

## Projektbericht

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# Understanding drive tourists – A typology of German classic car enthusiasts

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**Abstract:** In Germany, as well as in most western countries, the number of classic car owners is constantly rising. This clientele loves to utilize classic cars especially in the leisure and tourism context and therefore more and more specialized tour operator appear on the market. Based on those developments the research note at hands presents the first attempt to establish a target group segmentation of German classic car enthusiasts, to better understand their motivations and attitudes.

**Keywords:** drive tourism, Germany, typology, classic car

## 1 Introduction

For over a decade, scholars, such as Guiver, Lumsdon, Weston, and Ferguson (2007) and Gronau (2017), have outlined the large share of non-environmentally friendly transport modes in the context of leisure and tourism. *“Estimates for industrialized countries show that about half of all mobility (40 pkm/day/person) is for leisure-related purposes, out of this 70 %–75 % by car”* (Gössling, 2002). Although the plane is on the rise, when it comes to the main transport mode in the leisure and tourism context the individual motorized modes are still clearly the most important ones. Furthermore, we even see a shift towards more life-style orientated forms of individualized mobility, namely the heavy increase of classic cars, almost 100 % in less than 10 years or the growth of motorcycles of more than 300 % in the last 25 years (Kraftfahrtbundesamt, 2020a & 2020b). Holyoak et al. (2009) documented for example the shift in Australia, from a market dominated by tourists in transit – using the vehicle as the most convenient mode of transport between the origin and the destination – to one where the use of the vehicle was more central to the enjoyment of the trip. Putting it in other words: *“the major change in the global*

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*self-drive markets is a shift from the car as a form of least-cost transport towards the use a variety of self-driven vehicles that add value to the tourism experience*” (Carson et al. 2011). Both the high share of individualized modes of transportation as well as the ongoing trends towards more life-style-orientated forms contributes to the ongoing growth of drive tourism. Unfortunately, “*drive tourism remains an under-researched component of the wider tourism industry*” (Fyall, 2014).

Therefore, the contribution at hand will address the specifics and interests of a special drive tourist clientele, namely the one of German classic car enthusiasts. To better understand what drives the ongoing increase of drive tourism, a typology of this specific clientele will be developed. The results are based on a quantitative study in cooperation with individual classic car owner clubs organized under the umbrella of the DEUVET, the DAVC and the German Car Owner Association (ADAC) utilizing a cluster analysis.

Therefore, the main research goals of the study can be summarized as follows:

To what extent the clientele of German classic car enthusiasts is in line with the by Carson described target group using the individual transport mainly to add value to their tourism experience. How homogenous is the before mentioned clientele and finally is there a possibility to identify different target groups with the segment of German classic car enthusiasts? In the following a few preliminary results are presented.

## 2 German classic car enthusiasts through the lens of a hierarchical cluster analysis

### 2.1 Methodology of the study

The quantitative study was conducted as an online survey, inviting all 167 member clubs of the DEUVET (*confederation of classic vehicle clubs*), the DAVC (*German veteran automobile club*) and the corporative classic car club members of the ADAC (*German automotive association*; excluding clubs which are specialised only on utility vehicles).

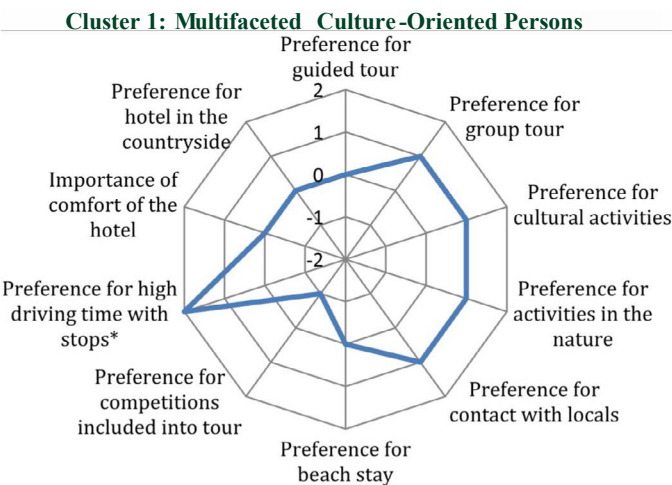
All associations were contacted electronically and asked to forward the link to the survey to their members. 245 correctly completed surveys are the basis of the following analysis. The questionnaire itself focused on measuring attitudes and interests with respect to their interest in classic cars and travelling of the specific clientele while utilising a 5-item-Likert-Scale. Furthermore, classic socio-demographic aspects like age, household size and household income were included to learn more about the identified target group of drive tourism.

A k-means cluster analysis of the 245 included cases resulted in 5 clusters, i. e. 5 subgroups of classic car tourist-types. The clusters take 28 variables into account, that were grouped into 10 aspects. Each aspect was evaluated on a scale of five (–2 to +2) looking at the contained variables (both/all variables were positive → +2/ all variables neutral and at least one variable positive → +1/ all variables neutral or same number of variables positive and negative → 0/ all variables neutral and at least one variable negative → –1/ all variables negative → –2). In the following, each cluster will be briefly presented.

## 2.2 Overview on the 5 Constructed Clusters

### 2.2.1 Cluster 1: Multifaceted Culture-Oriented Persons

The first identified cluster is entitled ‘Multifaceted Culture-Oriented Persons’ and is comprised of 61 interviewees. As the radar chart shows, these persons rather prefer a group tour and have no preference regarding the hotel or whether the activities are guided or not. Moreover, they are indifferent towards beach stays. In contrast, the multifaceted culture-oriented persons are rather interested in cultural activities, being in the nature and having some contact with locals. However, they are not strongly interested in one of these topics. Furthermore, these persons are rather uninterested in any kind of competitive elements during a classic car tour. They would like to drive very much with their classic car and make many stops at interesting places.



**Chart 1:** Preferences of multifaceted culture-oriented persons [\*=as opposed to preference for very high driving time without any other activities]

Cluster 2: Competition-Oriented Group Travellers.

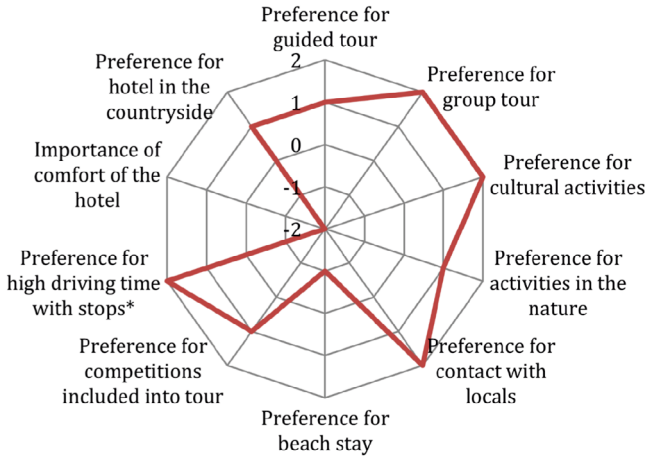


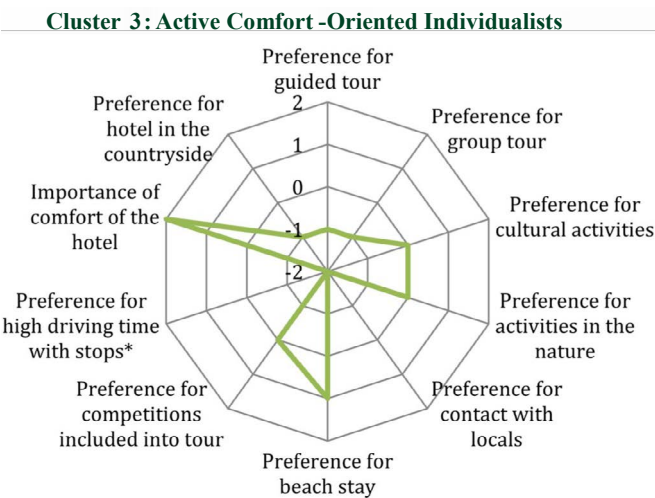
Chart 2: Preferences of competition-oriented group travelers [\*=as opposed to preference for very high driving time without any other activities]

2.2.2 Cluster 2 Competition-Oriented Group Travellers

The second cluster is entitled ‘Competition-Oriented Group Travellers’ and is comprised of 67 interviewees. In contrast to the persons belonging to the multifaceted culture-oriented persons, the competition-oriented group travellers are highly group oriented and also in favour of guided activities. Regarding the type of activities, they are very interested in cultural activities and contact with locals, followed by being rather interested in activities in nature. They are rather not interested in beach stays. Regarding the driving, the competition-oriented group travellers are strongly in favour of driving a lot and making several stops, and – in contrast to the multifaceted culture-oriented persons – they are also in favour of the inclusion of some competitive elements. The competition-oriented group travellers do not place any importance on the comfort of a hotel and would rather prefer hotels in the countryside.

2.2.3 Cluster 3 Active Comfort-Oriented Individualists

The third cluster discovered is the one that is comprised of the least interviewees: Only 20 persons belong to the group of “Active Comfort-Oriented Individualists”. The active comfort-oriented individualists are rather not interested in either guided or group tours. Moreover, they are indifferent towards cultural activities and activities in the nature. The active comfort-oriented individualists show interest in beach stays (rather interested) and in high driving time without any stops for activities (interested). The active comfort-oriented individualists are indifferent towards a possible rally character. Moreover, they are not interested in contact with locals and would rather prefer not to stay in a hotel in the countryside. The comfort of a hotel is very important for this type of travellers.



**Chart 3:** Preferences of active comfort-oriented individualists [\*=as opposed to preference for very high driving time without any other activities]

2.2.4 Cluster 4 Spontaneous Companionable Explorers

56 interviewees can be associated with the fourth cluster named ‘Spontaneous Companionable Explorers’. These persons are – like the competition-oriented group travellers – very interested in cultural activities and contact with locals and rather interested in activities in the nature. Furthermore, they are indifferent towards beach stays. In contrast to the competition-oriented group travellers,

the spontaneous companionable explorers are rather not interested in competitive elements to be included in a classic car tour and are furthermore not interested in guided activities. However, they are rather interested in group tours and high driving time with stops at interesting places. Moreover, they are – similarly to the competition-oriented group travellers – very interested in hotels in the countryside and the comfort of hotels is not important to them.

Cluster 4: Spontaneous Companionable Explorers

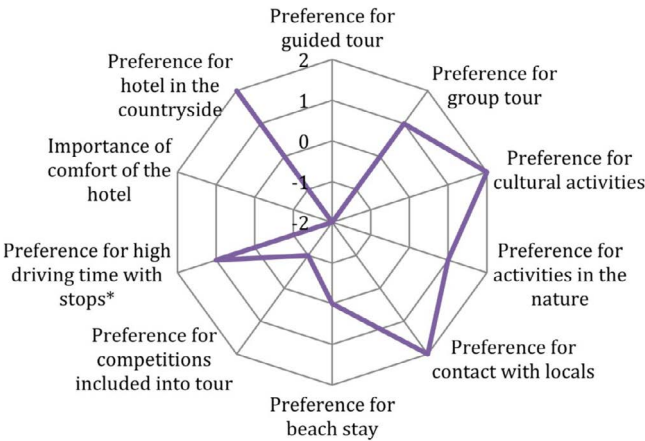
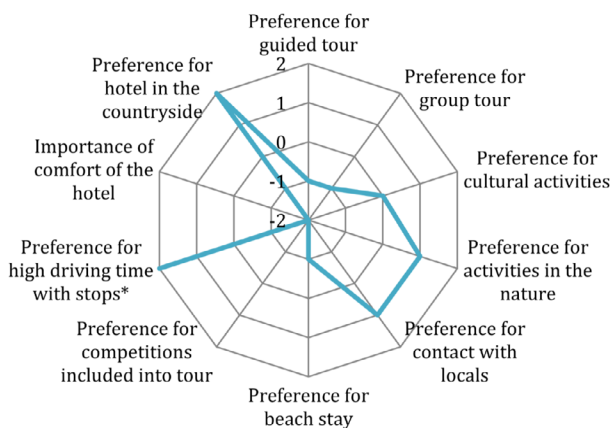


Chart 4: Preferences of spontaneous companionable explorers [\*=as opposed to preference for very high driving time without any other activities]

2.2.5 Cluster 5 Authenticity-Searching Nature-Oriented Individualists

The fifth and last cluster is titled ‘Authenticity-Searching Nature-Oriented Individualists’ and is comprised of 41 persons. These persons do rather not prefer guided and group travels and are not interested in any competitive elements. They are furthermore rather uninterested in beach stays and indifferent towards cultural activities. In contrast, they are – like the multifaceted culture-oriented persons – rather interested in activities in nature and contact with locals and interested in high driving times in combination with several stops. Regarding the hotel, the authenticity-searching nature-oriented individuals are highly interested in hotels in the countryside, and comfort is not important for them.

### Cluster 5: Authenticity -Searching Nature -Oriented Individualists.



**Chart 5:** Preferences of authenticity-searching nature-oriented individualists [\*=as opposed to preference for very high driving time without any other activities]

## 3 Conclusion

The first analysis of the presented data shows on the one hand a high homogeneity of the group when it comes to the character of their tours. Most German classic car enthusiasts do not favour a classic car tour with a full rally character (68.7%) but would like a classic car tour to use scenic secondary roads (90.2%) and to combine a high amount of driving time with many stops at interesting places (74%). These results are very much in line with the expectation that German classic car enthusiasts are a very good example for the by Carson et al. (2011) described modern self-drive tourist clientele, as they use their self-driven vehicles to add value to their tourism experience.

On the other hand, interviewees had very heterogenous opinions about the details and framework conditions of such an experience, underlining the high degree of individuality when it comes to this specific clientele. About using one car or several cars in a classic car tour, the question if a classic car tour would only be interesting with the own car or as well with rented cars, and whether some competitive elements should be included into a classic car tour, all these elements do highly vary. Moreover, the opinions regarding the question whether a perfectly restored car or a car with patina is more attractive also vary very much. When it comes to accommodation and activities in the context of classic car tours a high degree of heterogeneity has been identified as well. Regarding the hotel component of classic

car tours, it can be deduced from the analysis that ambience is rather more important than comfort for the interviewees and, that they are more inclined towards hotels in the countryside and small hotels with contact to the owners than towards centrally located city hotels. The population of the survey can be seen as active travellers, with a general positive attitude towards most travel activities, such as getting in contact with locals, discovering cities and trying new things. This is in concordance with the result that 64.2 % of the interviewees (rather) want to experience culture actively. Shopping and spending time at the beach was not important to most interviewees. All the afore mentioned preliminary results suggest that German classic car enthusiasts are a high spending, culturally and gastronomically interested, authenticity seeking clientele of rural tourists.

Further analysis of the data and a detailed comparison of the various clusters are next steps in the afore described project and will be the content of an upcoming publication.

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