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Drive Tourism: A Methodological Discussion with a View to Further Understanding the Drive Tourism Market in British Columbia, Canada

By

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A Peer Reviewed Publication

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ABSTRACT

Drive tourism, where people take leisure trips in their own or hired vehicles, is a rapidly growing sector of the tourism market in Canada, yet what is known about the phenomena is limited. This paper reviews existing research from a number of perspectives with a view to facilitating future research in the area. The review includes analysis of 1) who has conducted research into drive tourism; 2) what data has been sought; and 3) how it has been collected. The assessment reveals that data on drive tourism has been collected by three interest groups - government agencies, academic research institutions and industry bodies. Research has typically placed emphasis on the collection of data pertaining to demographic, planning, expenditure and behavioral characteristics, with the least emphasis being placed on psychographic characteristics and the impacts of drive tourism. It also found that the methods which have been used to collect the data have predominantly consisted of quantitative techniques such as surveys and questionnaires. The paper uses a revised version of the Yamada and Ham (2004) tool to assess methodological options for future research into drive tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Eighty years ago, the idea of taking a spontaneous and self directed holiday in one's own motor vehicle was, for most people, a fantasy. Now, nearly 18 million Canadians own a motor vehicle (Statistics Canada, 2003) and industry based research suggests that one in 13 Canadians own a Recreational Vehicle (RV) (Go RVing, 2004). Indeed, the notions of freedom and spontaneous holiday making in one's own, or a rented vehicle are now so popular that they have become mass marketing slogans and are inextricably linked with the images and names of cars such as the Nissan Pathfinder, Ford Escape, Jeep Liberty and Nissan Pathfinder. Moreover, a sector of tourism has emerged called drive tourism, which may be defined as the act of take a leisure trip in ones own, borrowed, or rented vehicle. This form of tourism includes travel where a motorhome, fifth wheel, trailer or camper is the primary means of accommodation. It also includes travel where a vehicle is used as the primary form of transport, and tents, hotels, lodges or B&Bs, or other structures are used for accommodation.

In Canada, the tourism industry showed steady growth until 2001, when world events such as reaction to the September 11th attacks and SARS affected visitation. Pre-2001 levels of visitation are now being approached and in 2003, 104 million trips were taken by Canadians, citizens of the USA and travellers from overseas, contributing an estimated \$50.8 billion to the economy and employing just over half a million people (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2003). In 1996, when the last data related to drive tourism was collected, it was estimated that 62,063,000 overnight trips were taken by Canadians in their motor vehicles (Statistics Canada, 1999). These figures may well be linked to a retiring and ageing population, as it is estimated that 12.3% of the population (3.7 million Canadians) are aged 65 and over, which represents an increase of 60% since 1981 (Statistics Canada, 1999). Within the tourism industry, the increase in drive tourism has been noted and some regions have responded by developing marketing and planning strategies to take advantage of the economic possibilities that this trend may bring to rural and remote communities. The province of British Columbia is an example of this kind and has developed many drive tourism itineraries which are promoted on its website.

However, research into this phenomenon is scarce. Some recent attempts have been made to understand the demographic and behavioural characteristics of the drive travellers and RVing seniors, but little is yet known about their core motivations, psychographic characteristics (personality and motivational characteristics), impacts upon local communities and expenditure. This paper seeks to facilitate research into this growing market segment of tourism by discussing:

1. what drive tourism data has been collected;
2. how the data were collected and by whom; and
3. the variety of methodological options available for future research into this area.

A specific focus will be given to the drive tourism industry in British Columbia, Canada.

DRIVE TOURISM RESEARCH

Drive tourism has been defined by Tourism Queensland (Olsen, 2002, p.18) as what people do when they travel:

...away from home for at least one night, on holidays or visiting friends and relatives, in their own, rented or borrowed vehicle, as the primary mode of transport.

Since the advent of the motor vehicle, drive tourism has been an important component for the growth of many tourist destinations in Canada and other countries that rely upon ‘rubber tire traffic’ as a generator for their tourism income. Vehicles can now travel further, with greater reliability, greater human comfort and over a greater diversity of terrain and road quality. In addition, improved road conditions and service availability (e.g. refuelling stations, motels and camp grounds) have meant that travellers can use routes to travel safely with greater convenience (Hardy *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, increases in paid leave, car and recreational vehicle ownership and a retiring baby boomer generation have provided opportunities for new types of drive holidays. These include short breaks (1-3 nights), short tours (4-7 nights), big tours (8-21 nights) and grand tours (22 + nights) (BDA 2001, cited in Olsen, 2002), the last of which are often taken by seniors and can be up to several thousand kilometres in length and several months in duration (McHugh and Mings, 1992; Olsen, 2003; Hardy *et al.*, 2005; Recreational Vehicle Industry Association, no date).

Despite the relative significance of the drive tourism market within the tourism industry and recognition by the tourism literature of the important role of transport within the industry (Prideaux, 2000), drive tourism has been described as “tourism’s silent majority” (Olsen, 2003, p.332). Of the research that has been conducted, three broad types of research warrant review:

- 1) Research conducted by government bodies or tourism agencies such as Tourism BC or Canada Tourism;
- 2) Academic research conducted within university environments;
- 3) Industry based, or ‘grey’ research, which has been conducted by consultants on behalf of industry based tourism organizations.

The following section will review these three different types of research into drive tourism (See Appendix 1 for details on how to access these reports).

Research conducted by government bodies or tourism agencies

In British Columbia, as is the case with many other provinces and countries, the research conducted by Tourism BC has tended to concentrate on the collection of broad visitation statistics. The numbers of drive travellers, their information sources and their planning behaviour may be extracted from broad visitation data sets collected by the provincial and national tourism agencies. However, they are limited in their ability to fully explain the motivations, decision making process and impacts of the drive sector.

The exception to this is a recent study by Tourism BC (2004). This research, described in detail below, provided valuable and previously unknown insights into the demographic characteristics, trip length and expenditure, activities undertaken, information sources, satisfaction and planning habits of travellers along the Alaska Highway. However the core motivations, decision making process and impacts of drive travellers are still largely unknown in British Columbia. Moreover, it is unknown whether the sample on the Alaska Highway is representative of the broader drive tourism market in BC, or a specific sub-sample of a larger and more diverse market.

Academic research conducted within university environments

From an academic perspective, the past five years have seen a gradual increase in research pertaining to drive tourism. There have been two types of academic research—that which is of a purely theoretical and conceptual in nature and secondly, research which assesses the characteristics of drive travellers, including RV travellers.

During the last ten years, conceptual and theoretical research has resulted in the development of transportation models (Prideaux, 2000). However, Prideaux (2000) argues that research on the role of transport has often been delegated to a minor place behind geographical concepts such as spatial separation, traffic flows and transit zones. For example, models such as those developed by Leiper (1995) and Miosecc (1976, cited in Prideaux, 2000) have both recognized the role of transport in developing regions, but have failed to conceptualize the importance of transport in influencing the behaviour of travellers (Prideaux, 2000). Specifically, Prideaux (2000) argues that the transport costs (including fare costs, travel time and distance travelled) of accessing specific destinations is a significant component, because it will affect a destinations' abilities to attract tourists from specific markets.

Building upon Prideaux's (2000) argument, the development of touring routes as part of the drive tourism experience has arguably changed the way in which the tourism system may be viewed. When considering touring routes and their relationship with Leiper's (1995) tourism system model, the boundaries between the transit route region and the tourist destination region, are much less certain than is traditionally assumed. This is because the transit *experience* (driving one's own car or RV) forms an essential part of the holiday. Moreover, when touring routes are planned with a goal to become attractions and destinations in their own right, the driving is an inseparable part of the attraction and consequently may even be viewed as a destination or an attraction.

To date, academic research into the characteristics of drive travellers has largely been undertaken in Australia. This research has assessed drive travellers' motivations, behaviour, planning and recognition of touring routes (see Olsen, 2003; Sivijs, 2003; Prideaux and Carson, 2003; Laws and Scott, 2003; Hardy *et al.*, 2005; Hardy *et al.*, 2004). Its applicability has yet to be tested overseas. The exceptions to Australian based research are a few isolated studies in the United States which have explored the attributes

of drive travellers visiting friends and relatives in Florida, and the attributes of hotels sought by US drive travellers (Pennington Gray, 2003; Shanahan, 2003).

While not focussing on the broader drive tourism market, recent research into ‘full time’ RVing seniors in North America has provided some valuable insights into this rapidly growing sector (Ayers and Ayers, 2004). This research suggests that there is a continuum of ‘types’ and ‘styles’ of RVing. Types have been defined as including singles, Canadians, Americans and Boomers (those under 55 years of age), and styles as including Full timers, Part Timers, Planners and Non Planners.

Industry based or ‘grey’ research into drive tourism

A third source of data on drive tourism is that collected by industry based organisations in Canada and the USA. Referred to as ‘grey literature’, this research has primarily focused on RV usage and the studies have been conducted by consulting companies for industry associations. It is this research which has been responsible for defining RVs as vehicles:

... designed as temporary living quarters for recreational camping, travel or seasonal use. RVs may have their own motor power (as in the case of motorhomes); may be mounted (as are truck campers); or towed by another vehicle (as are travel trailers and folding camping trailers). Not included in the RV definition are conversion vehicles, off-road vehicles and manufactured housing for long-term residence (park trailers and mobile homes).
(Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, no date, p.1).

The ‘grey literature’ suggests that RV ownership is growing steadily and that 3 million Canadian households own RVs, making Canadian RV ownership higher, per capita, than in the United States (13% of households vs. 10% or 7.2 million in the USA) (Go RVing, 2004; Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, no date). This literature also suggests that RV users range widely in their income and ages, with 60% earning between \$20,000 and \$60,000 per annum (Go RVing, 2004). Similarly, the USA ‘grey literature’ suggests that RV users represent the ‘middle class’, with the typical RV owner being 49 years old, married, with an annual household income of \$56,000, which is higher than the median for all US households (Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, no date). Moreover, this same study suggests RV ownership relates to a certain lifestyle, as RV users are likely to spend their disposable income on travelling an average of 4,500 miles (742 kilometres) and 28-35 days annually, according to a US study (Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, no date). In the US alone, the number of RV-owning households is projected to rise to nearly 8 million in 2010. This figure is a gain of 15 % between 2001 and 2010 and is expected to outpace overall the U.S. household growth of 10%.

This research provides an interesting backdrop to what appears to be a rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry. However, RV users do not make up the entire drive tourism market, as drive travellers also include those who rent or drive their own or borrowed vehicles.

RESEARCHING DRIVE TOURISM

When reviewing the tourism agency, academic and grey research which has been conducted into drive tourism, it is important to understand not only *what* information has been sought, but also *how* it has been sought. The following section will explore these issues and present a research tool which may assist researchers in choosing the most appropriate methods for designing research into drive tourism.

As with almost any aspect of tourism, a plethora of research options exist for researchers. The tendency in drive tourism research has been to conduct surveys, and the risk for planners is that surveys may be appropriate for some situations, but limited in others. Alternatives to surveys include focus groups, self-completed diaries, in-depth interviews, questionnaires and group techniques such as nominal group process and the Delphi technique.

As in the case of surveys, each methodological option has advantages and disadvantages, depending on what information is being sought. Strengths and weaknesses have been considered by Yamada and Ham (2004), who developed a tool for assessing research options in the context of interpretation research. The strength of the tool is that it addresses the practical realities which exist when decisions are made about which method to use. These realities include not only the purpose of the research, but also cost, time available, personnel resources and the burden upon the respondent. The tool was originally applied for research into interpretation. It assessed methods specifically useful for interpretation research, including: personal meaning mapping, focus group interviews, informal interviews, formal interviews, questionnaires and observation.

For this paper, the tool is applied to drive tourism research and it considers the application of a range of different methods. The assessment of the methods is based upon the authors previous research into the drive tourism market (see Hardy 2003; Hardy *et al.*, 2004; Hardy *et al.*, 2005) and other researchers' assessments of tourism methodologies (Appendix 2). The tool is particularly useful because it can assess a range of different research options. Methods relevant to drive tourism research include:

Methods when taking a Qualitative Approach:

- Focus groups
- Self-completed diaries
- In-depth interviews
- Nominal group processes
- Delphi technique

Methods when taking a Quantitative Approach:

- Self-completed surveys
- Face-to-face questionnaire
- Post-trip surveys

See Appendix 2 for detailed description of each of these methods.

As mentioned above, Yamada and Ham's (2004) tool assesses the ability of each of the methods to address logistical and methodological issues, including:

1. **Cost**- relative expense of each technique;
2. **Time**- how long it takes to employ the technique;
3. **Speed of feedback**- how fast results can be acquired after data collection;
4. **Burden on travellers (or respondents)**- degree of effort required for respondents to provide the data;
5. **Burden on personnel**- amount of work required by the evaluator;
6. **Validity**- the ability of the technique to measure what it is supposed to measure;
7. **Reliability**- the ability of the technique to produce consistent results across time or researchers.

For drive tourism research, an extra assessment criterion should be added: breadth and quality of information which may provided by the respondent. This criterion is particularly important when one is conducting qualitative forms of research.

Using the modified Yamada and Ham (2004) tool, the following section will review what types of drive tourism research have been undertaken, how the studies were undertaken and alternative methods available for future research into these issues.

Touring Route Development

Since the advent of the motor vehicle, scenic drives and famous highways have come into being, such as Route 66 in the United States of America which was established in 1926, the Icefields Parkway in the Canadian Rockies or the Alaska Highway. Touring routes have been defined:

...as identifiable routes on roads that are promoted by organizations using maps, signs, brochures or audio material, which may be linear or circular, and pass or provide access to key attributes of the area...[which].. vary in length, configuration, route quality and environmental context. (Hardy et al., 2005, p.6).

Also known as 'scenic byways' or 'drive trails', touring routes have become increasingly popular in the last ten years in countries that depend upon drive tourism. They are seen as a means to encourage travellers to move in particular destinations and to cluster activities and attractions, thus encouraging economic development and community partnerships in regional and remote areas (Briedenham and Wickens, 2004). In British Columbia, touring routes are now commonly referred to in promotional material published by Tourism British Columbia and its regional representatives. The Alaska Highway, Stewart-Cassiar Highway and various Circle Tours are examples of these.

To date, research into touring routes has been approached from two different angles. First, research has been conducted from a planning perspective whereby the most effective method to plan touring routes has been explored. Several articles now exist

which advocate means by which touring routes should be developed (Briedenham and Wickens, 2004; Olsen, 2003; Hardy, 2003; National Centre for Tourism, 2001). Most commonly, community participation in the planning, development and implementation stages are emphasized, along with other factors such as deciding who will be responsible for ongoing funding, how promotion will be conducted through marketing and information networks, interpretation of the touring route, service quality, safe road networks and signage. Hardy (2003) presented this holistic approach as the ‘10Ps’ of designing effective touring routes (Table 1).

Table 1: The 10Ps Necessary for the Development of Iconic Touring Routes (Hardy, 2003, p. 326-327)

Place
Product
Promotion
People
Paraphernalia
Path
Presentation
Principles of Interpretation
Price
Protection

The majority of research into the development of touring routes has been conducted using observation (Olsen, 2003; Hardy, 2003; National Centre for Tourism, 2001), with one study using the Delphi technique (Briedenham and Wickens, 2004). However, other options for understanding planners’ attitudes towards the development of touring routes include methods such as self-completed questionnaires, face-to-face questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus groups and nominal group processes. Face-to-face questionnaires, self-completed questionnaires and observation would be the most limited of these options because they would not allow planners to express their views and perceptions of the planning process in great detail (Table 2).

Table 2: A critique of methodological techniques that may be used to assess planners attitudes towards the development of touring routes.

Quantitative Approach				Qualitative Approach			
	Self-completed Questionnaire	Face-to-face Questionnaire	In-depth Interview	Focus Group	Observation	Delphi technique	Nominal Group Processes
Cost	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	High	Moderate
Time	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Speed of feedback	Low	Low	High	Moderate	Low	Low	High
Burden on respondent	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate
Burden on personnel	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Quality & breadth of info	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	High	Moderate
Validity	Low	Low	High	High	Low	High	High
Reliability	High	Moderate	High	High	Low	High	High

The second and more recent approach to touring route research has been to assess travellers' recognition and use of touring routes. This research seeks to understand whether travellers realize they are traveling on touring routes and the role that touring routes play in decision making processes. To date, the majority of this research has been conducted in Australia (Hardy *et al.*, 2004; Olsen, 2003). It has found that recognition of touring routes varies, depending on the type of traveller and the touring route itself. Moreover, whilst the travellers may have realized that they were on touring routes, it was not necessarily their primary motivation for visiting the region. Rather, the notion of touring, underpinned by the freedom to go where you want, over-rides any touring route preference. Consequently, the Australian research found that travellers expressed a preference for mixing and matching routes to get to the places and experiences they desired, with very few people choosing a route for its theme or story (Hardy *et al.*, 2004).

The Australian research was conducted on touring routes which were supported with integrated signage and brochures. However they were not considered as iconic routes in Australia, such as the Great Ocean Road or the Birdsville Track. This raises a key issue as research has not yet been conducted on 'iconic' touring routes such as the Icefields Parkway, Alaska Highway or the Great Ocean Road. Consequently, it has yet to be determined whether 'iconic' touring routes may become attractions and destinations in their own right, as opposed to routes that link key destinations.

Research into travellers' recognition and use of touring routes has used quantitative approaches including face-to-face questionnaires and post-trip questionnaires and also qualitative, in-depth interviews (see Hardy *et al.*, 2004; Olsen 2003). Quantitative approaches such as face-to-face questionnaires are cost efficient, place a lower burden on

the traveller and may yield representative samples. However post-trip surveys do have to contend with recall, which may vary amongst people (Pearce, 1999).

Conversely, qualitative approaches can yield a far greater depth of understanding and more detail on how touring routes are used and perceived by the traveller. To date, in-depth interviews are the only method that has been applied to address this issue, although focus groups would be a very appropriate (albeit costly) way to collect travellers' in-depth perceptions of the role of touring routes. Observation and self-completed diaries may yield results on behaviour whilst on the touring route, but their ability to collect data on recognition may be limited (see Table 3).

Table 3: A Critique of methodological techniques that may be used to assess drive travellers' recognition and use of touring routes

Quantitative Approach			Qualitative Approach			
	Self-completed Questionnaire	Face-to-face Questionnaire	In-depth Interview	Focus Group	Observation	Self-completed Diaries
Cost	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low
Time	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Speed of feedback			High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Burden on traveller	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	High
Burden on personnel	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low
Quality & breadth of info	Low	High	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Validity	Moderate	High	High	High	Low	Moderate
Reliability	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High

Demographics

By far the greatest amount of research attention has been given to the demographic characteristics of drive travellers. Demographics include aspects such as gender, age, income, country of origin and education.

Overall, it appears that drive travellers should not be characterized as a homogeneous market segment. However, what does appear to be the case is that different regions do appeal to different market segments, therefore generalizations may be made when researching travellers to regional destinations.

For example, in Canada, recent research conducted by Tourism BC on travellers touring the Alaska Highway found that travellers were predominantly from Canada (49%) and the lower 49 states in the USA (45%), followed by travellers from other overseas countries (6%). Among these travellers, relatively similar age profiles were apparent, with the vast majority being between 35 and 64 years of age (Tourism BC, 2004) (Table 4 below).

Counts and Counts' (2004) research into full time RVing seniors in North America found very similar results. They found that RVers were typically 60-65 years of age, of European origin, well educated and had varying levels of income.

Table 4: Age Profiles of Travellers to the Alaska Highway (Tourism BC, p.19)

Age	Canada	USA	Overseas
65 plus	21	27	20
55-64	28	32	28
35-54	36	28	31
Under 35	15	13	21

In the Australian context, research found that Outback Queensland tended to appeal to older more travel experienced retirees who took longer length journeys, whereas the island of Tasmania appealed to a younger, less experienced and shorter staying demographic (Hardy *et al.*, 2005). This research has suggested that a life cycle may exist amongst the drive tourism market, whereby different destinations are attractive to drive travellers who are more or less experienced in terms of their 'travel careers' (Hardy *et al.*, 2005). This notion of the drive travel life cycle and its implications for destination marketing has yet to be explored in detail in Canada.

To date, research into the demographic characteristics of drive travellers which has been conducted in Australia (Hardy *et al.*, 2004; Hardy *et al.*, 2005), Canada (Tourism BC 2004; Counts and Counts, 2004) and the United States (Pennington-Gray 2003) has tended to use on site face-to-face, or self-completed questionnaires. This is cost and time efficient and can collect representative samples. However, other options include post-trip surveys, which may be less costly to conduct, although they would have to address recall issues (Pearce, 1999). As demographic information is being sought, qualitative approaches and methods such as focus groups, diaries and in-depth interviews would be the least efficient method of collecting this data (Table 5).

Table 5: A critique of methodological techniques that may be used to assess demographic characteristics of drive travellers.

Quantitative Approach			Qualitative Approach			
	Self-completed Questionnaire	Face-to-face Questionnaire	In-depth Interview	Focus Group	Observation	Self-completed Diaries
Cost	Low	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Low
Time	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Speed of feedback			High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Burden on traveller	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	High
Burden on personnel						
Quality & breadth of info	Low	High	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Validity	Moderate	High	High	High	Low	Low
Reliability	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate

Psychographics

The goal of market segmentation is to divide tourism markets into groups of travellers with similar characteristics (Pearce *et al.*, 1998). Understanding why people travel and the factors that encourage them to make decisions when travelling is regarded as one of the most difficult components of tourism research. This is because motivations may be affected by factors such as differences in age, gender, ethnicity, lifestyles and generations (Smith, 2000). However it is vitally important because it allows researchers to understand travellers' behaviour and industry practitioners to develop markets which cater to the needs of different traveller segments. Approaches to understanding travellers' motivation have included segmentation according to demographic factors, purpose of trip, occasion of travel and country/region of origin. However, these approaches have been criticized for their narrow focus and inability to understand the core motivations of travellers and attitudes towards travel (Pearce *et al.*, 1998).

An alternative to these is psychographic segmentation or profiling, which has been defined as the "measure of personality and motivational characteristics" (Plog, 1998, p.254) and which assesses variables such as motivation, lifestyle, attitudes and demographics. In tourism, the strength of psychographics is that they can provide a rich picture of users' motivational characteristics and they are commonly used in marketing and destination development. However, Ryan (1998) notes that research into motivation may be limited because it assesses expressions of needs, but not the *ability* to satisfy those needs.

Olsen (2002) suggests that drive travellers are affected by both internal and external influences and barriers which prompt them to take drive holidays. External influences include aspects such as one's income, the weather and the economy (BDA, 2001, cited in

Olsen 2002). However, whilst drive tourism holidays are often seen as cheaper alternatives to traveling overseas, there are also external barriers. These include the relative price of other types of holidays, lack of information or misinformation, the lack of perceived benefits of drive tourism destinations, and employment opportunities (BDA, 2001, cited in Olsen, 2002).

Internal factors which facilitate or create barriers to travel include an internal desire for a drive tourism holiday that cannot be satisfied through other forms of travel. Indeed research has found that freedom, flexibility, and a desire for authentic, real experiences, local information and to discover ('pioneer') new places are key drivers for those on drive tourism holidays (Trimble, 1999, cited in Olsen, 2002; Hardy *et al.*, 2004). However it should be noted that research has suggested that the drive tourism market is by no means homogeneous. Indeed, differences in styles of drive tourism holidays are evident in their length and structure of their travel parties.

Preliminary research in Australia has found that drive travellers are largely 'pioneer' style travellers who seek destinations which they consider to be places where tourists rarely go and where they can 'pioneer' new places, people and experiences (Horneman, 1999). Ayers and Ayers' (2004) RV research appears to concur with this notion for full time RV users. The same applies for research by Tourism BC (2004), whose data collected from the Alaska Highway suggests that drive travellers are motivated by similar desires, including a desire to see landscapes and places they have always wanted to see, and to recreate in a safe outdoor environment. Further research is now needed to explore whether different types of destinations (for example those classified in Butler's (1980) Destination Life Cycle Model) would attract different psychographic profiles of travellers.

The research which has been conducted into drive travellers' psychographic profiles has been conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, utilizing methods including face-to-face questionnaires, in-depth interviews and also post trip respondent completed surveys. It should be noted that psychographic segmentation studies have most often been approached from a quantitative approach have been criticized because they use closed ended questions and therefore, may miss the motives of groups if they are different from the researcher (Pearce *et al.*, 1998; Ryan, 1998). For this reason, it is argued here that qualitative approaches which use methods such as observation, self-completed diaries, in-depth interviews and focus groups are more appropriate for collecting psychographic data. This is because their open ended style of questioning allows for travellers to explain and elaborate, in their own words, their motives and perceptions of the drive travel experience (Table 6).

Table 6: A critique of methodological techniques that may be used to assess psychographic profiles of drive travellers.

Quantitative Approach			Qualitative Approach			
	Self-completed Questionnaire	Face-to-face Questionnaire	In-depth Interview	Focus Group	Observation	Self-completed Diaries
Cost	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Low
Time	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Low
Speed of feedback	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	High	Low
Burden on traveller	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	Low	High
Burden on personnel	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low
Quality & breadth of info	Low	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
Validity	Moderate	High	High	High	Low	High
Reliability	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	High

Behaviour

Research into the behaviour of drive travellers is probably one of the most commonly researched aspects of the market and covers a broad spectrum of issues. Behaviour includes travellers' length of stay, the attractions and destinations they visit, the vehicles they use, accommodation, their planning characteristics and the routes that they take.

The BC Tourism Alaska Highway study (Tourism BC, 2004) explored many of these aspects and found that the average length of stay for travellers on the Alaska Highway is 39 nights. However, it should be noted that travellers who stay for an average of 39 nights are not necessarily the 'typical' drive traveller in all regions across BC. It has also suggested that a spectrum of drive tourism holidays now exists, depending on their length (Brian Dermott and Associates, 2001, cited in Olsen, 2002). This spectrum includes:

- short breaks (1-3 nights),
- short tours (4-7 days);
- big tours (8-21 nights); and
- grand tours (22+ nights).

'Big' and 'grand' tours often include following long touring routes such as the Alaska Highway which can be up to several thousand kilometres in length and take several months to complete (McHugh and Mings, 1992; Olsen, 2003; Hardy *et al.*, 2005; Recreational Vehicle Industry Association, no date). In northern British Columbia,

Halseth (2002) conceptualised tourism visitation as involving a ‘nodes’ and ‘pathway’ which is a useful tool by which the spatial location and organisation of tourism can be assessed. In doing so he noted the significant potential for community nodes to capture increased numbers of rubber tire traffic along the current pathways.

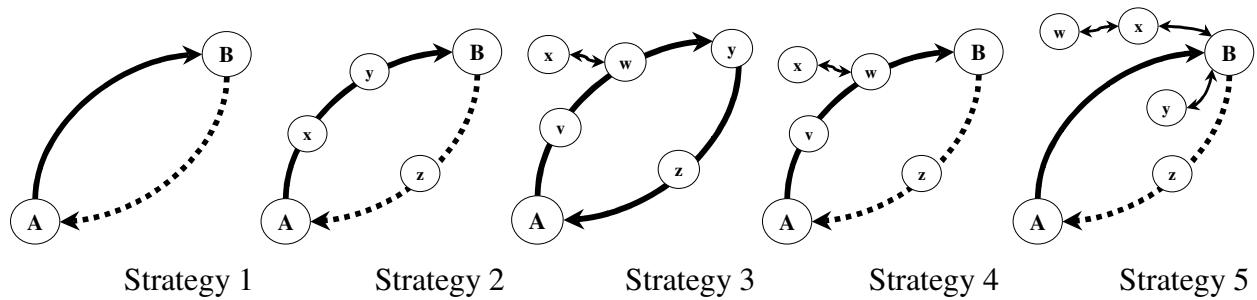
Planning habits appear to differ according to the type of traveller and the region they are visiting. The BC Tourism Alaska Highway study found that travellers’ schedules are often flexible, with two thirds having ‘flexible schedules’ and 80% having few or no planned activities before leaving home. The study also found that those travellers who do plan and originate from ‘long haul markets’ (Eastern Canada, overseas and lower 48 states) will spend much more time planning their journey than those who are from regional markets, such as those from BC, Yukon, Alberta, and Alaska.

Importantly, it should be noted that different methods of research can reveal different levels of information regarding how planning is undertaken. Australian survey research has found that up to 45% of travellers did no planning prior to leaving home. But, further investigation through qualitative research revealed that whilst they had said they did not plan specific stops and day by day activities, ‘big picture’ planning was in fact undertaken by most respondents, in the form of an information gathering exercise. Factors such as road safety, fuel stops, rest stops, possible places to stay, destinations and distances between stops or destinations were explored, as were the history of the region and flora and fauna. Consequently whilst information was sought, flexibility, as with the Alaska Highway respondents, remained of key importance to many travellers (Hardy *et al.*, 2004).

In addition to research into planning, behavioural research on drive travellers has explored differing spatial configuration patterns. Studies (Tourism Queensland, cited in Hardy *et al.*, 2004) have found that travellers use five major drive travel strategies (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Travel Strategies of the Drive Traveller (Tourism Queensland, cited in Hardy *et al.*, 2004).

1. driving straight to a main destination with no overnight stopovers in either direction except at the main destination;
2. driving straight to a main destination with overnight stopovers in either direction;
3. touring around spending a night or two in several places with no main destination;
4. touring around spending a night or two in several places with a main destination in which you spend a week or so; and
5. driving to a main destination, then touring around spending a night in several locations.



Research conducted in different states in Australia has suggested that travellers use different strategies at different destinations. Whether this behaviour is a function of the destination, or of the type of travellers attracted to the destination, requires further research. Moreover, research is needed to ascertain whether the travel strategies developed in Australia (Figure 1) may be applied to BC or Canada.

When viewing research methods, it is apparent that behaviour has largely been explored through the use of face-to-face questionnaires, with the exception of the qualitative approach in Australia, which used post trip, in-depth telephone interviews as a method. Whilst quantitative approaches are useful to determine what travellers do, qualitative approaches are needed to understand why travellers behave in the ways that they do (Table 7).

Table 7: A critique of methodological techniques that may be used to assess the behaviour of drive travellers.

Quantitative Approach			Qualitative Approach			
	Self-completed Questionnaire	Face-to-face Questionnaire	In-depth Interview	Focus Group	Observation	Self-completed Diaries
Cost	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Low
Time	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate
Speed of feedback	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	Moderate
Burden on traveller	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	Low	High
Burden on personnel	Low	High	High	Moderate	High	Low
Quality & breadth of info	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Low	High
Validity	High	High	High	High	Low	Moderate
Reliability	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High

Expenditure

Little research has been specifically conducted on drive travellers' expenditure. The exception is BC Tourism's research on drive travellers on the Alaska Highway, which found that those from the United States (\$157 per day) spent slightly more than Canadians (\$146 per day), who in turn spent more than those from other overseas countries per day (\$127 per day). They also found that travellers in motorhomes were more likely to spend more than those who travelled in their own vehicles fifth wheel or campervans. The majority of all expenditure was on transportation followed by accommodation and activities. As research into expenditures is generally focused on understanding average spending according to type of traveller, quantitative approaches are the most appropriate for this form of research (Table 8).

Table 8: A critique of methodological techniques that may be used to assess the expenditure of drive travellers.

Quantitative Approach			Qualitative Approach			
	Self-completed Questionnaire	Face-to-face Questionnaire	In-depth Interview	Focus Group	Observation	Self-completed Diaries
Cost	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Low
Time	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	High	Moderate
Speed of feedback	Moderate	High	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Burden on traveller	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	High
Burden on personnel	Low	High	High	Moderate	High	Low
Quality & breadth of info	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Low	Moderate
Validity	High	High	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Reliability	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High

Impacts on Local Communities

In Canada, the growth of the drive market has been recognized by researchers in many regions and in turn, destinations have been re-branded in an attempt to attract visitation. However, the rapid increase in the propensity of people to use vehicles for travel has meant that infrastructure along access routes has often developed in an unplanned manner. This has the potential to cause friction between local communities and travellers, which in turn would jeopardize the achievement of sustainable tourism development (Hardy *et al.*, 2002). Within academic tourism literature, which has been described as pre-paradigmatic (Pearce, 1993), it is now accepted that an understanding of stakeholder perceptions is vital in order for sustainable tourism to be achieved at the local and regional levels (Butler, 1999; Sautter and Leisen, 1999; Hardy and Beeton, 2001; Hardy *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, Briedenham and Wickens (2004) have argued that meaningful community participation and public sector support can result in positive collaborative opportunities such as the development of touring routes.

From an academic perspective, research into the relationship between drive tourism and local communities presents an opportunity for improved understandings of sustainable tourism management. From an industry perspective, an understanding of the impact of drive tourism upon local communities is needed to facilitate sustainable decision making and policy development.

Within the drive tourism literature, little research has been conducted on the impacts of drive tourism on local communities. However, there has been a wealth of research which has investigated the impacts on and relationships of tourism with local communities. This research has suggested that negative impacts may range from commodification of cultures, through to resident resentment of tourism and crime (Weaver and Lawton, 2004). Positive impacts have been identified as increased economic prosperity, an

increase in community pride and improvements to infrastructure (Weaver and Lawton, 2004) (Table 9).

Various methods are appropriate to explore this issue. Qualitative approaches will result in rich and in-depth understandings of local community attitudes, whilst quantitative approaches, which may not be able to explore the issues in as much detail, would be appropriate to give statistical significance to their perceptions. Delphi techniques and nominal group processes are probably the least appropriate as they seek to elicit consensus and action, rather than to gauge perceptions and attitudes.

Table 9: A critique of methodological techniques that may be used to assess community perceptions of impacts of drive tourism.

Quantitative Approach			Qualitative Approach				
	Self-completed Questionnaire	Face-to-face Questionnaire	In-depth Interview	Focus Group	Personal Diaries	Delphi technique	Nominal Group Processes
Cost	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	Low
Time	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	High	Low
Speed of feedback	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	High
Burden on traveller/respondent	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Low
Burden on personnel	Low	High	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low
Quality & breadth of info	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	High	Moderate
Validity	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Low	Low
Reliability	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

DISCUSSION

Research into drive tourism may focus on a number of issues ranging across planning, traveller behaviour, expenditure, psychographics and community attitudes towards development. In order to explore these issues, this report illustrates that researchers are faced with choices regarding their approach (qualitative or quantitative) and their methods, of which a variety exist. The assessment of approaches and methods reveals that quantitative approaches using methods such as face-to-face surveys and completed questionnaires have been used predominantly to explore the phenomena of tourism. While useful for generalizing and giving statistical significance to the market, this approach is not as useful for understanding why travellers act in the way that they do and how things are perceived by travellers and community members.

However, it would be simplistic to argue that when one is exploring an issue in tourism, a single approach and its associated methods are the most appropriate. Firstly, different research situations bring with them different budgets, time frames, personnel and logistical issues. All these considerations are relevant in deciding what may be the most appropriate method. The second issue surrounding the choice of research methods is that research often seeks to focus on a number of issues, such as how much money drive

travellers spend, where they go and why. Consequently, decisions concerning the most appropriate approach and method must consider a) whether only one phase of research may be used, or whether multiple phases and, consequently which approaches and methods may be used; and b) the context and constraints within which the researcher must work, such as budgets, logistics and time constraints. Therefore, this exploration of drive tourism research, research approaches and method choice should be considered a guide, rather than a definitive statement on what form of research is most appropriate.

What is clear from this report is that further research is needed in specific areas in order to fully understand the drive tourism market. Issues requiring attention include the way in which drive tourism is perceived and the impacts that drive tourism may have upon local communities. Further research is also needed to explore whether a ‘life cycle’ exists within the drive travel market, whereby age and experience move one further up the cycle. Research into these areas would provide valuable insights into this rapidly growing segment of tourism.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The drive tourism market is a rapidly growing and under researched tourism phenomenon. If the population continues to age in Canada, and if car ownership continues to reach unprecedented levels, the market will grow even further. Research is needed to fully understand why people choose to take holidays of this type, how they choose their destinations and how they behave and make decision whilst on holidays. Moreover, the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts of this rapidly growing sector are yet to be fully realized.

This paper has found that research into drive tourism may be approached from quantitative or qualitative perspectives and may use a variety of different research methods. The decision regarding use of methods is invariably influenced by factors such as time, money, personnel, and the nature of the travellers but, most importantly, it should be influenced by the goals and objectives of the research. Yamada and Ham’s (2004) revised tool for decision making allows researchers to consider these factors whilst making decisions. Using their revised tool, this report has found that the majority of drive tourism research has been approached from a quantitative perspective. This has allowed for statistical generalizations, but at the same time, it has compromised the ability of the research to elicit the reason *why* people behave in certain ways. It has also limited the ability to understand how drive travellers are perceived by those affected by them, such as regional communities and businesses.

The revised Yamada and Ham (2004) tool also assessed a range of qualitative and quantitative methodological options. It highlighted the fact that surveys have been the predominant research method in drive tourism research. Whilst all methods have their limitations and advantages, the tool highlighted different methods which may be utilized to compliment survey research in the future.

From these findings, a number of recommendations for further research have arisen. Research is needed in a number of areas: in terms of understandings the drive traveller, it is needed to understand why people choose to undertake drive holidays, whether a drive traveller 'life cycle' exists, and also the notion that the drive tourism market is non homogeneous. Behavioural research would also help realize the impact that rising and declining fuel prices has upon the drive tourism market.

Research is also needed to gain further knowledge on the relationship between drive tourism and regional communities. In particular, understanding how drive travellers are perceived by local communities; and how the drive tourism market impacts upon communities, the environment and regional communities are of primary importance.

Finally, this report has also highlighted specific research approaches that require attention. In particular, qualitative research approaches are needed to elicit the in-depth perceptions and attitudes of drive travellers and stakeholders affected by their behavior. And finally, the choice of research methods should, ideally, be determined by the research question: however, factors such as time, money and personnel must also be considered.

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Appendix 1: Sources of Drive Tourism Data

Government Reports	Source
Tourism British Columbia (2004)	Tourism BC Corporate Website under "research-special reports" http://www.tourism.bc.ca/special_reports.asp?id=2065
Academic Research	Source
Counts and Counts (2004)	<i>Over the Next Hill: An Ethnography of RVing Seniors in North America-</i> available through Amazon.com
Briedenham and Wickens (2004)	<i>Tourism Management-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Olsen (2002)	Anne Hardy, Resource Recreation and Tourism Program, UNBC - hardya@unbc.ca
Olsen (2003)	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Hardy, Beeton and Pearson (2002)	Anne Hardy, Resource Recreation and Tourism Program, UNBC hardya@unbc.ca
Hardy (2003)	Anne Hardy, Resource Recreation and Tourism Program, UNBC hardya@unbc.ca
Hardy, Beeton and Carter (2005)	Anne Hardy, Resource Recreation and Tourism Program, UNBC hardya@unbc.ca
Hardy, Carter, Beeton and Horneman (2004)	Anne Hardy, Resource Recreation and Tourism Program, UNBC hardya@unbc.ca
Laws and Scott (2003)	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing-</i> journal available at UNBC library
McHugh and Mings (1992)	<i>Journal of Applied Recreation Research -</i> journal available at UNBC library
Pearce (1999)	<i>Tourism Recreation Research-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Pennington and Gray (2003)	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Prideaux (2000)	<i>Tourism Management-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Prideaux and Carson (2003)	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Shanahan (2003)	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Sivijs (2003)	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing-</i> journal available at UNBC library
Industry Based Research	Source
Recreation Vehicle industry Association (RVIA) no date (2003)	RVIA website- "media" http://www.rvia.org/media/
GoRVing (2004)	GoRVing website- "media" http://www.gorving.com/media_cat.cfm

Appendix 2: Description of Research Methods

QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Focus Groups:

Focus groups have been defined as involving :

...A moderator [who] guides the interview while a small group discusses the topics that the interviewer raises. What participants say during their discussion are the essential data in focus groups.

Typically there are six to eight participants who come from similar backgrounds, and the moderator is a well trained professional who works from a predetermined set of discussion topics.” (Morgan, 1998, p.1).

A qualitative form of data collection, focus groups have the advantage of allowing divergences and conferences of opinions to occur through discussion and be explored within the group (Morgan, 1998). Furthermore they allow the insights of the participants to emerge and be discussed in a group atmosphere and consequently they produce rich insights in exploratory areas (Stiegenthaler and Vaughan, 1998). However, the weaknesses of focus groups lie with the role of the moderator, whose behavior can directly affect the dynamics of the group or indeed introduce biases into the discussion (Krueger, 1998).

Self-completed Diaries:

Self-completed diaries require respondents to make regular entries which record their activities, perceptions or expenditure. They may be structured and prompt participants to record specific thoughts, or completely open in their entry requirements. Diaries have the advantage of being able to record respondents' thoughts accurately and to collect rich insights into participants' emotions, perspectives, and behaviour (Finn *et al.*, 2000). However, their success relies upon the continued motivation of the traveller to complete the entries at the required intervals.

In-depth Interviews:

In-depth interviews have been likened to conversations, as they are similar to the ways in which people talk to each other. They have been defined as conversations with a purpose (Jennings, 2001). Patton (2002) argues that qualitative in-depth interviews allow the researcher to enter the other person's perspective and to gather their stories. As with focus groups, the quality of the information gained depends on the quality of the interviewer. Unlike surveys, which ask closed ended questions with predetermined categories from which the respondents can choose, in-depth interviews use open ended questions and allow the respondent to elaborate and describe the rationale for their answers.

In-depth interviews can take a number of forms, ranging from those which are informal and unstructured (and do not use interview guides), through to semi-structured focused interviews which may address topics and themes, and those which are standardized, ask questions in the same way to each respondent and follow carefully worded interview guides. These different types of in-depth interviews are not mutually exclusive and their choice depends on the researchers' approach to research and project goals (Patton, 2002; Jennings, 2001).

Nominal group processes

The purpose of nominal group processes is to engage group members in discussions regarding their priorities, and to identify and suggest solutions for conflict (Moore, 1987). Nominal group processes are extremely useful in establishing priorities for planning and potential issues which should be addressed. Highly structured in their approaches, nominal group processes are organized so that all members have equal opportunities to contribute, and priorities are normally reached within 90 minutes, with no requirement for further work. The group is guided by a facilitator with the assistance of two others. Nominal group techniques have the advantage of being able to develop priorities which are agreed upon in short periods of time, but their success depends on the skill of the facilitator, and the short time frame within which consensus of the group is achieved, means that the results should be treated with caution (Carney *et al.*, 1996).

Delphi Techniques

Delphi technique is similar to the nominal group technique, but it seeks to achieve consensus through the written word rather than oral discussion. Also, unlike nominal group process, Delphi technique involves the repeated interviewing of experts via email or other written forms until a consensus is reached (Carney *et al.*, 1996). The researcher aggregates the data from successive interviews and disseminates them for participants to reflect and comment upon. The technique allows for experts to be involved from a geographically dispersed location, plus it allows respondents to comment individually without the pressure of group dynamics. However, the process focuses on reaching consensus, which may be difficult and time consuming (Jennings, 2001).

QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Self-completed Surveys

Self-completed surveys utilize questionnaires which are developed in an easy-to-read format and are filled in by the respondent, rather than by a professional surveyor. They are a cost effective way to collect data, but there are a number of problems associated with this technique. Potential respondents must be alerted to the presence of the survey, encouraged (non verbally) to participate, and then be encouraged to complete the survey. Self-completed surveys also rely on being well written to avoid confusion and misinterpretation by the reader.

Face-to-face Surveys

Face-to-face and telephone surveys tend to achieve higher response rates in general populations (de Vaus, 2002). These types of surveys require that a skilled surveyor contact potential respondents, seek their permission to be involved and verbally ask questions to the respondents. Having a surveyor present may decrease the likelihood that respondents will stop answering questions before the survey is finished, but it is costly because surveyors must be employed for the duration of each interview.

Post-Trip Telephone Surveys

Post-trip surveys involve calling respondents once they are home from their journey and administering the questionnaire by telephone. Whilst telephone surveys typically have good response rates, this type of survey technique relies on the respondents giving their consent and telephone number to the surveyors whilst on their holiday and also relies on them being back home when the surveys are being conducted. Moreover, recall is an issue and the post-trip surveys must be conducted within a reasonable time of the respondents returning home, to ensure that they are still able to remember and comment upon their journey (Pearce, 1999). However, post trip surveys are able to collect respondents' reflections on the entire trip, and these reflections may contain valuable contextual insights.

For further information on options for conducting qualitative and quantitative research, the following references are useful:

Research and Analysis Resources	Source
De Vaus (2002)	<i>Surveys in Social Research</i> - available from the UNBC library
Finn, Elliot- White, and Walton (2000)	<i>Tourism and Leisure Research Methods: Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation</i> - available from the UNBC library
Pearce (1999)	<i>Tourism Recreation Research</i> - available from the UNBC library
Jennings (2001)	<i>Tourism Research</i> - available from the UNBC library
Morgan (1998)	<i>The Focus Group Guidebook Vol 1.</i> - available from the UNBC library
Krueger (1998)	<i>Moderating Focus Groups Vol. 4</i> - available from the UNBC library
Patton (2001)	<i>Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods</i> - available from the UNBC library
Carney, McIntosh, and Worth (1996)	<i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i> - available from the UNBC library