

## Table of Contents

<b>Keynote Address.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Making research more relevant: Give it a try! <i>David W. Lime.....</i>	3
<b>Crowding Issues in Resource Management.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Balancing tradeoffs in the Denali Wilderness: An expanded approach to normative research using stated choice analysis. <i>Steven R. Lawson and Robert Manning.....</i>	15
Coping, crowding and satisfaction: A study of Adirondack wilderness hikers. <i>Andrew K. Johnson and Chad Dawson.....</i>	25
Perceived crowding at Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area. <i>Megha Budruk, Robert E. Manning, William A. Valliere, and Benjamin Wang.....</i>	32
Transportation planning and social carrying capacity in the National Parks. <i>William Valliere, Robert Manning, Megha Budruk, Steven Lawson, and Benjamin Wang.....</i>	36
<b>The Role of Information in Travel Planning Decisions.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Assessing information needs and communication behaviors of National Forest summer visitors. <i>James D. Absher, Brijesh Thapa, and Alan R. Graefe.....</i>	43
The commodification process of extreme sports: The diffusion of the X-Games by ESPN. <i>Chang Huh, Byoung Kwan Lee, and Euidong Yoo.....</i>	49
Marketing National Parks: Oxymoron or opportunity? <i>Alan K. Hogenauer.....</i>	53
<b>Demographic Trends in Outdoor Recreation Participation &amp; Travel.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Wildlife-associated recreation in the North Central Region: Participation patterns and management implications. <i>Allan Marsinko and John Dwyer.....</i>	63
The New England travel market: Generational travel patterns, 1979 to 1996. <i>Rod Warnick.....</i>	69
Welcome center research: How valuable is secondary research? <i>Lousia Meyer, Tara Patterson, Lori Pennington-Gray, Andrew Holdnak, and Brijesh Thapa.....</i>	76
<b>Methodology in Outdoor Recreation Research I: Interventions.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Unique programming: An examination of the benefits of a free choice program. <i>Dorothy L. Schmalz, Deborah L. Kerstetter, and Harry C. Zinn.....</i>	81
Outdoor experiential-based training: Motivational and environmental influences affecting outcomes. <i>Teresa (Birdie) High and Alan R. Graefe.....</i>	85
Use of experience sampling method to understand the wilderness experience. <i>Lynn Anderson.....</i>	92
Encounters and the guided group trip: Going "on-the-scene" to examine the situational interpretation of encounters. <i>Erin K. Sharpe.....</i>	98

<b>Leisure Motivations of Outdoor Recreationists.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Differences in SCUBA diver motivations based on level of development. <i>Sharon L. Todd, Alan R. Graefe, and Walter Mann.....</i>	107
Skier motivations: Do they change over time? <i>Erin White and Lori Pennington-Gray.....</i>	115
Sociocultural perspectives of trapping revisited: A comparative analysis of activities and motives 1994 and 2000. <i>Rodney R. Zwick, Ron Glass, Kim Royar, and Tom Decker.....</i>	118
<b>Resource Management &amp; International Tourism Development.....</b>	<b>125</b>
The impact of potential political security level on international tourism. <i>Young-Rae Kim, Chang Huh, and Seung Hyun Kim.....</i>	127
Future of the Korea National Parks: A preliminary Delphi study of key experts. <i>Byung-kyu Lee and Wilbur F. LaPage.....</i>	130
<b>User Satisfaction in Outdoor Recreation.....</b>	<b>133</b>
A preliminary analysis of Florida State Park satisfaction survey data. <i>Andrew Holdnak, Stephen Holland, and Erin Parks.....</i>	135
Recreationists in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area: A survey of user characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes. <i>Robert C. Burns and Alan R. Graefe.....</i>	138
Visitor satisfactions: Backcountry and wilderness users in the White Mountain National Forest. <i>Chad P. Dawson, Rebecca Oreskes, Frederick Kacprzyński, and Tom More.....</i>	144
Participants' perceptions of the 1997-1998 Missouri State Parks Passport Program. <i>Yi-Jin Ye and Jaclyn Card.....</i>	153
<b>Environmental Knowledge, Concern, Behavior &amp; Education.....</b>	<b>161</b>
An evaluation of Appalachian Trail hikers' knowledge of minimum impact skills and practices. <i>Peter Newman, Robert Manning, Jim Bacon, Alan Graefe, and Gerard Kyle.....</i>	163
Who cares and who acts? Different types of outdoor recreationists exhibit different levels of environmental concern and behavior. <i>Mario F. Teisl and Kelly O'Brien.....</i>	168
Visitor behavior and resource impacts at Cadillac Mountain, Acadia National Park. <i>Rex Turner and Wilbur LaPage.....</i>	175
<b>Leisure Constraints of Outdoor Recreationists.....</b>	<b>181</b>
The effects of perceived leisure constraints among Korean university students. <i>Sae-Sook Oh, Sei-Yi Oh, and Linda L. Caldwell.....</i>	183
Exploration of the influence of self-efficacy on recreation participation levels of individuals with visual impairments who use dog guides. <i>Laurlyn K. Harmon and Linda L. Caldwell.....</i>	188
<b>Urban Recreation &amp; Development Issues.....</b>	<b>193</b>
An integrative concept for visitor monitoring in a heavily used conservation area in the vicinity of a large city: The Danube Floodplains National Park, Vienna. <i>Arne Arnberger, Christiane Brandenburg, and Andreas Muhar.....</i>	195

Linkages in the use of recreation environments across the urban to ex-urban spectrum by urban residents. <i>John F. Dwyer and Susan C. Barro</i> .....	202
The role, use and benefits of natural recreation areas within and near residential subdivisions. <i>Christine A. Vogt and Robert W. Marans</i> .....	208
<b>Economic Impacts &amp; Non-economic Benefits of Tourism</b> .....	215
New York State's 1999 agritourism business study. <i>Diane Kuehn and Duncan Hilchey</i> .....	217
Rail-trails and special events: Community and economic benefits. <i>Charles Nelson, Christine Vogt, Joel Lynch, and Daniel Stynes</i> .....	220
Private business perceptions of transportation issues and the Island Explorer Bus system at Acadia National Park, Maine. <i>Rea Brennan, Marc Edwards, and John J. Daigle</i> .....	225
<b>Management Decision-making &amp; Planning for Outdoor Recreation</b> .....	231
Integrating resource, social and managerial indicators of quality into carrying capacity decision making. <i>Peter Newman, Robert Manning, and Bill Valliere</i> .....	233
Redefining roles of science in planning and management: Ecology as a planning and management tool. <i>Greg Mason and Stephen Murphy</i> .....	239
<b>Impacts of Wildlife Viewing</b> .....	247
Elk viewing in Pennsylvania: An evolving eco-tourism system. <i>Bruce E. Lord, Charles H. Strauss, and Michael J. Powell</i> .....	249
Competing values: A case study of Pennsylvania's elk herd as a tourism attraction. <i>Jeffrey A. Walsh and Leonard K. Long</i> .....	253
Impacts of wildlife viewing at Dixville Notch Wildlife Viewing Area. <i>Judith K. Silverberg, Peter J. Pekins, and Robert A. Robertson</i> .....	260
<b>Methodology in Outdoor Recreation Research II: Instruments &amp; Methods</b> .....	267
Effects of pretesting with the adventure recreation model instrument. <i>Anderson Young, Lynn Anderson, and Dale Anderson</i> .....	269
Modeling nonlinear preferences. <i>Donald F. Dennis</i> .....	275
<b>Personal Relevance, Involvement &amp; Loyalty in Outdoor Recreation</b> .....	279
Psychological commitment as a mediator of the relationship between involvement and loyalty. <i>Joohyun Lee and Alan Graefe</i> .....	281
<b>Gender Issues in Outdoor Recreation &amp; Resource Management</b> .....	289
Older Chinese women immigrants and their leisure experiences: Before and after emigration to the United States. <i>Ching-Hua Ho and Jaclyn A. Card</i> .....	291
Towards an understanding of gender differences with respect to whitewater rafting preferences. <i>Duarte B. Morais, Traci Zillifro, and Susanne Dubrouillet</i> .....	298

<b>Trails over Land &amp; Water: Issues of Multiple Use &amp; Conflict</b> .....	305
Use and user patterns among Michigan licensed Off-Highway Vehicles ownership types. <i>Joel A. Lynch and Charles M. Nelson</i> .....	307
Recreation conflict of riparian landowners with personal watercraft and motorboat use along the New York's Great Lakes. <i>Cheng-Ping Wang and Chad P. Dawson</i> .....	314
User preferences for social conditions on the St. Croix International Waterway. <i>Jamie Hannon, John J. Daigle, and Cynthia Stacey</i> .....	320
Security along the Appalachian Trail. <i>James J. Bacon, Robert E. Manning, Alan R. Graefe, Gerard Kyle, Robert D. Lee, Robert C. Burns, Rita Hennessy, and Robert Gray</i> .....	326
Trails research: Where do we go from here? <i>Michael A. Schuett and Patricia Seiser</i> .....	333
<b>Attachments to Places &amp; Activities in Outdoor Recreation</b> .....	337
Visitor meanings of place: Using computer content analysis to examine visitor meanings at three National Capitol sites. <i>Wei-Li Jasmine Chen, Chad L. Pierskalla, Theresa L. Goldman, and David L. Larsen</i> .....	339
The importance of visitors' knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks in influencing sense of place in the High Peaks Region. <i>Laura Fredrickson</i> .....	346
Attachments to places and activities: The relationship of psychological constructs to customer satisfaction attributes. <i>Thomas D. Wickham and Alan R. Graefe</i> .....	356
An exploration of human territoriality in forest recreation. <i>Harry C. Zinn, Laurlyn K. Harmon, Brijesh Thapa, Deborah L. Kerstetter, and Alan R. Graefe</i> .....	365
Community attachment and resource harvesting in rural Denmark. <i>Rodney R. Zwick and David Solan</i> .....	369
<b>Poster Session</b> .....	375
The political economy of wilderness designation in Nova Scotia. <i>Glyn Bissix, Leah Levac, and Peter Horvath</i> .....	377
The Westfield River Watershed Interactive Atlas: Mapping recreation data on the Web. <i>Robert S. Bristow and Steven Riberdy</i> .....	383
Park resources as an essential to urban societies. <i>Kristin Dion, Doug Stefancik, Serena Hawkins, and Robert Bristow</i> .....	386
Parks and recreation employment status: Implications from a civil service perspective. <i>Joel Frater and Arthur Graham</i> .....	390
Natural resources interpretation: The role of researchers – A new-old approach. <i>Mark Gleason</i> .....	395
Mountain bike trail compaction relation to selected physical parameters. <i>Jeff Hale and Rodney R. Zwick</i> .....	399
Internet & branding: A perfect match or a fatal attraction? Analysis of fifty states of the U.S. official tourism websites. <i>Gyehee Lee, Liping A. Cai, Everette Mills, and Joseph T. O'Leary</i> .....	403

Job satisfaction among recreation practitioners. <i>Erin Parks and Andrew Holdnak</i> .....	411
Extensivity and intensity of grants usage in obtaining funding for recreation services and capital improvement projects among park and recreation agencies in the state of Michigan. <i>Jerry L. Ricciardo</i> .....	415
Resident camp directors, spirituality, and wilderness. <i>Michael Rule and Edward Udd</i> .....	418
Social groups preferences relation to motivations and ability levels of whitewater kayakers. <i>Seth Turner and Rod Zwick</i> .....	421
<b>Management Presentation</b> .....	427
Human preferences for ecological units: Patterns of dispersed campsites within landtype associations on the Chippewa National Forest. <i>Lisa Whitcomb, Dennis Parker, Bob Carr, Paul Gobster, and Herb Schroeder</i> .....	429
<b>Roundtable Discussions</b> .....	435
Creating recreation partnerships on private agricultural and forest land in the urban Northeast: A case study from the Great Meadows of the Connecticut River. <i>Robert L. Ryan and Juliet Hansel</i> .....	437
Applied research opportunities in developed campgrounds. <i>Carl P. Wiedemann</i> .....	443
Adapting the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) for states lands planning. <i>Susan Bulmer, Linda Henzel, Ann Mates, Matt Moore, and Thomas A. More</i> .....	447
It's time to put the C.A.R.T. before the H.O.R.S.E. or Putting Critical, Analytical, and Reflective Thinking before "Handyman" Oriented Recreation Student Education. <i>David L. Jewell</i> .....	452
<b>Index of Authors</b> .....	457

# **The Role of Information in Travel Planning Decisions**

# ASSESSING INFORMATION NEEDS AND COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS OF NATIONAL FOREST SUMMER VISITORS

James D. Absher

Pacific Southwest Research Station, USDA–Forest Service,  
Riverside, CA 92507

Brijesh Thapa

Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism, University of  
Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611

Alan R. Graefe

Leisure Studies Program, The Pennsylvania State  
University, University Park, PA 16801

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**Abstract:** Information needs and satisfaction with various media are studied on the San Bernardino National Forest. Personal contact with rangers or staff is preferred, and about one-third to one-half of all visitors reported using various print media (brochures, maps, etc.). Least used were websites or mass media. Second, an adaptation of communication theory, uses and gratifications, is tested. Results suggest that the uses and gratifications scales are reliable and stable, and that visitors want orientation, reassurance and educational messages, in decreasing order of importance. Each of these topics was compared between day and overnight visitors.

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## Introduction

Participation in various outdoor recreation activities has significantly increased over the past decade. Increases have been particularly high in forestlands that are adjacent to urban areas. Of particular concern is the knowledge that visitors from these areas may have about natural resource management policies or proper use of forestlands for recreation. One approach is to study the communications between recreation area managers and current or potential visitors. Included would be an investigation into visitors' information needs and communication behaviors (Absher, 1998). Upon knowing visitors' information needs and communication behaviors, managers would be able to enact more effective and efficient ways to reach out to visitors, and better focus management efforts in terms of environmental education, minimal impact information, alerting visitors of policy changes, or simply assuring that visitors are able to achieve the highest quality experience.

## Group Differences

Visitor communication in resource management has typically employed various print and non-print communication media such as interpretive bulletin boards, flyers, and brochures. Often the task has been to instill awareness, generate interest, and influence or modify behavior. Programs are only effective if the information positively influences recreationists' attitudes, and more

importantly, creates an acceptable behavioral ethic during and after the visit to a recreational setting (Cole, 1999). For example, Oliver, Roggenbuck and Watson (1985) identified a fifty percent decrease in tree damage and litter in a campground as a result of creating awareness among campers via brochures about low-impact camping. Correspondingly, Cole, Hammond and McCool (1997) found that hikers exhibited a significant increase in knowledge after exposure to environmental messages encouraging low-impact practices.

However, the overall effectiveness of various print and non-print communication media is questionable, as the message is constrained due to the inability to reach all recreationists (Cole et al., 1997). Face to face communication can be much more effective, due to the credibility of the source of information (Knopf & Dustin, 1992; Vander Stoep & Roggenbuck, 1996), as in the case of a backcountry ranger informing a backpacker about the risks involved in the backcountry. Roggenbuck and Berrier (1982) found greater effectiveness with the combination of brochures and personal contacts among campers. Similarly, Olson, Bowan and Roth (1984) noted an increase in visitors' knowledge and attitudes via the use of brochures and direct personal communications, while the use of signs was much less effective among visitors. When given a choice, forest visitors seem to prefer face-to-face interaction to written or displayed information (James, Absher & Blazey, 1999).

However, visitor communication is typically concentrated on-site where the learning environment is informal and attention to the educational message is optional. It has been suggested that specific user groups with low awareness, knowledge or experience should be targeted with offsite communications (Confer, Mowen, Graefe & Absher, 2000). If information is received prior to site visitation or activity participation, there is the possibility that users will be more aware of appropriate behaviors and will choose to visit the 'right' place/setting (Vander Stoep & Roggenbuck, 1996). To achieve this objective, it is essential to understand the process of information search, as well as preferences for communication media among visitors (Brown, McCool & Manfred, 1987).

Finally, information needs and communication behaviors often lack homogeneity across all users because they are dependent upon various factors such as level of experience, proximity to the destination, ethnic background, and activity participation. First time visitors are more likely than repeat visitors to seek information about a new setting. Hence, they might be more inclined to read the information provided by management, such as interpretive bulletin boards, flyers, and brochures. They might also be expected to seek basic and additional information about the setting (Rogers & Ramthun, 1998). On the other hand, more experienced visitors or skilled recreationists may be more likely to pursue personal contacts to gather information about the setting, or may in fact feel comfortable in acting on incomplete or inaccurate information. For example, Williams and Huffman (1986) noted a difference in the process of information use by more and less experienced

visitors; wherein specialized hikers demonstrated a greater propensity to seek additional information than non-specialized hikers. Finally, ethnic or group composition variables may be a factor. Parker and Winter (1996) reported that Hispanics were less likely to approach a management agency for information, and more likely to obtain information about a recreation area via family or friends. Also, Hispanics have shown a greater proclivity to learn about the rules and regulations, while their preferred medium of communication was print media (Winter & Chavez, 1999). In summary, information needs and behaviors may vary by user group.

### Communications Approach

Based on the above review, it is apparent that information services may be critical links enabling managers to communicate effectively with a broad range of visitors. Information needs and communication behaviors have been a relatively new subject of study within the outdoor recreation field, and research has primarily focused on the application of social psychological theories, notably persuasion theory and/or close variants of theories of reasoned action (Absher, 1998). Although the use of social psychological theories offers a valuable way to understand communication behaviors, research should incorporate other existing theories from various disciplines to further extend our understanding of communication patterns. To be clear, the dismissal of currently used theories, notably socio psychological derivatives, is not advocated here. Rather a more integrated interdisciplinary approach is encouraged — one that may complement, advance or provide a more complete assessment (Absher, 1998).

A relatively untested approach to deciphering information and communication behaviors comes from the mass communication field. A popular theory known as “uses and gratifications” (U&G) has been employed over the last 50 years to study the public’s perception of gratifications sought and obtained via engagement in mass communications across a variety of modalities such as television programs, phone usage and print media. It is important to note that gratifications sought and gratifications obtained are not synonymous. Gratifications sought (GS) are defined as ‘needs, expectations, or motivations for media use,’ while gratifications obtained (GO) reflect ‘actual fulfillment’ of the gratifications sought (Dobos, 1992, p. 30). The causal link between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained is important because, if sought after gratifications are not obtained during the process of media engagement, then the likelihood of further engagement is reduced, and future communication opportunities may be lost.

Basically, the U&G approach assumes that viewing audiences differ in the gratifications they seek and obtain while engaged in the mass media (Vincent & Basil, 1997). Also, this theory assumes that viewing audiences are not passive receivers but rather are actively involved in making a conscientious and motivated attempt to seek various

gratifications (Anderson, 1987; McQuail, 1983). It is due to the various purposes or gratifications sought by the audiences that the outcome of the viewing experience fluctuates among individuals engaged in similar mass media outlets (Anderson, 1987).

That said, U&G might vary by setting. In other words, various media outlets may be sought for different gratifications. For example, newspapers were sought for sociopolitical knowledge and self-understanding was obtained by books, while broadcast media such as interpersonal channels, film, and television programs granted ‘more affective gratifications’ when compared with newspapers (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973 in Dobos, 1992, p. 31). Recently, Vincent and Basil (1997) indicated that newspaper reading resulted in better knowledge of current events when compared with newsmagazine reading among college students. It is evident that individuals resort to various media types to seek and fulfill various gratifications. It is unclear at this time which information needs are fulfilled in outdoor recreation settings.

Even though U&G has been extensively employed in media studies (mass communications), rarely has there been an attempt to incorporate this theory or other mass communication theories in the context of outdoor recreation, although the applicability is implicitly evident and strongly recommended (Absher, 1998). To date, a few exploratory studies have been conducted (Absher & Picard, 1998; Absher, 1999).

### Uses and Gratifications Scales for Outdoor Recreation

The basic U&G principles were adapted and pilot-tested among Forest visitors to establish theoretical validity by Absher and Picard (1998). Based on this work this study focused on a four-dimension implementation of U&G scales: *Orientation*, *Instrumental*, *Educational* and *Reassurance*. Each dimension highlights one practical aspect of the outdoor recreation experience. The first dimension, *Orientation*, refers to seeking information about forest activities, events and various places within the forest. The second dimension, *Instrumental*, refers to visiting the Forest or Forest Service sites to gather logistic information about parking facilities, day-use permits and operating hours. The third dimension is *Educational*. As the name implies, it refers to seeking or visiting the forest to learn about various plants, wildlife, and preservation and conservation ideas and concerns. The fourth dimension, *Reassurance*, refers to the use of information to avoid getting lost, avoid potentially dangerous situations, and know where to get help if the need arises. A total of 24 uses and gratifications items were randomly arranged using a six-point, Likert scale format, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The dimensions demonstrated reliability alpha values ranging from .78 to .87. Analysis based on these scales indicated clear differences in the use of communication services across users groups (Absher, 1999).

## Objectives

The work reviewed above provides a platform to build upon in terms of better understanding of visitor communications and further refinement of the U&G scales. Information services use needs to be systematically investigated. This involves various media as well as new measurement scales. Following from Absher and Picard (1998) and Absher (1999) the U&G scales need to be further tested to determine reliability among various user groups. Thus, the objectives of this paper are to:

1. Apply U&G theory to the assessment of information needs, preferences and uses among two major segments of National Forest summer visitors (overnight and day users), and
2. Assess the use of and satisfaction with various information sources (media) by these user groups.

## Methods

Data were collected within the Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests, both located in Southern California. Both of these National Forests offer a diverse array of recreational opportunities including camping, hiking, swimming, boating, picnicking, sightseeing and fishing. A sampling plan was designed to target users on six days during the months of July, August and September 1997. The sampled sites included ten campgrounds and nine day-use areas.

Interviewers attempted to sample all users at each site on the designated sampling periods. A single member of each group was requested to respond to the interview questions, which took about ten minutes to complete. A total of 633 subjects were approached, of which 566 users completed a questionnaire and 67 refused to be interviewed, yielding an 89 percent response rate. There were 379 respondents that were sampled at campgrounds and 217 in day-use areas. The three-page survey instrument was administered onsite, and a Spanish version was also available. The Spanish version was needed because California has a high Spanish speaking population and some of those users might feel more comfortable responding in their native tongue.

Respondents were asked about their frequency of visitation to National Forests within the last 12 months, and the primary activity undertaken during the course of their trip. A total of 16 items related to information needs and communication behaviors based on U&G theory as adapted by Absher and Picard (1998) were employed. As explained earlier, the U&G scales was conceptually designed with four dimensions that demonstrated to be reliable based on Cronbach's alpha values: *Orientation*, *Instrumental*, *Educational* and *Reassurance*. The original scales had 24 items, but 8 items were dropped due to redundancy or lack of statistical power, as recommended by Absher and Picard (1998). The remaining 16 items, four for each U&G sub-scale, were randomly ordered on the questionnaire with a six-point Likert type scale format, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These variables were subsequently reverse coded so that higher levels of agreement resulted in higher U&G scores.

Other sections of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the media sources they used in planning their trip and their satisfaction with the same media in terms of their usefulness. Basic sociodemographic and recreation use questions completed the questionnaire.

## Results

### Profile of Subjects

Among the 566 respondents, 65% reported they were White/Caucasian, 22% claimed to be Hispanic, and below 13% classified themselves into other ethnic groups (Black/African American, Native American or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander). About 39% reported incomes between \$40,000 and \$75,000, 28% indicated between \$20,000 and \$39,999, 13% reported below \$20,000, and about 20% noted above \$75,000. Visitors were predominantly from the Southern California region (97%), with about 3% from other states.

Within the past 12 months, 23 percent of the respondents indicated they visited the National Forest six or more times, while an equal number (23%) reported one visit. During their current visit, 23 percent reported a stay of 1 day or less (day users), while 77percent were overnight visitors. This data is the result of an intentional stratification in the sample, and should not be used as a general estimate of the day use proportion in the forest. This variable was used to define the two analysis groups below.

Activities pursued at the forest varied with visitor ethnicity. About half of the day users (51%) were White, compared to nearly three-quarters of the overnight users (72%). Hispanics were twice as prevalent among day users (34%) than among overnight users (16%). About one-eighth of both campers (12%) and day users (15%) were members of other minority groups.

### Information Needs and Communication Behaviors

Table 1 shows that the most used information sources were family/friends (60% or the respondents), followed by maps (55%), brochures and flyers (54%), and rangers/staff (53%). Next came three moderately used media: trail/road signs (49%), bulletin boards (42%) and guidebooks (37%). Only the World Wide Web (Internet) and radio/TV/newspapers/magazines registered low usage (13% each).

Independent of how often the various media were actually used, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the sources they did use. Technologically newer and conventional mass media, such as the World Wide Web (Internet) and radio/TV/magazines/newspapers, registered low levels of satisfaction as well as relatively low use levels. Information from rangers or other Forest Service employees, and from family and friends, received the highest levels of satisfaction. These are, of course, the two personal media on the list. Maps, brochures & flyers, bulletin boards, guidebooks, and signs along roads or trails (all print media) seem to fall in the middle in terms of satisfaction.

**Table 1. Communication Media Use and Usefulness (Satisfaction) by Group**

Variable	Day User	Overnight User	All	Significance Test
<b>1. Media used<sup>2</sup></b>				
Brochures/flyers	53.8%	53.7%	53.7%	.535 <sup>2</sup>
Rangers/ FS employees	44.5	55.5	52.9	.023
Bulletin boards/notices at sites	42.0	42.0	42.0	.539
Signs along roads/trails	52.1	47.6	48.6	.224
Maps	47.1	57.8	55.3	.026
Websites	7.6	14.2	12.7	.034
Radio/TV/newspaper/magazines	15.1	12.7	13.3	.296
Guidebooks	32.8	32.2	36.9	.169
Family/friends	57.1	60.6	59.8	.287
<b>2. Medium usefulness (satisfaction)<sup>3</sup></b>				
Brochures/flyers	3.34	3.34	3.33	.964 <sup>1</sup>
Rangers/ FS employees	3.69	3.69	3.62	.459
Bulletin boards/notices at sites	3.54	3.38	3.41	.131
Signs along roads/trails	3.51	3.26	3.31	.024
Maps	3.55	3.39	3.42	.192
Websites	3.00	2.94	2.95	.732
Radio/TV/newspaper/magazines	3.23	2.90	2.99	.028
Guidebooks	3.49	3.37	3.39	.296
Family/friends	3.50	3.59	3.56	.427

<sup>1</sup> This section is based on a t-test between groups.

<sup>2</sup> This section reports the percentage that used the medium listed, and significance test is based on Chi-square test (Fisher's exact) of groups by use percentage.

<sup>3</sup> Scale is 1= "Not at all satisfied" to 5= "Extremely satisfied."

In order to better understand these results, they were compared between the day and overnight groups. The significance tests in Table 1 show that there were few differences. Overnight visitors reported using three media sources more often than their day use counterparts: rangers/employees, maps, and websites. And they rated their satisfaction (usefulness) with signs along roads/trails and radio/TV/newspaper/magazines lower.

#### Uses and Gratifications Scales

The items within each U&G dimension were subjected to a Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis to identify their internal consistency (see Table 2). The first dimension, Orientation, had a standardized alpha of .78; the second dimension, Instrumental, registered .78; the third dimension, Educational, had .87, while the fourth dimension, Reassurance, was .83. These reliability values are considered good to very good, and are consistent with the earlier works of Absher and Picard (1998) and Absher (1999), with no one scale differing by more than .05 from the pilot test. This suggests that the U&G scales are stable and reliable at least for this user population.

As far as the actual needs these scales measure, the Instrumental scale was the lowest rated at 2.78 out of 5. Then came Educational (2.86), Reassurance (3.07) and finally Orientation (3.30), the highest rated of the four. This suggests that orientation concerns are the predominant need followed by reassurance and educational functions.

To check this further, the day and overnight users were compared with a t-test of the mean scores (Table 2). The differences for each scale were relatively small, ranging from .06 to .13 scale points. None of the group comparisons were statistically significant, which suggests that the information needs are the same for each group. Apparently it makes no difference whether they are day users or longer term visitors in terms of the kinds of information visitors are seeking.

#### **Summary and Conclusions**

In summary the results show that visitors reported personal interaction (family/friends or rangers/staff) when communicating about outdoor recreation more than other forms of communication. Printed media (bulletin boards, guidebooks, maps, brochures, and signs) were in the middle range of use, and mass media outlets (Internet, radio, TV, newspaper, magazines) were used relatively infrequently.

There were some differences between those who stayed overnight and day users, with overnight users always reporting more use of those media that were significantly different (rangers/employees, maps, and websites). One management implication from these results is that personal services are highly valued. Whether they are provided by a staffed office, roving patrols, or non-agency employees such as volunteers or partners (e.g., chambers of commerce), the users rate these information sources highly.

Table 2. Uses and Gratifications Scales, Alpha Reliability and Group Comparisons

U&G Subscales <sup>1</sup>	Cronbach's Alpha:		Mean Scores and Group Comparison:				
	Standardized Item Alpha	Previous Alpha <sup>2</sup>	Overall Mean (Std. Dev.)	Overnight Users' Mean	Day Users' Mean	t-test Signif.	
Orientation Scale	.83	.78	2.70 (1.46)	2.71	2.65	.92	
Instrumental Scale	.74	.78	3.22 (1.18)	3.23	3.17	.89	
Educational Scale	.85	.87	3.14 (1.22)	3.18	3.06	.15	
Reassurance Scale	.88	.83	2.93 (1.26)	2.97	2.84	.33	

<sup>1</sup> Questions used a six-point Likert Scale format, reverse coded, so that 6= Strongly Agree and 1= Strongly Disagree.

<sup>2</sup> Compared to pilot study results (Absher, 1998).

The print media are also being accessed by many visitors (roughly a third to a half of all visitors). Managers will need to more carefully assess the impact of these media to assure effectiveness in message delivery. The websites and mass media are not being used much and in some cases are low rated in terms of usefulness. The application of these technologies/media would need to be improved if they are to be more successful for a broad range of visitors.

The U&G scales were shown to be reliable and consistent for these forest visitors. Orientation concerns were the top rated need, followed by reassurance and educational functions. Moreover, there were no significant differences in these needs between the two groups studied. Managers may want to review the mix of messages they, and perhaps their partners, provide through various media to ensure that these functions are met in ways that are accessible to both day and overnight users.

Finally, this study provides only a brief account of U&G scale performance. The original U&G development work intended to produce scales that could be used broadly in outdoor recreation, and the results from this application of the scales is encouraging. Nonetheless, they should be more fully tested across a variety of outdoor recreation settings and activity types to gauge their suitability and impact in general use.

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## THE COMMODIFICATION PROCESS OF EXTREME SPORTS: THE DIFFUSION OF THE X-GAMES BY ESPN

Chang Huh

Ph.D. Candidate in Park, Recreation, and Tourism  
Resources, Michigan State University, 172 Natural  
Resources Building, East Lansing, MI 48824

Byoung Kwan Lee

Ph.D. Candidate in Journalism and Communications,  
University of Florida, 2096 Weimer Hall, Gainesville, FL  
32611

Euidong Yoo

Ph.D. Candidate in Physical Education, Florida State  
University, Tallahassee, FL 32306

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to explore the commodification process of extreme sports. Specifically, this study is to investigate how X-Games as a sport event has been spread among the teenagers by ESPN in order to use extreme sports commercially. The diffusion theory was utilized as a theoretical framework to explain this process because the diffusion theory is a useful perspective to explain how new ideas are spread among the members of a social system. In other words, X-Games as an innovation has been diffused through both ESPN (mass media channel) and the participants and viewers of X-Games (interpersonal channel) over time among teenagers (the members of a social system). Especially, this study focused the role of ESPN as a change agent in the diffusion process of X-Games. For the purpose of this study, a research question was suggested, "Does ESPN influence the consumption of commodities related to extreme sports?". A path model was constructed to examine this research question. This model was designed to investigate the causal link between the amount of X-Games televised by ESPN and the consumption of commodities related to extreme sports. The result indicated that the model was consistent with the data.

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### Introduction

Individual sports and outdoor activities, like skateboarding, in-line skating, rock climbing, parasailing, mountain biking, skyboarding, disc golf, and snowboarding, that contain a certain degree of risk have become increasingly popular in the 1990s. These leisure activities are known by various names, such as "thrill seeker" vacations (du Lac, 1995), "whiz" sports (Midol, 1993; Midol & Broyer, 1995), "panic" sports (Kroker, Kroker, & Cook, 1989), "risk" sports, and "extreme" sports (ESPN, 1995; Rinehart, 1995; Robinson, 1992). Two terms, risk sports and extreme sports, are broadly accepted.

Robinson (1992) argued that risk sport activities differ from traditional sport activities by posing elements of real or perceived physical danger within a context of outcome

uncertainty. He also defined the risk sports "as a variety of self-initiated activities that generally occur in natural-environment settings and that, due to their always uncertain and potentially harmful nature, provide the opportunity for intense cognitive and affective involvement" (p. 53). The origin of using the word "extreme" in those activities goes back to the 1970s in France when two Frenchmen referred to their conquest of Chamonix couloirs as "ski extrême" (Youngblut, 1998). Youngblut described the word "extreme" as "far beyond the bounds of moderation; exceeding what is considered reasonable; radical" (p. 24). Pedersen and Kelly (2000) contended that the term "extreme" was used in the context of sports to describe any sporting activity that was taken to "the edge." Then, they defined it as "a variety of sporting activities that have almost nothing in common except for high risk and an appeal to females and males from the ages of 12-to-34" (p. 1). Synthesizing the definitions of Robinson and Pedersen and Kelly, extreme sports are defined as a variety of individual sporting activities that challenge against uncertain and harmful nature to achieve the enjoyment itself, especially, among the young generation.

The Entertainment Sports Programming Network (hereafter, ESPN) X-Games is a commercialization of extreme sports. According to ESPN's Director of Programming, Ron Semiao, he got the idea for ESPN's X-Games in 1993. The idea was to create a sport event, such as the Olympic Games, held in both Summer and Winter every four years. Thus, ESPN began hosting X-Games in Summer and Winter annually, called them Summer X-Games and Winter X-Games. The idea of ESPN's Director, wishing to innovate a sport event in Summer and Winter, such as the Olympiad, has come true as X-Games. Needless to say, in terms of a communication channel to people, ESPN has played an important role to disseminate X-Games to people. ESPN claimed that "the 1998 X-Games attracted a record 250,000 spectators and gathered more than 400 of the world's top alternative sports athletes to compete for prize money/medals in nine sports categories" (X Games fact sheet - X at V, 1999, p. 1). In addition, they said that they reached 76 million households through ESPN, 64.4 million households through ESPN2, and approximately 171 million households worldwide via ESPN International in 1999 Summer X-Games. Since ESPN changed the name from "The eXtreme Games" to "X-Games in 1996, ESPN has hosted "The X-Games" each year in both Summer and Winter, as planned.

In the meantime, extreme sports are alternative sports against the mainstream. In spite of its uncommercial characteristic as the alternative sports, they have flourished commercially. Maurstad (1998) noted, "The X-Games present a sporting event for a post-punk audience raised on MTV. ... This wide world of sports represents a complete inversion of the old order in which team sports and team ideals were the standard that jocks lived by" (p. 1). The X-Games was created in 1995 by ESPN in order to enhance profit and entertainment in the form of sponsorship and endorsement of non-sports and sport-related activities, goods, services, and merchandise. In other words, the X-Games is a sports event created to commercialize extreme sports by a media company.

In fact, not only ESPN, the first network to televise extreme sports as a sport event, but also the other television networks (e.g., Fox Sports Net, NBC, MTV, and XOZ) are dealing with extreme sports or have a plan to do so (Larson, 1999). Many major advertisers have paid attention to extreme sports and have even sponsored them. It is said that the main reason why they are interested in the X-Games is that most of participants and viewers are teenagers who have strong purchasing power. For this reason, it is expected that many television networks will make efforts to commodify the extreme sports continuously. Moreover, this type of intervention by media or sponsors demonstrates the commodification process of extreme sports regardless of the nature of alternative sports. In other words, the extreme sports, which have tried to resist commercialized and competitive forms (Rinehart, 1998), are becoming new objects of commodification.

The purpose of this study is to explore the commodification process of extreme sports. This study is also to examine how extreme sports evolved into X-Games as a sport event by ESPN. Thus, it is assumed that ESPN has played an important role as a change agent to diffuse extreme sports among people in order to use extreme sports commercially. In this matter, diffusion theory provides a useful theoretical framework to achieve the purpose of this study. According to Rogers (1995), "diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p.5). Thus, diffusion theory is useful approaches to explain how new ideas are spread among the members of a social system. Therefore, this study is to explore the commodification process of the extreme sports by applying diffusion theory. Specifically, it is investigated how X-Games as a sport event has been spread among people by ESPN in order to use extreme sport commercially.

## Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the commodification process of extreme sports. Specifically, this study is to investigate how X-Games as a sport event has been spread among people by ESPN in order to use extreme sports commercially. The diffusion theory was utilized as a theoretical framework to explain this process because the diffusion theory is a useful perspective to explain how new ideas are spread among the members of a social system. In other words, X-Games as an innovation has been diffused through both ESPN (mass media channel) and the participants and viewers of X-Games (interpersonal channel) over time among teenagers (the members of a social system). Especially, this study focused the role of ESPN as a change agent in the diffusion process of X-Games.

For the purpose of this study, a research question was suggested, "Does ESPN influence the consumption of commodities related to extreme sports?" In addition, hypotheses to test this research question were proposed as follows:

*Hypothesis #1:* There is a positive association between the amount of X-Games televised by ESPN and the number of participants in X-Games.

*Hypothesis #2:* There is a positive association between the number of participants in X-Games and the amount of consumption of commodities related to extreme sports.

Based on these hypotheses, a path model was constructed (Figure 1). The path model was applied because it is a causal model for understanding relationships between variables. It is assumed that independent variable, the amount of X-Games televised by ESPN, will have an impact on the number of participants in X-Games as a control variable, and in turn will have an impact on the amount of consumption of commodities related to extreme sports as a dependent variable.

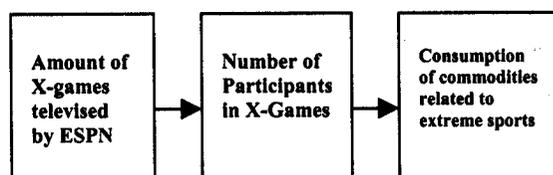


Figure 1. Path model

In order to test this path model, the second data were collected as follows. The amount of X-games televised by ESPN 1 and ESPN 2 in a yearly base from 1993 to 1999, the number of participants in X-games in a yearly base from 1991 to 1998, and the amount of consumption of commodities related to extreme sports from 1990 to 1999 in a yearly base were tabulated. Moreover, a least squares path analysis program by Hunter and Hamilton was employed to analysis.

## Results

In order to assess the fit of the model, the amount of X-games televised by ESPN (X) → the number of participants in X-games (Y) → the amount of consumption of commodities in extreme sports (Z), it should be compared by the predicted value of the correlation between X and Z to the obtained value of that. If this model is correct, the predicted value and the obtained value of the correlation between X and Z are equal. Thus, the predicted value of the correlation between X and Z is the product of the correlation between X and Y and the correlation between Y and Z (Tables 1 & 2).

The predicted correlation between ESPN (X) and Participants (Y) was  $(0.74)(0.91) = 0.63$ . Thus, the error in predicting this correlation is approximately  $(0.93) - (0.63) = 0.26$ . This error is trivial. Furthermore, the significant test of the error size ( $z=1, p > .05$ ) indicated that the data are consistent with this model. In addition,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.99$ , so that  $p > 0.05$ , again indicating that this model is consistent with the data (Figure 2).

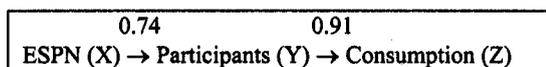
**Table 1. Correlation Coefficients**

Variable	ESPN (X)	Participants (Y)	Consumption (Z)
ESPN (X)	1.00		
Participants (Y)	0.74*	1.00	
Consumption (Z)	0.93*	0.91*	1.00

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2. Path Coefficients**

Variable	ESPN (X)	Participants (Y)	Consumption (Z)
ESPN (X)			
Participants (Y)	0.74		
Consumption (Z)		0.91	



**Figure 2. Path Model with Path Coefficients**

**Discussion**

According to the test of the path model, the hypotheses were supported; that is, there is a positive association between the amount of X-Games televised by ESPN and the number of participants in X-Games; there is a positive association between the number of participants in X-Games and the amount of consumption of commodities related to extreme sports.

One of the limitations of this study will be that this study examines the commodification process of the extreme sports in the macro level. Therefore, the future researches in the micro level should be followed. For instance, the specific roles of ESPN to diffuse extreme sports, the psychological or sociological motive of participants for extreme sports, the characteristics of individual participants in terms of adopter categories, and the interpersonal network of participants should be examined in the future research.

Despite this limitation, this study will have several implications. First, this study will be worthy as a pilot study on extreme sport or X-Games. In fact, there have been few researches on extreme sports or X-Games. Especially, there has been no research, which empirically examine the commodification process of X-Games. Furthermore, this study will provide theoretical base for the future research on X-Games. The various researches on X-Games or extreme sports in the micro level or individual level can be conducted. As previously noted, one of the strengths of diffusion theory is its broad applicability. Another implication of this paper will be that it tries to apply diffusion theory to another field, namely, the field of leisure sports marketing.

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## MARKETING NATIONAL PARKS: OXYMORON OR OPPORTUNITY?

Alan K. Hogenauer, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Director, Ed and Lynn Hogan Program in Travel and Tourism, College of Business Administration, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA 90045

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**Abstract:** Although the "national park" concept is universally acknowledged, marketing of the 4,000+ areas so designated worldwide varies dramatically. Some park systems – such as those of Canada and Australia – are extensively marketed, in the sense that considerable resources are devoted to traditional strategic and tactical approaches to the potential user. Other systems pay relatively little attention to these concerns, because of entrenched avoidance of the marketing process (U.S.) and/or perception that the total visitor count is either so high that marketing is unwarranted (U.S.) or so low that marketing is unaffordable (many developing nations). This paper reviews selected issues of "national park" marketing from the viewpoints of the varied interests: managerial (park unit, region, and system); commercial (concessions, external enterprises, and visitor/tourism bureaus); and target audience (actual and potential visitors). Its primary objective is to raise awareness of the possibilities for (and limitations of) greater marketing effort and mutual benefit, in terms of effectively influencing consumer attitudes, beliefs, and purchase decision making.

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### Marketing and the National Park Philosophy

The concept of marketing to draw additional visitors to national parks is oxymoronic to many park administrators. As management of national parks has come to embrace not only internal challenges, but external ones as well, the visitor is often regarded as exactly the latter. Resource preservation is seen as the clear priority (Arnberger, Views) (Lowry, Paved). Very little has been published/researched on the "purchase decision" behavior of the visitor, and little has been committed for either accomplishing such research or implementing broad market appeals. The default influences have, therefore, been publicity (media coverage, independent photographic essays, etc.), highway signage, and on-site brochure distribution. If, however, the concept of marketing is not wholly alien, who is best equipped to address the challenge? Should it be a coordinated system effort? An opportunity for unit initiative? The role of the commercial interests that will most directly benefit? Or the task of visitor promotion agencies at all levels, whose mission already includes marketing? We shall begin by examining the traditional 4Ps of marketing in the context of the "national park."

### Product

"National parks" are variously defined. In the broadest sense, they are areas held in the global interest by national authorities, or under national guidelines, absent an international governance other than United Nations/UNESCO World Heritage designation. Most "national park" systems have capitalized on the idealized image of the "national park" by applying this designation as liberally as possible. Park-administrating authorities generally differentiate "national parks" (superior scenic and/or wildlife-based areas) from other areas (primarily historic sites, but also including, as in the U.S. case, numerous subcategories: national monuments, national preserves, national recreation areas, national historical parks, etc.) (National Park Service, Index). Hereafter, despite the above caveats, all "national" areas will be referred to as national parks.

Parks (including most of the subcategories noted above) are also administered by state, provincial, county, and city agencies. Non-national parks are generally seen as more oriented to regional recreation, but may nonetheless be marketed proactively (Iowa, Marketing Plan/SHOW). While the most outstanding areas are generally protected within the national systems, there are significant exceptions. For example, Niagara Falls is a state park; Mount Vernon, Williamsburg, and the sites of the National Trust are run by independent foundations; and Monument Valley is within a native American reservation. National parks are designated by national governments, generally through legislative bodies (Congress, Parliament), but also via Executive declaration, and almost always with broad "public" approval (although not necessarily corresponding to local interests). The most common denominator is that national parks designate existing lands and/or waters as having a protected status. These may be naturally pristine (Yellowstone, Glacier, Auyuittuq), but they may also require significant rehabilitation/conversion (Shenandoah, Great Smokies, Golden Gate), restoration (Castle Clinton), or outright re-creation (Bent's Old Fort, Fort Stanwix, Louisbourg), and all require ongoing management. While many units are the result of political expediency, more recently, park systems have attempted to be proactive in unit designation, identifying ecosystem and historic theme components, and actively seeking appropriate areas for donation/purchase to add to the roster. Three of the more successful efforts of this type are the spectacular lands set aside in Alaska in 1978 and 1980, and the ongoing Canadian and Australian expansion based on biome categories.

Nationally-protected areas are the enlightened withdrawal of lands and waters in the "public" interest. They are most often found in advanced economies that can afford such withdrawals, or developing economies that recognize the self-serving commercial value of such withdrawals or are coerced into making them by external pressures. National park units vary widely in what they offer the visitor

(natural and scenic values, military-industrial-cultural themes, anthropological sites, recreational opportunities), making marketing a particular challenge on a system basis. The primary unifying characteristic of national park units is their extraordinary diversity (National Park Service, Index).

### **Price**

Fees for park entry are on average, extremely low; many units are free, and even the most expensive U.S. units charge only \$20 for a carload. Annual passes make the cost of any single visit even less expensive. However, access significantly affects total cost, particularly in reaching remote areas. The cost of reaching units in Alaska and the Canadian Arctic, outlying U.S. possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific, and virtually all parks in developing economies, at least in terms of foreign visitors, renders such visits infeasible for most potential visitors.

### **Promotion**

#### Park Administrators (Federal, Region, State, Unit)

Promotion of parks varies widely; four examples will serve to illustrate the disparity. The United States National Park Service, within the Department of the Interior, has never broadly embraced marketing as a system concept. (Of the Federal entities embracing marketing, only the military, the Post Office, and Amtrak actively promote their services.) Some park regions have issued pamphlets featuring the units within their jurisdiction, and each unit offers superb standardized brochures on request or arrival, but these are passive approaches (National Park Service, Organ Pipe Cactus et al). The long-standing NPS compilation, "Visiting a Lesser-Known Park," is basically an effort to divert visitation from overcrowded units rather than a promotional device per se (National Park Service, Visiting). The primary NPS "National Park Index" is issued infrequently, and is also primarily a passive listing (National Park Service, Index).

The historic rationale for avoiding marketing is readily apparent. Even the modest fees collected by most NPS units have been transferred to the Federal Treasury, rather than retained for the benefit of the unit; given this reality, and the NPS focus on resource protection and management, it is little wonder that marketing seems irrelevant. At numerous "lesser-known" sites, "marketing" consists of little more than often-inappropriate count-enhancement activities barely related to the commemorative purpose of the site (e.g. noonday concerts at Federal Hall National Memorial in New York's Wall Street district) (Hogenauer, Courier). A quasi-independent entity, the National Park Foundation, whose basic mission is encouraging private sector (largely corporate) philanthropy (National Park Foundation, Charter and Mission), has implemented an ambitious promotional device, the National Park Passport (National Park Foundation, Passport/SHOW), intended to

motivate unit visitation by providing inked-impression stamps and a pocket-sized "passport" for their entry. While this has doubtless increased awareness of the extent and diversity of units, and motivated some to visit additional units to collect the stamps, the lack of other than a self-motivating incentive limits its viability as a true marketing tool.

Reams of information are available to those who seek it out - everything from coffee table photographic essays, to those superb brochures obtained in advance or on-site, to - more recently - creative Internet websites offering considerable detail. But active marketing has been limited. The earliest majestic Western parks were marketed, by the railroads benefiting from the carriage of visitors without alternative access (Runte, Promoting). However, aside from in-house tours including parks, today's bus companies and airlines (and rental car companies dependent on them) do little to market national parks (or most of their other destinations, to be fair). Tour books (such as Birnbaum, Fodor, or the AAA series) list parks in objective fashion as attractions to visit once in the area. Today's larger units rely in part on independently produced commercial brochures supported by national advertisers (e.g. Yosemite Magazine, one of American Park Network's 17 national park titles; these have a total circulation of some 3.8 million) (American Park Network, Yosemite, 1998), and on non-profit "cooperative association" publications (Southwest Parks).

In recent years, a proliferation of Presidentially-declared national monuments has been assigned to non-NPS agencies for administration. These have included the Bureau of Land Management (especially most recently with the flurry of new declarations by Bill Clinton), the U.S. Forest Service (Mt. St. Helens), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. None of these is presently involved in wide-scale marketing activity.

Nationally-directed national park marketing is perhaps best exemplified by the extensive efforts of Parks Canada. For several years, both regional support groups and individual unit marketers have taken on the challenge of marketing the national parks. This is evidenced by such innovations as the "Heritage Logs" and accompanying stamps (Parks Canada, Heritage), as well as the widespread use of the beaver logo, focused on Parks Canada's 1985 centennial. However, marketing has been impelled particularly in the most recent years, as revenue generation at the unit level has been elevated in importance, and overall market awareness has increased significantly (Parks Canada, Policy). To an extent, "marketing" within Parks Canada is more a term, and/or a plan, than a system-wide implementation, but its inclusion does indicate awareness of the need for positioning, quality service delivery, target audience identification, and increases in visitor counts (Parks Canada, Halifax). As in most systems, heavily-visited areas represent the greatest challenge: maintaining the balance between preservation and steadily increasing

popularity (University of Calgary, Communiqué) (Zinkan, Changing).

As a fourth specific example, Australia has, in recent years, solidly embraced tourism development, national park designation, and marketing, with a particular focus on the vast, remote, and thinly-populated regions. Areas like Kakadu (home territory of Crocodile Dundee) and Uluru (the former Ayers Rock) are widely promoted, in part as a result of ancillary commercialization in their otherwise-empty vicinities. The administration of Australia's "national" parks has, uniquely thus far, been delegated to the respective states and territories, and there is no visible federal oversight agency as found elsewhere (New South Wales, About Us). Nevertheless, the active promotion of the areas has contributed greatly to a significant expansion of tourism, particularly by international visitors.

#### Commercial Enterprises

One of the key arguments raised against national park marketing is the widely-held view that national parks themselves are not commercial enterprises, and therefore there is no role for marketing. However, few national park areas are immune to the exploitation of their visitors. Since visitor needs are diverse, and the national parks themselves rarely accommodate most, let alone all, reliance upon supplemental suppliers is essential. Few visitors are satisfied with the "natural" state of the parks, but even fewer are aware of the extent to which the units are "managed" for their visiting pleasure (wildlife control; trail, road and facility development; point of interest identification and improvement; etc.). Most in-park concessions to date have been limited to accommodations, food service, and ancillary sales (souvenirs, clothing), but there is considerable pressure to privatize more, including visitor center construction and management, interpretation and guided tours, and the like. The in-park concessionaire has generally been a limited marketer, because demand - highly concentrated in short seasons - has exceeded supply, and rates (i.e. revenues) are proscribed by concession agreement. However, the emergence of the Internet and the relative ease of maintaining e-mail lists of potential purchasers have enabled in-park concessionaires to tap this avenue of marketing (Amfac/Furnace Creek Inn).

Commercial enterprises in the immediate environs of national parks are the most numerous, most at risk, and most likely to already be spending considerable sums on self-serving marketing effort, almost always tied in to the innate appeal of the park itself. At the Tusayan complex south of Grand Canyon National Park's south rim, in Arizona, a host of businesses competes for the tourist's attention in what has become a full-fledged strip of attractions, even offering high-tech interpretations that visitors might anticipate finding within the park (e.g. National Geographic's IMAX Theater) (National Geographic, IMAX). Similar commercialization is found in the vicinity of many units (all communities near the Great

Smokies; St. George, UT; Bar Harbor, ME; etc.). Such commercialization is not limited to the more popular units of park systems. Even in remote Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska, a portion of which is only accessible via a 61-mile unpaved road, tourism development is having a major impact ("indeed, much of the increased exposure [to tourism] can be attributed to the residents [of isolated Kennicott] themselves (particularly the owner of the lodge...), who have succeeded in marketing the community as a recreation destination") (Ringer, Growth).

Increasingly, national/global enterprises - global brands or major national advertisers already heavily involved in traditional marketing effort - are seen as the saviors of national park marketing, in that "modest" proportions of their budgets are allocated to approaching national park visitors directly, in support of the park "cause" (American Park Network, Yosemite).

#### Visitors Bureaus (National, State, Local)

These entities accept at least partial responsibility for marketing national parks within their respective jurisdictions. Virtually all U.S. states and Canadian provinces utilize the same techniques for marketing their inventory of tourist offerings: a comprehensive brochure, a map, a toll-free number, and an Internet site. Given that virtually all are mandated to promote "equally," passively including all attractions, however worthy or unworthy, is the norm, generally in the context of "tourist regions" that cover all of their respective geography. More locally, Chambers of Commerce often serve as the umbrella vehicle for promoting "area businesses" as a group. Thus, there is a clearly-evident body of interests seeking more active marketing of the units themselves, whereby they might reap a portion of the ancillary economic benefit. These interests primarily include area accommodations, restaurants, and attractions (even those wholly unrelated to the park's theme[s]), eager to attract the visitors' dollars.

#### **Place (Distribution)**

In terms of **place**, accessibility of the various areas, most likely regarded as a given by most potential visitors, is one of the most critical aspects of marketing, particularly as more remote sites enter the systems. There are three categories of accessibility: routine, challenging, and inaccessible.

*Routine* access cannot be presumed, particularly as more remote areas are included in national park systems. There is no objective definition of routine access, but at least two sub-categories can be presumed: a road leads directly to the site; or access is only by water, but frequent boat service is available. The first category is the least problematic for the visitor; most national park sites are in fact routinely accessible. Routine driving access, whether via private car, rental car, or tour bus, renders the site easily included in

any trip plan. Routine water access is limiting only in terms of schedules or - for the more popular experiences (e.g. Gros Morne's Western Brook Pond, or Golden Gate's Alcatraz) - vessel capacity.

*Challenging* access includes accessible units that cannot be regarded as routine given the time, cost, or distance involved. At least four sub-categories can be presumed: challenging because access is seasonally constrained or precluded (e.g. sites in the Canadian Rockies and Alaska); challenging because access is only by costly aircraft (scheduled or charter) (e.g. sites in American Samoa, the Queen Charlotte Islands, Alaska); challenging because scheduled boat service is not readily available for water access (e.g. Beaubear's Island, St. Croix Island); and challenging because access is via long and/or arduous (uphill) hiking (e.g. Abbott Pass Refuge Hut, Howse Pass, Athabasca Pass). (Challenging access is actually desirable in some locations to preserve the natural integrity of the site - and not incidentally, concurrently limit visitation).

*Inaccessible* access comprises units that despite their designation are "unreachable." (Units rendered inaccessible due to temporary weather phenomena, disasters, or access interruptions are not included.) Units are inaccessible because they are officially closed to the public (e.g. Yucca House, Hohokam Pima); inaccessible because they have been "lost," or "misaid" due to obscurity or lack of ready information (e.g. Loyalists Exhibit); or inaccessible because they are surrounded by restricted private lands (e.g. Bois Blanc Lighthouse).

### Target Audience

Who constitutes the market for these places? While this question may superficially be answered "visitors," the market for national parks is the total present - and future - global population for whom these areas are held in perpetual trust. But inasmuch as little in the way of traditional marketing segmentation has been undertaken, generally the emphases are on *total visitors*, by unit and overall (National Resources Defense Council, Reclaiming), and *seasonal peaking*, with its attendant problems.

Specific categories of present-day visitors can be generalized, which suggest various avenues of marketing approach. In order of proximity, there are four categories of visitors: those at home or office, remote from the park; those en route to the area of the park, but still distant; those near the park; and those actually in the park. Within each of these groupings, there are potential markets by age, income, lifestyle, ethnicity, even gender, and of course persons exhibiting interests relevant to the unit's primary attributes (historians, Civil War buffs, transport buffs, hikers, campers, etc.). Unfortunately, most national park visitors come with only a vague notion of what the park has to offer, relying on on-site specifics to determine the length and focus of the actual visit. While this may not match the

idealized conception, it clearly affects the nature of the marketing approaches that might be useful.

### What is Appropriate Marketing, Anyway?

Marketing is most commonly regarded as a process, one to which members of most societies are subjected - often to their discomfort. It is concerns over the process - specifically, the costs and "inappropriateness" of its implementation - that most deter the national park marketing process from moving forward. But more than a process, marketing is a philosophy - one that embraces proactive methods of encouraging the market's response to the product. Support for the marketing philosophy relative to national parks is what is most needed; the specific techniques, and the budget for their implementation, are less problematic. While the total number of U.S. NPS visitors is impressive (287 million in 1998), consideration of the total population of the United States (265 million, 1996), the number of units (officially, 384), the increasing number of foreign visitors, and the deceptive effect of multiple counting suggests that only a minuscule fraction of the U.S. population visits multiple parks or parks multiple times. Marketing can certainly help ensure that more people benefit from all the parks have to offer.

In terms of **product**, the national park will always be many products in one: wilderness, nature, history, interpretation, recreation, commercialization, even civilization (e.g. Riding Mountain, Prince Albert, Grand Canyon south rim). Emphasis on several seriously-overcrowded units diverts attention from the vastly more numerous underutilized areas whose quality is no less evident upon examination (National Park Service, Visiting). Often there is little or no control within the administering agency as to product proliferation (i.e. additional units, failing to be "nationally significant"); this in part was the motivation for proposed legislation mandating a more thorough examination of units both within, and proposed for addition to the existing system (Congress, Common Sense). Over the years, some existing park units have been delisted (i.e. de-classified), but these are relatively rare (Hogenauer, Gone). Perhaps most significantly, park nomenclature is confusing in its proliferation. One response to this, as well as clear evidence of an underlying marketing strategy, is the recent tendency to rename NPS units as national parks, rather than monuments (Black Canyon, Death Valley, Joshua Tree) or recreation areas (Cuyahoga Valley).

In terms of **price**, fees should be commensurate with the customer-desired benefits, not simply amounts offsetting expended costs. Marketing expenses, if such were to be incurred, would have to be offset by increased fees and/or appropriations. The traditional low- (or no-) fee park entry concept is being rethought, often to the consternation of unsuspecting visitors (in 1996, significant fee increases in Canadian parks created considerable difficulty for both visitors and staff). Fees collected should be retained at the

unit level, with supplemental appropriations provided where necessary to optimize unit performance. An income tax deduction for park visits, based on the educational value therefrom, should be implemented, partially offsetting actual visitor cost, and stimulating visitation (and benefits) across the board.

In terms of **promotion**, appropriate national park marketing is that which cost-effectively reaches the proper target audience, encouraging this audience to partake of the visitation benefits provided. More than anything, marketing is information, placed so as to effect the purchase decision in favor of the marketer. Information on national parks has historically, as noted, been largely passive, not active. Evidence of marketing interest at the highest levels of NPS administration can be found, but the speed of marketing integration into system operations has been glacial. A 1998 planning articulation of NPS "goals" lists 31 long-term goals to be achieved in 3 to 20 years; *none* refer to marketing of the units or system (National Park System Goals). A 1999 Director's Order (Director's Order #17: National Park Service Tourism) mandates extensive interaction with, and proactive approaches to the "tourism industry," thus relating the NPS itself to another category (Order, sections 4.1, 4.5). The Order further provides for hierarchical implementation at the international, national, regional and park levels (Order, section 5). Funding for the mandated activities, however, is not clear, and in at least one NPS unit, detailed specifications for a person to assume responsibilities for many types of marketing activity are assumed to be filled by a *volunteer!* (City of Rocks). Clearly, there is a dissonance between maintaining resources "unimpaired for future generations" and making them available now through effective promotion to the current ones.

An even more elaborate exposition of the possibilities is found in the premiere issue of an Employees & Alumni Association newsletter, "Arrowhead" (Arrowhead), in which an extensive "Message Project" examined visitor perceptions and NPS response at length. The Project, evolving from an earlier effort to promote the Golden Eagle Passport (an annual pass to multiple federal agency lands), concluded that there was "an extraordinarily limited understanding, or even awareness, of the depth and breadth of the National Park System." The public was seen to perceive national parks as "a handful of natural wonders, Western wilderness areas, and vacation destinations." In response to this, the NPS undertook a broad review of methods and management of the "communications" process, and found that materials all look different, the arrowhead is inconsistent, the System is overlooked, there are only 25 public information officers among (then) 379 units, there is inadequate attention to visitor segmentation, and parks are protected "from" people, rather than "for" them. These are major findings that most at NERR2001 will see as valid, particularly in the context of possible proactive marketing in response. These are also of major

significance in advancing the prospects for NPS marketing overall (Arrowhead).

In terms of **place**, parks should "guarantee" access to a visitor. Any officially-designated "national park" unit should be readily-accessible to the public, either routinely, or, at the very least, periodically on a scheduled guided visit offered on a non-profit basis. Inaccessible units – including those not yet "open" for visitation, should be delisted (i.e. otherwise-classified).

In terms of **target audience**, the aforementioned four categories of visitor suggest possible marketing approaches. *Those at home or office, remote from the park*, by far the most numerous, need to be motivated to initiate a visit. Marketing should be undertaken by the overall agency, with national advertising, 1-800 information, and spot advertising in local markets, supported by a substantial Internet presence. *Those en route to the area of the park, but still distant* need to be motivated to include the site in their itinerary. En route signage and appropriate print media, as well as possible outdoor advertising are required.

*Those near the park* likewise need to be motivated to include the site in a trip-in-progress. Again, en route signage, print media, and outdoor are recommended. And finally, *those actually in the park* need to be motivated to spend more time enjoying the park's benefits. More effective promotion of the available activities is required, including accommodation incentives to extend length of stay in the area. In many units, creation of additional activities will also be required. Further, trade promotion – reaching out to, rather than defensively responding to the tourism industry – should be undertaken, with the appreciation that any park authority IS part of the tourism industry.

## Conclusions

In summary, national park marketing should adopt traditional methods, but apply them to their specific circumstances. Nomenclature should be simplified, detached units should be treated independently, and product mix and line should be periodically revisited.

Fees collected should be retained at the unit level, with supplemental appropriations provided where necessary to optimize unit performance. An income tax deduction for park visits, based on the educational value therefrom, should be implemented, partially offsetting actual visitor cost and boosting visitation.

Any officially-designated "national park" unit should be readily-accessible to the public, either routinely, or, at the very least, periodically on a scheduled guided visit offered on a non-profit basis. Inaccessible sites should be relegated to some alternative category, rather than designated as part of a national park system.

Marketing should focus on expanding the overall market substantially, by actively encouraging the "right" target audience for each unit. Four visitor groups must be addressed: those at home/office, those en route yet still distant, those nearby, and those already in the unit.

"National park" units should be actively marketed on a coordinated system-wide basis, with the involvement of unit managers and local interests benefiting from such marketing. The most successful efforts will be those where unit management and local interests are mutually supportive, and where the target audiences most effectively addressed by marketing are correctly identified. Tourism industry promotion should also be implemented.

Marketing national parks should be a cooperative effort, spearheaded by a competent group within the administrative agency, but including state/provincial and local government, and related commercial interests (transport, in-park concessions, and area businesses). Controlling authority should come from the largest feasible component of the park system, most often the national authority. But cooperation is essential, and likely to be more readily forthcoming from the respective interests if the effort is well-coordinated. Goals such as those in the laudable NPS Message Project should be vigorously pursued. While marketing activities may appear irrelevant or detrimental to some, expansion of overall awareness of, interest in, and trial of national parks is highly desirable and likely to pay enormous dividends in terms of engendering public support.

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# **Demographic Trends in Outdoor Recreation Participation & Travel**

# WILDLIFE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION IN THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION: PARTICIPATION PATTERNS AND MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Allan Marsinko

Professor, Department of Forest Resources, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634-0331

John Dwyer

Research Forester, USDA Forest Service, North Central Research Station, 845 Chicago Avenue, Suite 225, Evanston, IL 60202

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**Abstract:** The North Central Region (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, WI) is a diverse area of the United States. Compared to the remainder of the country, the region as a whole is demographically similar in terms of mean age, education, household income, and gender. However, the North Central region has a higher proportion of Whites and a slightly lower proportion of people residing in urban areas. Compared to the remainder of the United States, residents of the region are more likely to have hunted and/or fished during their lifetime and are more likely to have hunted and/or fished in 1995, the year of the latest National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Residents of the region are also more likely to participate in nonconsumptive wildlife-associated recreation activities such as observing, feeding, photographing, and maintaining natural areas for wildlife around the home; and taking trips for the purpose of observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife. Thus, residents of the region are more likely to participate in all wildlife-associated recreation activities addressed by the survey. Within the region, there is considerable diversity. Household income differs by about 25% among states in the region and ethnic diversity differs considerably as well. States within the region range from predominately white rural to ethnically diverse urban. Wildlife-associated recreation participation differs considerably among states. Some of the differences are easily explained while others are not. Easily explained is that the highest proportion of hunters resides in the most rural state while the lowest proportion of hunters reside in the most urban state. This pattern does not apply to fishing or any of the nonconsumptive activities. Participation differences within the region are probably attributable to combinations of population characteristics and available natural resources. The diversity of participation patterns within the region affects public natural resource managers and suggests treating the region as subunits to more effectively address resource management issues.

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## Introduction

States in the North Central Region (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, WI) are diverse in terms of demographic characteristics and wildlife-associated recreation participation levels. This presents challenges for managers who must allocate funds and manage the natural resources of these states. The

purposes of this paper are to examine participation in wildlife-associated recreation in the region and in each state, to compare the region to the remainder of the United States, and to compare states within the region in order to provide managers with some insight into the patterns and challenges in the region. The activities examined are hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching. Wildlife watching consists of observing, feeding, photographing, and maintaining natural areas for wildlife within one mile of the home (residential activities) and taking trips of one mile or more for the purpose of observing, feeding, and/or photographing wildlife (nonresidential activities). First, the region is compared to the remainder of the U.S. in terms of participation. Then, states are compared demographically and in terms of participation. Finally, because of space limitations, one activity (hunting) is examined in greater detail, including the relationship between hunting participation and available natural resources.

## Methods

The 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation was used in this analysis. The survey has been conducted by the Census Bureau for the US Fish and Wildlife Service approximately every 5 years since 1955 (U.S. Dept. of Interior, 1997). The survey actually consists of three surveys that result in three data sets. The screening survey consists of demographic and limited participation data and is considered to be representative of the population of the United States in general. The sportsmen survey consists of detailed participation and expenditure data about hunting and fishing and is considered to be representative of hunters and anglers residing in the United States. The wildlife watching survey consists of detailed participation and expenditure data about nonconsumptive wildlife associated recreation activities and is considered to be representative of wildlife watchers residing in the United States. The screening survey was the primary source of data used in this analysis. Although the screening survey contains only limited participation data, it permits comparisons of participants with nonparticipants as well as participation among participants in all activities (fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching). Participation data collected using the screening survey are for 1995 and most of the data presented in the summary publication (U.S. Dept. of Interior, 1997), which are collected using the detailed surveys, are for 1996. Because of the methodology used by the Census Bureau to select and adjust the weights for the detailed surveys, and the fact that the data are collected for different years, the total numbers of participants calculated using the screening survey differ from the total numbers of participants calculated using the detailed surveys.

## Results

### Comparison of the Region to the Remainder of the U.S.

Residents of the North Central Region were more likely than residents of the remainder of the U.S. to hunt, fish, and participate in all wildlife watching activities (Table 1). A higher percentage of residents of the region (28% vs. 22%)

**Table 1. Participation Comparisons of North Central Region and Remainder of Country: Age 16 and Older**

Characteristic	North Central Region	Not North Central Region	Ratio NC/Not NC
	Mean	Mean	
% ever hunted	28%	22%	1.25
% of above who hunted in 1995	42%	32%	1.33
95 hunting expenditures-category	3.23	3.38	0.95
95 hunting days-category	3.18	3.10	1.03
% ever fished	58%	51%	1.14
% of above who fished in 1995	50%	45%	1.10
95 fishing expenditures-category	2.54	2.57	0.98
95 fishing days-category	3.28	3.06	1.07
% observed wildlife	33%	25%	1.30
% feed wildlife	38%	29%	1.29
% photo wildlife	12%	9%	1.29
% wildlife plantings	14%	11%	1.23
% taking wildlife trips	17%	14%	1.23
95 trip expenditures-category	2.02	2.22	0.91
95 trip days-category	2.50	2.49	1.00

have ever hunted and a higher percentage of those who have ever hunted (42% vs. 32%) continued to hunt in 1995. Expenditures and days of participation are collected as categorical data in this data set and the means of these categories are listed in Table 1. Larger numbers mean higher levels of participation. Because of the limited number of categories, differences in expenditures and days of participation can be expected to be small. Hunters in the region spend slightly less and hunt slightly more than hunters who reside outside the region. The last column in Table 1 is an index derived by dividing the region column by the column for the remainder of the U.S. This is a quick reference to the differences. A number greater than one, indicates the region exceeds the remainder of the U.S. in this respect. A number that is less than one indicates the remainder of the U.S. exceeds the region. The magnitude of the ratio indicates the amount of the difference.

The patterns for fishing were similar to those for hunting. A higher percentage of residents of the region (58% vs. 51%) have ever fished and a higher percentage of those who have ever fished (50% vs. 45%) continued to fish in 1995 (Table 1). Although the patterns are similar, the differences are not as great as for hunting. Again, anglers in the region spend slightly less and fish slightly more than anglers who reside outside the region. The row labeled "% of above who fished in 1995" can be viewed in a loose way as a fishing retention

rate. This rate is higher in the region than outside of it. The same was true of hunting. It should be noted that, the retention rate for fishing is higher than the rate for hunting.

This may be due, in part, to the more strenuous nature of hunting, which causes people to drop out as age limits activities. In the case of the angler who is also a hunter, there may be some substituting of fishing for hunting as the participant ages.

The data set does not contain the same type of participation data for wildlife watching activities as for hunting and fishing. Data exists only for 1995 participation. Expenditures and days of participation are given for nonresidential wildlife watching activities only (i.e., for "% taking trips" in Table 1). Residents of the region are considerably more likely to participate in all of these activities than residents of the remainder of the U.S. They spend slightly less and participate about the same number of days as residents of the remainder of the U.S.

Thus, residents of the region appear to be more active than residents of the remainder of the U.S. by almost all participation measures presented in Table 1. Although the differences are small, residents of the region spent less in 1995 on all activities than residents of the remainder of the U.S. This is interesting because they spent at least as many days participating in the activities.

Comparison of States within the Region

*Demographics* -- States within the region differ considerably in terms of key demographic characteristics (Table 2). Residents of IA have the lowest income (\$39,535) while residents of WI have the highest at \$49,788, a difference of over \$10,000 (over 25%). There are also considerable differences in racial/ethnic diversity and residence (urban/farm) among states. IA has the least diversity (98% white) while IL has the most (82% white). IA is the least urban (55%) while IL is the most urban (82%). Most of the extremes (highs or lows) occur in IA and IL. The three states with the lowest incomes have with the highest proportion of residents living on farms. There are considerable differences between states in demographic characteristics that can affect probability of participation as well as participation levels. The more rural nature of IA, for example, can provide more opportunities for certain kinds of recreation while the relatively low income can affect types and levels of participation.

*Hunting* -- The most noticeable difference in hunting participation across states (Table 3) is the low proportion of residents who have ever hunted in IL (17%), the most urban state. Not only does IL have the lowest proportion who have ever hunted; it also has the lowest retention of hunters in that only 29% of those who have ever hunted continued to hunt in 1995. This suggests that IL residents are more likely to drop out of hunting than residents of the other states. We cannot state this with certainty because tenure at a specific location is not measured in the survey. It is possible that people lived and hunted in another state and then moved to IL into perhaps, a more urban environment, and stopped hunting at that time. It is also possible that people lived and hunted in a rural area and then moved to an urban area within the same state and then stopped hunting. This is valuable information for managers and marketers concerned with decreases in numbers of hunters.

**Table 2. Demographic Comparisons of North Central Region by State: Age 16 and Older**

Characteristic	Means						
	IA	IL	IN	MI	MN	MO	WI
Age (yrs)	45.9	44.2	45.5	44.4	43.9	46.7	44.3
Education (yrs)	12.8	13.4	12.8	13.1	13.1	12.9	13.3
Household Income	\$39,535	\$49,481	\$42,411	\$49,122	\$45,696	\$41,648	\$49,788
% Working	69%	67%	65%	65%	71%	62%	73%
% White	98%	82%	89%	85%	92%	91%	94%
% Black	0%	11%	8%	12%	2%	7%	3%
% Asian	1%	3%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%
% Hispanic	1%	6%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%
% Reside Urban	55%	82%	60%	68%	61%	63%	66%
% Reside Farm	33%	14%	32%	28%	26%	35%	29%

**Table 3. Participation Comparisons of Hunting in North Central Region by State: Age 16 and Older**

Characteristic	Means						
	IA	IL	IN	MI	MN	MO	WI
% ever hunted	36%	17%	25%	29%	37%	32%	33%
% of above who hunted in 1995	42%	29%	36%	46%	50%	40%	50%
95 expenditures-category	2.88	3.45	2.86	3.22	3.34	3.20	3.39
95 days-category	3.12	3.20	3.45	3.30	2.74	3.18	3.27

Three of the lower income states with the highest percentage of residents living on farms (IA, IN, and MO) have the lowest expenditures for hunting. The two highest income states have the highest expenditures for hunting. Even though the income is reported as household income for all residents, and the expenditures are reported only for participants, it is interesting to note that there appears to be an association between these variables. Days spent participating do not appear to be related to income. This may be attributable to several factors. Often, higher income individuals have less time available for recreation. Also, because hunting is usually done in a rural environment, proximity of the resource may be an important factor in frequency of hunting.

*Fishing* -- As is the case for hunting, IL has the lowest proportion of residents who have ever fished (51%) and the lowest proportion of those who have ever fished and who continued to fish in 1995 (Table 4). However, the differences between states do not approximate those seen in Table 3 for hunting. This suggests that fishing appeals to a wider range of individuals and/or that there are more opportunities available to fish than there are to hunt. Certainly, urban residents in the Chicago area of IL have a great lakes fishing opportunity relatively close at hand. MN, with its abundant water resources, has the highest proportion of residents who

ever fished and the highest proportion who fished in 1995. Expenditures for fishing across the states have a narrower range than hunting expenditures and do not appear to be strongly associated with income.

*Wildlife watching* -- The proportion of residents involved in wildlife watching activities in 1995 is given in Table 5. Overall, residents were most likely to observe and/or feed wildlife and least likely to photograph wildlife within one mile of the home. Expenditures and days participating tended to lie in a fairly narrow range. Again, residents of IL were least likely to participate in all wildlife watching activities. Residents of IA ranked second in probability of taking a wildlife watching trip, but spent the least on wildlife watching trips.

*A closer look at hunting* -- The previous sections discuss participation from the standpoint of proportion of the population participating. This section reviews this information for hunting and looks at hunting from different perspectives that may be important to those managing the resources and/or marketing the activity. This section shows how this information can be used and interpreted in different ways to facilitate different management/marketing objectives. The lowest proportion participating in hunting (17%) and the

**Table 4. Participation Comparisons of Fishing in North Central Region by State: Age 16 and Older**

Characteristic	Means						
	IA	IL	IN	MI	MN	MO	WI
% ever fished	61%	51%	54%	58%	70%	62%	62%
% of above who fished in 1995	54%	45%	51%	48%	56%	49%	52%
95 expenditures-category	2.47	2.63	2.35	2.44	2.65	2.65	2.52
95 days-category	3.26	3.14	3.45	3.27	3.17	3.59	3.19

**Table 5. Participation Comparisons of Wildlife Watching in North Central Region by State: Age 16 and Older**

Characteristic	Means						
	IA	IL	IN	MI	MN	MO	WI
% observed wildlife	36%	26%	32%	33%	39%	38%	33%
% feed wildlife	40%	30%	41%	41%	39%	40%	42%
% photo wildlife	10%	10%	10%	14%	14%	13%	14%
% wildlife plantings	15%	12%	14%	14%	14%	13%	18%
% taking wildlife trips	21%	15%	15%	17%	23%	16%	18%
95 trip expenditures-category	1.68	2.03	2.11	1.96	2.04	1.98	2.22
95 trip days-category	2.35	2.62	2.63	2.51	2.32	2.35	2.59

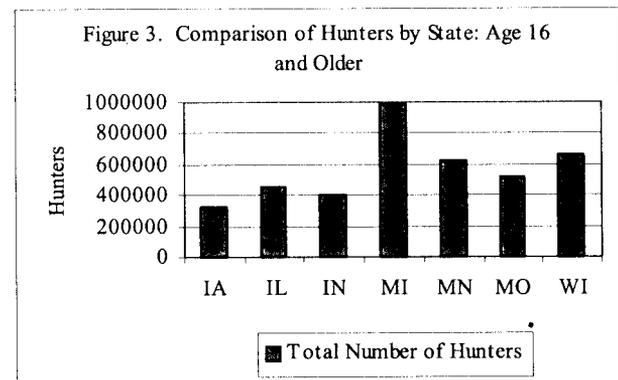
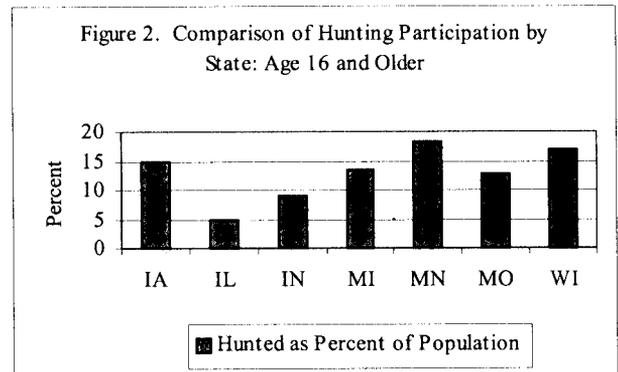
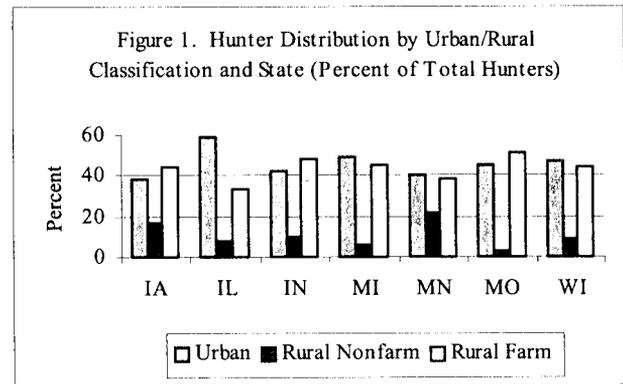
lowest retention rate (29%) both occur in IL (Table 3). The highest proportion participating (37%) and the highest retention rate (50%) both occur in MN. Because it has the lowest rates, IL might be targeted as a state in which an effort is to be made to increase hunting and to identify the reasons for the low retention rate. From another perspective, because it has the highest rates, MN might be targeted as a state in which efforts to increase hunting and retention rates might meet with greater success. MN might be seen as having a more solid base on which to build hunting. Or, a manager may wish to study a high participation state such as MN in order to identify reasons for the higher rates. Information from such a study might be of value in increasing participation in a state such as IL.

Managers and marketers are interested in the location of their clientele. An education program or marketing campaign can be implemented more effectively if the location of the clientele can be narrowed down as much as possible. Hunting is usually thought of as a rural activity and hunters might be expected to be likely to live in rural areas. This is true for most states in the region (Figure 1). Once again, however, IL stands out. More than half of the hunters in IL reside in urban areas (using Census urban/rural classifications). This means that campaigns targeting rural areas will miss almost 60% of the hunters in IL. In MI and WI, almost half of the hunters reside in urban areas. Even in IA, the most rural state, almost 40% of the hunters reside in urban areas. In most states, hunters are likely to be found either in urban areas or on farms. Only IA and MN have more than 10% of their hunters residing in rural nonfarm areas.

Residents of IL are unlikely to hunt (Figure 2). Residents of MN are over three times as likely to hunt as are residents of IL. Obviously, a campaign targeting hunters by way of the general population would meet with more success and be more cost effective in MN than IL. Figure 2 can easily be misinterpreted resulting in the erroneous conclusion that MN has the most hunters and IL has the least. This is not true because of the differences in population among the states. Figure 2 shows the probability that an individual in each state is a hunter. It does not quite show the probability that an individual selected at random is a hunter when hunters are not distributed uniformly throughout the state (Figure 1). Figure 2 gives some insight into how education programs and marketing campaigns can and cannot be conducted effectively in each state.

Managers and marketers are also interested in the size of the market. Someone interested in targeting a campaign toward current hunters would do well to look in MI, which has considerably more hunters than any other state in the region (Figure 3). As Figure 3 also shows, IL with its low participation rate has more hunters than IA with its higher participation rate. This is due to the large population differences between these states. The hunters in IL are harder to find than those in IA (Figure 2). This is also due to the large population differences between these states.

Links between the resource and activity are important to managers and marketers. MI contains the largest number of acres and highest percentage of forest land and the largest



number of hunters in the region. It does not, however, have the highest proportion of hunters (as a proportion of the population). Across these states, the probability of participation is positively correlated with the total amount of forest land (Pearson correlation coefficient .59) and with per capita forest land (.79) (Powell et al., 1993; U.S. Dept. of Interior, 1997). A stronger correlation (.87) was found between the total number of hunters and the total amount of forest land in a state. This could indicate that the abundance of resources in a state has resulted in a hunting ethic in that state. It is possible that the resources had a larger impact on probability of participation in the past which has decreased as interest in hunting in general has decreased. An earlier study by Allen and Dwyer (1978), however, did not find acres of forest land to be a significant predictor of hunting license sales by county in IL. This is an area that warrants further study.

## Summary and Conclusions

This study has shown numerous differences between the North Central Region and the remainder of the United States. Probability of participation is greater in the region than in the remainder of the U.S. for all activities considered. Retention rates for hunting and fishing are also greater in the region.

Variation among the states is also considerable. IL ranks last in terms of probability of participation for all activities considered and for retention rates for hunting and fishing. However, due to its large population, IL does not rank last in terms of total number of hunters. These differences present challenges for managers and those interested in identifying and marketing to hunters in these states.

Finally, positive correlations exist between various measures of forest land and measures of participation among the states in the region. Larger amounts of forest land imply more hunters and a higher probability of participation in hunting. This study did not address whether increasing or decreasing the amount of forest land in a state would increase or decrease hunting.

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## THE NEW ENGLAND TRAVEL MARKET: GENERATIONAL TRAVEL PATTERNS, 1979 TO 1996

Rod Warnick, Ph.D.

Professor of Recreation Resource Management and Club Management, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 204D Flint Lab, HRTA Department, 90 Campus Center Way, Amherst, MA 01003-9247

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**Abstract:** Generations of travelers who select New England as a primary destination are examined over time from the years of 1979 through 1996 and the analysis serves to update an earlier review of generational travel patterns of the region (Warnick, 1994). Changes in travel patterns are noted by overall adjusted annual change rates by demographic and geographic regions of residency. Generations, as defined by Strauss and Howe (1991), are then reviewed as the generation cohort ages over time during this 18 year period. New England was found to be an evolving market and it had rebounded from early decline trends of popularity in destination as noted in the 1994 study. Travel was up in the '90s across all age categories; however, generational trend patterns indicated that the 13th Generation and the older half of the Baby Boom Generation held only slightly higher participation rates in choosing New England as a primary destination over eight 10-year lag periods as each generation aged. Other generational participation rates declined at rates greater than the overall population during the same time periods. When the lag periods were examined, participation rates declined from 1984 through 1994 for each generation examined, but they were positive after the 1985 to 1995 lag period for each of the generations. Keywords: travel trends, New England destination travel, travel markets, generations, participation rates.

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### Introduction

During the last decade this author has extensively examined the New England travel market (Warnick, 1999; 1997a-c; 1995a-b; 1994; 1993a-c; 1992a-b; 1991; 1990; 1989). These studies have examined such concepts as overall travel trend patterns and rates of travel, geographic markets and the propensity to travel, target market regions for New England destinations, and outdoor recreation activity patterns and volume of participation of Northeast and New England destination travelers. In 1994, the domestic travel patterns to New England on demographic and geographic dimensions were examined and provided the first insights into generational travel patterns. Warnick has also examined generational travel patterns in several other studies (1994; 1993c; and 1995b).

The NERR 1994 study revealed the following major findings: 1) the choice of New England as a primary destination indicated that New England had become a mature destination choice among U.S. domestic travelers; 2) no gain or a declining popularity for New England as a travel destination among 18- to 24-year-olds; 3) the Baby

Boom generation appeared to offer potential; but the real question was whether they would come to New England in the '90s and beyond; 4) the decline in market demand for New England, put into question potential losses for activity pursuits such as skiing, hiking and other outdoor recreation activities; and 5) generational findings, although preliminary in nature due to limited long term data, suggested that as younger generations aged New England was less popular while only older generations held a stronger desire to visit New England as a primary destination as they aged.

The concept of generations was first advanced by Strauss and Howe (1991). It was been found to be a new way to examine trends and changes in participation patterns in both recreational activity pursuits and travel behavior (Warnick, 1994, 1993c, 1995b). It also becomes a way to provide some insights into the future as one examines the past and existing behavior of current generations. One can make some assumptions based on our current knowledge of existing generations. For example, the members of the Baby Boom generation are moving into the 55 and over age cohorts and we have traditionally marketed to this segment; but other segments are also becoming important. An older, but large segment of the population, the Baby Boomers, will, within this decade, begin to enter their pre-retirement and retirement years. In addition to being empty nesters and they should have more travel time and more diversity in travel choices as they age. Second, by reviewing age categories, generations and generational cycles in participation in travel over time, new patterns about travel behavior can be revealed. Third, Strauss and Howe (1991) developed the theory of the "cycle of generations" and they suggested by understanding these cycles and the generational characteristics insights into current and future behavior may be also appreciated. For example, the Silent Generation reaches a period of time in their life span where Strauss and Howe (1991) predict and document that they will become more "sensitive" as a generation while at the same time many of their grandchildren, members of the Millennial Generation are in a "protected" period of their life spans. Thus, intergenerational travel (grandparent and grandchild) travel or destination promotional activities may become an evolving trend. Thus, by tracking the generation or age group through the stages or process of aging is an improved and new way to predict future consumer trends is possible.

### Purposes of Study

The purposes of this research paper are three-fold: 1) to examine domestic travel to New England during the '80s and through the mid-'90s within the context of generations; 2) to determine how participation rates in domestic travel within individual age categories changed over time (from 1979 through 1996); 3) to determine how participation rates in domestic travel of generations changed as these groups passed from one age category into the next (i.e., from 25 to 34 in 1980 to 35 to 44 in 1990)? Do lag periods of generational change indicate any different patterns of travel participation trends? Does a particular generation travel more or less as it ages and how do generations compare during similar period of their life spans (i.e., young adults or rising adult stages).

## Method

Data for this study was drawn from the Simmons Market Research Bureau's *Study of Media and Markets* (1979 through 1996). An average annual adjusted percentage change rate, two-point moving average and descriptive statistics were the basic statistics used to examine the data. Participation rates and generations served as the primary variables. Lag periods, covering ten-year spans, were also used to determine increases or declines in participation rates of New England destination travel as a generation aged. The generations and their birth years examined as defined by Straus and Howe (1991) included: G.I. Generation – born between 1904 & 1925, Silent Generation – born between 1926 & 1943; Baby Boom Generation – born between 1944 & 1960; and the 13th Generation – born between 1961 & 1982. Other generations, the Lost/Missionary Generations (born before 1904) – are passing on and were not statistically sufficient in numbers to be represented in the database. The Millennial Generation – the newest generation – born from 1982 to the present has not yet reach the adult age in 1996 to be represented in the data base. The theory of the "Cycle of Generations" (Strauss & Howe, 1991) indicated that each generation is type caste and takes on a personality cycle which is predictable. The types and personality cycles (with the level currently existing underlined here) include the following: 1) "Idealist" – the Baby Boom Generation which cycles through levels of indulged, narcissistic, moralistic, visionary; 2) "Reactive" – the Thirteenth or X Generation which cycles through levels of criticized, alienated, pragmatic, reclusive; 3) "Civic" – GI and Millennial Generations which cycle through the protected (Millennial), heroic, powerful, busy (GI); and 4) "Adaptive" – the Silent Generation which cycles through levels of suffocated, conformist, indecisive, and sensitive. Strauss and Howe indicate that the type and personality cycle are has repeated over the time, and are impacted by concepts such as social moments or significant changes in generational thinking. The Simmons data base includes data on travelers who pick New England as a primary destination and with 18 years of data, one can monitor who is going to New England and how has those markets have changed over time by generations.

## Selected Findings

The participation rate of all adults selecting New England as a primary destination averaged 3.7% over the 18-year period. The adjusted annual change rate indicated 1.5% growth per year. This translates into gain on average of about 200,000 primary destination travelers per year. The peak years were 1995 and 1996 at 9.5 and 9.4 million destination travelers respectively. The year with the fewest destination travelers was 1991 when 4.2 million destination travelers selected New England as a primary destination but the down year rebounded in 1992. However, these summary statistics are misleading as dramatic gains were experienced in the economic recovery period of 1995-1996 when travel nearly doubled to New England as a primary destination. Prior to 1995, travel to New England appeared to generally decline overall with only slight or periodic positive changes.

The New England's demographic markets participation rates, which selected New England as a destination choice, changed positively for all six age cohorts and included the following results: 18- to 24-year-olds – grew by 2.6%; 25- to 34-year-olds – grew by 8.6%; 35- to 44-year-olds – grew by 3.7%; 45- to 54-year-olds – grew by 1.8%; 55- to 64-year-olds – grew by 6.5%; 65 and older – grew by 5.5%. Thus, the age group with the largest increase and from previous studies we recognize are also active outdoor participants are the 25- to 34-year-olds. The two oldest age categories also had large average annual increases. However, these patterns also reflected the large gains in the 1995-1996 period which offset the declines experienced in earlier years.

The New England's geographic markets, which selected New England as a primary destination choice, changed positively for all four major markets areas and included the following results: the Northeast market grew by 5.1%; the South grew by 3.4%; the Midwest grew by 5.6%; and the West grew by 11.5%. The composition of New England's geographic markets of primary destination travelers indicated the following changes that 1) the Northeast comprises 62.4% of New England's market (compared to 66% in 1994); 2) a larger portion of the New England travel market were now from more distant markets, particularly the Midwest which accounted for about 18% on average but has exceeded 20% of the market of New England destination travelers in the '90s.

When age categories were examined over time a different view of travel to New England was revealed. The overall changes of domestic travel within age categories indicated that the rate of growth appears more pronounced or dramatic in recent years for age categories under 35 years of age. Rates grew at a rate of 5+% per year. The rates of age groups over 35 also grew; but, the rates grew at a slightly slower rate of just under 3% percent per year or less for those 35 to 54 years of age. Age categories where New England destination grew the most in popularity was the 55 to 64 and older category (up 6.5% per year) and 25- to 34-year-olds (up 8.6% per year). However, the problem with these data changes are we are only looking at static age categories. Furthermore, the changes reflect an age category analysis where members of different generations pass through the age years. In addition, the data also were impacted by dramatic changes in the mid-'90s after a decade of almost continued decline. Thus, a need exists to look at generations as they move through time as an age cohort. (See Table 1.)

First, some observations about the changes in overall generational impacts. In 1979, Baby Boomers were 35 or under. By 1989, a watershed year, Baby Boomers were in the 25 - 34 and 35 - 44-year-old categories and a portion were moving into the 45 to 54-year-old categories. Within the 18 to 24-year-old category for example, domestic travel participation rates declined steadily from '79 through '91 and then began to rebound after 1991 and then more than doubled by the year 1996. Boomers were being replaced by the 13th Generation during this time period. The "Baby Bust" or "13th Generation" fully comprised the 18 - 24-year-old cohort after the year 1983. Overall, the

Table 1. New England Travel Market, 1979 to 1996

	Decade										Two-Point			
	1980	1982	1984	1985	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1995	1996	Average	Change Rate	Moving Ave.
<b>New England Summary:</b>														
Adult Part. Rate	4.3%	4.2%	4.1%	3.5%	3.8%	3.0%	3.3%	2.9%	2.5%	5.0%	4.9%	3.6%	3.2%	1.5%
#New Eng. Trav. ('000)	6,814	6,772	6,889	5,960	6,581	5,324	5,903	5,307	4,727	9,467	9,395	6,285	4.4%	2.6%
<b>Age Cohorts:</b>														
Adult Overall Rate	4.3%	4.2%	4.1%	3.5%	3.8%	3.0%	3.3%	2.9%	2.5%	5.0%	4.9%	3.6%	3.3%	1.5%
18 to 24	3.3%	3.4%	3.0%	3.0%	2.8%	2.5%	1.9%	2.3%	2.0%	3.9%	4.2%	2.8%	2.6%	1.5%
25 to 34	5.8%	3.5%	4.0%	3.8%	4.4%	2.6%	3.5%	1.9%	2.1%	5.8%	5.5%	3.7%	8.6%	3.1%
35 to 44	5.2%	5.5%	5.3%	4.3%	4.3%	3.7%	4.5%	3.5%	3.0%	5.0%	5.4%	4.2%	3.7%	0.6%
45 to 54	5.1%	5.3%	5.0%	4.0%	3.9%	3.9%	3.9%	3.5%	3.6%	5.4%	5.1%	4.2%	1.8%	0.5%
55 to 64	3.5%	4.2%	4.7%	3.3%	4.6%	3.7%	2.5%	3.2%	2.6%	5.8%	5.6%	3.8%	6.5%	3.5%
65 and Older	2.3%	3.7%	2.7%	2.5%	3.0%	2.1%	2.6%	3.2%	1.8%	3.8%	3.2%	2.7%	5.5%	2.7%
<b>Target Region:</b>														
Northeast	14.3%	13.4%	13.1%	10.8%	11.5%	8.8%	10.2%	8.4%	5.7%	13.2%	14.3%	10.6%	5.1%	1.1%
South	1.8%	1.9%	1.6%	1.4%	1.5%	1.3%	1.4%	1.3%	1.4%	1.8%	2.0%	1.6%	3.4%	1.2%
Midwest	1.3%	1.5%	1.7%	1.8%	2.1%	1.7%	1.7%	1.2%	2.0%	3.0%	2.8%	1.8%	5.6%	4.9%
West	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.0%	1.2%	1.3%	0.9%	1.9%	1.5%	3.9%	2.7%	1.6%	11.5%	8.4%
<b>Target Region Composition:</b>														
Northeast	72.9%	70.7%	70.5%	66.7%	65.6%	61.5%	66.3%	61.3%	47.0%	54.4%	58.7%	62.4%	-0.6%	-1.3%
South	10.6%	12.0%	9.9%	10.1%	9.7%	10.7%	10.2%	10.8%	13.1%	8.4%	9.4%	10.9%	2.3%	0.1%
Midwest	10.3%	11.6%	14.2%	17.6%	18.9%	19.3%	17.8%	14.4%	27.5%	20.9%	20.1%	17.9%	6.2%	4.6%
West	6.3%	5.7%	5.3%	5.6%	5.8%	8.5%	5.8%	13.5%	12.4%	16.3%	11.4%	8.7%	8.9%	6.1%
<b>Total Travel Destinations of Northeast Market ('000):</b>														
All Destinations	130,431	132,419	126,112	119,659	121,750	122,738	130,839	139,497	130,938	187,340	187,988	135,001	2.3%	2.2%
Northeast	25,426	21,642	28,141	24,064	22,931	23,877	21,780	19,585	21,019	34,822	34,908	24,270	2.7%	2.3%
New England	4,965	4,788	4,860	3,975	4,318	3,276	3,913	3,252	2,220	5,152	5,519	3,958	5.6%	1.8%
Mid-Atlantic	7,135	8,064	8,307	7,276	6,268	6,978	5,772	4,435	4,210	7,450	7,917	6,560	2.0%	1.2%
Other Regions	13,326	8,790	14,974	12,813	12,345	13,623	12,095	12,171	14,589	22,220	21,472	13,767	3.9%	3.4%
NE Share of All	3.8%	3.6%	3.9%	3.3%	3.5%	2.7%	3.0%	2.3%	1.7%	2.8%	2.9%	2.9%	1.4%	-1.0%
NE Share of NoEa	19.5%	22.1%	17.3%	16.5%	18.8%	13.7%	18.0%	16.6%	10.6%	14.8%	15.8%	16.3%	1.5%	-0.7%
Mid-Atl Share of NoEa	28.1%	37.3%	29.5%	30.2%	27.3%	29.2%	26.5%	22.6%	20.0%	21.4%	22.7%	27.2%	-0.4%	-0.9%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau. 1979 to 1996. Study of Media and Markets. Vol. P-4, Travel. New York, New York.  
 NOTE: Years 1979, 1981, 1983, 1987, 1991, and 1993 are not shown due to space limitations; however, data are included in statistical analysis.  
 Use summary statistics (average, annual change rate, moving average) with caution.

entire population participation rates for the selection of New England as a primary destination were off by "0.7%" after each of the eight 10-year lag periods from 1979 through 1996.

Second, "Silent Generation" members were largely in the 35 to 54 age categories from 1979 through 1983; then moved ahead into 45 to 64-year-old groups. Their domestic travel behavior participation rate to New England declined from 1979 - 1983 in the 35 to 44 age category. In 1979, the New England travel participation rate was 5.4% and it declined to 3.6% in 1983. The older half of the "Silent Generation," age 45 to 54, experienced a decline in New England travel participation from 5.2% in 1979 to 3.9% in 1996 and after all of the 10 year lags were examined the average decline change was an overall decline of "-1.0%". With only a few years of data available, the travel tendencies of the 13<sup>th</sup> Generation actually grew as they aged from 18 to 24 and then later as they moved to the 25 to 34-year-old segment of their life span. Rates nearly doubled from 1985 to 1995 and 1986 to 1996.

Third, the "Baby Boom Generation" held the most stable New England travel participation rate over the decades when the other generations were examined. However, the oldest of the Baby Boomers showed signs of increased participation rates. These rates grew from 4% to over 5% after a decade of aging. The Silent Generation for the decade lags of 1979 to 1984 generally found their rates declining; however, these rates changed the least in 1986 to 1996 lag periods and less decline was noted in the older portion of this generation.

Fourth, the 1989 and 1995 years were watershed years when noted directional changes occurred in nearly all of the age category participation rates. These findings represent a positive note for the domestic travel industry in New England. In particular, the participation rates have appeared to have rebounded in the mid-'90s; particularly in the 1995-1996 years. Will these changes and growth trends be maintained? However, a word of caution must be observed because participation rates only indicate what percent the overall population and individual members of age categories participate and not how frequently they participate. (See Table 2.)

The generation change data can also be compared by generations. For example, the depth and wealth of the data now allows us to compare the young life stage of Baby Boomers to the 13<sup>th</sup> Generation. In the mid-'90s, the rates for the 13<sup>th</sup> Generation were higher than for the Baby Boomers a decade earlier when they were at the same life span stages. (See Table 3.)

When the transition of generational participation rates were examined by domestic travel to New England, one may examine the data by the pure change or examine it within the context of overall population change in participation from one decade to the next. Within the context of eight periods examined here (1979 to 1986 and 1989 to 1996), decade lag changes could be tracked by participation rates of age categories and generations. Although there was growth over time; the rates were not as high as they were after a decade of

aging and transition for most generations tracked here with the exception of the 13<sup>th</sup> Generation. Travel to New England overall, was up 3.2% on average; however, significant gains were most noteworthy in the mid-'90s. The Baby Boom Generation's participation rate in New England destination travel actually declined after a decade of change with the exception of the oldest Boomers. The older half of the Baby Boom Generation (those aged 35 to 44 in the mid-'80s), had participation rates which actually increased slightly. For example, the 35 to 44 rates in 1986 were 4.3% and in 1996 the rates were 5.1% after a decade of aging. No real patterns of change can be read into the changes in the GI Generation's travel patterns. Limitations of the data do show through here. For example, the decades of travel data here are not all purely of one complete generation, as each generation spans more than 10 years and over time, the age category will change in composition of generations.

## Conclusions

Over time and a replication of previous research with more data, reveals new and different changes. New England is an evolving or a rebounding market destination choice. After a downturn in the early '90s, the New England destination choice has rebounded and contributed to an overall growth trend is destination choice. The size of the market is up, the Northeast market rebounded in participation choice and more distant markets are also selecting New England as a primary destination. Furthermore, nearly all age categories have rebounded in participation.

The value of examining generations as suggested by Strauss and Howe (1991) does provide a new and somewhat different look of travel behavior as generations are examined and their participation over time changes as they age. New questions are raised after examining these data. For example:

1. Why is New England not growing as rapidly as we might expect in popularity with the current young adults? Rates are up significantly in the mid-'90s; but will they last? Why are the most active travelers isolated within two separate age segments (25- to 34-year-olds and 55- to 64-year-olds)? Is the popularity of the Millennial Generation simply a short-term event?
2. The Baby Boomers still appear to a potentially strong future market. Will they continue to travel more as they age and will they continue to travel to New England?
3. The best news appears to be the rebirth in interest of traveling to New England among the youngest adults, those 18 to 24. The 13<sup>th</sup> Generation is coming to New England and rates are increasing in their travel choices of New England even as they age.

More data is still needed and it would be even better if the data were available by actual individual birth year and by volume of travel instead of simple number of destination travelers. Individual and regional travel destination businesses and attractions would do well to monitor the behavior of their markets over time. This would reveal changes in patterns of interest and overall choice behavior as each individual generation ages and makes new life cycle choices and plans in the future.

Table 2. Generational Changes in New England Domestic Travel Participation Rates: 1979 to 1989 through 1986 to 1996

Generation, Age Category and Year	1980	1990	1982	1984	1985	1995	1986	1996	Ave. Decade Change Rate
<i>13th Generation</i>									
18- to 24-year-olds (83-86)				3.0%	3.0%	5.8%	2.8%	5.5%	0.8%
↳>25- to 34-year-olds (93-96)									
<i>Baby Boom Generation</i>									
18- to 24-year-olds (79-86)	3.3%	3.5%	3.4%	3.0%	3.0%	5.8%	2.8%	5.5%	0.8%
↳>25- to 34-year-olds (89-96)		0.2%	2.3%	-1.1%					
25- to 34-year-olds (79-86)	5.8%	4.5%	3.5%	4.5%	4.3%	5.4%	4.3%	5.1%	0.1%
↳>35- to 44-year-olds (89-96)		-1.3%	3.5%	0.0%					
35- to 44-year-olds (79-86)				5.3%	4.3%	5.4%	4.3%	5.1%	0.1%
↳>45- to 54-year-olds (89-96)									
<i>Silent Generation</i>									
35- to 44-year-olds (79-86)	5.2%	3.9%	5.5%	3.6%	4.3%	5.4%	4.3%	5.1%	0.1%
↳>45- to 54-year-olds (89-96)		-1.3%	3.5%	-2.0%					
45- to 54-year-olds (79-86)	5.1%	2.5%	5.3%	5.0%	4.0%	5.8%	3.9%	5.6%	-1.6%
↳>55- to 64-year-olds (89-96)		-2.6%	3.2%	-2.1%					
<i>G.I. Generation *</i>									
55- to 64-year-olds (79-86)	3.5%	2.6%	4.2%	4.7%	3.3%	3.8%	3.9%	5.6%	-1.0%
↳>65 and over (89-96)		-0.9%	3.2%	-1.0%					
<i>Overall Population Travel Rate</i>									
Early Rate	4.3%		4.2%	4.1%	3.5%	5.0%	3.8%	4.9%	-0.7%
↳> One Decade Later Rate		-1.0%	2.9%	-1.3%					

\* The generation change of the GI Generation is reported for consistency only; this generation's domestic travel participation rates are confounded by the presence of two other older generations (those 85+).

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau. 1979-1996. Study of Media and Markets, Vol. P-4. Travel.

Note: Lag periods 1979 & 1989, 1981 & 1991, 1983 & 1993 are not shown due to space limitations; however, data are included in statistical analysis.

**Table 3. Generational Diagonal in Domestic Travel Behavior in New England**

Year----->>> Life Stage and Age Cohort	-----The Early '80s-----					-----The Early '90s-----										
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<i>Elder</i>																
65 and Older Travel Part. Rate	Lost/GI 3.1%	Lost/GI 2.3%	Lost/GI 3.0%	Lost/GI 3.7%	Lost/GI 2.4%	Lost/GI 2.7%	Lost/GI 2.5%	Lost/GI 3.0%	GI 2.3%	GI 2.6%	GI 2.0%	GI 3.2%	GI 2.5%	GI 1.8%	GI 3.8%	GI 3.2%
<i>Midlife</i>																
55 to 64 Travel Part. Rate	GI 4.2%	GI 3.5%	GI 3.9%	GI 4.2%	GI 3.4%	GI 4.7%	GI 3.3%	GI 4.6%	Silent 4.0%	Silent 2.5%	Silent 3.2%	Silent 3.2%	Silent 3.0%	Silent 2.6%	Silent 5.8%	Silent 5.6%
45 to 54 Travel Part. Rate	Silent 5.2%	Silent 5.2%	Silent 5.2%	Silent 5.3%	Silent 4.0%	Silent 5.0%	Silent 4.0%	Silent 3.9%	Silent 2.9%	Silent 3.9%	Silent 3.0%	Silent 3.5%	Silent 3.9%	Silent 3.6%	Silent 5.4%	Silent 5.1%
<i>Rising Adult</i>																
35 to 44 Travel Part. Rate	Silent 5.4%	Silent 5.2%	Silent 5.4%	Silent 5.5%	Silent 3.6%	Silent 5.3%	Silent 4.3%	Silent 4.3%	Boom 3.1%	Boom 4.5%	Boom 2.6%	Boom 3.5%	Boom 3.4%	Boom 3.0%	Boom 5.0%	Boom 5.4%
25 to 34 Travel Part. Rate	Boom 4.5%	Boom 5.8%	Boom 4.7%	Boom 3.5%	Boom 4.5%	Boom 4.0%	Boom 3.8%	Boom 4.4%	Boom 2.7%	Boom 3.5%	Boom 1.9%	Boom 1.9%	Boom 2.5%	Boom 2.1%	Boom 5.8%	Boom 5.5%
<i>Youth</i>																
18 to 24 Travel Part. Rate	Boom 4.6%	Boom 3.3%	Boom 3.4%	Boom 3.4%	Boom 3.9%	Boom 3.0%	Boom 3.0%	Boom 2.8%	13th 1.8%	13th 1.9%	13th 1.6%	13th 2.3%	13th 1.9%	13th 2.0%	13th 3.9%	13th 4.2%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau. (1979 through 1996).

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## WELCOME CENTER RESEARCH: HOW VALUABLE IS SECONDARY RESEARCH?

Louisa Meyer\*

Tara Patterson\*

Graduate Students in Recreation Parks and Tourism,  
University of Florida, 325 Florida Gym, P.O. Box 118209,  
Gainesville, FL 32611

Lori Pennington-Gray

Andrew Holdnak

Brijesh Thapa

Assistant Professors in Recreation Parks and Tourism,  
University of Florida, 325 Florida Gym, P.O. Box 118209,  
Gainesville, FL 32611

\*Names appear in alphabetical order because both authors contributed equally

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**Abstract:** Community tourism research often focuses on characteristics and patterns of visitors to an area. Issues such as economic impacts, length of stay, travel plans and demographic descriptions are common topics of research projects conducted for tourism development agencies. However, research often fails to utilize readily obtainable information, such as guest book information that may be routinely collected. Conversely, data collected in guest books at Welcome Centers is often collected, quickly tabulated, reported monthly then ignored. When collected over a period of time and analyzed, data collected using this relatively unobtrusive method may provide a rich source of information about tourism in an area. In addition, it may provide insights into the validity of other tourism studies conducted.

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### Introduction

This paper was part of a larger study funded by the Alachua County Visitors' Bureau. The aim of the overall project was to determine the frequency and use patterns of the Alachua County Welcome Center. The purpose of this portion of the study was to examine data routinely gathered to determine any possible patterns that may be evident. The variables of interest were gender, city and country of origin, destination, and time of year and day. This study was an initial step in demonstrating how secondary information can be used by tourism agencies either as primary or as supporting information.

Community tourism research has focused on economic impacts, length of stay, travel plans and demographic descriptions. Welcome Centers provide a stopping point for tourists to rest, gain information, use facilities, and

picnic. They help to contribute to the economic impact of tourism to the area, and are crucial for setting the stage of the travelers' experience. Welcome Centers are usually located at state borders but can also be found at the county level. Visitors stopping at the state border welcome centers tend to be out-of-state residents, traveling for business or pleasure searching for information (Pennington-Gray & Vogt, 2000). Furthermore, visitors to the interior welcome centers tend to be in-state residents traveling for leisure (Pennington-Gray & Vogt, 2000).

Past research has focused on the reasons for stopping compared to the actual behavior of visitors. For example, people may stop in order to take a break, stretch their legs or to use the facilities, but while doing this may inadvertently gain information which influences their future behavior. Additionally research has focused on users versus non-users, demographic information has shown that when compared to non-users, people who stop at welcome centers typically have higher incomes, larger party size, and tend to be on pleasure trips. Furthermore, much research has focused on the economic impact of visitors and the effect of the welcome centers on their actual behaviors and expenditures. More recently research has focused on the location and available facilities at the welcome centers as well as their impact on visitors.

### Methodology

Since opening in December 1997, all people visiting the Alachua County Welcome Center were asked to sign a guest book. Information requested included questions pertaining to their city and country of origin, destination, party size, date, and time of visit. The information collected was used only to measure the volume of visitations, thus making the case for the continued funding of the center. Over a three-year period, a total of 12,000 responses were collected. A random selection of approximately 6,000 entries were entered into SPSS version 10.0 and analyzed. Frequencies provided information about gender, location, and destination, and the results were then further analyzed in order to better describe the usage patterns of the Welcome Center.

### Findings

This study yielded the following results: 54% of the visitors to the Alachua County Welcome Center were male (Table 1). Visitations occurred mostly during the afternoon hours (12-3 pm) with 40.3% of visitations at this time period (Table 2-4). There was 65.6% of visitors coming from outside of Alachua County and the top five states of origin were Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee respectively. There was also a fair representation of International visitors with the top five countries of origin being Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Germany, and France. For the travelers, the top five counties of destinations were Alachua, Orange, Hillsborough, Marion, and Pinellas (Table 5).

**Table 1. Gender of Visitors**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	2803	54.0
Female	2385	46.0
Total	5188	100.0

**Table 2. Time of Visitation**

Time	Frequency	Percent
Morning	1590	33.6
Afternoon	1908	40.3
Evening	1232	26.0
Total	4730	100.0

**Table 3. Year of Visitation**

Year	Frequency	Percent
2000	1196	20.2
1998	1158	19.5
1999	3571	60.3
Total	5925	100.0

**Table 4. Month of Visitation**

Month	Frequency	Percent
January	343	5.8
February	407	6.9
March	554	9.4
April	744	12.7
May	766	13.0
June	356	6.1
July	620	10.6
August	985	16.8
September	684	11.6
October	413	7.0
November	4	.01
Total	5876	100.0

**Table 5. Visitors' Origin**

County	Frequency	Percent
Inside Alachua	2057	34.4
Outside Alachua	3915	65.06
Total	5972	100.0

## **Discussion**

The results of this study indicated that readily obtainable information received at Welcome Centers could provide insight into travel behaviors of tourists. However, the information may be limited depending on the types of questions that are asked. Demographical information and open ended questions should be included in guest books in order to better understand such things as purpose of travel, length of stay, and reasons for stopping at the Welcome Center. Future studies should examine economic feasibility of county funded Welcome Centers in light of technological advances and ease of access to information.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Welcome Center Research is an interesting area that suggests the need for further research in order to better gain insight into the travel habits and behaviors of visitors to a particular area. Secondary research allows the individuals to examine what habits may already exist, however, more

intrusive methods must be utilized in order to gain more detailed information such as reasons for stopping. Welcome centers provide information that may be useful to travelers, however, through this research study it was observed that location of the center may also affect visitor type. Much research has examined such issues as county verses state welcome centers, as well as theme of the welcome center. Providing incentives for completing guest book sign in may also help to increase the amount of information offered by visitors. Future research should continue to examine travel habits as this information may greatly help to affect the tourism industry as a whole.

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