

Future Living Conditions and Mobility: Travel Behaviour of Alpine Tourists

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0 Abstract

Traffic for leisure purposes in modern societies contributes more than 50% to all traffic movements. Therefore, leisure behaviour is an important factor for explaining the development of mobility patterns and traffic flows. On the other hand traffic flows and infrastructure heavily influence living conditions and herewith leisure behaviour.

Based on a systemic approach this paper tries to contribute to the systematisation and structuration of leisure traffic flows. The hereby developed structural model shall give a fundamental base to analyze future mobility patterns. It can be hypothesized that

- Future leisure needs and improved living standards will increase mobility for leisure purposes at home as well as in destinations.
- There is a tendency to a concentration of activities to specific locations, which creates traffic jam problems, as well as an opposite tendency towards more diversified destinations patterns impacting nature and landscapes in peripheral regions.
- New forms of leisure activities lead to a diversification of mobility.
- With regard to the modal split there is an increasing share of private car in leisure time and airtravel in tourism due to modern leisure needs

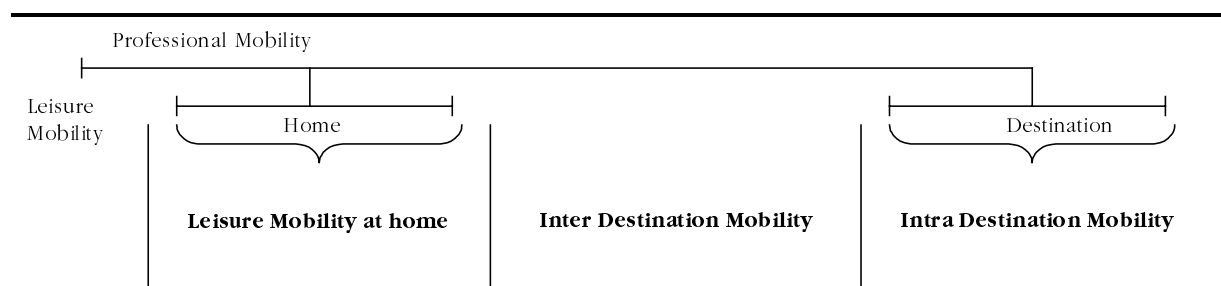
These trends ask for new concepts in traffic management as well as new forms of attractive public transport means to avoid a significant destruction of leisure quality.

1 Leisure and tourism mobility – a structural concept

1.1 Categories of leisure mobility

Leisure mobility can be divided into two or three main categories. According to the definition of tourism (Inskeep, 1991; Kaspar, 1996) travelling to a destination always involves mobility. This represents the first type of mobility, which can be categorised as inter destination mobility. It also has an impact on the second category, the intra destination mobility, assuming that tourists arriving by car will use their car for further activities within the destination. Moreover, all other forms of mobility needed for access to leisure activities close to the area of living can be included. (Müller et al., 1999). The third form of mobility contains mobility caused by sport activities (car racing, skiing, cycling) or cultural activities (sight seeing on train roundtrips), which are also highly dependent on mobility (figure 1), at home.

Figure 1: Mobility typologies



1.2 Leisure mobility model

A **leisure mobility model** (c.f. figure 2) shall be derived from the situational approach (Hägerstrand, 1970; Brög, 1983; Mentz, 1984; Hoglebe, 1994; Laesser, 1996; Bieger & Laesser, 1991).

According to the above mentioned approach, the need for mobility and its structure (modal split) is heavily influenced by

- the **socio-economic predetermination of the mobility subject** (i.e. user of a given means of transportation),
- the form of **leisure activity** and
- the **contextual factors** of its consumption.

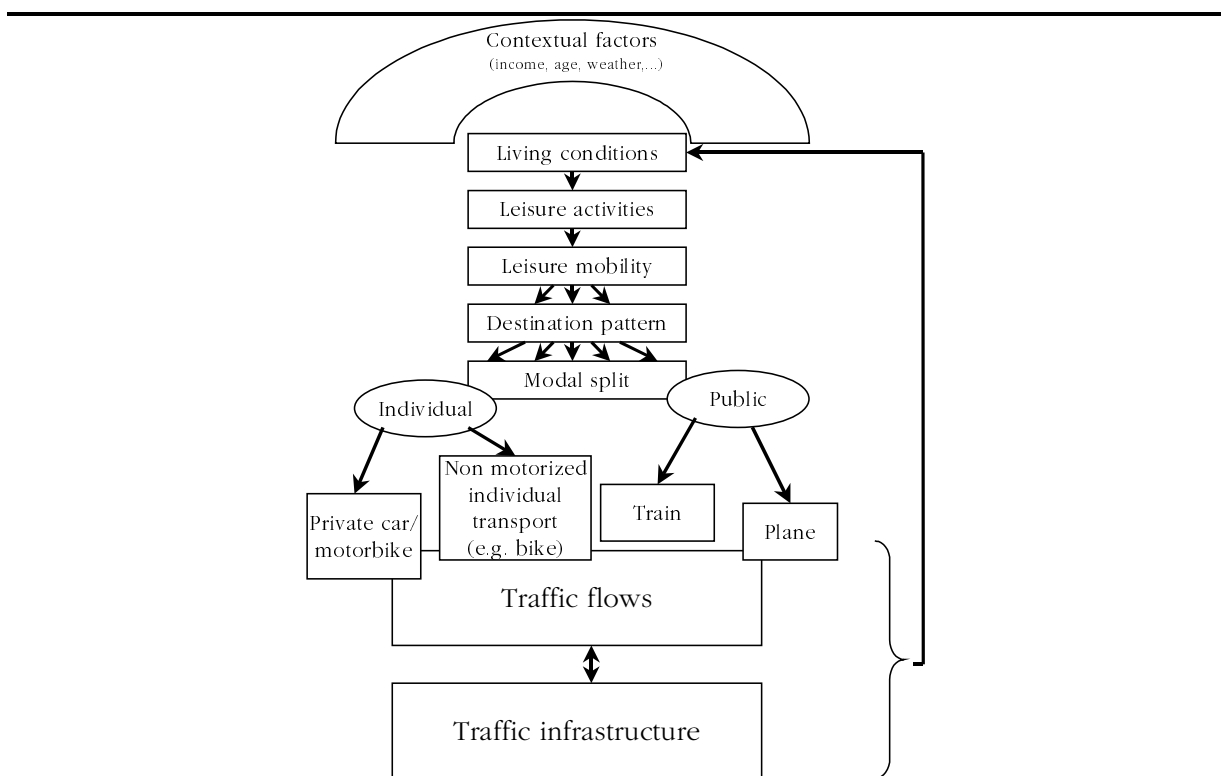
The volume of traffic varies with the activity taken, e.g. sports such as skiing requires not only transport to the destination, but also transport within the destination, such as cable cars. (ECMT, 2001)

Furthermore the location of the leisure activity and its distance to the place of living has an impact on the amount of mobility needed (Lawson, 2001). This shall be illustrated with cultural events. As most cultural events take place in town centers, it can easily be seen that different means of transportation will be used to get there and therefore different mobility patterns will be developed. Whereas people living in peripheral areas of a town will most probably rely on individual mobility, people living downtown might rather use collective means of transportation to do the same kind of leisure activity. This generates different kind of traffic flows.

Furthermore: Means of transportation under offer influence leisure behaviour: The availability of a fast road for example will induce mobility, as this encourages people to use this additional capacity to travel not only faster but also more often (ECMT, 1998).

The **effects of traffic** last but not least affect housing conditions and relocation patterns. Due to the fact, that originators of pollution often are not identical with the recipients, those effects become **external**. This in turn also influences leisure behaviour of both groups. So, in the tradition of a „leisure – living“ model (Krippendorf, 1984) a loop back from traffic flows and infrastructure to leisure behaviour and through this to mobility needs can be assumed.

Figure 2: Leisure mobility model



This simple model can be taken as a base for deriving various **research questions** and **topics** which are relevant for the future of leisure mobility:

- How do different forms of leisure activities influence mobility?
- Which trends in leisure mobility based on these relations can be expected?
- How do different forms of leisure activities affect the modal split of traffic?
- Which effects will traffic pattern have on living conditions and leisure behaviour?
- Which problems do emerge? Is there room for improvement?

This paper tries to develop hypotheses to for discussion of the the above mentioned questions. We hereby rely on empirical studies done in **Switzerland**. Switzerland seems to be a interesting case study in many respects:

- It has a **rich and affluent leisure market** on a comparatively high development stage (high market maturity).
- A quite high population density implies an increased **sensitivity for problems emerging from traffic patterns**.

2 The influence of leisure activities on mobility

In Switzerland more than 50% of the overall traffic movements results from leisure activities (vgl. Stettler, 1997 and census of the federal office of statistics). For more than 80% of driven km's the private car is used.

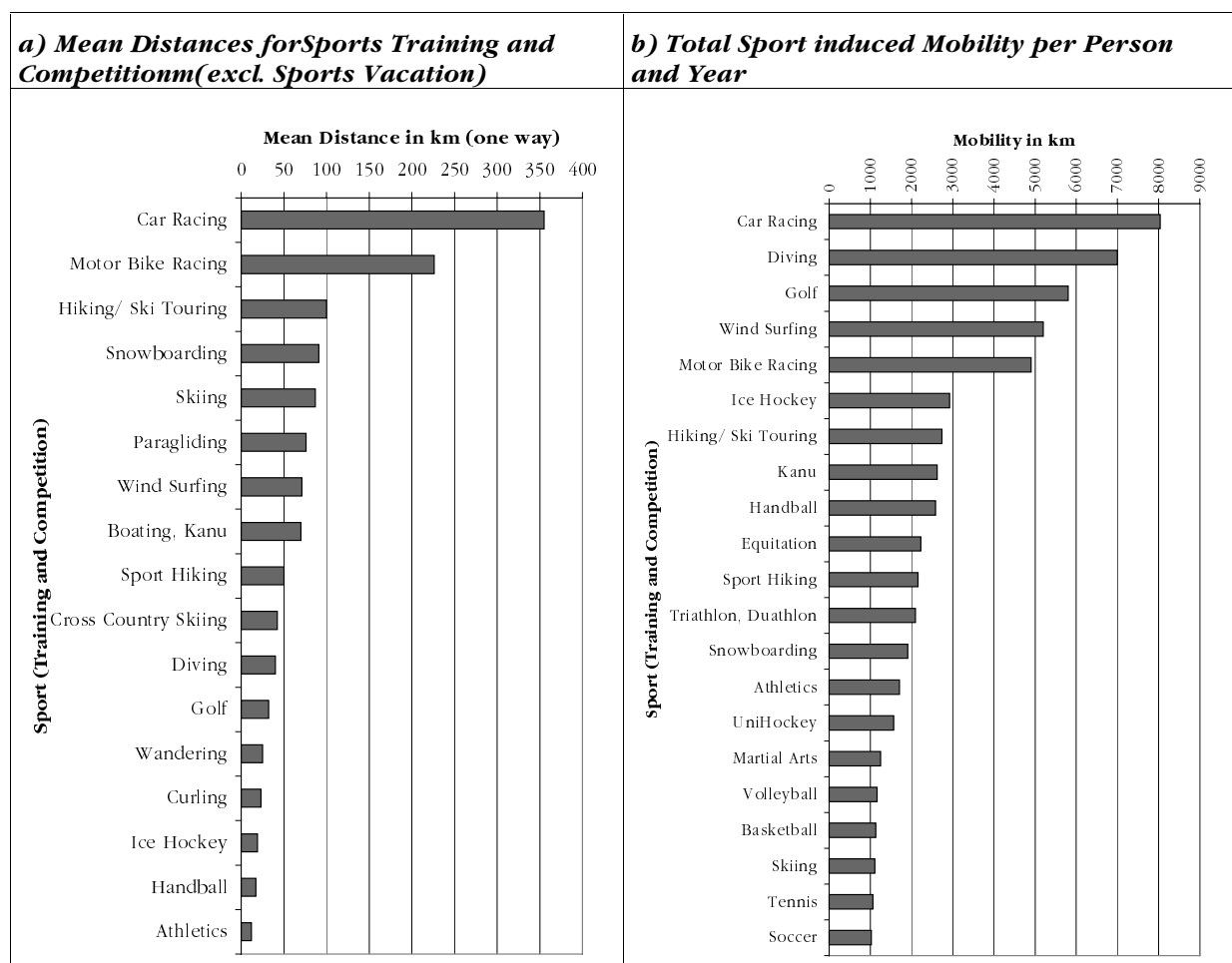
The different forms of leisure mobility (please refer again to figure 1) shall be illustrated by the following means:

- **Leisure mobility at home:** Sport activities induced mobility patterns of swiss people
- **Inter destination mobility:** Tourism induced mobility patterns of swiss travellers
- **Intra destination mobility:** Mobility patterns of swiss tourists during their stay in the destination

2.1 Leisure mobility at home: The example of sport activities

Stettler (1997) in his comprehensive study on sports and traffic in Switzerland came up with data on traffic effects of different forms of sport. The study relies on a set of datas such as statistics of the federal statistic office of Switzerland as well as other sources (including own empirical research).

Figure 3: Quantity structure of sport induced mobility



Source: adapted from Stettler (1997)

Based on the data in figure 2a it can be hypothesized that the more „trendy“ and exclusive a sport the bigger the distance necessary to be able to execute it. The total distance covered per year by an addict of a specific sport shows a slightly different picture (figure 2b). Yet, the exclusive and often so called nature oriented sport activities show the biggest transport volume necessary. But on the other hand, traditional sport activities like athletics lead to a significant amount of mobility, too, due to often intensive travels to contests.

The type of sport activity also has an important influence on the modal split. More than 90% of all kms covered are done by car, especially in the case of ice hockey, diving, golf, windsurfing, horse riding, shooting as well as car and motorcycle sport. The share of public transport means is the highest in the case of hiking, snowboarding (due to the age of the boarders), cycling and mountaineering (Stettler, 1997).

From this data it can be hypothesized that

- Mobility is influenced by sport activities
- Sport activities requiring special natural conditions (mountains, lakes) or infrastructures lead to increased mobility
- Sport activities that require special equipment or require specific and very individual traffic relations (like golf or diving) lead to increased use of private cars
- Sport executed by younger people lead to less private car use due to reduced availability of cars for this group of consumers.

2.2 Inter destination mobility: The example of tourism

Based on the extensive database of our institute on leisure travel of Swiss citizens (vgl. Bieger & Laesser 1999, (1'970 households and 5'570 trips covered), a number of different conclusions regarding leisure tourism mobility can be drawn.

First of all, air transportation turns out to be the long term winner with regard to selection of means of transportation to a holiday destination (see figure 5). Preliminary results of the corresponding 2001 survey reveal a continuation of that trend.

Besides this, the share of travel by car is still increasing, even with declining relative numbers. At least up to 1998, rail travel has not only lost in absolute but also in relative terms. This fact is even more astonishing in a country, whose population is among the most frequent railway users (in terms of utilisation intensity; cf. UITP statistics).

There is one major reason for this development (Bieger & Laesser 1999): Over the past few years, the share of **long haul trips** has just about tripled. While in 1980, only about 3% of all leisure trips by Swiss people led to destinations outside of Europe, in 1998 already 12% of all journeys were going to non-European destinations (about 1.5 million leisure trips!). The **association** between the **choice of destination** and the **choice of means of transportation** is very high ($\Phi = 0.940$), thus more or less overriding most other potentially explaining factors. Or to put it into other words: **The choice of destination turns out to be a summarizing factor for explaining differences in the choice of transport mode.**

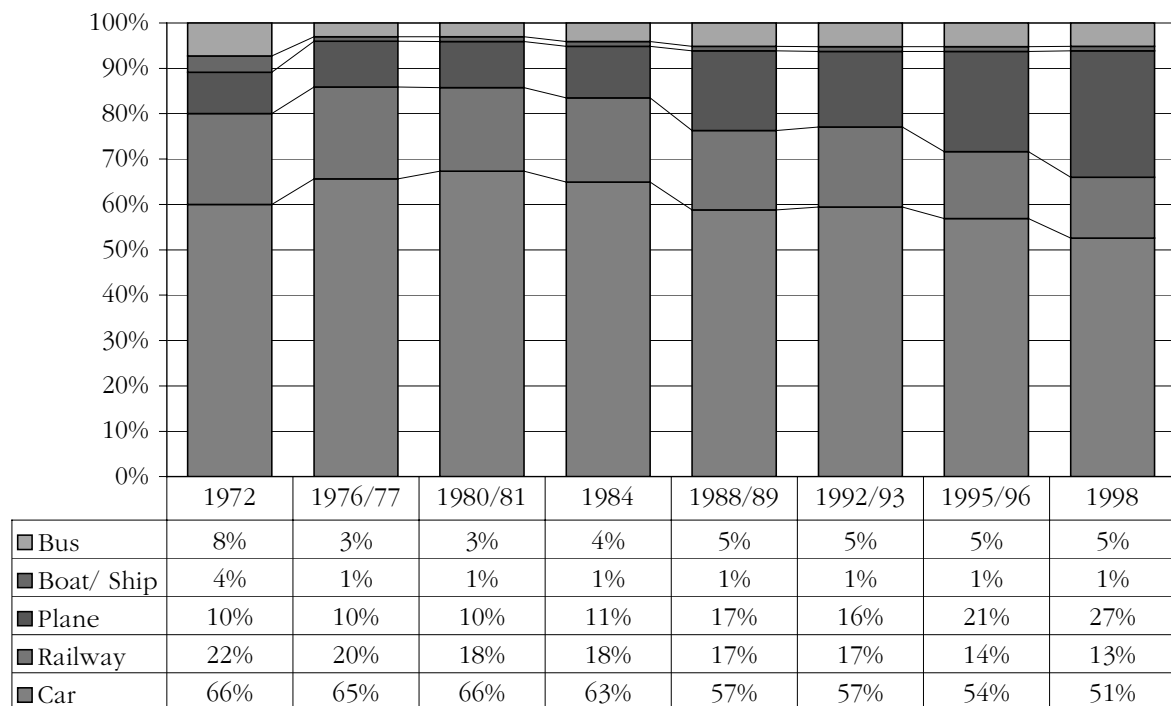
Moreover, there are further factors explaining, which are independent from the choice of destination (Bieger & Laesser 1999; Reisemarkt Schweiz 1998):

- Some **types of travel** are clearly inducing mobility ($\Phi = 0.644$). When looking at the means of transportation to the (first) holiday destination, the **share of the car** (with regard to number of trips, not of distance!) is predominant with travel types such as „Winter Holiday in the Snow“ (84%), „Holiday in the Mountains“ (81%). Planes on the other hand are key means of transportation in the cases of „Beach Holiday“ (44%) „City

Trip“ (36%) and „Sightseeing Trip“ (35%). The types of trip mentioned incorporate more than half of all trips, with the railway not having any predominant role.

- Not surprisingly, the **duration of trip** is another factor explaining the choice of transportation. While the use of plane increases over the duration of the trip, the use of cars and trains decreases ($\Phi = 0.370$). Though in this context, one should not ignore the close association between the duration of a trip and the choice of destination, with $\Phi = 0.587$.

Figure 4: *Selection of means of transportation to holiday destinations*



Source: *Reisemarkt Schweiz (diff. years)*

- The car turns out to be a mean of transportation for comparably larger travel groups. An average **size of travel group** from one and the same household averages 2.7 in the case of car use and 2.0 in the case of plane and train use, with $\text{Eta} = 0.326$. Budget reasons may be one of the potential determinants of that behaviour.
- The **age of the traveler(s)** seems to be a first, trip-preliminary explaining factor (the gender, on the other hand, is of no relevance). The highest share of the car is reached in the age groups <15 and 26-45, with $\Phi = 0.310$. This is yet another indication for the potential of a life-phase based segmentation of travellers (Laesser, 2001; Bieger & Laesser 2002): When travelling with children, the use of car becomes close to obvious. With regard to the use of railway and plane, no specific pattern can be observed.
- In tendency, **sport activities** during holiday rather lead to a use of the car and plane for transport reasons. The mean number of sport activities practiced during holidays ranges from 3 (rail), to 4.7 (car) and 5.2 (plane), with $\text{Eta} = 0.126$. This result is not very surprising, as sport very often is requires transport of corresponding (sometimes bulky) utensils.

Based on this data for different forms of leisure activities in Switzerland the hypothesis cannot be rejected that

- the type and form of leisure activity as well as
- specific context factors of the consumer

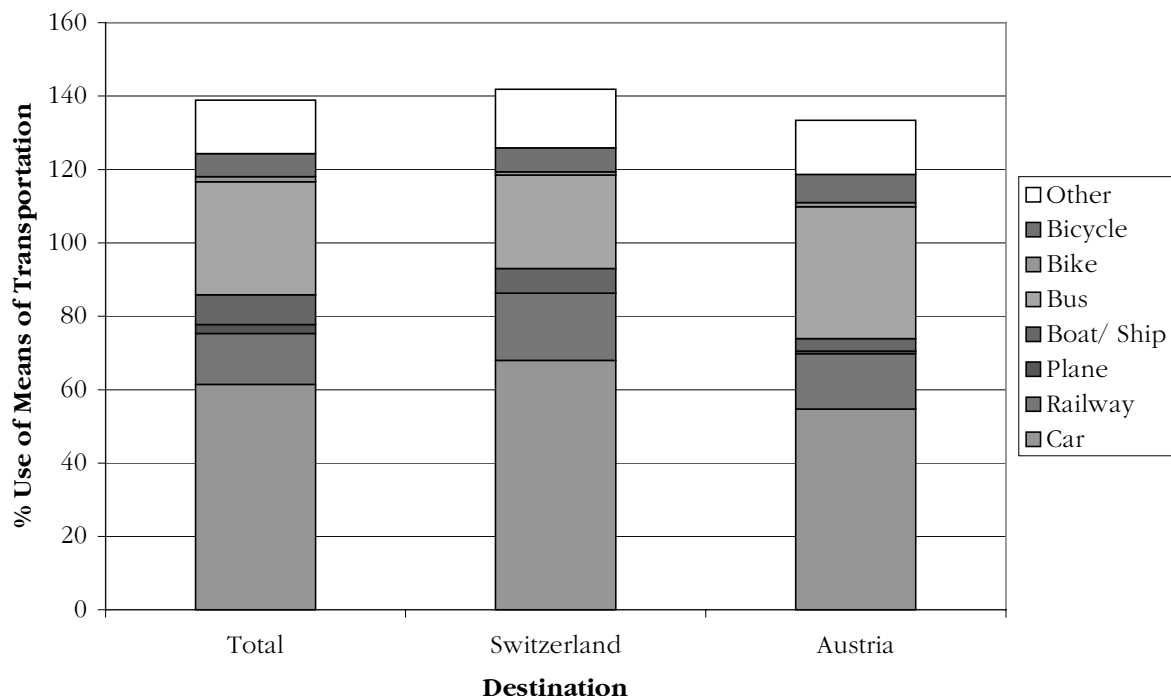
have an important influence on mobility.

2.3 Intra destination mobility: The examples of swiss travellers mobility pattern

Based on the same database of our institute on leisure travel of Swiss citizens (vgl. Bieger & Laesser 1999, (1'970 households and 5'570 trips covered), a number of different conclusions regarding the use of means of transportation in a destination can be drawn.

First of all, on an average trip swiss travellers make use of about 1.4 means of transportation. Secondly, the use of a car is a key means of transportation while in a given destination (see figure 5). 61% of all travellers from Switzerland are driving a vehicle while on a leisure trip.

Figure 5: Use of means of transport in destination



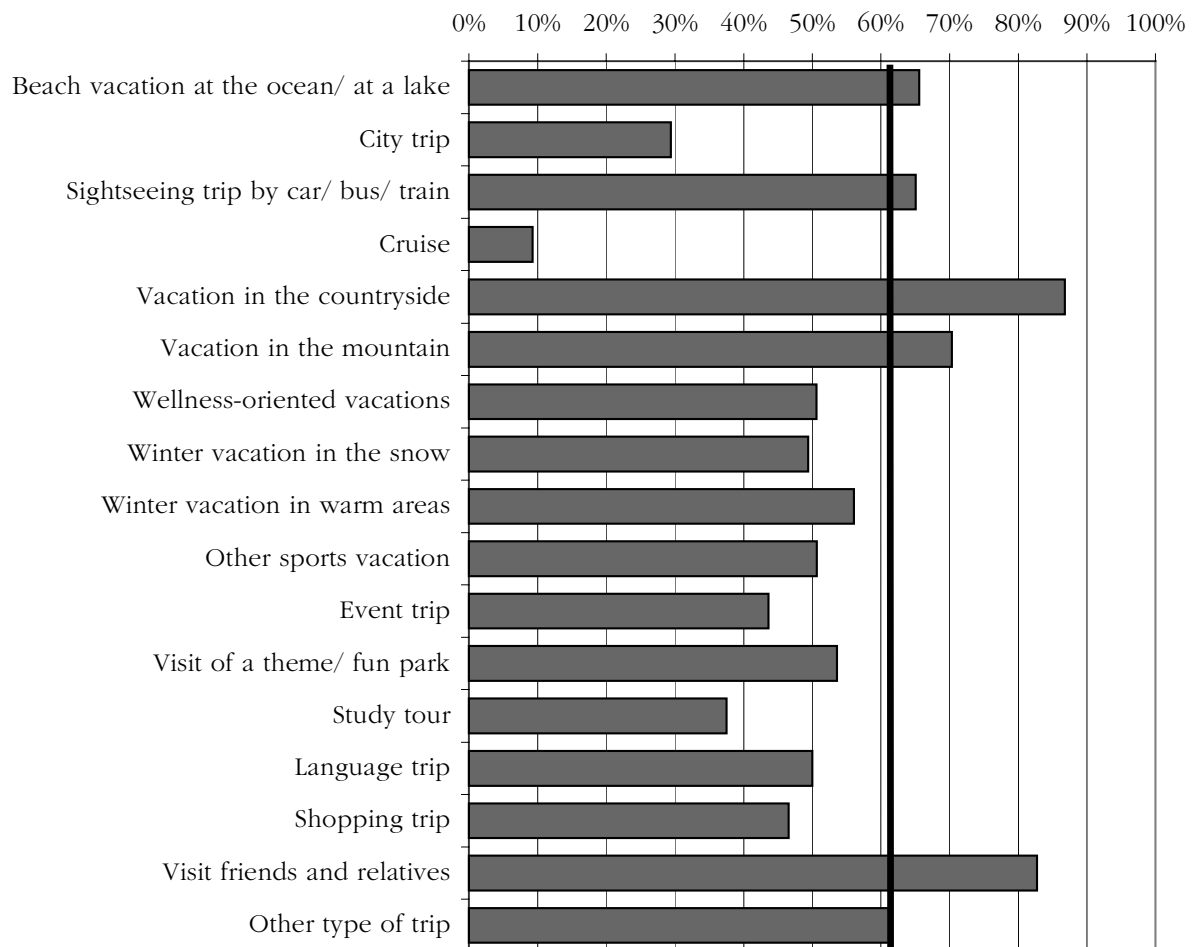
Source: Reisemarkt Schweiz (1998)

Looking at the use of the car, some differentiations need to be made (Bieger & Laesser, 1999; Reisemarkt Schweiz 1998):

- **Concerning type of trip** (figure 6): In general, car-mobility inducing types of trip are such as “visit friends and relatives” (almost a third of all trips can be characterized by that title), “vacations in the montains” (not winter), and “vacation in the countryside”. On the other hand, city trips and cruises are – not surprisingly those types of trip, which induce the least car-mobility of all. The association is significant but rather weak though with $\Phi = 0.378$.
- Also from the point of view of intra-destination mobility, the car turns out to be a mean of transportation for comparably larger travel groups. An average **size of travel group** from one and the same household averages 2.6 in the case of car use and 2.0 in the case the use of other means of transportation, with $\eta = 0.232$.

- The earlier described **mobility pattern by age** can be observed on a intra-destination level, too: It is again the groups of <15 and 26-45 rather using the car as means of transportation than other age groups.
- The degree of **sport activities** is another reason for using cars. Especially sports which involve the transport of bulky items and sports implicating the use of rather centrally located infrastructure rather tend to use a car than the case. The determination is rather weak though.

Figure 6: *The share of swiss travellers using a car while in a destination*



Source: *Reisemarkt Schweiz (1998)*

2.4 Preliminary concluding remarks

From the results of the past sub-chapters, the following preliminary concluding remarks can be drawn:

- The **degree of determination** of a number of factors for the choice of means of transportation is **higher in the case of inter destination mobility** than intra destination mobility (at each case, the measures of association of a given factor with the choice of transportation are comparably higher in the case of inter destination mobility). This leads to the following hypothesis: The degree of predetermination in the case of inter-destination mobility is comparably higher than in the case of intra destination

mobility; with regard to the latter, the traveller rather decides short term opportunistic, possibly comparing pros and cons of a given means of transportation.

- The size of the **travel group** (often correlating with the age of the persons in a given group) and the need to transport (sometimes bulky) items are, apart from the type of trip, key determinants with regard to the choice of means of transportation. One shall not ignore the obvious interrelation between those factors (parents with children naturally travel with a comparably large number of sometimes bulky items).
- For those reasons, we can formulate another hypothesis: With the **alps beeing a prominent destinations for families** (Laesser, 2001) and thus comparably large travel groups with proportionate items transport, in the future that area will be affected by car traffic to at least the same extent as currently. It can further be assumed, that **cars are primarily and rather used as means for goods than people transport**.

3 Leisure trends and mobility

Modern social development is interpreted by sociologists through definition of different „societies“:

- The **Experience Society** (Schulze, 1993) is characterized by the search of wide parts of the population for new experiences by crossing individually determined psychic or physic frontiers. Experiences allow a given individual to better get to know its identity (for the identity concept please refer to Simon & Mummendey, 1997; Goleman, 1995, Baumeister, 1986)
- The **Risk Society** (Beck 1986, 1989 and 1999) is characterised by the search of wide parts of the population for new limits of risk. This search for risk can be interpreted as a search for experiences, aiming at getting to know oneself in new risk situation, allowing the strengthening of the individual identity.
- The **Option Society** (Poon, 1993; Gross, 1994) is characterized by an ever increasing choice of options in every dimension of an individuals life, for example in form of life concepts, forms of marriages, family structure, services and goods. A growing number of people are keen on just getting to know and taking advantage of the variety of options. This leads to a reduction of the weight of traditional norms and institutions. This trend to optionalization is driven by an increasing deregulation and individualisation (which were regarded as the main values of the past century).

These developments can be considered as Megatrends from which specific consumer trends can be derived. Focussing on leisure activities, the following trends can be regarded as important (Bieger, 2000):

MULTIOPTIONALISATION

Consumers want to maximize their options and try to keep them open and accessible as long as possible. This leads to the need for having all possible sport equipment on hand (most of the times in the car) and be flexible to easily access all possible sport infrastructure (mostly by car).

TIME EFFICIENCY

The modern society is going to be divided into

- a group of well educated employees, having – by means of the net economy - little time but enough income to spend;
- a group with not enough work and income but plenty of time (Opaschowski, 1997).

The average working time of employed people has been increasing, despite reduced legal working hours (vgl. CSFB for US). Since competition in the labour market is increasing, many people are either forced to work overtime or otherwise need a multijob portfolio to earn enough money. Additionally, with the rise of the female employment rate, the number of families with one person constantly at home (managing the household) is decreasing. Therefore, time constraints increase and many time consuming obligations need to be fulfilled within free time, thus reducing leisure time. The modern citizen is stuck between scarcity of money or scarcity of time (Opaschowski 1997). Therefore, for leisure activities, time efficiency is of growing importance.

SOFT INDIVIDUALISM

Modern people neither have enough time for themselves nor for their friends and relatives. In times of multioptionality relatives become less important than friends (Opaschowski, 1997). People therefore want to do something individual by their own and at the same time being together with their friends or a reference group (vgl. Horx, 1996). Places of attraction, where people can be together in homogenous groups and at the same time do things for themselves are getting increasingly important.

ACTIVITY INSTEAD OF RELAXING

In the age of the experience society everything that can be done and be experienced is growing in importance. Passive relaxation is „out“, an active experience is „in“.

SUMMARY

The trend towards multioptionality, time efficiency, soft individualism and activity leads to **diversified and complex, time flexible and very individual mobility patterns**. The average load of equipment that has to be transported is increasing. The concentration of activities on specific places will increase. It even can be hypothesized that the total amount of leisure mobility will be further increasing in the future. The need for flexible, convenient and individual transport will add to the importance of the private car. These changes in leisure needs will also increase the amount and the share of private cars for inter destination mobility.

4 Leisure needs and modal split

Different needs and also preconditions lead to different preferences regarding the choice of means of transportation. In a contingency analysis, based on data of a survey of 700 people in Switzerland, the degree of importance of different evoked criterias for the selection of transport means was evaluated. The research concept chosen was a **situational approach**, thus virtually putting the test persons in two quite diverse travel situations (Bieger & Laesser, 2001):

- one situation covered a **national/ professional** situation, having the means of transportation „car“ competing against „railway“,
- the other situation covered an **international and business/leisure** mixed situation, having the means of transportation „plane“ competing against „railway“.

Hereby, the actual decision behaviour has been compared to the predisposition (individually estimated importance before taking a decision in a specific situation), thus revealing the alleged and effective demand structure at the same time.

The study has showed a number of results (see figure 6):

- **Travelling time** is the only criteria, which allocates a high predispositional significance and a high degree of influence on situational decisions at the same time. It is thus a key decision factor, no matter if leisure or business was dominating.
- **Safety, flexibility** and **convenience** (number of changes and connections) have a high predispositive relevance but are put aside in the actual situational decision. Asking, why tourists are not using trains more frequently can be answered by the following interpretation: People assume that public land transport for leisure reason is safe, but neither flexible nor convenient (for example with regard to transporting bulky items). As long as this assumption is not sustainably disproved by personal experience, they stick to this expectation. Imprecisely and incompletely estimated **travel costs** with regard to using cars for example (in most cases only marginal costs are estimated; Laesser, 1996) reinforce this effect.
- **Relaxation / rest** and the **potential to dispose of time** are not valued highly before taking a trip but become more important once a mean of transport has been chosen.

Figure 7: *The significance of predispositive quality criteria and their influence on situational decision-making*

 Degree of influence on situational decision Predispositive Relevance of Quality Criteria (valuation before actual decision taking)	Relatively high	Relatively low
	Relatively high	Relatively low
Relatively high	I Travelling Time	II Safety Number of Changes Number of Connections/ Flexibility
Relatively low	III Relaxation/ Rest Productive Use of Time	IV Total Costs Familiarity

Source: Bieger & Laesser (2001)

It can be hypothesized that **time efficiency** and possibility to spend time productively is of major importance for the selection of transport means. Safety and convenience seem to be important but have a reduced influence in the specific situation. This also leads to the conclusion that there exist major differences between what people think that it is important for them and what in fact in a specific situation is of importance.

5 Traffic and its influence on life condition and leisure behaviour

Already in the early stages of leisure research the **influence of traffic on living conditions and thereby on leisure activities** had been discussed (Krippendorf, 1984 and 1986). From the development of settling structures in Switzerland it can be derived that good public transport attracts private households, with special emphasis on singles and double career couples without children.

On the other hand **increasing car traffic leads to a reduced attractiveness** and thus willingness to pay for **private living**:

- with regard to the evaluation of living conditions, **potential evasion of traffic noise** and **attractive public transport** are both **pull-factors**, i.e. attractive with regard to an alternative housing option. Therefore, in case there is or if there was an option for evasion, people move out to the suburbs or even peripheral regions (Laesser, 1996; Meyrat-Schlee, 1992).
- **Traffic noise significantly reduces housing rents.** The increase of traffic noise by 1 dBA reduces the rent for housing objects by an approximate average of 1.25%. Three hedonic price analysis for the cities of Basel (Pommerehne, 1988), Zurich (Iten, 1990) and Helsinki (Vainio, 1995) have shown similar results (with a slightly increased reability over point of time of the studies).

The leisure activities as well as the derived mobility structure of people living in peripheral areas differ from people living in the center of towns (Laesser & Bieger, 1999). Many people living in the peripheries own private houses with more and more increasing comfort. Market research shows a **tendency towards investments in living conditions at home**. In spite of earlier expectations from Krippendorf (1986) for example, a growing part of the population lives in beautiful environments and in good apartments or houses. They therefore spend an increasing part of their leisure time at home (vgl. Heinze & Kill 1997) and spend some of their active leisure time (doing sport) in the neighbourhood. There is also a tendency to spend vacations at home and to undertake day trips. This results in an increase of leisure traffic. The existence of vicious circle can be hypothesized: People move in the peripheries to get away from traffic externalities. Living outside the cities leisure activities often rely on car-based mobility, especially due to the individual mobility patterns and the decentralized origins. This leads to a further reduction of the attractiveness of the city centers and the places close to important roads.

If easily accessible, urban people more frequently rely on public transport. The average mobility is supposed to be smaller since a big variety of activities can be done close by in the towns.

A study by Fuhrer et al. (1993) shows at the example of the Swiss capital Bern, that the following **factors are influencing mobility**:

- Cosiness – feeling at home: who is feeling at ease at home like married people living in houses with gardens tend to show a reduced mobility
- Traffic : who lives besides a street with intense traffic travels bigger distances on the weekends
- Garden: who is able to shape his own garden is more likely to stay at home
- Floor: the more downstairs somebody lives the more likely he or she will stay at home on free days
- Meeting people: who travels on free days most likely wants to meet other people
- Car comfort: the better the comfort and cosiness of the individual's car the more likely it will travel by car and spend leisure time in the car.

It can therefore be hypothesized that the

- trend towards better living conditions at home,
- higher share of car owners,
- decentralisation of homes

will increase the need for leisure mobility

6 Field of problems and need for solutions

The leisure time activities and the leisure industry more and more has to rely on mobility. Since the time spent in cars or on trains further reduces the already tight leisure time, this development in a way is contraproductive. Mobility in form of traffic externalities also reduces the quality of many leisure activities like biking, walking, sightseeing etc.. One can hypothesize that these development will lead to a segregation into two main markets:

- **Option 1:** A market for **top leisure activities at top destination** for which individuals are ready to travel big distances;
- **Option 2:** **Leisure time at home** or in the immediate neighbourhood on the other hand

Additionally, there might be a market for leisure activities combined with transport. Example: entertaining forms of train travel or entertainment in cars.

This paper focuses on **potentials for the leisure industry**. Therefore concepts to limit mobility are not in the focus.

Conclusions to be drawn for the leisure industry at first sight might seem to be very simple:

- **Big (international) attractions** have to invest steadily to maintain their attractiveness and international competitiveness. International demand and willingness to pay for top attractions will provide the necessary financial power to do so, under one condition: There will be no major regulatory disturbance with regard to mobility (especially with regard to the pricing of mobility; an issue currently on the brink of political discussion).
- **Local attractions might experience a renaissance in demand**, as long as they can compete in regard of hygiene factors (e.g. minimal standards in comfort, safety, variety etc.). Attractions in metropolitan or urban areas are rather bound for success than the ones in peripheral regions: their basis for demand is larger and more specialized (which opens also the potential for niche products).
- **Mediocre leisure attractions at middle distance:** They will not necessarily lose market share in short term but might lose their ability to generate willingness to pay and therefore suffer reduced income in the medium term. In the long run they will lose their investment power though and - as a consequence - their attractiveness. The state as owner of the last resort will then have to decide whether to subsidize these attractions or not. Examples: Low quality ski resorts in pre alpine regions or low quality museums. They have to gain cost flexibility to serve demand when needed and save costs at the rest of the time as they will be struck by the phenomena of concentration on best suited times and places more than any other types of attractions.

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