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Characteristics of the Visiting Friends and Relatives Markets in Prince Edward Island: A Longitudinal Approach

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Abstract

This study attempts to better understand the VFR market in Prince Edward Island, Canada by using data set drawn from Tourist Exit Survey during the period from 2000 to 2004. The study provided an exploratory examination of trip characteristic variables between VFR and pleasure travellers and identified some significant differences between the two trip purpose groups. It also identified that the VFR markets are important and valuable for Prince Edward Island. The results imply that tourism marketers need to address the unique differences of the VFR markets in keeping with their trip patterns and characteristics.

Introduction

It has been known that visiting friends or relatives (VFR) contributes a significant portion of the international and domestic travel markets (Lehto, Morrison, & O'Leary, 2001; Morrison, Hsieh, & O'Leary, 1995; Paci, 1994; Seaton & Palmer, 1997) and economic benefits to destinations with great growth potential worldwide (Beioley, 1997; Lee, Morrison, Lheto, Webb, Reid, 2005; Meis, Joyal, & Trites, 1995; Mules, 1998; Navarro & Turco, 1994; Paci, 1994; Seaton & Palmer, 1997; Yuan, Fridgen, Hsieh, & O'Leary, 1995). In addition, it has been found that VFR travellers have unique characteristics in terms of their information search behaviors, trip planning, trip types, vacation activities, and spending patterns. As a result, it has been suggested that the VFR market requires tailor-made marketing efforts (Morrison & O'Leary, 1995; Moscardo, Pearce, Morrison, Green, & O'Leary, 2000).

Although tourism marketers and researchers have now realized the VFR markets' importance and economic benefits, they have neglected or underestimated them compared to other pleasure markets due to such reasons as the complexity of the markets (hybrid travel), misunderstanding of the concepts related to the VFR (e.g., VFR as a major motive or a specific activity and typology of VFR), issues in domestic versus international, short-haul versus long-haul VFR, and difficulties in promoting to the market. (King, 1996; Morrison & O'Leary 1995; Seaton, 1994).

Many prior studies on VFR have demonstrated that it is a multifaceted and unique segment given it has a large proportion of the total volume of travel and a significant proportion of both domestic and international markets. VFR has unique trip characteristics in both the short- and long-haul VFR, including significant use of commercial accommodation, representing a viable niche market for the lodging industry (Hu & Morrison, 2002).

This study attempts to better understand the VFR markets in Prince Edward Island, Canada. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify some characteristics of the VFR markets by comparing the differences between VFR and pleasure markets using data set drawn from Tourist Exit Survey during the period from 2000 to 2004.

Methodology

Data. This study used data drawn from the “Tourist Exit Survey (TES)” conducted by Tourism Prince Edward Island (PEI) in Canada. The main purposes of TES are to examine comprehensive statistics on the volume of travellers and their expenditure and to identify detailed characteristics of their trips (Tourism PEI, 2004). A 5-year term of data sets of the TES was used in this study during the period from 2000 to 2004.

Samples. Table 1 presents the TES data characteristics and samples used. During the period from 2000 to 2004, Tourism PEI collected a total of 16,640 samples. 14,641 samples were used for analyzing the data and identifying characteristics of VFR markets over time in PEI. Of these, 2,472 (16.9%) were VFR purpose travellers and 12,169 (83.1%) were pleasure travellers over time. The number of samples used overnight pleasure travellers to PEI rather than same day travellers and other purposes of trip.

Table 1. Total number of Samples collected and Samples used for the Study

| Year | Total Samples | Pleasure Travellers | Overnight Pleasure Travellers * | | |
|-------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|--------|
| | | | VFR | Pleasure | Total |
| 2000 | 2,523 | 2,225 | 357 (16.5) | 1,802 (83.5) | 2,159 |
| 2001 | 3,562 | 3,243 | 554 (17.8) | 2,554 (82.2) | 3,108 |
| 2002 | 3,536 | 3,283 | 525 (16.5) | 2,662 (83.5) | 3,187 |
| 2003 | 3,428 | 3,135 | 460 (15.1) | 2,588 (84.9) | 3,048 |
| 2004 | 3,591 | 3,296 | 576 (18.3) | 2,563 (81.7) | 3,139 |
| Total | 16,640 | 15,182 | 2,472 (16.9) | 12,169 (83.1) | 14,641 |

Notes:

1) * indicates samples used for the study.

2) VFR indicates visiting friends and relatives.

3) Numbers in parentheses indicate % of each market size in each year for overnight pleasure travellers.

Variables. Trip characteristic variables, trip purpose, visitor types, types of accommodation, travel party size, trip duration, travel expenditure, and travel activity were used for analyzing the data and identify characteristics of VFR markets in PEI (see Tables 2, 3, and 4).

Data analysis. This study employed a longitudinal approach using a series of data that was observed or measured at more than one point in time, possibly repeatedly, and developed over time (Bijleveld & van der Kamp, 1998). The study performed Chi-Square analyses and *t*-tests to identify some trip characteristics of VFR markets in PEI. Separate χ^2 analyses were used to identify the differences between categorical trip characteristic variables with the trip purpose groups. Similarly, a series of independent *t*-tests were analyzed on trip characteristics to determine whether variables in two groups differed.

Results

Visitor types and trip purpose. In order to identify the differences between VFR and pleasure travellers and to capture better understanding of characteristics of each over time, Chi-Square analyses were performed on each of the two identified groups with respect to the variable of visitor types (first time visitor and repeat visitor). As illustrated in Table 2, statistically significant differences showed between VFR and pleasure travellers in visitor types over the years. Overall, VFR’s repeat visitors’ ratio has been much higher than pleasure travellers over time. VFR’s repeat visitors accounted for 75.3% to 84.2%, while first time pleasure travellers accounted for 50.5% to 54.7%.

Table 2. Visitor Types by Trip Purpose

| Year | Variable | VFR | Pleasure | Total |
|------|--|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2000 | First time visitor | 70 (19.6) | 985 (54.7) | 1,055 (48.9) |
| | Repeat visitor | 287 (80.4) | 817 (45.3) | 1,104 (51.1) |
| | Total | 357 | 1,802 | 2,159 |
| | Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 146.53, d.f. = 1, p < .0001$ | | | |
| 2001 | First time visitor | 106 (19.1) | 1,304 (51.1) | 1,410 (45.4) |
| | Repeat visitor | 448 (80.9) | 1,250 (48.9) | 1,698 (54.6) |
| | Total | 554 | 2,554 | 3,108 |
| | Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 2159.00, d.f. = 1, p < .0001$ | | | |
| 2002 | First time visitor | 83 (15.8) | 1,367 (51.4) | 1,450 (45.5) |
| | Repeat visitor | 442 (84.2) | 1,295 (48.6) | 1,737 (54.5) |
| | Total | 525 | 2,662 | 3,187 |
| | Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 223.40, d.f. = 1, p < .0001$ | | | |
| 2003 | First time visitor | 88 (19.1) | 1,318 (50.9) | 1,406 (46.1) |
| | Repeat visitor | 372 (80.9) | 1,270 (49.1) | 1,642 (53.9) |
| | Total | 460 | 2,588 | 3,048 |
| | Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 158.91, d.f. = 1, p < .0001$ | | | |
| 2004 | First-time visitor | 142 (24.7) | 1,295 (50.5) | 1,437 (45.8) |
| | Repeat Visitor | 434 (75.3) | 1,268 (49.5) | 1,702 (54.2) |
| | Total | 576 | 2,563 | 3,139 |
| | Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 126.84, d.f. = 1, p < .0001$ | | | |

Note: Numbers indicate frequencies (n) in each segment cell for each year, whereas numbers in parentheses indicate % within the segment.

Types of accommodation and trip purpose. To identify the differences between VFR and pleasure travellers over time, Chi-Square analyses were performed on each of the two identified groups regarding the variable of “type of accommodation used”. As shown in Table 3, statistically significant differences showed between VFR and pleasure travellers over time. As expected, VFR travellers were more likely to stay at their friends or relatives’ home (from 48.4% to 62.1%) over the years, whereas pleasure travellers were more likely to spend in hotels, motels or resorts (from 38.8% to 41.7%). In addition, cabin or cottage was the second preferred type of accommodation by both VFR and pleasure travellers.

Travel party size, trip duration, and trip purpose. To determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the trip purpose groups with respect to travel party size and trip duration variables over the years, a series of t -tests were run. The results are reported in Table 4. Statistically significant differences between the trip purpose groups were found in all of travel party size and trip duration variables over time, excluding one item of “travel party size” in 2004. Overall, it was found that VFR travellers’ party size has been smaller than pleasure travellers over the years, whereas VFR’s trip duration has been longer than pleasure.

Travel expenditure and trip purpose. All of the travel expenditure categories indicate average spending per person per night rather than total amount of spending. The results are also presented in Table 4. Statistically significant differences between the trip purpose groups were

found in many of spending variables over time. In 2004, all of spending categories are significantly different between the two groups. Overall, it was found that pleasure travellers' expenditures in almost all of the spending categories have been higher than VFR travellers.

Table 3. Types of Accommodation by Trip Purpose

| Year | Variable | VFR | Pleasure | Total |
|--|------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2000 | Hotel/Motel/Resort | 57 (16.0) | 699 (38.8) | 756 (35.0) |
| | B&B/Inn | 31 (8.7) | 268 (14.9) | 299 (13.8) |
| | Cabin/Cottage | 62 (17.4) | 386 (21.4) | 448 (20.8) |
| | Camping/Trailer Park | 18 (5.0) | 309 (17.1) | 327 (15.1) |
| | Home of friends or relatives | 182 (51.0) | 87 (4.8) | 269 (12.5) |
| | Other | 7 (2.0) | 53 (2.9) | 60 (2.8) |
| | Total | 357 | 1,802 | 2,159 |
| Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 594.19$, <i>d.f.</i> = 5, <i>p</i> < .0001 | | | | |
| 2001 | Hotel/Motel/Resort | 69 (12.5) | 997 (39.1) | 1,066 (34.3) |
| | B&B/Inn | 21 (3.8) | 360 (14.1) | 381 (12.3) |
| | Cabin/Cottage | 62 (11.2) | 484 (19.0) | 546 (17.6) |
| | Camping/Trailer Park | 40 (7.2) | 478 (18.7) | 518 (16.7) |
| | Home of friends or relatives | 344 (62.1) | 140 (5.5) | 484 (15.6) |
| | Other | 18 (3.2) | 92 (3.6) | 110 (3.5) |
| | Total | 554 | 2,551 | 3,105 |
| Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 1,121.16$, <i>d.f.</i> = 5, <i>p</i> < .0001 | | | | |
| 2002 | Hotel/Motel/Resort | 80 (15.2) | 1,072 (40.3) | 1,152 (36.1) |
| | B&B/Inn | 29 (5.5) | 383 (14.4) | 412 (12.9) |
| | Cabin/Cottage | 82 (15.6) | 520 (19.5) | 602 (18.9) |
| | Camping/Trailer Park | 43 (8.2) | 442 (16.6) | 485 (15.2) |
| | Home of friends or relatives | 254 (48.4) | 132 (5.0) | 386 (12.1) |
| | Other | 37 (7.0) | 113 (4.2) | 150 (4.7) |
| | Total | 525 | 2,662 | 3,187 |
| Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 816.61$, <i>d.f.</i> = 5, <i>p</i> < .0001 | | | | |
| 2003 | Hotel/Motel/Resort | 56 (12.2) | 1,066 (41.2) | 1,122 (36.8) |
| | B&B/Inn | 17 (3.7) | 414 (16.0) | 431 (14.1) |
| | Cabin/Cottage | 83 (18.0) | 493 (19.0) | 576 (18.9) |
| | Camping/Trailer Park | 36 (7.8) | 424 (16.4) | 460 (15.1) |
| | Home of friends or relatives | 251 (54.6) | 114 (4.4) | 365 (12.0) |
| | Other | 17 (3.7) | 77 (3.0) | 94 (3.1) |
| | Total | 460 | 2,588 | 3,048 |
| Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 971.58$, <i>d.f.</i> = 5, <i>p</i> < .0001 | | | | |
| 2004 | Hotel/Motel/Resort | 101 (17.5) | 1,067 (41.7) | 1,168 (37.3) |
| | B&B/Inn | 35 (6.1) | 383 (15.0) | 418 (13.3) |
| | Cabin/Cottage | 94 (16.3) | 470 (18.4) | 564 (18.0) |
| | Camping/Trailer Park | 39 (6.8) | 467 (18.3) | 506 (16.2) |
| | Home of friends or relatives | 300 (52.1) | 122 (4.8) | 422 (13.5) |
| | Other | 7 (1.2) | 48 (1.9) | 55 (1.8) |
| | Total | 576 | 2,557 | 3,133 |
| Chi-Square Statistics: $\chi^2 = 923.70$, <i>d.f.</i> = 5, <i>p</i> < .0001 | | | | |

Note: Numbers indicate frequencies (*n*) in each segment cell for each year, whereas numbers in parentheses indicate % within the segment.

Table 4. Travel Party Size, Trip Duration, Travel Expenditures, and Travel Activities by Trip Purpose

| Variable | 2000 | | | 2001 | | | 2002 | | | 2003 | | | 2004 | | |
|---|------|-------|----------|------|-------|-----------|------|-------|-----------|------|-------|-----------|------|-------|-----------|
| | VFR | PLR | t-value | VFR | PLR | t-value | VFR | PLR | t-value | VFR | PLR | t-value | VFR | PLR | t-value |
| Travel Party Size | 2.8 | 3.1 | -2.72** | 2.6 | 3.1 | -8.03*** | 2.3 | 2.7 | -5.31*** | 2.8 | 2.9 | -1.68 | 2.8 | 3.0 | -1.93 |
| Trip Duration | 7.2 | 4.7 | 7.02*** | 7.1 | 4.5 | 8.25*** | 6.8 | 4.4 | 8.51*** | 6.6 | 4.5 | 5.57*** | 6.0 | 4.1 | 6.76*** |
| Travel Expenditure * | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Average spending per person per night | 81.5 | 103.8 | -4.88*** | 57.2 | 102.7 | -17.55*** | 63.9 | 107.3 | -14.60*** | 73.3 | 114.7 | -9.77*** | 71.1 | 117.0 | -14.45*** |
| Accommodation | 38.3 | 39.8 | -0.58 | 32.3 | 39.9 | -4.07*** | 13.9 | 37.6 | -17.13*** | 15.7 | 41.9 | -13.31*** | 19.8 | 41.8 | -13.70*** |
| Food & beverage | 27.0 | 29.1 | -1.23 | 21.1 | 30.8 | -9.15*** | 21.7 | 29.3 | -7.43*** | 24.4 | 31.3 | -5.03*** | 23.0 | 33.0 | -10.27*** |
| Transportation | 17.7 | 14.7 | 1.14 | 11.8 | 13.9 | -1.12 | 5.9 | 4.8 | 1.47 | 6.3 | 4.3 | 2.25* | 9.4 | 13.4 | -5.07*** |
| Recreation & entertainment | 19.8 | 20.1 | -0.04 | 17.8 | 29.7 | -1.25 | 6.8 | 9.7 | -4.49*** | 6.8 | 10.0 | -4.54*** | 6.4 | 11.8 | -8.03*** |
| Shopping | 28.9 | 29.9 | -0.43 | 21.0 | 28.8 | -4.93*** | 13.5 | 21.6 | -9.11*** | 17.5 | 22.6 | -4.02*** | 12.1 | 16.2 | -4.51*** |
| Other spending | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.33 | 9.7 | 12.6 | -1.09 | 2.0 | 4.0 | -3.57*** | 2.4 | 4.4 | -3.27*** | 0.9 | 1.7 | -3.27*** |
| Travel Activity ** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Experiencing Acadian Culture | 19.3 | 26.6 | -3.10** | 23.6 | 32.7 | -4.47*** | 19.8 | 29.8 | -5.13*** | 18.9 | 27.0 | -4.02*** | 21.9 | 30.6 | -4.49*** |
| Beach Visits | 65.5 | 74.4 | -3.26*** | 67.5 | 73.7 | -2.84** | 68.4 | 72.5 | -1.87 | 69.1 | 72.1 | -1.26 | 60.1 | 66.7 | -2.94** |
| Bird Watching | 14.6 | 22.6 | -3.79*** | 18.1 | 23.4 | -2.92** | 18.5 | 22.3 | -2.02* | 15.7 | 19.7 | -2.15* | 15.3 | 17.1 | -1.10 |
| Boating/ Canoeing/ Kayaking/ Sailing | 17.4 | 11.4 | 2.77** | 14.3 | 11.3 | 1.82 | 14.1 | 10.7 | 2.07* | 13.7 | 8.8 | 2.88** | 8.2 | 7.8 | 0.29 |
| Camping | 9.5 | 19.4 | -5.46*** | 10.6 | 21.9 | -7.27*** | 11.4 | 19.5 | -5.08*** | 9.8 | 17.0 | -4.57*** | 9.7 | 19.3 | -6.54*** |
| Canada's Birthplace Attractions | - | - | - | 24.2 | 34.1 | -4.84*** | 24.2 | 35.0 | -5.19*** | 18.7 | 27.9 | -4.53*** | 20.1 | 27.4 | -3.86*** |
| Confederation Trail | 12.9 | 18.9 | -2.99** | 16.1 | 21.1 | -2.89** | 14.7 | 21.2 | -3.75*** | 15.0 | 18.9 | -2.12** | 14.9 | 23.9 | -5.24*** |
| Craft/Souvenir Shopping | 70.0 | 79.3 | -3.55*** | 64.1 | 73.6 | -4.30*** | 63.0 | 72.4 | -4.11*** | 63.7 | 70.8 | -2.95** | 56.8 | 63.1 | -2.79** |
| Cycling | 7.3 | 10.0 | -1.78 | 6.7 | 9.7 | -2.50* | 7.0 | 8.8 | -1.37 | 6.1 | 7.8 | -1.39 | 4.7 | 6.6 | -1.93 |
| Deep Sea/Salt Water Fishing | 12.0 | 6.0 | 3.30*** | 8.1 | 6.8 | 1.07 | 8.8 | 5.7 | 2.32* | 5.2 | 4.8 | 0.35 | 6.8 | 3.8 | 2.65** |
| Driving Tour | - | - | - | 48.2 | 57.7 | -4.07*** | 56.0 | 58.2 | -0.94 | 43.5 | 53.1 | -3.82*** | 36.5 | 47.3 | -4.84*** |
| Festival/ Event | 32.5 | 27.5 | 1.86 | 25.1 | 24.2 | 0.42 | 23.6 | 21.0 | 1.30 | 18.7 | 18.9 | -0.12 | 18.9 | 17.0 | 1.07 |
| Founders Hall | - | - | - | 12.8 | 16.4 | -2.27* | 14.7 | 19.2 | -2.61** | 11.5 | 16.9 | -3.23*** | 11.8 | 17.8 | -3.90*** |
| Fun/Theme parks | 19.3 | 22.8 | -1.48 | 17.9 | 20.8 | -1.59 | 17.5 | 18.9 | -0.76 | 17.2 | 19.0 | -0.95 | 19.3 | 14.4 | 2.75** |
| Golf | 20.2 | 14.7 | 2.39* | 19.9 | 15.7 | 2.23* | 21.1 | 14.6 | 3.44*** | 17.8 | 14.2 | 1.90 | 14.1 | 12.1 | 1.22 |
| Harbour/City/Land tours | 12.6 | 19.0 | -3.23*** | 11.0 | 15.8 | -3.15*** | 8.8 | 12.5 | -2.67** | 8.0 | 14.6 | -4.51*** | 12.7 | 18.2 | -3.48*** |
| Hiking | 16.5 | 26.3 | -4.39*** | 19.3 | 24.3 | -2.66** | 17.7 | 23.2 | -2.96** | 20.4 | 23.3 | -1.41 | 11.3 | 19.4 | -5.29*** |
| Live Theater | 19.0 | 20.4 | -0.59 | 19.3 | 18.1 | 0.68 | 17.1 | 17.1 | 0.05 | 15.2 | 18.7 | -1.87 | 15.5 | 15.3 | 0.07 |
| Lobster Suppers | 41.7 | 46.0 | -1.49 | 39.9 | 47.7 | -3.38*** | 39.6 | 47.4 | -3.32*** | 40.9 | 46.8 | -2.39* | 33.2 | 40.3 | -3.26*** |
| Night Life | 16.2 | 14.2 | 0.96 | 17.7 | 14.5 | 1.79 | 17.0 | 12.6 | 2.46* | 14.6 | 13.0 | 0.90 | 10.1 | 12.2 | -1.49 |
| Sightseeing | 72.5 | 84.2 | -4.65*** | 67.9 | 81.0 | -6.16*** | 72.0 | 84.0 | -5.73*** | 78.7 | 85.4 | -3.31*** | 63.0 | 74.4 | -5.20*** |
| Shopping (general merchandise) | 60.2 | 56.8 | 1.21 | 56.9 | 51.5 | 2.31* | 57.5 | 54.8 | 1.16 | 63.5 | 53.2 | 4.17*** | 43.4 | 37.0 | 2.82** |
| Sports (participant) | 11.5 | 10.6 | 0.49 | 13.4 | 11.8 | 0.99 | 15.2 | 12.7 | 1.50 | 13.0 | 11.4 | 0.99 | 6.9 | 5.3 | 1.39 |
| Sports (spectator) | 8.7 | 4.6 | 2.59** | 10.5 | 7.0 | 2.48* | 8.6 | 5.2 | 2.58** | 5.9 | 4.6 | 1.08 | 4.2 | 2.8 | 1.52 |
| Visiting Anne of Green Gables Attractions | 24.9 | 47.6 | -8.80*** | 26.2 | 47.8 | -10.23*** | 25.5 | 46.8 | -9.98*** | 25.7 | 42.8 | -7.60*** | 29.0 | 46.1 | -8.03*** |
| Visit National Parks | 37.3 | 58.7 | -7.61*** | 41.9 | 58.7 | -7.28*** | 43.8 | 58.9 | -6.36*** | 39.8 | 54.9 | -6.07*** | 38.4 | 51.9 | -6.01*** |
| Visit Friends/Relatives | 79.8 | 18.6 | 27.02*** | 87.9 | 19.5 | 42.91*** | 82.1 | 18.1 | 34.86*** | 84.3 | 19.9 | 34.46*** | 73.3 | 16.1 | 28.84*** |
| Visiting Historical/Cultural Attractions | 31.9 | 46.4 | -5.28*** | 34.1 | 47.2 | -5.84*** | 31.0 | 44.2 | -5.86*** | 25.7 | 37.4 | -5.21*** | 33.0 | 44.9 | -5.42*** |

Notes:

1) VFR indicates visiting friends and relatives, whereas PLR indicates pleasure purpose travellers.

2) * (travel expenditure) = average spending \$ per person per night; ** (travel activity) = % of participation

Travel activity and trip purpose. According to the results of *t*-tests, significant differences between the trip purpose groups were found in many of travel activity variables over the years. The results are shown in Table 4. On the whole, it was found that pleasure travellers were more likely to be involved in diverse travel activities than VFR travellers. In detail, VFR travellers were more likely to engage in travel activities such as boating/canoeing/kayaking/sailing, going to deep sea or salt water fishing, playing golf, shopping (general merchandise), and participating in a sports event, including visiting friends or relatives, whereas pleasure travellers were more likely to involve in a variety of cultural, historical, and natural activities in PEI.

Discussion and Conclusions

Historically, PEI has experienced high repeat visitation. Nonetheless, it was found that VFR's repeat visitors' ratio has been much higher than pleasure travellers over time. Although repeat visitors accounted for more than 45% of the total pleasure travellers, most of VFR travellers were repeat visitors (more than 75.3% of the total VFR over time). It implies that VFR is one of the most important markets in terms of attracting repeat visitors. Thus, tourism marketers need understand the unique differences of the VFR markets in keeping with their trip patterns and characteristics.

Looking at the results by accommodation types, VFR travellers were more likely to stay their friends or relatives' home, whereas pleasure travellers tended to stay in hotels/motels/resorts. Another finding is that cabins or cottages have been preferred by both VFR and pleasure travellers. Therefore, marketers or tour operators may need to consider cottage or cabin as a preferred accommodation product. Presumably, travellers' preferred accommodation type may change over time. Thus, marketers need to explore and monitor these changes.

VFR travellers' party size has been smaller than pleasure, but their trip duration has been longer. However, VFR travellers' average spending per person per night has been smaller than pleasure, perhaps due in part, to their preferred accommodation type (homes of friends and family). Tourism marketers must balance the objectives of increasing expenditures and improving overall visitation numbers in their marketing strategy. The VFR market represents high repeat visitation, yet lower expenditure or yield as compared to pleasure travellers. This is an important measure to manage. Tourism marketers must continuously monitor changes in spending patterns over time in order to generate incremental tourism dollars and to promote specific markets.

According to the results of travel activities, VFR travellers were more likely to enjoy specific activities such as boating/canoeing/kayaking/sailing, going to deep sea or salt water fishing, playing golf, shopping (general merchandise), and participating in a sports event, including visiting friends or relatives, whereas pleasure travellers were more likely to involve in diverse cultural, historical, and natural activities. Thus, travel market and travellers' behaviour research is needed to develop and promote specific activity-based products for specific travel markets.

In summary, this study is exploratory rather than explanatory, but it identified that the VFR market is important and valuable to Prince Edward Island although further in-depth research is needed (e.g., research on ways to promote to the VFR market from a pragmatic perspective). It provided an exploratory examination of trip characteristic variables between VFR and pleasure travellers and identified some significant differences between the two trip purpose groups using longitudinal data sets.

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