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Driving RVpark/Campground Selection: A Grounded Theory Approach

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tapping into the tourist sense of freedom and traditions, tourist authorities and governments are looking to drive tourism as a strategy to increase tourism to peripheral places, connecting fragmented areas and communities, and as a means of economic injection. A considerable sub-sector of the drive tourism industry is that of the recreational vehicle user (RV_{er}). The recreational vehicle industry, all companies involved with the manufacture, sale, rental, repair, storage and service of recreational vehicles (Dunham, 2016), is a multi-billion-dollar industry. The RV industry supplies over 8.9 million households with RVs, 12,000 RV-related businesses, and 16,750 campgrounds within North America (Kessler, 2016; RVIA, 2012). In 2015, the U.S. economy benefited from \$49.7 billion to the economy from the RV industry along with 289,852 full time American jobs (Kessler, 2016).

Despite the significant impact of the RV industry to the United States (U.S.) economy, minimal academic research has been conducted on this important sub-sector of the drive tourism industry. This study will build upon previous research by Fjelstul (2013; 2014), Fjelstul, Wang, and Li (2012), Fjelstul and Severt (2011), Severt and Fjelstul (2015) and continue to build and move towards a further understanding of the RV consumer. A grounded theory approach was used to drive the direction of the research for this study. Given the scope of the data and studies that have been done regarding the RV industry, this study examines the extent that motivational factors vary amongst different traveler types within the RV industry. This study adds to the academic body of knowledge through the expansion of motivational research into the RV industry. The research provides the industry with a deeper understanding of the needs of the varying target markets so they can better tailor their offerings to meet consumer demands.

The study will begin with a review of the literature, specifically grounded theory, which will lead to the development of the hypothesis. The study will then review the methodology, including information regarding data and data analysis, before presenting the results of the analysis with a corresponding discussion including a look into literature that reflects the data. Opportunities for future research and limitations of the study will also be discussed.

2. LITERATURE

2.1 Drive Tourism

Drive tourism is defined by Prideaux, Wei and Ruys (2001) as “tourism that centers on traveling from an origin point to a destination by car that is either privately owned or rented, and engaging in tourism-related activities during the journey.” Olson attached a time constraint to the definition stating that drive tourism is “traveling away from home for at least one night, on holidays or visiting friends and relatives, in their own, a rented or borrowed vehicle as the primary mode of transport (Prideaux & Carson, 2003, p. 2).” Olson further stated that while drive tourists have shared characteristics, this is not a homogenous population.

The travel and tourism industry accounts for a significant part of the global market (Fjelstul & Fyall, 2014). In the U.S. alone, travel and tourism is one of the largest industries contributing to approximately \$2 trillion in economic output, of that, approximately \$155 billion is generated from the auto transport industry (US Travel, 2013). Drive tourism has been shown to play a

significant role injecting economic benefit into local economies, particularly in rural regions (Prideaux & Carson, 2003; Yi, Day, & Cai, 2011).

To date, the drive tourism literature has covered a variety of topics including day trips, length of stay in rural areas, and influential factors in the destination selection process and optimization of driving routes (Hashim, Ismail, & Ahmad, 2013; Opperman, 1995a; Laws & Scott, 2003; Yi et.al., 2011). The RV industry plays a unique role in relation to leisure travel and tourism and the drive tourism industry, as the recreational vehicle serves not only as the mode of transportation but also as the accommodation (Severt & Fjelstul, 2015). This uniqueness is paramount in the overall leisure experience, making it critical for the industry to understand the driving motivations of the consumer in order to best service the needs and wants of the marketplace.

2.2 Recreational Vehicle & Campgrounds

Recreational vehicle travel (RV-ing) is a subset of drive tourism in which there are a range of vehicles utilized including caravans, pop-up campers, camper trailers, tent trailers, motorhomes, campervans, and fifth wheels (Wu & Pearce, 2014). Golowenski (2005) defined the different types of U.S. RVs in increasing order of expense and luxury: (a) pop-up camper—a trailer that pops into a sleeping tent without amenities or facilities; (b) truck camper—removable, hard-shell unit that fits on the bed of a pick-up truck and can hold facilities; (c) travel and/or fifth-wheel trailer—the most popular American RV, which includes a full kitchen and bathroom facilities, large beds, entertainment systems, and storage; (d) van/motorhome/bus—the largest, hardest to drive, most amenity-filled, and most expensive of the RVs (Chen, Lu, & Wu, 2010).

Camping is a recreational activity that is rooted in historical traditions within the United States and has continued to grow in popularity over the past twenty years (Graefe & Dawson, 2013). A recent survey by the Recreational Vehicle Association Industry (RVIA) showed that purchase intention in the United States has increased approximately 5% since 2001 (Broom, 2016) and a national survey showed that, despite the increase in the cost of fuel in 2012, approximately 64% of current RV owners still intended to utilize their RVs more than in previous years (Broom, 2012). The RV industry is expected to have another year of expansion in 2017 which will mark the eighth consecutive year, indicating that this is not an area to be ignored (Dunham, 2016; Kessler, 2016). Kessler (2016) stated multiple reasons for a continued interest in RVing including the variety of RV options meeting the needs and wants of a variety of consumers, the minor gains in jobs and income, the lifestyle that it affords users, and the increase in campsite feature and amenities.

Several studies have been conducted to examine the intricacies of the recreational vehicle industry. Graefe and Dawson (2013) explored the psychological factors that contributed to visitor substitution preferences and the willingness to make resource substitution to roadside camping, meaning the difference between those choosing developed camping areas versus the selection of more primitive campsites. Furthermore, the study found evidence to indicate that previous experience and knowledge with various camping settings was an important factor in the decision making process for campers when selecting locations for which to camp. Additional studies have examined the motivations behind RV users, finding that many enjoy the lifestyle it affords them (Kessler 2016; Wu & Pearce, 2014). McClymont, Thompson and Prideaux (2001) found that a large number of RV users are senior retirees. These users often spend extensive time traveling over long distances motivated by the ability to visit warmer climates, flexibility of travel, and ability to relax comfortably in a variety of settings (Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Pearce, 1999; Wu & Pearce, 2014). More recently, studies have examined how RV users utilize social

media (Hardy, Hanson, & Gretzel, 2012) and regarding safety issues and concerns among international drive tourists (Blackman & Haworth, 2013). However, when compared to other sectors of the tourism industry, research in recreational vehicles is still scarce.

2.3 Grounded Theory

While motivational theory was highlighted from a brief overview of the data and/or gaps in existing literature, the study followed a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory, used in a majority of qualitative studies, allows for the elaboration and modification of the theory as the data is analyzed. Strauss and Corbin (1994) stated that “researchers can [also] usefully carry into current studies any theory based on their previous research, providing relevancy – but again the matching of theory against data must be rigorously carried out (p. 273).” There is some debate regarding the use and application of grounded theory however it has been applied in a variety of tourism studies (Humphreys, 2014; Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011). The current research mirrors studies that employ a classic grounded theory approach whereby looking to “give the data a more general sociological meaning as well as to account for, and interpret, what has been found (Williams & Keady, 2012, p. 220).” Grounded theory approach guarantees that the theory for the study is grounded in both the data and context from which it is derived from (Humphreys, 2014; Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011).

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

An overview of the data has presented the following specific research question for this study, based on the data:

- 1) Are there differences and/or similarities in what motivates persons traveling with children, without children, or alone to RV?
- 2) Are there differences and/or similarities in what sources of information persons traveling with children, without children, or alone use to make decisions regarding RVpark/campground selection?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data Source

For the current study the data set was obtained via a survey distributed to 100,000 members of a large U.S. based RV membership association. The survey was developed and distributed in collaboration with the association and therefore the questions are based on the needs of the association. The survey was lengthy, consisting of a total of 54 questions, with the addition of some sub-questions (Severt & Fjelstul, 2015). Of the surveys distributed, 30,539 were returned, a response rate of approximately 30%. A total of 24,584 surveys were retained for the analyses after deleting multi selection on group category questions and no responses.

4.2 Measurement of Study Variables

The survey contained a variety of questions regarding RVpark/campground behaviors, satisfaction, and motivations. The current study focused on a total of forty-two questions regarding motivations, attribute importance, and source of information. The respondents were

given twelve statements and were directed to indicate the level of agreement as to why they RV measured on a 5-point Likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree;” twenty-two statements from which to indicate the importance of RVpark/campground attributes, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from “not at all important” to “extremely important;” and eight statements regarding the importance of information sources when choosing an RVpark/campground, measured on a 5-point Likert scale of “not at all important” to “extremely important.”

Travel party was reduced from six components, shown in Table 1, to three, where: “Traveling with children” consisted of “at least one other adult and with children,” “extended family, a group, and/or friends with children,” and “with children only, no other adult;” traveling without children consisted of “at least one other adult and without children,” and “extended family, a group, and/or friends without children;” alone was made of the item “alone.”

A variety of demographic questions and questions regarding trip characteristics were asked, measured on nominal or categorical scales; description of travel party, number of years RVing, classification of RV, number of RVs owned, description of self, reservation preference, favorite state to RV, distance traveled/days traveled in the past 12 months while RVing, and distance anticipated to travel as examples. The current study utilized questions of family structure, motivations to RV, and sources of information items. This study utilizes questions regarding traveling party, motivations to RV participation, attribute items, and source of information items (see Table 1).

Table 1: Survey Sections with Component Options

| Section | Options |
|--|---|
| Typical Traveling Party Selection | Group 1 |
| | At least one other adult and with children |
| | Extended family, a group, and/or friends with children |
| | With children only, no other adult |
| | Group 2 |
| | At least one other adult and without children |
| | Extended family, a group, and/or friends without children |
| | Group 3 |
| | Alone |
| Online Source of Information | Online forums/campground review |
| | Good Sam website |
| | Internet search engine |
| Motivations to RV Participation | RV-ing is economical |
| | For weekend getaways |
| | For sporting events |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| | For family vacations |
| | To visit family but not stay with family |
| | For a place to live while working on the road |
| | For the lifestyle: i.e. no suitcases, I have my own bed, bathroom, kitchen, etc |
| | To attend rallies and/or club activities |
| Offline Source of Information | Referral from friend/family |
| | Trailer Life Directory |
| | Good Sam discount |
| | Other discounts |
| | Advertisements |

5. RESULTS

5.1 Demographic Results

Demographic results from the current study are found in Table 2. Out of the 18,560 responses, approximately 78% of the participants were male and 22% were female. Each of the comparison groups (RVer’s traveling with children, RVer’s traveling without children, and RVer’s traveling alone) mirrored the male and female distribution of all participants ranging in 71% - 78% for males and 21% - 20% for females. The majority of participants were 65 years of age or older and represented approximately 58% of all participants, reflective of both the membership group surveyed and previous research (Fjelstul,2014). The RVer’s traveling without children (Group 2) and RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3) had the majority of participants 65 years of age or older (62% to 64%) while the RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1) had the majority of participants between the ages of 50-64 (42%). Most respondents were married (89%) when combining the three groups, however only 34% of the RVer’s traveling alone were married while approximately 43% were widowed or divorced. RVer’s traveling with children had a greater number of participants working full time (44%) while RVer’s traveling without children and RVer’s traveling alone had a great number of participants retired, representing approximately 74%.

Table 2. *Demographic information*

| | | Group (Valid %) | | | |
|--------|--------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | All | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Gender | Male | 77.79% | 77.96% | 78.29% | 70.93% |
| | Female | 22.21% | 22.04% | 21.71% | 29.07% |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Age | 20-34 | 0.32% | 1.56% | 0.15% | 0.08% |
| | 35-49 | 5.16% | 26.33% | 2.26% | 2.58% |
| | 50-64 | 36.61% | 42.25% | 36.06% | 33.05% |
| | 65+ | 57.91% | 29.85% | 61.52% | 64.29% |
| Marital Status | Single | 2.31% | 1.50% | 1.32% | 16.96% |
| | Married | 88.79% | 91.69% | 92.46% | 34.81% |
| | Separated | 0.30% | 0.38% | 0.19% | 1.63% |
| | Divorced | 2.44% | 2.27% | 1.02% | 21.48% |
| | Widowed | 2.79% | 1.88% | 1.50% | 21.56% |
| | Unmarried couple living together | 3.02% | 2.12% | 3.31% | 0.89% |
| | Never married | 0.35% | 0.15% | 0.20% | 2.67% |
| Employment | Employed full-time | 17.80% | 44.28% | 14.28% | 13.23% |
| | Employed part-time | 4.37% | 5.15% | 4.22% | 4.80% |
| | Temporarily unemployed | 0.74% | 1.00% | 0.67% | 1.18% |
| | Business owner | 4.42% | 5.95% | 4.27% | 3.47% |
| | Homemaker | 1.12% | 2.50% | 0.98% | 0.37% |
| | Retired | 70.24% | 39.55% | 74.39% | 74.65% |
| | Other | 1.31% | 1.57% | 1.19% | 2.29% |

Note. Total (n= 24,584, Group 1= 3,008 Group 2= 20,019, Group 3= 1,557)

*Data= 30,414 -> 24,584

5.2 Source of Information

The current study explored information sources, as outlined in Table 1, to investigate where respondents obtain information that motivate decision making. As noted in Table 1, respondents had five offline sources of information to choose from: referral from friend/family; Trailer Life Directory; Good Sam discount; other discounts; and advertisements. Table 3 depicts sources of

information results as obtained from the analysis. The highest mean among the sources of information for the RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1) was other discounts (4.29 on a 5-point scale) while the highest mean for RVer’s traveling without children (Group 2) was online forums at 3.84. The highest mean score for RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3) was information from Trailer Life directory at 3.72.

A one-way ANOVA was used to assess the difference regarding how varied sources of information influence the choice of RV park/campground among the three RV groups. Since the variances in the groups were unequal, Welch tests were employed. Games-Howell post-hoc tests were followed. No issues were found regarding skewness and kurtosis (Skewness < 3, Kurtosis <10). Results indicated there was not a significant difference between RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3) and RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1) when asked how influential referrals from friends and family are and how influential information in the Trailer Life Directory is when choosing a RV park/campground. There was, however, a statistically significant mean difference between these two groups and RVer’s traveling without children (Group 2). Therefore, RVer’s traveling alone and with children are more likely to be influenced by referrals from friends and family and Trailer Life directory than those RVer’s traveling without children when choosing a RV park/campground.

The results also depicted a statistically significant mean difference between all three comparison groups, in being influenced by the Good Sam’s website, other discounts, and the Good Sam’s discount when choosing a RV park /campground. There was not a significant difference between RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1) and those traveling without children (Group 2) when asked how influential online forums and campground reviews are when choosing a RV park/campground. Yet there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (RVer’s traveling with children and RVer’s traveling no children) and RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3).

The final item was on the influence of internet search engines, such as google, when choosing a RV park/campground. There was not a statistically significant mean difference between RVer’s traveling without children (Group 2) and RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3) but there was a statistically significant mean difference between those two groups (RVer’s traveling with no children and RVer’s traveling alone) and RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1).

Table 3. *Source of information (ANOVA)*

| Group | 1 | 2 | 3 | Statistics (Welch) | Significance | Post-hoc (Games-Howell) |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| | Mean (SD) | | | | | |
| Referral from friend/family | 3.28 (1.07) | 3.14 (1.09) | 3.22 (1.09) | 18.68 | <.05 | 2 < 3, 1 |
| Trailer Life directory | 3.74 (1.09) | 3.60 (1.13) | 3.72 (1.16) | 20.96 | <.05 | 2 < 3, 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------|------|-----------|
| Good Sam website | 2.91 (1.29) | 2.75 (1.33) | 2.39 (1.28) | 65.80 | <.05 | 3 < 2 < 1 |
| Other discounts | 4.29 (0.84) | 3.41 (1.06) | 3.23 (1.13) | 1099.66 | <.05 | 3 < 2 < 1 |
| Good Sam discount | 2.93 (1.16) | 3.09 (1.19) | 3.33 (1.19) | 46.21 | <.05 | 1 < 2 < 3 |
| Online forums/ campground reviews | 3.87 (0.96) | 3.84 (0.99) | 3.61 (1.12) | 26.23 | <.05 | 3 < 2, 1 |
| Internet search engine (i.e. Google) | 1.90 (1.03) | 2.67 (1.14) | 2.66 (1.19) | 582.92 | <.05 | 1 < 2, 3 |

Note. Total (n= 19,511, Group 1= 2,428, Group 2= 15,908, Group 3= 1,175)

Group 1 = With children, Group 2= Without children, Group 3 = Alone

(1= not at all important to 5 = extremely important)

5.3 Motivation Differences

Motivational differences' results are highlighted in Table 4. The highest mean motivator for RVer's traveling with children (Group 1) was to travel for family vacations (4.47). In comparison, the other two groups of RVer's traveling without children and RVer's traveling alone (Group 2 and 3), the highest mean motivator was to travel for the lifestyle at 4.46 and 4.45, respectively. One-way ANOVA was used to assess differences in RV travel motivation among the three groups. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point scale as to their motivation for RV travel. Although there was no statistically significant mean difference between RVer's traveling without children (Group 2) and RVer's traveling alone (Group 3), there was a statistically significant mean difference between these two groups (RVer's traveling without children and RVer's traveling alone (Groups 2 and 3) and RVer's traveling with children (Group 1) in their motivation to RV due to RVing being economical, for sporting events, and to relax and getting away from it all.

There was no statistically significant mean difference in RVer's traveling without children (Group 2) and RVer's traveling alone (Group 3), however, there was a statistically significant mean difference between these two groups and RVer's traveling with children (Group 1) for the following motivations: to visit family but not stay with family, for the lifestyle, to attend rallies and/or other activities, and to travel with pets. Interestingly, there was a statistically significant mean difference in RVer's traveling without children (Group 2) and the other two groups (RVer's traveling with children (Group 2) and RVer's traveling alone (Group 3)) on being motivated to RV to see the United States.

For the following motivations, to live while working on the road and to RV as a way to pursue other interest and activities, RVer's traveling alone (Group 3) had the highest mean and showed

a statistically significant mean difference from the other two groups (RVer's traveling with children (Group 1) and RVer's traveling without children (Group 2). However, there was not a significant mean difference between RVer's traveling with children (Group 1) and RVer's traveling without children (Group 2) on these two motivations. As a final point of RVer's motivation to RV, the results showed a statistically significant mean difference for all three RV groups for being motivated to RV for weekend getaways and for family vacations with RVer's traveling with children (Group 1) having the highest mean score (3.98 and 4.47).

Table 4. *Motivation differences (ANOVA)*

| Group | 1 | 2 | 3 | Statistics (Welch) | Significance | Post-hoc (Games- Howell) |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| | Mean (SD) | | | | | |
| RVing is economical | 3.26 (1.09) | 3.13 (1.06) | 3.14 (1.11) | 14.50 | <.05 | 2, 3 < 1 |
| For sporting events | 2.81 (1.34) | 2.56 (1.33) | 2.58 (1.35) | 37.60 | <.05 | 2, 3 < 1 |
| To relax, to get away from it all, to do nothing if I choose | 4.41 (0.86) | 4.32 (0.94) | 4.24 (1.05) | 14.61 | <.05 | 3, 2 < 1 |
| To visit family but not stay with family | 3.64 (1.26) | 3.82 (1.21) | 3.75 (1.27) | 24.54 | <.05 | 1 < 3, 2 |
| For the lifestyle; i.e. no suitcases, I have my own bed, bathroom, kitchen, etc. | 4.27 (1.05) | 4.46 (0.93) | 4.45 (0.93) | 37.10 | <.05 | 1 < 3, 2 |
| To attend rallies and/or club activities | 2.80 (1.35) | 3.03 (1.38) | 3.11 (1.39) | 32.13 | <.05 | 1 < 2, 3 |
| To travel with my pets | 3.26 (1.56) | 3.43 (1.63) | 3.39 (1.63) | 13.07 | <.05 | 1 < 3, 2 |
| To see the United States by RV | 4.12 (1.09) | 4.29 (1.01) | 4.17 (1.11) | 29.60 | <.05 | 1, 3 < 2 |
| For a place to live while working on the road | 2.76 (1.51) | 2.80 (1.56) | 3.17 (1.59) | 30.88 | <.05 | 1, 2 < 3 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------|------|-----------|
| I use my RV as a way to pursue other activities/ interests | 3.44 (1.26) | 3.44 (1.25) | 3.58 (1.29) | 5.67 | <.05 | 1, 2 < 3 |
| For weekend getaways | 3.98 (1.07) | 3.54 (1.24) | 3.36 (1.30) | 188.50 | <.05 | 3 < 2 < 1 |
| For family vacations | 4.47 (0.86) | 4.11 (1.08) | 3.65 (1.31) | 264.13 | <.05 | 3 < 2 < 1 |

Note. Total (n= 18,560, Group 1= 2,483 Group 2= 14,931, Group 3= 1,146)

Group 1 = With children, Group 2= Without children, Group 3 = Alone

(1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

5.4 Spending Pattern Differences

Participants were asked to indicate approximately how much they spent on average, per trip, in restaurants, local attractions and venues, and shopping (Table 5). Thirty percent of RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1) reported they spent on average \$51 to \$100 in restaurants followed by 28% who spent on average \$101-\$250. Twenty-nine percent of RVer’s traveling without children (Group 2) spent on average \$51 to \$100 in restaurants followed by 26% who spent on average \$101 to \$250. Thirty-six percent of RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3) spent less than \$50 in restaurants followed by 26% spending \$51 to \$100.

Less money overall was spent on local attractions and venues for each of the RV groups. Twenty-nine percent of RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1) reported they spent on average \$101-\$250 followed by 27% who spent \$51-\$100. Thirty percent of RVer’s traveling without children (Group 2) spent on average \$51-\$100 followed by 28% who spent on average less than \$50. RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3) had the largest percent (44%) of respondents who spent less than \$50 followed by 25% spending \$51 to \$100.

In the category of shopping, 31% of RVer’s traveling with children (Group 1) reported spending \$101-\$250 and 28% spent \$51-\$100. Approximately 29% of RVer’s traveling without children (Group 2) spent \$101 to \$250 on shopping while 25% spent \$51 to \$100. RVer’s traveling alone (Group 3) spent less on shopping compared to the other groups. Twenty-eight percent reported they spent less than \$50 while approximately 24% spent \$51 to \$100 on shopping.

Table 5. *Spending pattern differences*

| Restaurant | | | Local Attractions & Venues | | | Shopping | | |
|------------|---|---|----------------------------|---|---|----------|---|---|
| Group | | | Group | | | Group | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Less than \$50 | 24.68% | 22.59% | 36.20% | 19.66% | 27.98% | 44.21% | 15.52% | 16.99% | 28.09% |
| \$51-\$100 | 30.39% | 29.14% | 27.00% | 27.07% | 30.02% | 24.83% | 28.08% | 25.49% | 23.84% |
| \$101-\$250 | 28.04% | 26.65% | 20.67% | 29.51% | 25.19% | 18.99% | 31.58% | 28.67% | 23.44% |
| \$251-\$500 | 11.74% | 13.88% | 9.99% | 15.98% | 11.62% | 7.62% | 16.30% | 17.28% | 11.87% |
| \$501-\$1,000 | 3.78% | 5.11% | 3.56% | 5.66% | 3.74% | 2.67% | 5.80% | 7.16% | 7.81% |
| Over \$1,000 | 1.38% | 2.63% | 2.57% | 2.12% | 1.46% | 1.68% | 2.72% | 4.41% | 4.95% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Note. Total (n= 16,889, Group 1= 2,172, Group 2= 13,706, Group 3= 1,011)

Group 1 = With children, Group 2= Without children, Group 3 = Alone

6. CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Discussion

The initial research questions for this study were: 1) “Are there differences and/or similarities in what motivates persons with children, without children, and alone to RV?” and 2) “Are there differences and/or similarities in what sources of information persons traveling with children, without children, and alone use to make decisions regarding RVpark/campground selection?” A key feature of grounded theory is not that the hypotheses, in this case research question, remain unverified, but that it is constantly revised through the research process until “they hold true for all of the evidence concerning the phenomena under study (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 11).” A review of the data analysis in this study indicated, consequently, that a single research question was more appropriate for this study. Therefore, the updated and revised focus of the study was on the differences/similarities in motivations between travel party groups in making decisions regarding RVpark/campground selection. Source of information, however, plays a part of that motivation, having appeared in various studies as being closely linked to motivation (Bieger & Laesser, 2004). In addition to findings that point to motivation and source of information as being significant, the analysis showed spending patterns as being different amongst the traveler groups. A brief literature review of motivational theory, source of information, and spending patterns will be presented in the next section of the paper prior to reviewing implications and further discussion of the findings from the data analysis.

6.1.1. Motivational Theory

The importance of understanding customer motivation has been established across various literature streams; however, there are a variety of theories discussed in motivational research. A vast majority of motivation literature in consumer behavior and tourism studies start with

Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a theoretical foundation (Chang, 2007; Chien et.al. 2012; Kozak, 2002). Other studies use the paradigms of Plog's travel personality and Cohen's strangeness vs. familiarity when covering tourist motivations to travel (Chen, Mak, & McKercher, 2011). As a whole, tourism literature finds that an understanding of customer motivations will assist in understanding choice, preference, and needs (Chan & Baum, 2007; Gnoth, 1997; Scarinci & Richins, 2008; Tangeland, 2011). Motivation has been defined as a driving force that initiates and directs behavior (Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Tangeland, 2011). Chang (2007) determined that motivation can be defined as the reflection of needs and wants that emerges when an individual seeks to satisfy a need, and can be viewed as a critical variable in relation to purchase decision and the outcome of satisfaction. Scarinci & Richins (2008) noted that "motivation is only one of the many variables which influence the destination choice process. However, motivation is a fundamental driving force in helping to explain tourist behavior (p.273)." In the context of the recreational vehicle literature, motivation from both a destination choice process as well as from the lens of product purchase is critical as very often the two areas overlap for the avid RV consumer. Tangeland (2011) makes the assessment that motivation to purchase a specific product will not come about unless the tourist is aware of that product and believe that it will satisfy their needs, which could infer that sources of information have an effect on purchase decision.

6.1.2. Source of Information

Information search was defined by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1993) as the motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory and/or the acquisition of information from the environment. A variety of studies link source of information to influencing and determining consumer behavior (Cai, Feng, & Breiter, 2004; Murphy, Mascardo, & Benckendorff, 2007). This is integral to determining where and how customers acquire information, which thereby assists managers in making informed marketing decisions. In a tourism context, Fodness and Murray (1997: 506) defined information search as "the result of a dynamic process wherein individuals use various amounts and types of information sources in response to internal and external contingencies to facilitate travel planning." Source of information has been presented in a variety of classifications. Several studies have noted source of information in online context, those places in an e-environment such as blogs, websites, forums, and as offline context, word-of-mouth, print advertising, etc. (Choi, Lehto, Morrison, & Jang, 2012; Dodd et al., 2005; Lopez & Sicilia, 2011). Bieger and Laesser (2004) presented four approaches to information search behavior: psychological/motivational/individual characteristic approach, cost/benefit approach, process approach, and information source usage as segmentation variable. The first approach stems from travel motivation theory and proposes that customers' sociodemographic characteristics influence the external information sources that they use and that the purpose of the trip influences the information search and sources used. The second approach focuses on the economic impact that the customer perceives (how much the trip will cost and limiting the risks associated with the trip), the third approach is the physical act of searching for information, and the fourth uses information search behavior as a way to segment customers. Cai, Feng, and Breiter (2004) also discuss information searches in relation to purchase level involvement and found that the content of the information depended on the level of involvement in the purchase.

6.1.3. Spending Habits

Overall the travel industry generates billions of dollars and an abundance of research has been conducted to measure motivations to consumer behavior as well as spending patterns (Hong,

Fan, Palmer, & Bhargava, 2005). Cai, Hong, and Morrison (1995) studied the effect of various demographic, socioeconomic and cultural factors on family leisure expenditure (food, lodging, transportation, and sightseeing) patterns for tourism products. Family life cycle model (FLC) has been used by marketers as a way to assess and measure expenditure patterns of families. The FLC explains changes in individuals' behavior at different stages of family life and has been used in some travel and tourism studies as well as a means in which to segment markets (Bojanic, 1992; Lawson, 1991; Oppermann, 1995b). The FLC shows that as individuals progress through the cycle, the presence or absence of a spouse, children, and their age will affect their preferences and the demands placed on their resources. The life cycle model has been used as a means to highlight the importance of understanding consumer behavior and family expenditures through by providing a framework that analyzes the relationship between intertemporal consumption and intratemporal expenditure allocations (Blundell, Browning, and Meghir, 1994; Hong et al., 2005). Both Bojanic (1992) and Lawson (1991) found agreement between the vacation patterns and the results of the expenditure analysis and support the financial cycles aspect of family life cycle theory.

6.2 Implications

Overall the data analysis showed there to be a greater variety of differences between those RVers traveling with children than either of the other two groups combined (RVers traveling alone and RVers traveling without children). When considering the analysis further the implications can be separated into three main categories: motivations, source of information, and spending habits.

1. Motivations

Most notably, there were two RV travel motivations (for weekend getaways and for family vacations) that were different for all three groups of travelers. While there are differences between the motivations to RV travel for each group, this provides the RV industry with confirmation that each of these groups' wants and needs may be different. Understanding these differences are critical to RV services providers offering services for specific RV group type. Additionally, the results revealed significant differences between RVers traveling with children and the other two groups combined (RVers traveling alone and RVers traveling without children) when visiting family but staying with family, for the lifestyle, to attend rallies or other activities and when traveling with pets. These results indicate the importance of families needing their own space when traveling. This, when added to the fact that RVers traveling with children feel it is an economical way to travel, gives insight into promoting parks that are family friendly. Graefe and Dawson (2013) suggested that campers are motivated to return to the same locations, however it may simply be because, due to lack of proper marketing, campers are not aware of alternate sites that would suit their needs. In short, since there was a difference in the motivations between all three groups, RV parks should use different marketing messages that correspond to each of these groups.

2. Source of Information

When analyzing the importance of source of information on campground selection, intuitively, it would be reasonable to assume that families with children and those traveling alone would want to obtain credible information prior to choosing an RV park/campground; to determine the availability of amenities prior to pulling into the campground or safety/security needs. This thought process shows to be accurate as the data indicates that people traveling with children and those traveling alone to be most similar in how information sources impact their selection. Both

groups were shown to be more influenced by referrals from friends and family, i.e. word of mouth, indicating that it could be beneficial for the RV industry to utilize rewards programs based on recommendations. This ideology is not out of line as research has shown that word of mouth has the ability to lead to approach or avoidance in consumer purchase behaviors (Baker, Donthu, & Kumar, 2016).

The results show that people traveling with children and those traveling alone are influenced by the information in the Trailer-Life directory, thereby it may benefit Trailer-Life to gain advertisements from the service providers who cater to RVers traveling with children and those traveling alone. However, RVers traveling with children are more influenced by internet search engines such as google when choosing a RV park/campground and therefore RV service providers should take that into consideration when selecting marketing medians and resource allocation to reach this target market specifically through online search engines. Another implication for marketers could be to highlight the economic advantages of RVing with children. This could be done through advertisements in Trailer-Life and internet search engines as well as print and direct marketing materials.

Finally, the results suggest that people who travel alone are more likely to use online forums and online reviews when choosing an RV park/campground. Therefore, RV service providers may want to advertise on these forum and review sites to highlight services and campgrounds that are more quiet and offer less family activities. Additional research may be needed to verify which search engines are used most by RVers traveling with children and those traveling alone.

3. Spending Habits

The analysis of spending habits brought forth triggered interesting implications based on the findings. The data suggested people traveling alone are less likely to spend money on attractions, which matches the results in a study by Hong, Fan, Palmer and Bhargava (2005) where singles were less likely to spend on entertainment than other segments of traveler groups. This could be because those traveling alone are not sharing in the attraction experience. Alternatively, RVers traveling alone had the highest percentage of purchases over \$1,000, this being almost double over the other two groups in this spending range. RVers traveling alone also spend a higher percentage than the other two groups on attractions and shopping in the \$1,000 plus spending range. This information is different from Hong et al., (2005) in which those married without children spent significantly more money than singles in all subcategories of travel (i.e. transportation, food, lodging, and entertainment). This presents an area of future research to determine what people traveling alone are willing to spend money on, as RV parks could be able to capitalize on the sale of merchandise or other goods if there was an understanding of what shopping was taking place.

For those RVers traveling with children and without children, there was a similarity in spending patterns in relation to restaurants. Future research could look at restaurant habits between the two groups to analyze the difference in types of restaurants and number of restaurants visited while traveling. This being especially interesting given that one of the commonly cited motivations to RVing is that it is economical way to travel and provides flexibility of lifestyle (Fjelstul, 2013; 2014).

Finally, as an overall look at the analysis done, results suggest the RV industry could benefit from offering promotions to travel the U.S. utilizing route options and different route options specific to different budgets and type of RV traveler (specifically those traveling with someone

but without children). By communicating the benefits and the overall experience, there may be an increase in the number of people who decide to participate in RVing, since the results indicate this target group is more motivated to see the U.S. than those RVers traveling solo or with children.

6.3 Future research and Limitations

Given the scarcity of research done specifically in the RV sector, this study adds to the body of knowledge both from an academic and industry perspective. Future research should consider incorporating additional items into the study as well as selecting additional samples from the data to ensure consistency of findings. One major limitation of the study is that many of the items that were grouped together within the questionnaire theoretically should have been correlated but were not. Other limitations of the study were the majority of respondents were members of a large RV association, which does not provide a true representation of the population. Additionally, the survey design for this study was not theoretically founded, rather developed from a strict practitioner perspective, specifically that of a single large RV association. In addition to suggestions offered during previous discussion, future research in this area should seek to develop a more theoretically founded survey and to seek out a more representative sample of those who RV.

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