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Exploring Pull Factor Influences at Campgrounds by RV Association Members

Jill Fjelstul

University of Central Florida, jill.fjelstul@ucf.edu

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Exploring Pull Factor Influences at Campgrounds by RV Association Members

1.0 Introduction

Today's travelers on major highways and thoroughfares have most likely shared the road with a recreational vehicle (RV). Recreational vehicles come in various sizes, shapes, and onboard features. Recreational vehicles are owned and/or rented by travelers of diverse ages, traveling parties, and agendas. The recreational vehicle industry is multidimensional within travel and tourism, estimated at \$37 billion industry and representing approximately 12,000 RV-related businesses, 8.9 million households, and 16,000 campgrounds (RVIA, 2012). The uniqueness of RV travel is the dual role of the recreational vehicle serving the traveler as both their transportation and lodging.

Recreational vehicles, in most cases, will be parked at a campground during use, lending to the question of what factors influence campground selection. Travel literature is replete with studies exploring motivation. Researchers have argued that understanding psychological reasons for travel will better predict future needs and expectations of tourists (Cha et al., 1995; Crompton, 1979; Jang and Wu, 2006; Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005). A widely adopted theoretical based framework for travel motivation is the push pull theory (Crompton, 1979). In theory, the push factors are internal influences and pull factors are external influences. Push factors have been referenced as escape, self-exploration, relation, prestige, regression, social interaction, and enhancement of kinship. Pull factors are of much broader description, such as amenities, features, and attributes of destinations.

RV campgrounds of today vary in size, offerings, and price, far removed from campgrounds of the past. RV campgrounds range from a few sites on property to luxurious resorts with hundreds of sites, catering to recreational vehicles of every size and type. RVing is enjoyed by a wide spectrum of ages, travel parties, and lifestyle, some preferring simplicity and solitude while others electing full service amenities in their campground selection (GoRVing, 2012). With such widespread diversity, the current study was designed to explore the pull motivations specific to RV campgrounds. Previous studies have claimed push pull factors are independent influences and should be studied separately (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996; Klenosky, 2002, Pyo et al., 1989). The objectives of the current study, therefore, were to:

- 1) identify the general demographics of members of a RV association.
- 2) investigate campground travel decisions by members of a RV association.
- 3) explore pull factors specific to RV campground attributes by members of a RV association.

Increased competition in the travel and tourism industry magnifies the importance of knowing influences, cues, and customer perceptions of travel services (Ainscough, 2005). The study of travel motivation can be challenging. Motivational influences most likely vary from traveler to traveler, by target segments, by destination (Correia et al., 2007; Meng and Uysal, 2008), and by stage of lifecycle (Kim, 2007; Dotson et al., 2008).

The timing of the current research is noteworthy as the future of RV travel appears encouraging. The Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA, 2012) has recently released data on present day patterns and trends. As depicted, approximately 74% of RV travelers have indicated they will continue to travel despite fuel costs but will most likely choose destinations closer to home. Additionally, third quarter RV shipments were the strongest in five years, according to RV business indicators. Contributors to the recent growth are likely from manufacturers producing units optimal in size, amenities, and price for today's budget conscious consumers. Manufacturers are also producing lightweight towables and smaller fuel-efficient motorhomes, green technologies with solar panels and energy-efficient components. The current study, likewise, could further impact the future growth of the industry, especially in the current challenging economic climate. Findings from the current study can assist campground owners/operators in developing effective marketing strategies for attracting RV travelers with customized products, onsite amenities, and/or services. Offerings can be tailored to today's RV traveler based on travel needs, desires, and demographics.

2.0 Literature Review

The RV Industry

The RV traveler has over 16,000 campgrounds (GoRVing, 2012) to choose from. Campgrounds vary from primitive sites with minimal at-site convenience to luxury gated communities with clubhouse amenities. Many campground property owners have renovated their existing campsites, including technology from cable to WiFi service to longer and wider spaces accommodating RV lengths up to 45 feet. Voltage requirements have demanded electrical supply mandates of up to 100 amps per rig. Streets leading to individual campsites have also been widened and often paved due to the restricted turning radius of the longer rigs. Such changes most likely have altered master site plans and in some cases reduced the number of sites available for rent, thus providing more credence to the current study in discovering the campground attributes of strongest influence to maximize occupancy.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of human needs (Maslow, 1943) is embedded in present day motivational research. Maslow (1943) identified five basic human motivating needs; physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. The aforementioned have been identified in a hierarchy based on need and consciousness. As each need is achieved, the next in hierarchical order is sought, based on the premise that attained needs are not an active influence or motivator.

Researchers have argued that once travel intention has been declared, destination attributes are of influence (Baloglu and Uysal, 1990; Yuan and McDonald, 1990). Previous literature has identified pull factor influences of travel, including destination value (Kim et al., 2003), image (Prayag, 2012), kid-friendly destinations when traveling with children (Turley, 2001; Johns and Gyimothy, 2003; Brey and Lehto, 2008), landscaping, outdoor activities, and hassle-free environments (Frochot, 2005; Park and Yoon, 2009). Pull influences have also included beaches, weather, exotic food, culture, novelty (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994), lakes and historic sites (Horneman et al., (2002)). Pull influences specific to older travelers have noted preference

towards good transportation, cleanliness, safety, and socialization opportunities (You and O'Leary, 2000). Literature respective to recreational travel and camping is limited and has not explicitly studied pull motivations of RV travel. Previous studies, however, have revealed destination attributes are related to satisfaction. Natural areas and facilities were identified by Connelly (1987) and multiple options along travel routes and at destinations were revealed by Fodness and Murray (1997). More recently, Fjelstul and Severt (2011) identified destination attributes as the most common topic posted on association based online forum. Fjelstul et al. (2012) further noted campground and campsite attributes as major themes in campground reviews.

Travel motivation research has explored diverse demographics and agendas yet the RV traveler has not been studied extensively. Previous literature has included culinary tourists (Smith et al., 2010), ecotourists (Chan and Baum, 2007); international travelers (Hsu and Lam, 2003; Poria et al., 2006; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005), recreational home users (Sievanen et al., 2008), seniors (Jang and Wu, 2006; Lehto et al., 2001; Sangpikul, 2008; You and O'Leary, 2000), and university women (Kim and Beck, 2009). Travel motivation agendas have also included backpacking (Cohen, 2011; Loker-Murphy, 1996, Thyne et al., 2004), caravanning (Prideaux and McClymont, 2006), conventions (Axelsen, 2006), ecolodges (Chan and Baum, 2007), events (Kim, Borges, and Chon, 2006; McCleary et al., 2006), green practices (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007), ocean cruising (Jennings, 1997; Lusby and Anderson, 2010), and rural tourism (Oh and Schuett, 2010; Pesonen et al., 2011).

3.0 Methodology

The research design in the current study was sequenced as follows. First, motivational theory respective to the push pull theory was studied. It was subsequently determined that the current study would focus solely on pull factor influences. Next, literature respective to RV travel and camping was studied. The RV and camping review included academic and industry related articles respective to travel motivation. A review of industry-based surveys was also conducted for reference to key dimensions of campground attributes. It was determined a survey instrument specific to the present study's objectives was necessitated. Additional input for survey development was received through a series of phone calls, conference calls, and emails with industry leaders.

The initial draft of the survey was developed and subsequently reviewed by industry leaders. Once reviewed and edited, a survey pretest was administered to check for face validity and readability. Minor edification was performed. The final survey was electronic-based and consisted of the following sections. The first section of the survey sought the level of importance of RV travelers' push motivations. The present study, however, excluded push factor motivations from analysis. The second section included pull factor campground attributes. The 22 pull factor variables included in the survey mirrored literature findings and industry input. Each pull factor item employed a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The third section of the survey included campground travel decisions, including preference in choosing destinations or campgrounds first, miles from home base, familiarity with the campground of choice, and recommendations from family and friends. Each item also employed a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from strongly

disagree to strongly agree (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The final section of the survey reflected demographics; gender, age, marital status, occupation, education, and income. Ages were subsequently categorized into the following cohorts for investigating the differences between pull factor variables; 20-34; 35-49; 50-64; and 65+.

The survey was randomly distributed to 100,000 members of a large U.S.-based RV membership association. Demographics of the survey recipients were not available for comparison to the entire membership. However, the RV association claims over 1 million in membership. Participation was voluntary and confidential. There were 30,539 surveys returned, equating to an approximate 30% response rate. The collected data was coded into an SPSS data file for analysis. After review, the final number of usable surveys was 30,414. Based on the large sample size, the usable surveys were randomly categorized into two groups of equal size, each containing 15,207. One group was utilized for analysis for the current study. The other group will be utilized for validation in future studies.

In accordance to the objectives set forth, the following procedures were conducted. First, general demographics were analyzed on the 15,207 respondents. Second, general demographics were analyzed by age categories. Age categories were revealed as 20-34, 35-49, 50-64, and 65+. Third, for a better understanding of the RV lifestyle experienced by RV travelers, two additional analyses were performed on the following categorical variables. Travelers identified their typical traveling party as at least one additional adult with children, at least one additional adult without children, extended family, group, and/or friends with children, with a group traveling in separate RVs, with no additional adult but with children, or travel party of one. The traveler also identified how far from home base their projected travel mileage would be in the next 12 months. Fourth, campground travel decisions were studied. Travelers identified the following: if they choose a destination or campground first in their travel planning, if they choose campgrounds close to home or further than 100 miles away, if they choose campgrounds previously visited and campgrounds recommended by friends and/or family. Mean scores were calculated for each variable and categorized by age group. Fifth, pull influences of campground attributes were examined by age category. Pull factors included 22 attributes of campgrounds (Tables 5 & 6). Mean scores were calculated for each variable. A one way ANOVA was subsequently performed to investigate the differences of each pull motivation by age. Post hoc comparisons utilizing the Tukey HSD test was further employed to explore any differences between age cohorts. Analysis on ages 20-34 were excluded due to low response rate.

4.0 Results

Overall Respondents

The first objective of the current study was to identify the general demographics of today's RV traveler. The current study received tremendous support for data collection. A total of 30,539 surveys were returned, with a total of 30,414 as usable surveys. Due to the large response, two groups were randomly formed, each represented by 15,207 participants. Table 1 reveals the demographics of the 15,207 participants utilized for the current study. As depicted, the respondents were predominantly male (67%) and married (77%). Approximately 2/3 of the

respondents were retired. Income levels were widespread yet fairly evenly distributed by income range. The majority of respondents were of ages 50+ (82%).

Variable	Results (<i>n=15,207</i>)
Gender	
Male	67%
Female	19%
Age	
20-34	1%
35-49	6%
50-64	32%
65+	50%
Marital Status	
Single	23%
Married	77%
Occupation	
Employed	20%
Business Owner	6%
Retired	61%
Unemployed	2%
Education	
High School or less	16%
Some college	35%
Bachelor's Degree	21%
Master's/Doctorate	16%
Income	
\$49,999 or less	16%
\$50,000-\$74,999	20%
\$75,000-\$99,999	16%
\$100,000+	21%

The present study also examined demographics by age groups. Ages were categorized by groups; ages 20-34, 35-49, 50-64, and 65+. Ages 20-34 were excluded from analysis due to minimal responses. Table 2 reveals demographics by age category. In addition, the current study examined the typical travel party and their projected mileage for the next 12 months to offer a better understanding of the present day RVer. Table 3 depicts travel parties and projected mileage for today's RVer. A descriptive summary of each age group is highlighted in the following sections.

Variable	Age Groups		
	Ages 35-49 (n=685)	Ages 50-64 (n=4821)	Ages 65+ (n=7488)
Gender			
Male	70%	72%	82%
Female	30%	28%	18%
Marital Status			
Single	15%	12%	11%
Married	85%	88%	89%
Occupation			
Employed	81%	38%	8%
Business Owner	9%	7%	3%
Retired	5%	51%	88%
Unemployed	2%	2%	0%
Education			
High School or less	23%	19%	19%
Some college	40%	42%	40%
Bachelor's Degree	22%	16%	17%
Master's/Doctorate	11%	14%	3%
Income			
\$49,999 or less	9%	17%	27%
\$50,000-\$74,999	18%	24%	31%
\$75,000-\$99,000	26%	23%	22%
\$100,000+	47%	36%	20%

Table 3			
Typical Travel Party and Mileage Projected per Trip			
By Age Group			
Variable	Age Groups		
	Age 35-49 (n=685)	Age 50-64 (n=4821)	Age 65+ (n=7488)
Travel Party			
At least 1 other adult, with children	33%	11%	6%
At least 1 other adult, without children	25%	51%	56%
No other adult but with children	2%	1%	1%
Extended family, with children	15%	9%	6%
Extended family, without children	6%	8%	7%
With a group but in separate RVs	15%	14%	17%
Alone	4%	16%	7%
Projected Mileage per Trip			
<50 miles	4%	3%	3%
51-100 miles	10%	6%	6%
100-250 miles	34%	19%	10%
251-500 miles	15%	14%	11%
501-1000 miles	16%	19%	19%
1001+ miles	21%	39%	51%

Ages 35-49

RVers in ages 35-49 were predominantly male and married. The majority of RVers ages 35-49 were employed. Their incomes were promising for support of the RV lifestyle, with approximately 47% exceeding \$100,000. Further analysis revealed today's typical traveling party of ages 35-49 consists of at least one other adult. Traveling with or without children was fairly balanced, noting 33% traveling with children and 25% traveling without children. Projected travel distances in the next 12 months were also studied. The most reported mileage per trip projected for the next 12 months was 100-250 miles from home base (34%). Furthermore, 21% plan to travel 1000+ miles from home base next year, followed by 16% projecting 500-1000 miles, and 15% projecting 250-500 miles. Approximately 4% will stay within 50 miles of home base.

Ages 50-64

RVers in ages 50-64 were predominantly male and married. The majority of RVers ages 50-64 were retired. Their incomes were fairly balanced throughout all categories. Further analysis revealed their typical traveling party consisted of at least one other adult without children (51%). With regards to projected travel distance in the next 12 months, 1000+ miles from home base was the most reported mileage (39%). The next most reported mileage was balanced at 100-250 (19%) and 500-1000 (19%). Approximately 3% will stay within 50 miles of home base.

Ages 65+

RVers ages 65+ were predominantly male and married. The majority of RVers were retired with incomes fairly balanced across the financial categories. Findings revealed their typical traveling party consisted of at least one other adult without children (56%). The second most common travel party of ages 65+ travel with a group but in separate RVs (17%). With regards to projected travel distance in the next 12 months, 1000+ was the most reported distance from home (51%), followed by 500-1000 (19%). Approximately 3% will stay within 50 miles of home base.

Campground Travel Decisions

The second objective of the current study was to investigate campground related travel decisions. The mean for each travel decision was calculated and compared by age group (Table 4). The mean was calculated based on a 5 point Likert scale, reflecting level of influence. All age groups revealed choosing a destination first, then a campground as the strongest influence respective to campground related travel decisions. Furthermore, all age groups were in agreement to the weakest influence, choosing a campground prior to a destination.

Variable	Age Categories		
	35-49	50-64	65+
Choose a destination first, then a campground	4.32 ^a	4.39	4.40
Choose a campground I have previously visited	3.95	3.82	3.82
Choose campground recommended by friends/family	3.88	3.54	3.37
Choose a campground at least 100 miles from home	3.42	3.54	3.62
Choose a campground not previously visited	3.30	3.25	3.18
Choose a campground close to home	2.92	2.62	2.37
Choose a campground first, then a destination	2.00	1.82	1.66

^a=Mean values were computed on the basis of 5 Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)

Pull Factors for RV Travel by Age Group

The third objective of the current study was to explore pull factor influences respective to RV campground attributes. The mean and standard deviation for each pull factor item was calculated and compared by age (Table 5). The mean for each pull factor was calculated based on a 5 point Likert scale, revealing the level of influence. The five most influential motivators for each age group differed slightly. For ages 35-49, the strongest influence was for safety and security, followed by overall cleanliness. For ages 50-64 and ages 65+, the strongest campground attributes were overall cleanliness, followed by safety and security. The pull factor variable ranked third across all age groups was friendliness of staff. Comprehensively, the top pull factor campground influences were similar between age groups, varying only slightly by

influence; overall cleanliness, safety and security, friendliness of staff, full hookups, and clean bathrooms/showers. With respect to pull factor campground attributes of least influence, ages 35-49 revealed more variability as compared to the other two cohorts. Ages 50-64 and 65+ were least influenced by campgrounds that were kid friendly, had onsite fitness, and concierge-like services. In comparison, kid friendly offerings were of much greater influence for ages 35-49.

Variable	Ages 35-49		Ages 50-64		Ages 65+	
	Rank	Mean (s.d.)	Rank	Mean (s.d.)	Rank	Mean (s.d.)
Overall cleanliness	2	4.55 ^a (.627)	1	4.53 (.619)	1	4.49 (.648)
Safety & Security	1	4.55 (.706)	2	4.48 (.729)	2	4.43 (.754)
Friendliness of staff	3	4.49 (.660)	3	4.44 (.683)	3	4.41 (.694)
Full hookups	5	4.24 (.92)	4	4.26 (.94)	4	4.25 (.93)
Clean bathrooms/shower	4	4.31 (.994)	5	4.25 (1.02)	5	4.18 (1.08)
Ease of access	7	4.04 (.89)	7	4.13 (.86)	6	4.13 (.85)
Price	6	4.22 (.83)	6	4.15 (.84)	7	4.08 (.85)
Discounts	7	4.04 (.95)	8	4.08 (.89)	8	4.06 (.89)
Free WiFi	11	3.58 (1.25)	9	3.78 (1.22)	9	3.72 (1.28)
Loyalty	10	3.64 (1.15)	10	3.68 (1.10)	11	3.62 (1.13)
Upgraded sites	12	3.50 (1.10)	11	3.64 (1.02)	10	3.64 (.99)
Big rig friendly	17	3.01 (1.44)	13	3.46 (1.38)	12	3.43 (1.38)
Pet-friendly	9	3.77 (1.48)	12	3.58 (1.58)	14	3.25 (1.68)
Cable	16	3.07 (1.34)	14	3.38 (1.30)	13	3.40 (1.31)
Onsite campstore	15	3.34 (1.17)	15	3.24 (1.10)	15	3.16 (1.10)
Pool	13	3.46 (1.31)	16	2.88 (1.25)	18	2.56 (1.26)
Clubhouse	19	2.68 (1.11)	17	2.69 (1.10)	16	2.71 (1.16)
Onsite restaurant	20	2.42 (1.12)	19	2.53 (1.06)	17	2.57 (1.09)
Activities/Events	18	2.85 (1.21)	18	2.55 (1.09)	19	2.40 (1.09)
Concierge-like services	22	2.28 (1.16)	20	2.39 (1.16)	20	2.30 (1.50)
Onsite fitness room	21	2.31 (1.12)	22	2.38 (1.11)	21	2.27 (1.11)
Kid-friendly	14	3.35 (1.41)	20	2.39 (1.22)	22	2.11 (1.10)

^a=Mean values were computed on the basis of 5 Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)

In addition, a one way ANOVA was performed to investigate differences in campground attributes by age cohort. The analysis of variance revealed significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) existed between age groups in approximately 66% of the analysis performed. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated the mean score of the pull factor motivational variables were significant between age groups. Table 6 depicts when significance for each pull factor was observed between age groups. The pull factors are listed in the order found on the survey.

	Mean (s.d.)	Mean (s.d.)	Mean (s.d.)	<i>F-value</i>	Age Group Comparisons	Age Group Comparisons	Age Group Comparisons
Overall cleanliness	4.55 ^a	4.53	4.49	5.04	1-2	1-3	2-3*
Safety & Security	4.55	4.48	4.43	8.71	1-2	1-3*	2-3*
Friendliness of staff	4.49	4.44	4.41	4.96	1-2	1-3*	2-3*
Full hookups	4.24	4.26	4.25	.41	1-2	1-3	2-3
Clean bathrooms/shower	4.31	4.25	4.18	5.04	1-2	1-3*	2-3*
Ease of access	4.04	4.13	4.13	3.03	1-2*	1-3	2-3
Price	4.22	4.15	4.08	10.69	1-2	1-3*	2-3*
Discounts	4.04	4.08	4.06	.92	1-2	1-3	2-3
Free WiFi	3.58	3.78	3.72	5.62	1-2*	1-3*	2-3
Loyalty	3.64	3.68	3.62	2.99	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*
Upgraded sites	3.50	3.64	3.64	3.86	1-2*	1-3*	2-3
Big rig friendly	3.01	3.46	3.43	27.05	1-2*	1-3*	2-3
Pet-friendly	3.77	3.58	3.25	50.69	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*
Cable	3.07	3.38	3.40	12.52	1-2*	1-3*	2-3
Onsite campstore	3.34	3.24	3.16	10.50	1-2*	1-3	2-3*
Pool	3.46	2.88	2.56	147.07	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*
Clubhouse	2.68	2.69	2.71	1.38	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*
Onsite restaurant	2.42	2.53	2.57	8.15	1-2*	1-3	2-3
Activities/Events	2.85	2.55	2.40	45.91	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*
Concierge-like services	2.28	2.39	2.30	6.84	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*
Onsite fitness room	2.31	2.38	2.27	7.98	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*
Kid-friendly	3.35	2.39	2.11	264.35	1-2*	1-3*	2-3*

1= Age 35-49, 2=50-64, 3=65+

^a=Mean values were computed on the basis of 5 Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)

*Significance (<.05)

5.0 Conclusions

There were three objectives to the current study. First, the current study identified the general demographics of members of a RV association. Second, the current study investigated campground travel decisions by members of a RV association. And, third, the current study explored pull factors specific to RV campground attributes by members of a RV association. A thorough review of the findings and implications are categorized in the following sections.

Demographics

The present study notes gender and marital status were fairly consistent across age groups. Approximately 70% of ages 35-64 and 82% of ages 65+ were male. Marital status revealed 85-89% were married across the age categories. Income levels of current RVers were encouraging as the majority confirmed income of at least \$50,000. Such findings conclude RVing is not exclusive to the high economic status, consistent with claims by Sievanen et al. (2012).

Age revealed the most disparity in the current study. Only 1% of the participants were younger than age 35. There were only 6% between ages 35-49. Importantly, it is possible the demographics of the RV membership association surveyed in the current study had, on average, an older membership base. Demographics of the membership association were not available for comparison. Therefore, the findings may be consistent with the demographics of the membership association yet not reflective of all RV travelers. Nevertheless, these findings were significant as sustainability of the industry will rely heavily on attracting the younger generation to the industry while retaining current RVers. One suggestion for the industry would be to identify travel patterns and trends of traditional-based travelers ages 49 and younger. Once determined, the RV industry could match compatible RV travel options and create marketing pieces promoting RV travel alternatives. In addition, research should explore perspectives of RV travel from current RVers of all ages. Findings would offer a clearer understanding of the benefits of the RV lifestyle in present day.

Today's typical RV travel party findings were of particular interest. Across all age groups, the most common travel party composition was with at least one other adult. However, ages 35-49 were fairly balanced with regards to traveling with or without children. Presumably, traveling with children would present different needs than traveling without children. Future research should explore needs, patterns, and trends specific to these two findings. Not surprising, older RV travelers were less likely to travel with children; 11% for ages 50-64 and 6% for ages 65+. This finding was of particular interest, however, because generalizations from age demographics alone may not offer enough insight for effective marketing of products and services. For instance, 82% of the current respondents were ages 50+. Assumedly, products and services for the 50+ would be fairly consistent due to life stage distinctions. However, 17% of ages 50+ travel with children which should be considered. Additionally, a relevant finding related to travel party composition was solo travel. Approximately 4% of ages 35-49, 16% of ages 50-64, and 7% of ages 65+ indicated their travel party of one. Future research should explore solo RV travel to determine if solo travel is an emerging trend in the RV industry.

Lastly, the current study identified projected travel plans in the next 12 months with regards to mileage. Over 51% of ages 65+ and 39% of ages 50-64 plan to travel at least 1000 miles. Approximately 19% plan to travel between 500-1000 miles. Quite possibly, the travelers indicating long distance travel projections are either southbound for the winter or simply have the time to travel. In either case, further exploration to determine if 1000+ miles are traveled annually to a particular destination or if the miles are to multiple destinations is suggested. Furthermore, the most reported mileage for ages 35-49 was 100-250 miles. Future research should investigate their travel pattern, including frequency, duration, and time of year for a broader scope of understanding and for predicting future travel needs and services.

Campground Travel Decisions

The current study identified influences in campground travel decisions. Findings were significant not only for identifying patterns but for their presumed implication for campground owners/operators. All three age cohorts revealed choosing a destination first in their travel planning was far more important than choosing a campground. The difference in mean scores

between choosing a destination first or choosing a campground first, based on a 5 point Likert scale, was 2.32 for ages 35-49, 2.55 for ages 50-64, and 2.74 for ages 65+. Findings clearly reveal that campground selection is of far less importance. Consequently, determining pull factor campground attributes of most influence is significant. Furthermore, age cohorts revealed strong preference to staying at a campground previously visited or one recommended by friends or family, respectively. This indicates RVers select a campground with a greater likelihood to meet their expectations since they either have personal experience or trust by the referral from a reliable source.

Pull Factor Influences Regarding Campground Attributes

The third objective of the current study was to explore pull factor influences specific to RV campground attributes. The five most influential attributes differed slightly by influence, age cohort, and in statistical significance; overall cleanliness, safety and security, friendliness of staff, full hook ups, and clean bathrooms and showers. Overall cleanliness and safety/security were of most influence. Overall cleanliness, importantly, is controllable and should be manageable on a daily basis. Unfortunately, as with any venue, patrons are not always considerate for another's property. Thus, having available trash and recycling areas in convenient and identifiable locations may encourage trash and debris pick up by both personnel and guest. Signs requesting consideration is also suggested as such messages signals the importance of overall cleanliness by the management and for guest satisfaction and experience. Safety and security, on the other hand, may need further clarity for individual campground owners/operators as perception and expectation may carry different definitions by travel party. Nevertheless, appropriate lighting, code locks on common areas, and observed on site security personnel are considerations for safety and security detail. Friendliness of staff should be a given in any service sector. Findings reiterate the importance of friendliness by staff. Friendliness of staff should be a focus during the hiring process and as an continual theme onsite.

Full hookups are commonly pursued by RVers for convenience. Full hookups consist of water, electric, and sewer. Typically, campgrounds will offer water and electric with sewer offered sporadically throughout the industry. When sewer is not offered at each individual site, a common dump station is offered upon exit of the campground. This may be inconvenient for two reasons. First, if the RVer is staying for an extended period at a designated campsite, cleaning the holding tank will be necessitated if utilizing onboard facilities. Consequently, this would require the RVer to unhook all utilities to clean the holding tank. Second, departure from the campground may be delayed if an RVer exits for the dump station only to find other RVers occupying the facility. Campground owners/operators should take serious consideration with this finding, especially when considering future capital improvements for increasing occupancy rate. Likewise, for campgrounds offering full hookups, full hook ups should be clearly promoted as a convenience.

Clean bathrooms and showers may appear as an unusual pull factor influence given that most recreational vehicles are equipped with bathrooms and showers on board. Campground bathrooms and showers are utilized and, as revealed in the current study, are a major pull factor influence regarding campground attributes. Two possible explanations follow. First, water pressure is sometimes lacking at campsites based upon the age and systems of the campground.

As a result, campground facilities may be appealing for normal water pressure usage and if the facilities are clean. Second, if the recreational vehicle is equipped with a bathroom and shower, then disposal of the holding tanks are required. For this fact alone, some RVers prefer to use campground facilities to eliminate and/or reduce holding tank cleaning. Regardless of reason, campground owners/operators should make special note of the strong pull factor influence of clean bathrooms and showers from today's RV traveler.

The younger generation is the least represented cohort in the current study. Concerted effort by campground owners/operators should be directed towards the pull factor influences documented in the current study specific to the younger generation. Price and pool availability are two additional key pull factors specific to the younger generation RVer. Both pull factors revealed higher influence with the younger generation as compared to the older RVer. The challenging economic climate of the past few years have impacted most consumers, possibly even more so with the younger generation. The younger generation is in the beginning stages of building a career, possibly pursuing a family, and engaging in the RV lifestyle at most likely an early stage of involvement. Price, therefore, may be of more consideration as compared to the older traveler who possibly are higher wage earners or have less debt to consider. In contrast, the older population has experience in pricing at campgrounds, thus having historical knowledge of average prices to budget and/or to commit to. Regarding pool availability, the strong pull factor influence for the younger generation may be due to kids in their traveling party. Not all campgrounds have pools. Campground owners/operators should determine the demographics they cater to in determining the cost effectiveness of an onsite pool. If their potential growth market segment is with the younger generation, pool availability should be considered, resulting as a key finding in the current study.

In conclusion, the present study contributes to the literature and to the industry in several dimensions. The current study provided empirical evidence of general demographics of members of a large RV association. The demographic profile, comprehensively, revealed the majority of RV travelers included in this study were older than age 50, male, and married. An important consideration when interpreting the findings, as previously noted, is that all participants in the current study were members of a large RV association. Thus, the findings may be limited to the RVers who are members of the respective RV association and not reflective of all RV travelers in the United States. The current study also revealed campground travel decisions of the present day RVer and pull factor influences respective to campground attributes and age categories.

There were limitations to the current study. First, the participants for the current study were members of a large RV membership association. General demographics of the association are unknown. Second, the present study was predominantly supported by participants age 50. The high proportion of respondents older than 50 years of age may have been influenced by underlying factors not addressed and/or understood in the present study.

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