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IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF RELOCATION ATTRIBUTES IN THE CAROLINA COASTAL REGION

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ABSTRACT

Domestic migration to the Carolina coastal region has increased dramatically between 2005 and 2009. This influx has spurred substantial increases in the demand for housing, support services, employment and infrastructure. The continued increase in such services is dependent upon on-going financial support which, in turn, is contingent upon the stability and/or continued growth of the population in this region. This study identifies the social and economic factors considered to be important by these in-migrants as well as their perceptions of how well these factors perform. In addition, the study addresses the relationship between community attachment and individual migration intent. The results suggest that there are some opportunities for improving the region's attractiveness for different age groups. Implications and concerns with respect to residential stabilization are discussed.

Keywords. Domestic in-migration, Carolina coastal region, community attachment, importance performance analysis

INTRODUCTION

Migration has occurred since the dawn of animal existence. Human beings have followed an extremely simple proposition since their beginning: "If life is better there than here, people will tend to leave here and go there" (Osborne, 2003: 2).

According to a 2007 CNN Fortune Magazine survey of all states in the US, the states of North Carolina and South Carolina consistently remain two of the most attractive places to retire in the country. Both states have seen some in-migration directed from Florida (Mason, 2008), and South Carolina was the state of choice for domestic migration in the U.S. from 2000 through 2004 (Perry, 2008).

Attracting and retaining in-migrants to the South Carolina coastal area is extremely important for its economy. In-migration tends to encourage improvements in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, utilities and disposal systems. The same can be said for growth in social aspects such as schools, fire protection, law enforcement and government representation. Moreover, retired in-migrants provide positive support for the area's economy due to their substantial real estate purchasing power in the Carolinas. A number of housing units and developments have been constructed primarily to accommodate this in-migrant retiree group (McLean, 1998). Such developments and other positive changes have been made under the assumption that in-migrants will remain in the area, continue to utilize the improvements provided and support them through their tax dollars.

If such assumptions prove to be incorrect, the area, its infrastructure and its remaining inhabitants will

be affected adversely. Current and future residents, including lawmakers and municipal government entities, should be aware of, and give attention to, residential stabilization in the areas they represent. Because these areas rely on tax revenues to support existing infrastructure as well as continued growth, it is important to sustain satisfaction among these in-migrants once they have moved to the area. These people will be much more likely to remain in the area if they continue to believe that they have made a good relocation choice; if not, they will leave in search of a better place that more closely suits their needs and desires. These premises point to an important need to identify and understand the factors that these people consider to be important when deciding to make a move from their current residence to the Coastal Carolinas. Further, it is also important to discover the degree to which they are satisfied with their choice.

By studying the relocation priorities of those who have moved to the Carolina Coast, we can determine the best ways to deploy resources to promote increases in the number of people choosing this region.

This research was guided by the following objectives: (1) to identify relocation priorities of Carolina Coast in-migrants, (2) to discover improvement opportunities utilizing Importance-Performance Analysis, (3) to assess the gap differences and (4) to examine the impact of community attachment on migration intent.

IN-MIGRATION TRENDS IN COASTAL CAROLINA

The 2000 U.S. Census reports that 6.8 million people, or 2.5% of the population, moved from one state to another between 1999 and 2000. Regional relocation favored people from the Northeastern US moving to the South. The Southern states experienced a population growth of 227,000 in one year making it the region with the highest in-migration level in the US (Schachter, 2001).

A recent survey of those moving from one state to another (Perry, 2006) revealed that a majority was from the Northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut) as well as from the region around the Great Lakes. The top U.S. domestic migration destinations identified in this study included Florida, Arizona and Nevada. The southeast region had respectable representation, taking six of the top ten relocation destination positions reported in Census study. Among those rankings, North Carolina placed fifth, and South Carolina placed eighth (Perry, 2006).

Mason (2008) also reported that people who relocate preferred coastal cities when settling in the Carolinas. Among the 5,000 people surveyed in his study, 23% chose coastal regions, 18% chose lake areas and 13% chose foothills or mountain areas as their preferred relocation destination. This finding helps to explain why the coastal regions of each state account for a large portion of the population in those states. As of 2007, the North Carolina coast was found to host 23.3% of its inhabitants while the South Carolina coastal region was shown to be home to an astounding 41.7% of state residents (US Census, 2009). In North Carolina, the city of Wilmington ranked third for relocation destinations among those surveyed. In South Carolina, in-migrants selected Myrtle Beach as their number one relocation destination. Cities and towns around the Charleston area such as Summerville, Mt. Pleasant as well as Charleston itself also ranked among the top ten choices by in-migrants. In this particular study, 77% of the respondents were over 30 years of age (37% over 50, 40% between the ages of 30 and 49). Most of these respondents were well educated (with 77% having at least a college degree).

The study estimated that in-migration to both North and South Carolina is expected to continue to increase at a rate of approximately 1% per year over the next ten years. If this estimate turns out to be correct, this trend would double the 2005 population of each state (Mason, 2008).

While certainly astounding, such speculation appears to be realistic given the fact that the net population of North Carolina grew by over one million people from 2000 to 2007 while the population of South Carolina grew by nearly 400,000 people in the same time period. It is estimated that the population of North Carolina could grow by over 4 million people(51%) by 2030 while South Carolina can expect to see growth of over 1.1 million (28%) in the same time frame (Mason, 2008).

MOTIVATIONS FOR RELOCATION

Although it has been said casually that money may be directly associated with human happiness, extensive research and commentary suggest that the determinants of human happiness are far more involved than merely monetary wealth. Notably, economists and psychologists are often unable to confirm a persuasive tie between material prosperity and happiness (Osborne, 2003).

Although in most areas of the world an improved standard of living is a primary motivator for migration, such is not the case for domestic US migration. Personal income does not appear to impact domestic migration nor does the opportunity to live in a state with a higher standard of living. Moreover, neither health care, crime levels or political freedom have any significant impact on reasons for migration (Osborne, 2003).

The choice to relocate to a new area is a decision that begs for more research as does the assessment of both positive and negative factors associated with permanently relocating to a specific region and state (Wardwell & Gilchrist, 1987). Considerable empirical evidence has accumulated to support a wide range of ecological, economic, social and psychological factors that have been shown to be determinants of the migration decision (Murdock et al., 1984; Williams & Jobs, 1990).

Most social scientists agree that there is a combination of economic and noneconomic reasons for moving that differ depending on the time period and the age of the movers (Schachter, 2001).

Economic motivations

Economists believe that people relocate from areas of low economic opportunity to areas with more promising economic outlooks (Schachter, 2001). This motivation holds true for those who are still in the workforce. Economic factors consistently appear as the most powerful predictors of migration for all ages in the US in most of studies (Murdock, Parpia, Hwang & Hamm, 1984). In recent years, more studies have found that the effects of such economic factors seem to be decreasing while socioeconomic and other non-economic factors have increased in importance.

Employment is a principal economic motivator for domestic relocation in many self –reported studies (Schachter, 2001; Williams & Jobs, 1990). This employment motivator has varying impact depending upon the mover’s financial standing as well as his/her level of education (*U.S. News & World Report*, 2008). For example, 12% of the low-income respondents to the 2000 census survey (Schachter, 2003) reported relocating for work-related reasons compared to 17% of higher income movers. In addition, people with higher education levels were shown to be far more likely to move long distances and to move for employment reasons than those with lesser schooling. This finding is supported by the 2000 US Census (Schachter, 2001) which reported that only 14% of high school graduates moved for employment reasons compared to 25% of those with a bachelor’s degree and 28% of those with a master’s degree or higher. These findings indicate that education is positively correlated with a person’s likelihood of relocating.

Other major economic motivators include moderate tax rates (McLean & Roper, 2000; McLean, 1998), moderate housing costs (McLean, 1998; Rossi & Shlay, 1982), and low cost of living (McLean, 1998; Mason, 2008; *U.S. News & World Report*, 2008). Respondents in Mason's (2008) study rated these economic factors as having a 50 to 60% impact on their relocation choice. Energy efficiency was also included in *U.S. News & World Report* survey (2008) as another economic factor that influenced retirement relocation choice. The Coastal Carolinas are known to have relatively lower tax rates for permanent residents as well as lower construction costs in comparison to such areas as the Southwestern and Northeastern United States. These findings imply that retirement in this region can include an affordable, possibly more luxurious, home as well as a lower tax burden for those individuals who are no longer earning a sizable regular income.

Non-economic (personal) factors

Economic factors that once were the dominant determinants of migration have diminished in importance in recent decades, particularly for elderly migrants (Long & Hansen, 1979; Murdock et al., 1984) while quality of life (Williams & Jobs, 1990), availability of desired amenities and similar noneconomic factors have increased in importance for all age groups (Beale, 1977; Heaton et al., 1981; Long & Hansen, 1979; Zelinsky, 1977). Support for these noneconomic effects as reasons for migration has been found in several regions of the US (Fuguitt & Beale, 1978; Sofranko & Williams, 1980).

Family has also been shown to be a strong motivator for relocation (Williams & McMillan, 1983). The 2000 U.S. Census Survey shows that the family motivator is stronger for those in poor demographic groups than for non-poor groups. Additionally, those with less education are more likely to move for family reasons than those who possess a higher education. Thirty-one percent of high school graduates reported that they would move for family reasons as compared to 22% of college graduates (Schachter, 2001).

Other noneconomic motivators include climate and weather, recreational/leisure and cultural activities (Dillman, 1979) as well as different life style and community factors (Catton, 1980; Leopold, 1949; Schumacher, 1973). A survey of people who moved to South Carolina indicated that the main factor influencing their decision to relocate to the area were climate-related (McLean, 1998). Nearly 100% of 5,000 movers to the Carolinas cited the scenic beauty and the climate as important reasons for relocation (Mason, 2008). *U.S. News & World Report* (2008) also stated that climate made the Coastal Carolinas very attractive to those retirees coming from northeastern regions to play golf. The warm climates provide more extensive options for outdoor activities in the area, including the abundant availability of golf facilities. Golf courses are highly concentrated in Coastal Carolina cities. The Grand Strand area (coastal communities around Myrtle Beach) alone hosts more than 100 golf courses (*Grand Strand Living*, 2010). Other possible non-economic reasons for choosing Coastal cities include recreational and cultural opportunities, amenities (Forsythe, 1980), political outlook, medical accessibility, education, entertainment and safety of the area in general (Mason, 2008; *U.S. News & World Report*, 2008).

Upon retirement, some may wish to escape from the atmosphere where they have spent their working life, because they tend to associate that area with their job-related stress levels and demanding schedules. Having such strong reminders of their work life nearby may not permit these retirees to relax mentally and enjoy the retirement lifestyle that they have worked for so many years to attain (McLean, 1998). A recent survey from *U.S. News & World Report* (2008) indicated that the majority of those making the big move are in search of small-town life in order to lower the stress level and lessen the chaos in their lives. Other studies of

South Carolina immigrants, on the other hand, have found no significant relationship between the decision to relocate and factors such as closeness to family and friends, good health care or security (McLean, 1998).

IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Community attachment has been shown to play a critical role in an area's economic growth and well-being. In a five-year study of 26 communities, Gallup found that residents' attachment level had a significant correlation with an area's GDP growth (Myrtle Beach Soul of Community, 2008). Community attachment has been found to have a direct influence on the decision to migrate (Liao, 2001). The concept of community attachment can be explained using two broad theories. The first theory is known as the linear development model. This perspective is based on the idea that the population and density of an area directly influence inhabitants' social behavior. The other relevant theory, which is far more widely accepted, is the systematic model. This theory says that, although somewhat influenced by society as a whole, the community is a complex system of interactions between friends, kinships and other associations. This sense of community attachment is perpetuated as new generations and new residents are brought into the fold and assimilated (Theodori, 2004).

Community attachment can be influenced by length of residence, home ownership, age, income, level of education among other factors (Theodori, 2004). Length of residence has been shown to have a strong influence on reduced geographic mobility. This notion can be attributed to findings that indicate that the length of residence plays a far more important role in assimilation into the social fabric than population size, density, social class or stage of life. Although adjustments occur, this phenomenon holds true regardless of age. For younger residents, attachment is low at first and then increases quickly whereas with older people attachment begins at a relatively high level but increases occur more slowly (Theodori, 2004). Regardless of the level of community involvement and attachment, people from highly mobile societies are prepared to leave the community if conditions fall short of their immediate needs and aspirations (Fernandez & Dillman, 1979). Overall, identification with the community along with community satisfaction are directly associated with mobility (Fernandez & Dillman, 1979). The sense of having a real home or a strong community attachment reduces migration intent (Liao, 2001). Therefore, we hypothesize that the more community attachment the in-migrant experiences, the less likely he/she will be to leave the area.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire development

In order to assess in-migrants' sense of importance of economic and noneconomic (i.e., personal and social) factors and the corresponding satisfaction levels of these same factors, a five-point Likert scale survey was designed. This survey was developed based on the literature reviews of economic and noneconomic factors as well as community attachment items from the Soul of the Community Survey (SOTC) developed by Gallup. In its development of this survey, Gallup identified several factors that drive a person's loyalty to, and passion for, his/her area. This Gallup survey has been widely used for other area studies such as the Myrtle Beach Soul of the Community Survey (MBSCR, 2008). Similarly, the current study has drawn and adapted several items from the Gallup survey as well.

This study's survey began with 14 standard demographic questions. These questions were followed by

43 questions under the heading “How important was each of the following factors to your decision to relocate?” This section was followed by 45 items listed under the heading “How would you rate your experience with each of these factors since you relocated?” The survey ended with 9 affective questions regarding community attachment and 2 intention-to-stay questions (Theodori, 2004).

A pilot survey was distributed to three residential areas in Coastal Myrtle Beach, SC, and 37 of these surveys were returned. Initial analysis identified several irrelevant variables; consequently, these variables were removed from the subsequent survey.

Data Collection

The final survey was constructed as an internet webpage-based document (using SNAP software). Because it is extremely difficult to obtain exhaustive lists of everyone who has relocated to the Coastal Carolinas, data were collected using convenience sampling. An e-mail survey was sent to a list of email addresses of individuals who had relocated to the Carolina coast in the past 5 years. This list was obtained from the Center for Carolina Living (Mason, 2008). The survey was also posted as a web link on the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce web site for a period of one month as well as being distributed electronically to faculty, staff and students of the local university located in Conway, SC, which is located only 10 miles away from the South Carolina coast. A total of 269 surveys were returned and analyzed, and the results were recorded.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, paired t-test, IPA, and multiple regressions were conducted using SPSS 15.0 software. In our survey of factors associated with relocation to the Carolinas, people were first asked how important certain factors were in the decision to relocate, and then post-experience satisfaction was measured. Importance and satisfaction scores were paired and t-tests were performed on all relocation priority items. All insignificant items were dropped from the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) of relocation factors. IPA is a simple and useful technique used by market researchers (Abalo, Varela & Manzano, 2007). This technique is based on the premise that satisfaction is a result of a preference for some object or service and judgments of its preference (Martilla & James, 1977; Myers & Alpert, 1968). The results of IPA can help city planners and marketers to understand the most important attributes on which they should focus and how those target attributes could be improved (Mullins & Spetich, 1987).

Community attachment items used in our survey were adapted from Theodori (2004), and they were regressed on the average of intention to migrate scores. The multiple regression analysis examined to what extent community attachment items accounted for the likelihood of migration.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographics

The most appropriate sample for this study would have closely resembled the population of Carolina coast in-migrants for all times; however, such an ideal sample was unobtainable. The demographic profile of our sample (Table 1) nearly equally represents gender (48.3% male vs. 50.6% female), age (55.2% less than 47 years old vs. 44.8% older than 47) and marital status (56% married vs. 44% single). Duration in the current

residence was also equally distributed as about half (54.8 %) of the respondents had lived in their respective communities for less than 3 years while the other half (44.5%) had residency of 4 years or longer.

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE (N=269)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	126	48.3
Female	132	50.6
Age		
18 - 27	79	30.3
28 - 37	25	9.6
38 - 47	40	15.3
48 - 57	58	22.2
58 - 67	53	20.3
68+	4	1.5
Marital Status		
Single	94	36.0
Married	145	55.6
Widowed	4	1.5
Divorced	15	5.7
Separated	1	0.4
Education Level		
High School Graduate	65	24.9
Two Year College Degree	42	16.1
Four Year College Degree	89	34.1
Graduate Degree	49	18.8
PhD.	13	5.0
Employment		
Unemployed-Seeking Work	24	9.2
Unemployed - Not Seeking Work	19	7.3
Employed Part-time	57	21.8
Employed Full time	110	42.1
Retired	47	18.0
Makeup of Household		
Respondent Only	89	34.1
Respondent and Spouse	98	37.5
Respondent and Children	8	3.1
Respondent, Spouse and Children	51	19.5
Respondent and Parents	12	4.6
Total Household Income		
Under \$30,000	46	17.6
\$31,000 to \$45,000	27	10.3
46,000 to \$60,000	22	8.4
61,000 to \$75,000	31	11.9
76,000 to \$90,000	33	12.6
91,000 to \$105,000	27	10.3
\$106,000 or above	61	23.4
Years Lived in Current Community		
Less than 1 year	37	14.2
1 - 3 years	106	40.6
4 - 6 years	62	23.8
7 - 9 years	11	4.2
10 years	43	16.5

In our sample, a representative respondent had a 4-year college or higher degree (58%) and was employed to some extent (64%) – either full- or part- time. The household makeup was predominantly “respondent and spouse” (37.5%) followed by “respondent only” (34%). The household income of the sample

was fairly well distributed on a spectrum tending toward higher income levels than the national average (57% were over \$61,000). Moreover, it is apparent that the sample was skewed toward the higher income group because 23.4% of respondents were at the extreme end of the income spectrum (\$106,000 or above).

IMPORTANCE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Respondents rated weather and nature related items (temperature, climate, proximity to seashore) as most important determinants for moving to the Coastal region, followed by cost of living, housing (price, market, options, quality and density) and social opportunities. At the bottom of the list were water sports, shows and golf. Although Coastal Carolinas are known for golf, the movers in this sample apparently did not choose the area primarily for the golfing opportunities it offers.

Importance and satisfaction scores of each item were paired for t-tests. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, t-values, and significance of paired t-tests of 36 items.

Thirteen pair means showed no significant differences at the 0.05 level; therefore, they were discarded from later IPA grid. These excluded items included temperature, climate, relaxing environment, ease of living in the community, friendliness of community, social opportunities, quality of housing construction, medical services, housing density, water quality, waste water and sewer services, quality of primary schools and road availability and condition.

TABLE 2. RESULTS OF PAIRED T-TESTS

	Item description	Mean	S D.	T-Value	df	Sig.
Pair 1	Tax Rates	-0.193	1.495	-1.972	232	0.050*
Pair 2	Cost of Living	0.333	1.450	3.495	230	0.001***
Pair 3	Wages	0.328	1.697	2.921	228	0.004**
Pair 4	Employment Opportunities	0.569	1.658	5.227	231	0.000***
Pair 5	Law Enforcement	-0.223	1.399	-2.434	232	0.016*
Pair 6	Fire Department	-0.587	1.321	-6.737	229	0.000***
Pair 7	Shopping	-0.513	1.279	-6.108	231	0.000***
Pair 8	Restaurants	-0.538	1.187	-6.941	233	0.000***
Pair 9	Home and Personal Services	-0.420	1.234	-5.172	230	0.000***
Pair 10	Medical Services	-0.004	1.478	-0.044	232	0.965
Pair 11	Financial Services (banks, credit unions, etc.)	-0.509	1.316	-5.839	227	0.000***
Pair 12	Road Availability and Condition	0.104	1.468	1.078	229	0.282
Pair 13	Water Quality	-0.117	1.462	-1.215	230	0.226
Pair 14	Air Quality	-0.203	1.226	-2.523	230	0.012*
Pair 15	Quality of Housing Construction	0.091	1.324	1.044	230	0.298
Pair 16	Housing Density	-0.030	1.296	-0.356	229	0.722
Pair 17	Waste Water and Sewer Services	-0.137	1.228	-1.676	226	0.095
Pair 18	Quality of Primary Schools	0.018	1.433	0.185	226	0.853
Pair 19	Shows	-0.529	1.267	-6.288	226	0.000***

Pair 20	Climate	0.056	1.087	0.783	232	0.434
Pair 21	Temperature	0.039	1.054	0.561	231	0.576
Pair 22	Close Proximity to Seashore	-0.247	1.085	-3.455	230	0.001**
Pair 23	Avoidance of Density/Congestion	0.217	1.446	2.279	229	0.024*
Pair 24	Housing Prices	0.297	1.323	3.423	231	0.001**
Pair 25	Variety of Housing Options	-0.185	1.145	-2.435	226	0.016*
Pair 26	Golf	-0.826	1.139	-11.000	229	0.000***
Pair 27	Water Sports (surfing, water skiing, boating, etc.)	-0.504	1.218	-6.282	229	0.000***
Pair 28	Individual sports (tennis, bicycling, running, etc.)	-0.562	1.282	-6.694	232	0.000***
Pair 29	Friendliness of Community	0.070	1.108	0.953	229	0.342
Pair 30	Diversity of area	-0.169	1.255	-2.044	230	0.042*
Pair 31	Relaxing environment	0.009	1.167	0.112	232	0.911
Pair 32	Social opportunities	-0.100	1.293	-1.170	230	0.243
Pair 33	Safety of the Community	0.322	1.377	3.544	229	0.000***
Pair 34	Overall feeling of happiness	0.199	1.235	2.451	230	0.015*
Pair 35	Reduction of stress	0.183	1.272	2.178	229	0.030*
Pair 36	Ease of living in the community	0.035	1.314	0.403	227	0.687

Note: Positive mean shows importance score exceeds satisfaction score. Negative mean shows satisfaction score exceeds importance score. Non-significant items are shared. These items are at *pro quo* status, meaning expectations coincide with the performance.

The first part of Table 2 shows 8 underperforming items with which the respondents were dissatisfied. In general, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction gap was more salient for economic issues (employment opportunities, cost of living, housing prices, and wages) than for non-economic issues (safety, overall happiness, density/congestion, stress). This finding could be attributed to the current economic climate that the US is facing. Respondents indicated they were least satisfied with employment opportunities ($\bar{X}_S=2.75$) and wages ($\bar{X}_S=2.88$).

The Carolinas are known for their lower cost of living and price of housing. However, the data indicate that those who had moved to the area did not perceive these economic advantages to be true. The hypothesized expectation was not supported as the both items underperformed according to the respondents' perceptions (Cost of living: $\bar{X}_I=3.92$ vs. $\bar{X}_S=3.54$, housing price: $\bar{X}_I=3.88$ vs. $\bar{X}_S=3.53$)

Area traffic congestion was another point of dissatisfaction identified by the respondents. Although plans are in the works for improvements to roadways and traffic flow in the Myrtle Beach area, traffic in some areas can pose a significant problem, especially during the peak summer family vacation months.

Figure 1 presents statistically significant pairs on the importance-performance grid. These 23 items represent lack of congruence between in-migrants' pre-arrival expectations and their post-migration satisfaction in the area. In-migrants identified several items that did not meet their expectations. The most pressing issues identified included the cost of living, housing prices and density/congestion. These issues point to a pressing need for attention and improvement in the short term. Other items presenting opportunities for further

improvements included safety of the communities, diversity and housing options. The study also suggests that coastal cities should consider the plausibility of improving tax rates, law enforcement, employment opportunities and wages.

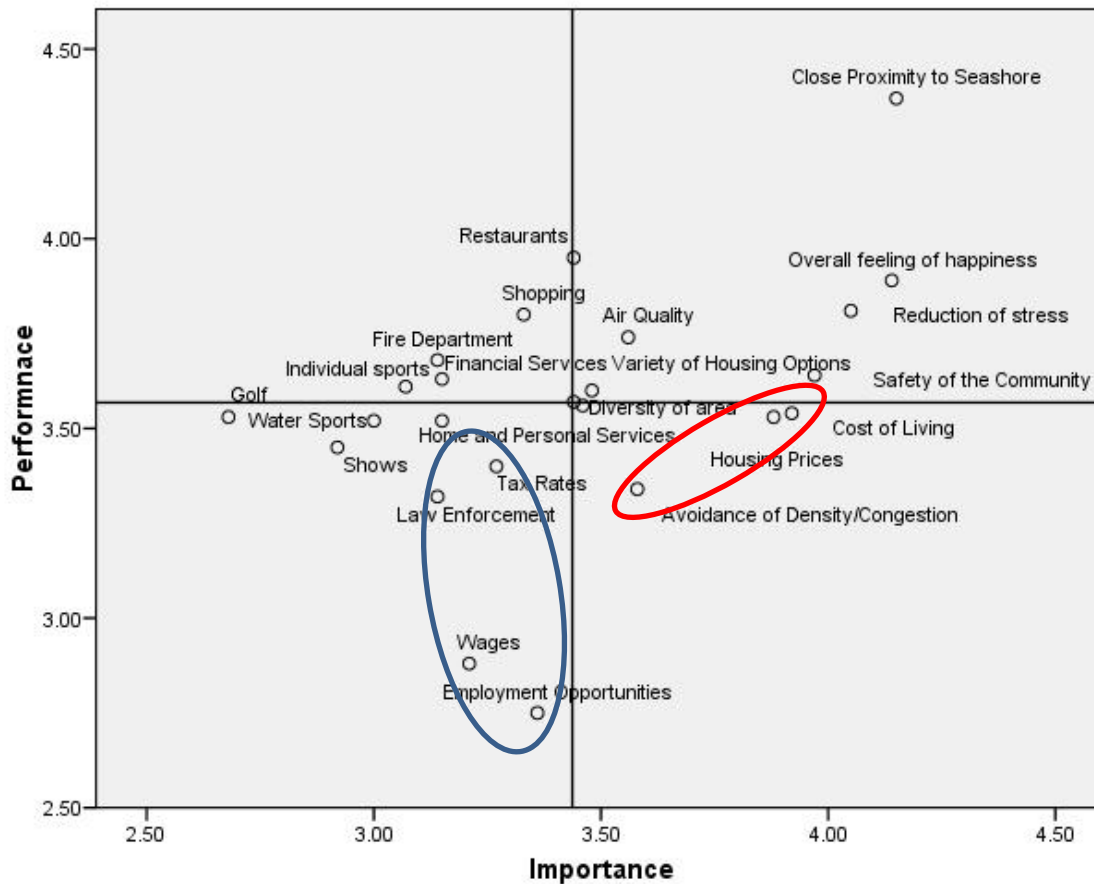
REGRESSION ANALYSIS: IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Two regression analyses were conducted to measure the impact of community attachment on migration intent and overall happiness in the current community. We calculated the average of community attachment items and intention to stay items. The community attachment mean was 3.44 (SD=0.79), the intention to stay mean was 3.24 (SD=1.00) and the overall happiness mean was 3.99 (SD = 1.07). The *Cronbach's alpha* of 9 community attachment items was .93.

The result suggests that community attachment explains 43% of variations in intention to stay and the relation was significant at the .0001 level. The regression model we used can be expressed as: Intention to Stay = .83 (Community Attachment) + .38. The coefficient was significant at 0.0001 level ($t = 12.34$).

The data suggest that community attachment is significantly correlated with the overall happiness. Community attachment explained 41% of variance in overall happiness since moving to the Carolina Coast ($r^2=.41$, $p<.0001$). This regression model can be expressed as: Overall Happiness = .85 (Community Attachment) + 1.03. The beta coefficient was significant at 0.0001 level ($t = 11.41$).

FIGURE 1. IMPORTANCE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS GRID



Note: Mid-points are

mean of all 23 items: importance mean = 3.44, performance mean = 3.57

COMPARISON ANALYSIS OF TWO AGE GROUPS

Burger (1971) proposed the idea that multiple realities exist for different social categories. Economic consideration might be important for some groups while quality-of-life or other factors are exclusively important to others. Such differences could be associated with the age of migrants to the Coastal Carolina Area. There were two age groups that showed obvious differences from many perspectives. These were the 18-27 age group and the 57-68 age group. These groups could be labeled as “working group” and “retired group.” To compare and contrast these two age groups, we conducted independent t-tests. The descriptive statistics on these two groups are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF TWO AGE GROUPS

Gender	Younger Group (18 -27)		Older Group (58 -67)	
	Frequency (N=77)	Percent	Frequency (N=53)	Percent
Male	35	45.5	35	66

Female	42	54.5	18	34
Marital Status	Frequency (N=72)	Percent	Frequency (N=53)	Percent
Single	72	93.5	4	7.5
Married	5	6.5	44	83
Widowed	0	0	1	1.9
Divorced	0	0	3	5.7
Separated	0	0	1	1.9
Education	Frequency (N=78)	Percent	Frequency (N=52)	Percent
High School Graduate	0	0	7	13.5
Two Year College Degree	20	25.6	8	15.4
Four Year College Degree	14	17.9	10	19.2
Graduate Degree	43	55.1	21	40.4
PhD.	1	1.3	6	11.5
Employment	Frequency (N=78)	Percent	Frequency (N=53)	Percent
Unemployed-Seeking Work	9	11.5	0	0
Unemployed - Not Seeking Work	16	20.5	1	1.9
Employed Part-time	37	47.4	7	13.2
Employed Full time	16	20.5	17	32.1
Retired	0	0	28	52.8
Makeup of Household	Frequency (N=77)	Percent	Frequency (N=53)	Percent
Respondent Only	62	80.5	6	11.3
Respondent and Spouse	4	5.2	44	83
Respondent and Children	2	2.6	0	0
Respondent, Spouse and Children	1	1.3	1	1.9
Respondent and Parents	8	10.4	2	3.8
Total Household Income	Frequency (N=74)	Percent	Frequency (N=47)	Percent
Under \$30,000	39	52.7	4	8.5
\$31,000 to \$45,000	5	6.8	3	6.5
46,000 to \$60,000	1	1.4	7	14.9
61,000 to \$75,000	4	5.4	3	6.4
76,000 to \$90,000	5	6.8	9	19.1
91,000 to \$105,000	10	13.5	4	8.5
\$106,000 or above	10	13.5	17	36.2

Table 3 shows that there are differences in many aspects between the two groups. For example, 92% of the younger residents were single whereas 83% of older residents were not. Both groups were relatively well educated, but the younger group held mostly 4-year degrees whereas in the older group, 50% had a graduate degree or above. The younger group had a lower household income with 50% under \$30,000, while the older group had a majority of households with incomes over \$60,000.

A series of independent t-tests were conducted on the overall measures for the two age groups. Analysis indicated that the older group was happier (mean=4.63) than younger group (mean = 3.74) since relocating. The same can be said of overall satisfaction (older group mean = 4.17 vs. younger group mean = 3.62) as well as community attachment (older group mean = 3.85 vs. younger group mean = 3.28). The older group was more likely to remain in the community (mean = 4.1) than younger residents were (mean = 2.93). Table 4 presents summary statistics of these t-tests.

The two groups showed significant statistical differences in their opinions of the importance and performance of several factors as well. These included the tax rate, wages, employment opportunities, law enforcement and fire department effectiveness, quality and availability of medical services, quality of housing construction, housing density, waste water and sewer services, quality of schools, avoidance of congestion and ease of living in the community. When we placed these items on the Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) grids (Figure 2) side by side, it was clear that the two groups had very different overall opinions regarding their relocation priorities. The lower left quadrant indicates low importance/low performance. This quadrant was

where a majority of the 18–27 age group factors were located. The exact opposite was true for the 58-67

TABLE 4. INDEPENDENT T-TESTS ON OVERALL MEASURES OF TWO AGE GROUPS

	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig
Community Attachment			3.86	.000***
18-27	3.28	.74		
58-67	3.85	.68		
Overall Satisfaction			3.10	.002**
18-27	3.62	.83		
58-67	4.17	.95		
Overall Happiness			6.17	.000***
18-27	3.74	.90		
58-67	4.63	.60		
Intention to Stay			7.33	.000***
18-27	2.93	.80		
58-67	4.10	.75		

*** significant at the 0.0001 level, ** significant at the 0.001 level

age group. A majority of this group’s opinions were located in the high importance/high performance upper right quadrant.

The critical factors or high importance/low performance factors for 18-27 year olds included employment opportunities, quality of schools, relaxing environment, wages and cost of living. For the 58–67 year olds, critical factors included density/congestion, diversity, home and personal services, variety of housing and cost of living. The one factor common to both groups was the cost of living.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As emphasized by *CNN Money.com*, many baby boomers desire a retirement spot with close proximity to a body of water, which is a big selling point for the coastal Carolinas. In addition, *The Sun News* (2009) stated that the ten reasons for a resident of the Grand Strand to be happy to live here included the ocean, great weather, attractive location to all, many activities and festivals, fresh seafood, special purchase deals for locals, financial security and a great buying opportunity (Rodriguez, 2009).

Consistent with the extant literature surveyed, this current study found that in-migrants are very happy with the weather as well as the close proximity to the seashore. These are, after all, the most obvious attractions for most people visiting or relocating to the Carolina coastal area.

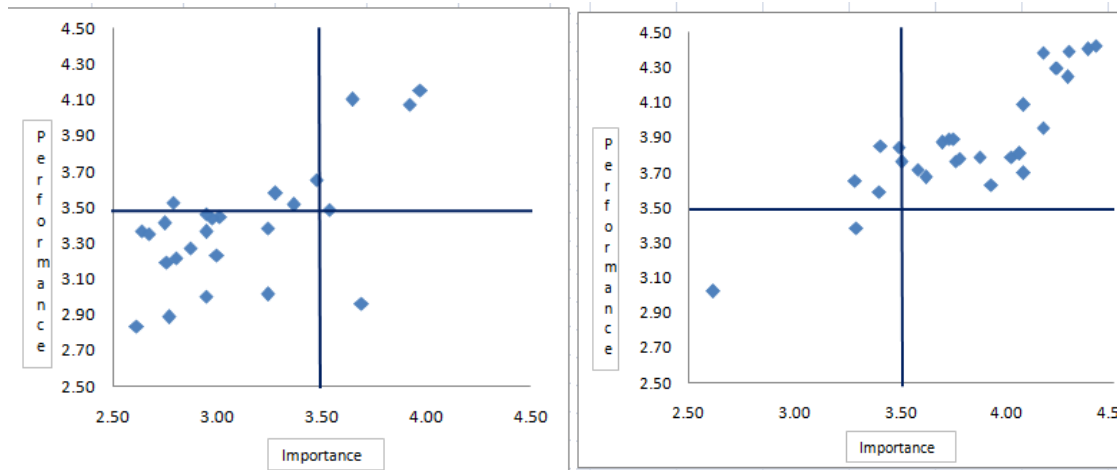
However, results from the current study suggest that there is also another critical factor for in-migrants that has been neglected in previous research – the cost of living. Participants across the different age groups included in the study deemed cost of living as both important and unsatisfactory. Although the study did show that people over 58 years of age are happy with, or, at the very least unconcerned with, factors such as taxes, wages, police departments, fire departments, etc., the same cannot be said for the cost of living. This finding

represents a call for change. In order to make conditions more

FIGURE 2. COMPARISON OF RELOCATION PRIORITY IPA FOR TWO AGE GROUPS

18-27 year age group

58-67 year age group



conducive for in-migrants to remain in this area and to attract new ones, it may be necessary to close the gap between the actual cost of living and the perceived cost of living. This problem may be improved if policy makers and business owners consider changes such as tax reductions, locals' discounts, and locals' specials during tourist seasons, advertising the cost of living differences between the Carolina coast and other destinations, among other options.

Unfortunately, the state of South Carolina recently increased its sales tax from 5% to 6% in 2007. Additionally, some counties charge additional taxes which serve to increase consumers' total tax burden. The average combined city and county rate in North Carolina is 7.8%, and in South Carolina, it is 7.05% as of May 2010.

To a lesser, but still significant, degree other factors such as wages, employment opportunities, density, diversity, housing options and school quality offer opportunities for improvement. These factors are particularly important to young families and singles, because typically they plan to work and raise children after moving to the area. Policy makers should focus on improving wage equity among various demographic groups. Future studies should identify those areas where people sense the most congestion in the communities of the Carolina coast and seek creative remedies.

Results of our study suggest that it would be prudent for policy makers to study carefully the qualities of high performing school districts and counties and benchmark them. The current study could serve as a starting point for devising ways to improve areas of low satisfaction as well as continuing to be vigilant about maintaining those areas revealed to be sources of high satisfaction.

As is the case with many social research studies, the current one has several limitations which can be attributed primarily to the data collection method employed. Our study used self-report measures which were collected through the use of an electronically distributed survey as well as a public announcement posted on the Chamber of Commerce website. Several questions have been raised in the past concerning the reliability and

validity of questionnaire scales for perceptual variables (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Online data collection methods have also engendered questions about validity issues because not all social groups are equally experienced with the use of computers. With 18% retirees in the dataset, it is a rather safe assumption that the older portion of our sample consists only those who are computer literate. Therefore, there are several factors inherent in this study that could limit the generalizability of its results. As noted, a more representative sample could be collected from census data, but such a sample was not obtainable under the current restraints. Finally, the substantial amount of sampling drawn from among university faculty, staff and students most likely skewed our results. Future research could investigate other coastal regions in the US as well as other domestic migration destinations. Particularly, future research should seek to determine why those who originally relocated to Florida and Arizona have subsequently moved to other relocation destinations.

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