately 70 percent of this travel group has completed at least some college level education. This population is a well educated travel segment. Travel markets must be aware of the level of education as they plan their promotion programs to appeal to this market segment. The images selected and the copy chosen to portray an attraction or destination must be consistent with the group they are trying to attract.



Occupation: More than 30 percent of this population were employed in professional/technical positions. It is interesting to note that the retired individuals comprise the second largest group of African-American travelers. This finding is consistent with the income and education findings reported earlier.

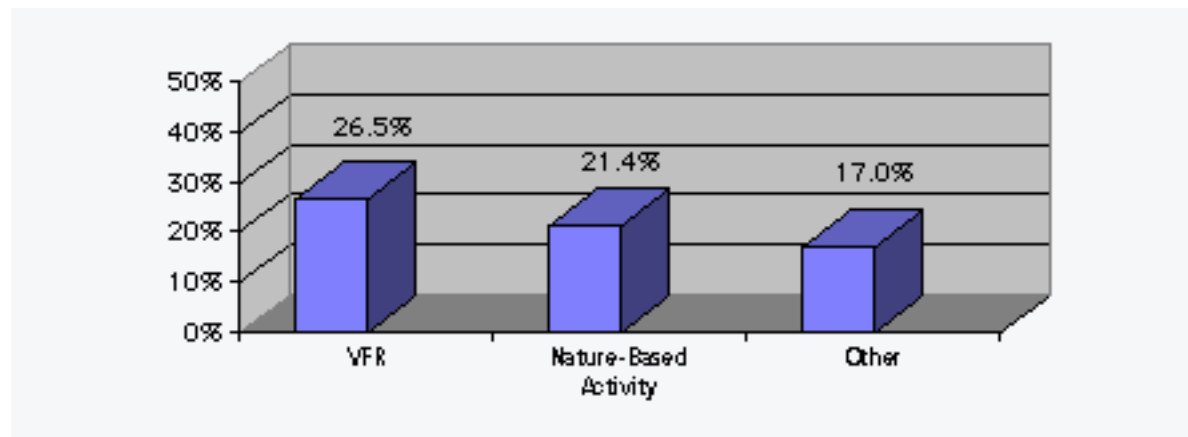


Community of Residence: It is not surprising that the majority of African-American travelers live in suburban and urban areas. Recognizing this, promotions targeted to this travel segment must be placed in major urban and suburban markets. Travel suppliers and destination marketers must ascertain which media/promotions will be most effective urban and suburban areas.



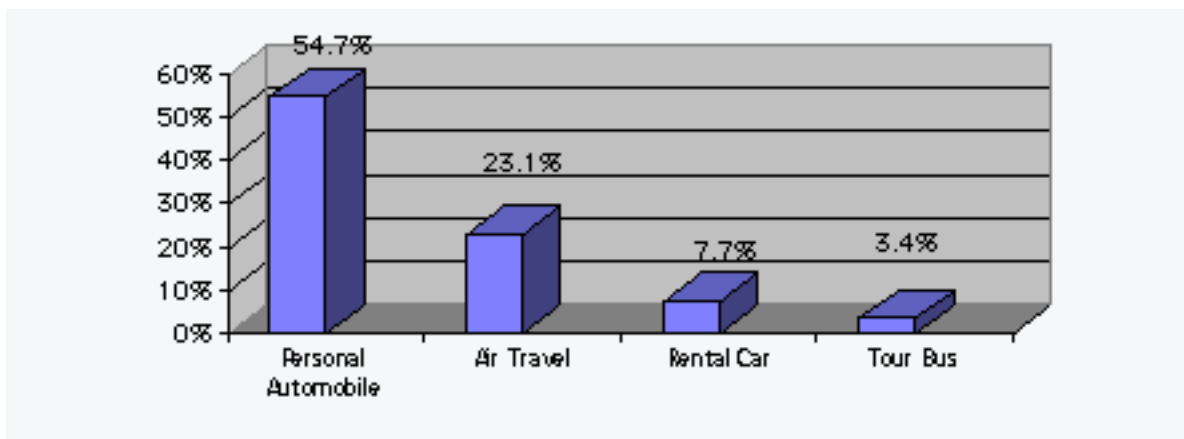
IV. TRIP CHARACTERISTICS

Major Purpose of Trip: The primary purpose of the vacation was to visit friends and relatives. A slightly smaller percentage (21.4) primarily traveled to participate in nature based activities.



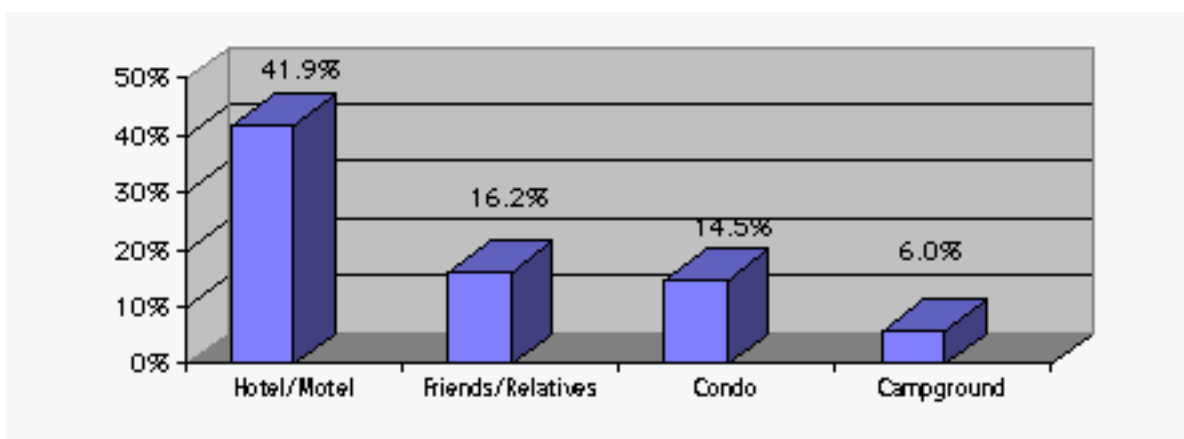
- Females were most likely to travel to visit friends and relatives (75%) than to participate in nature based activities (25%). In contrast males were just as likely to travel to visit friends and relatives (49%) as to participate in nature-based activities (51%).
- Income level and years of education were combined to assess socioeconomic states. African-American travelers in the highest socioeconomic status group were most likely to travel to participate in nature based activities (54%). Traveling to visit friends and relatives was the major purpose of the trip for low and middle socioeconomic travelers.
- Regardless of the major purpose of the trip the personal auto was the mode of transportation most used.
- African-Americans traveling to visit friends and relatives stayed between one to three nights on the trip in nature based activities stayed between four to six days.

Mode of Transportation: The overwhelming choice of transportation was the personal automobile (54.7%). Less than one quarter of the travelers used air travel as the primary means of transportation.



- African-American males and females are equally likely to travel by personal automobile.
- Personal auto was the primary means of transportation regardless of socioeconomic status. Of those who travel by air, 81.4 percent come from the highest socioeconomic status segment.
- Personal automobile was the mode of transportation used by those staying one to three nights. Air transportation services were most likely to be used by those staying from four to six nights.
- Hotels and motels were the primary type of lodging used by personal automobile travelers as well as those using air services.

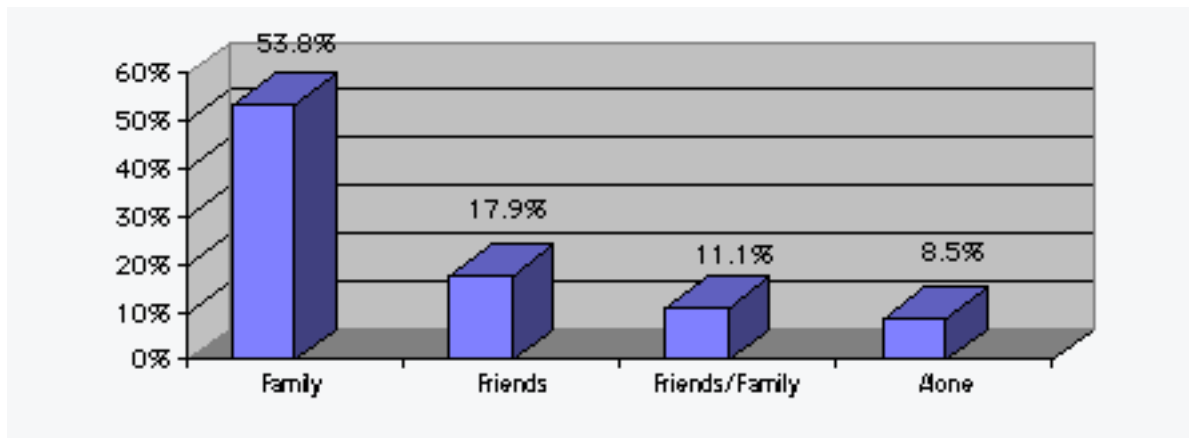
Mode of Lodging: African-Americans were more likely to stay in hotel or motels than any other form of lodging.



- Nearly equal numbers of males (46.0%) and females (44.8%) primary choice of lodging was hotel or motels.

- African-Americans reporting the highest and middle socioeconomic status are most likely to stay in hotels or motels while on vacation. Those in the lowest socioeconomic status group are most likely (46.1%) to stay with friends and relatives.
- African-Americans staying in hotels were most likely to stay between four to six days (48.7%). Those staying with family or relatives stayed for only one to three days (56.2%).
- Regardless of the travelers type of lodging, the majority of African-American travelers traveled with family members.

Travel Party Type: African-Americans primarily travel with family members (53.8%). Only a very small segment (8%) travel alone.



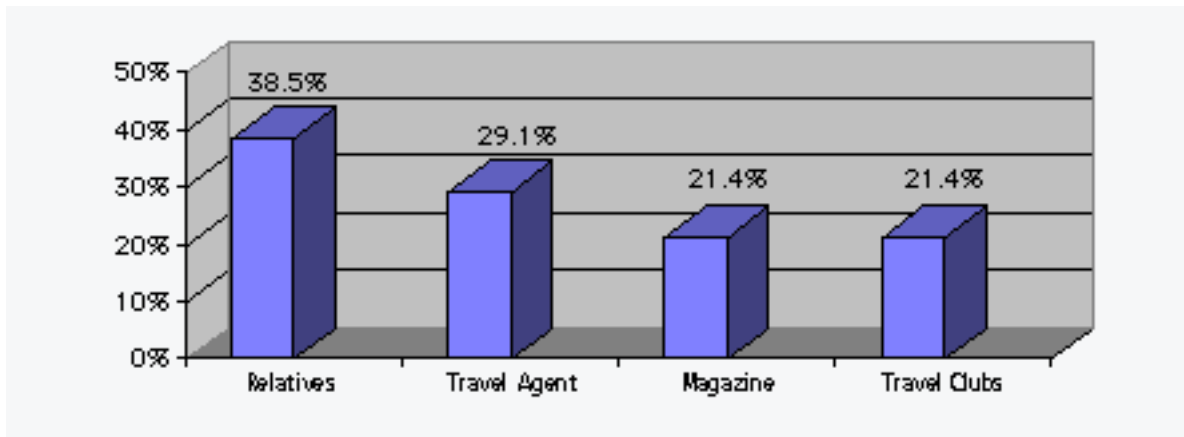
- African-American males and females are equally likely to travel with family.
- Regardless of socioeconomic status the primary travel party type was family group.
- The most frequent mode of transportation for all travel party types was personal automobile.
- The family travel party group was equally likely to stay on vacation one to three nights, four to six nights or seven more nights.

Nights Away From Home: Most African-American travelers stayed between four to six nights while traveling.

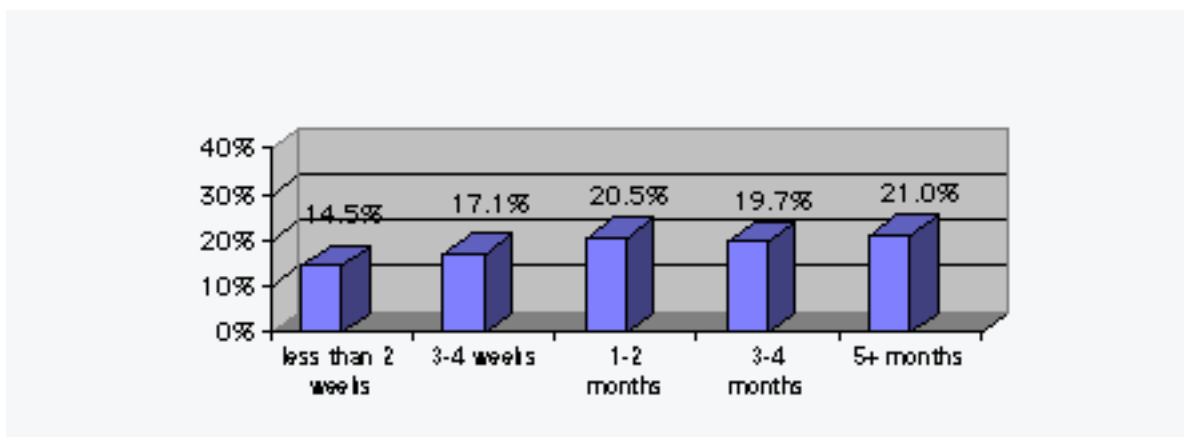
- Males and females were most likely to stay away four to six nights.
- Regardless of socioeconomic status, the average length of nights away were four to six.

V. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Sources of Travel Information: African-American travelers are likely to rely on relatives as a source of vacation information. Nearly 30 percent relied on travel agents for information to plan their trip. Magazines and travel clubs were used equally as an information source. It is surprising that information from newspapers was utilized more than direct mail as information sources. These findings further illustrate the importance of word of mouth communication among travelers.

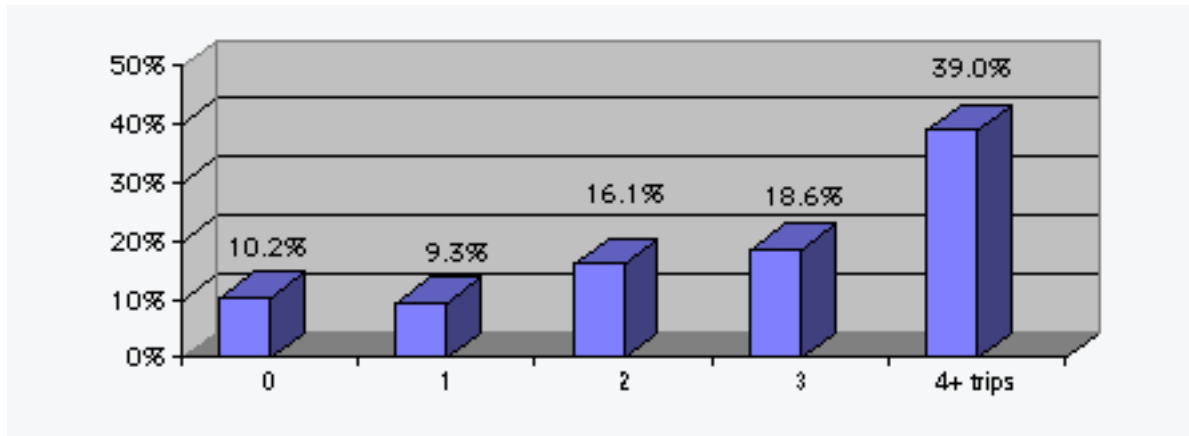


Advance Planning: A greater percentage of African-American travelers (20.5 %) plan their trip between one and two months in advance of the trip. A slightly smaller percentage 19.7 plan their trip up to four months in advance of the trip. Approximately 21 percent of African-American travelers planned the trip for longer than five months.



VI. TRAVEL PATTERNS

Trip Destinations: Florida was the most popular choice of a vacation destination for this sample of African-American travelers. On average, African-American travelers took 2.4 trips per year.



VII. FACTORS INFLUENCING DESTINATION CHOICE

On a scale of one to four African-American travelers were asked the degree to which twenty-nine motivations were important in their selection of a destination. The five most important motivations impacting the choice of destination were (a) being together as a family, (b) having fun, being entertained, (c) seeing as much as possible in the time available, (d) traveling to places where I feel safe and secure, and (e) getting a change from a busy job. The five least important motivators were (a) meeting people of the opposite sex, (b) going places my friends haven't been, (c) doing nothing at all, (d)

Reasons Important In Destination Selections

ITEM	VI*	SI	NVI	NAI	m	stdev
a. getting away from demands of home	43.6*	27.4	14.5	10.3	3.09	1.02
b. reliving past good times	17.9	31.6	23.1	20.5	2.50	1.04
c. experiencing new and different lifestyles	29.9	40.2	18.8	5.1	3.01	0.86
d. trying new foods	18.8	32.5	30.8	14.5	2.58	0.97
e. visiting places important in history	31.6	45.3	12.8	6.8	3.05	0.86
f. being free to act the way I feel	34.2	31.6	20.5	10.3	2.93	1.00
g. finding thrills and excitement	28.2	41.9	20.5	6.0	2.96	0.87
h. experiencing a simpler lifestyle	28.2	30.8	29.1	7.7	2.83	0.95
i. being together as a family	59.8	20.5	8.5	6.0	3.41	0.90
j. meeting people with similar interests	27.4	38.5	24.8	6.0	2.90	0.89
k. feeling at home away from home	35.9	33.3	20.5	6.8	3.02	0.94
l. going places my friends haven't been	11.1	18.8	31.6	35.0	2.06	1.01
m. talking about the trip after I return home	15.4	25.6	35.9	19.7	2.38	0.98
n. participating in sports	12.8	27.4	27.4	29.1	2.25	1.03
o. learning new outdoor skills	9.4	30.8	33.3	21.4	2.30	0.93
p. traveling to places where I feel safe and secure	47.9	31.6	13.7	3.4	3.28	0.84
q. having fun being entertained	46.2	41.0	6.0	2.6	3.37	0.72
r. seeing as much as possible in the time available	46.2	35.0	12.8	2.6	3.29	0.80
s. rediscovering myself	17.9	29.9	30.8	15.4	2.54	0.98
t. visiting friends and relatives	30.8	29.9	17.1	17.9	2.77	1.10
u. visiting places my family came from	21.4	27.4	21.4	24.8	2.48	1.11
v. being physically active	35.0	39.3	15.4	6.8	3.06	0.90
w. getting a change from a busy job	53.8	23.9	10.3	8.5	3.27	0.98
x. being daring and adventuresome	14.5	29.1	27.4	25.6	2.34	1.03
y. doing nothing at all	13.7	22.2	31.6	29.1	2.21	1.03
z. taking advantage of reduced fares	34.2	27.4	17.9	16.2	2.85	1.11
aa. learning about nature	23.9	38.5	24.8	8.5	2.81	0.92
bb. watching sports events	12.0	27.4	29.9	26.5	2.26	1.00
cc. meeting people of the opposite sex	11.1	19.7	24.8	40.2	2.02	1.05

*VI=very important; SI=slightly important; NVI=not very important; NAI=not at all important; 4=VI; 1=NAI

Opportunities at Destinations. African-American travelers were asked to indicate the importance of twenty-six vacation experiences sought at destinations. These items were designed to answer the pull factor that destinations have. Table 2 displays these findings.

- Opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation activities, to visit historic sites and parks, the warm climate, inexpensive meals and museums and galleries to visit were the most important aspects of the vacation.
- On the other hand, the least important opportunities sought by African-Americans were (a) gambling, (b) big cities, and (c) night life and entertainment.

Table 2

Importance of Opportunities at Vacation Destination						
ITEM	VI*	SI	NVI	NAI	m	stdev
a. big cities	9.4	24.8	33.3	26.5	2.18	0.96
b. smaller towns and villages	18.8	44.4	23.9	6.0	2.82	0.83
c. rural areas	22.2	41.0	20.5	10.3	2.80	0.93
d. wilderness	23.1	35.9	22.2	14.5	2.71	1.00
e. mountains	25.6	32.5	23.1	12.8	2.75	1.01
f. oceanside	28.2	36.8	17.9	12.8	2.84	1.00
g. lakes and streams	29.1	34.2	19.7	12.0	2.85	1.00
h. national/provincial parks	24.8	47.9	12.8	9.4	2.93	0.89
i. beaches for swimming and sunning	22.2	34.2	23.9	14.5	2.68	1.00
j. warm climate	27.4	40.2	20.5	7.7	2.91	0.91
k. predictable weather	23.1	38.5	25.6	8.5	2.79	0.91
l. resort areas	16.2	45.3	26.5	7.7	2.73	0.84
m. high quality restaurants	26.5	31.6	27.4	11.1	2.76	0.98
n. inexpensive meals	28.2	34.2	23.9	8.5	2.86	0.95
o. first class hotels	23.1	33.3	28.2	12.0	2.70	0.97
p. budget accommodation	22.2	46.2	19.7	7.7	2.87	0.86
q. shopping	11.1	43.6	23.9	17.9	2.50	0.93
r. nightlife and entertainment	7.7	30.8	23.9	33.3	2.13	0.99
s. gambling	1.7	11.1	24.8	58.1	1.54	0.77
t. live theatre and musicals	7.7	34.2	31.6	22.2	2.29	0.91
u. local festivals and events	16.2	44.4	29.1	6.8	2.72	0.83
v. museums and art galleries	19.7	42.7	29.1	5.1	2.80	0.83
w. historic sites/parks	28.2	45.3	17.9	5.1	3.00	0.83
x. amusement/theme parks	17.1	34.2	29.1	16.2	2.54	0.97
y. local crafts	12.0	48.7	21.4	13.7	2.62	0.88
z. cultural activities	17.9	47.9	20.5	9.4	2.78	0.87

*VI=very important; SI=slightly important; NVI=not very important; NAI=not at all important; 4=VI; 1=NAI

Landmark Awareness and Visitation: African-Americans are unaware of many of the landmarks in the area. It is surprising to note that Stone Mountain was the top site visited. When asked which sites they intend to visit, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Table 3, Calloway Gardens and Mary McLeod Bethune’s birthplace were the top sites.

Table 3

Awareness and Visitation of Landmarks			
	Familiar with	Have visited	Would visit
Robert Smalls’ House	3.4	0.8	22.9
Calloway Gardens	15.3	20.3	31.4
Stone Mountain	22.9	36.4	28.8
Denmark Vesey Home	—	1.7	25.4
Dubose Hayward Home	4.2	1.7	22.9
Joseph Rainey House	0.8	2.5	23.7
Biltmore House	21.2	22.0	26.3
Mary McLeod Bethune Birthplace	10.2	6.8	30.5
The Penn Center	5.1	5.1	22.0
Fort Sumter National Monument	16.1	21.2	33.9
Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic	18.6	26.3	27.1

Cultural/Historic Issues: African-Americans felt very strongly that (a) by learning more about their heritage, Black Americans can develop a stronger ethnic identity, (b) expressed a preference to visit Black historical sites, (c) more laws are need to protect Black historical landmarks from being destroyed, (d) it is interesting to visit places where famous Black Americans lived in U.S. history, and (e) for too long Black have overlooked the richness of their heritage. (Table 4)

Table 4

Cultural and Historic Issues							
ITEM	SA*	A	U	D	SD	m	stdev
It’s interesting to visit places where famous Black Americans in U.S. history lived.	28.0	33.9	19.5	4.2	6.8	3.78	1.15
For too long Blacks have overlooked the richness of their heritage.	34.7	22.9	23.7	8.5	4.2	3.80	1.17
Visiting former slave plantations in the South does not interest me.	9.3	25.4	13.6	36.4	10.2	2.87	1.21
I find that visiting historic sites is boring.	0.8	6.8	7.6	43.2	35.6	1.87	0.91
The history of slavery in the South is best left forgotten.	5.1	9.4	8.5	36.8	35.0	2.08	1.16

Cultural and Historic Issues

ITEM	SA*	A	U	D	SD	m	stdev
I feel that elementary and secondary school students should be taught the history of Black Americans in the U.S.	41.9	33.3	10.3	4.3	4.3	4.11	1.07
Too much emphasis is currently being placed on the importance of Black heritage.	7.7	10.3	19.7	21.4	35.0	2.30	1.30
The loss of Black historical landmarks is a necessary result of progress.	5.1	8.5	20.5	29.1	30.8	2.24	1.16
I am interested in learning more about the history of Blacks in American society.	27.4	31.6	15.4	14.5	5.1	3.65	1.21
We need more laws to protect Black historical landmarks from being destroyed.	26.5	29.9	21.4	12.0	4.3	3.66	1.15
Spending money to preserve Black historical landmarks is a luxury we cannot afford.	4.3	8.5	18.8	37.6	24.8	2.25	1.09
Historical buildings significant to Black history should be preserved although they may stand in the way of progress.	12.8	39.3	25.6	9.4	6.0	3.47	1.06
I don't like the feeling of being around things that remind me of the hardships imposed on Blacks in the past.	5.1	8.5	15.4	44.4	20.5	2.29	1.08
I would prefer to visit Black historical sites rather than simply read about them.	18.8	39.3	22.2	9.4	3.4	3.65	1.03
By learning more about their heritage, Black Americans develop a stronger ethnic identity.	38.5	35.9	12.0	5.1	1.7	4.12	0.96

*SA=5; SD=1; SA=strongly agree; A=agree; U=undecided; D=disagree; SD=strongly disagree