

THE LEISURE STYLE OF CANADIAN RURAL RECREATION PARTICIPANTS: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON THREE DIFFERENT RURAL LEISURE SETTINGS

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Abstract.—This study was a secondary analysis of data from a previous study of 248 Canadians on four dimensions of leisure style: time use, leisure setting, leisure activity participation, and leisure motivation. Correlation analyses were conducted to determine if frequency of participation in three rural leisure settings were related to other leisure style dimensions. Three resulting leisure styles were identified. Nonurban natural area visitors were characterized by participation in outdoor, cultural, social, and travel and tourism activities, and had stimulus-avoidance motivations. Pastoral/rural visitors were characterized by participation in outdoor, cultural, social, hobby, and personal development activities, and had intellectual and competence-mastery motivations. Cottage and lodge setting visitors were characterized by participation in outdoor, cultural, social, sports, and travel and tourism activities, and had competence-mastery and social motivations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 1991, Markham observed, “One of the most important, but least analyzed, segments of the [Canadian] recreation delivery system is ‘rural recreation’ ” (p. 12). More recently, Halseth (2004) wrote that “A better understanding of the rural recreation countryside has some urgency, given the shifting economic, social, and demographic characteristics of this part of Canada” (p. 54). In an attempt to increase our knowledge of rural recreation

in Canada, this paper investigated the leisure styles of rural recreationists. This knowledge is essential for developing, marketing, and providing recreation and tourism services in rural areas.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a paucity of empirical research on the leisure style of rural recreationists. While some European studies have investigated specific leisure activities or motivations (e.g., Müderrisoğlu et al. 2005, Mulder et al. 2005, a whole range of visitor characteristics and behaviors need to be considered when examining rural recreationists. Studies such as Warnick’s (2002) U.S. study which used the concept of rural recreation lifestyle, and the Finnish study by Sievänen et al.’s (2007) which used the way of life or lifestyle perspective, have recognized the importance of taking a more holistic approach to studying rural recreation.

Some research exists on Canadian cottage owners and users. In a study of the rural recreation countryside, Halseth (2004) discovered that “cottage ownership is strongly identified with socio-economic status and cottage landscapes are increasingly elite landscapes” (p. 49). However, a study of Canadian cottaging by Svenson (2004) claims that when cottage users, as opposed to cottage owners, are considered, Canadians with modest incomes participate in cottaging, and thus it is less of an elitist activity than Halseth claims. In terms of recreation activities, based on studies of Muskoka cottage trips, Svenson found that visiting with family and friends along with sports participation, especially water sports, were the “two defining characteristics of cottage life” (p. 69).

3.0 METHOD

This study investigated the research question: What is the leisure style of Canadians who participate in leisure activities in a rural setting? The study involved analysis of data from a previous Canadian

study that used survey questionnaires to examine leisure style. This previous study included a question that asked participants to indicate the frequency of their recreation participation in eight different leisure settings, three of which were rural recreation settings. Secondary analysis of this data set explored the relationship between Canadian rural recreation participation and leisure style.

3.1 Sample

The original study used a purposive sample to select participants from a variety of sources, primarily in Ontario, but also throughout Canada. Although the questionnaire did not ask for place of residence, based on where the survey was distributed, it is likely that the majority of the participants were urban rather than rural residents. A total of 436 survey questionnaires were distributed, and 248 (57 percent of the sample) had been returned by the time the data analysis began. While this sample was selected to gather information for a different research question, the sample approximates the general population.

3.2 Variables and Instrumentation

Leisure style, defined as “overall patterns of leisure activity engagement and time usage” (Mannell and Kleiber 1997, p. 59), includes four dimensions. Leisure participation was measured with a leisure activity participation scale adapted from Ragheb (1980) which included eight categories of leisure activities. Leisure motivation was measured with the short form of the Leisure Motivation Scale (Beard and Ragheb 1983) that includes four components of leisure motivation: Intellectual, Social, Competence-Mastery, and Stimulus-Avoidance. The Leisure Setting Scale included eight settings: primitive wilderness areas (e.g., canoe trip in Algonquin Park); nonurban natural areas (e.g., Provincial and National Park campgrounds); cottage or lodge settings (e.g., locations on the Great Lakes or Muskoka Lakes); pastoral/rural areas (e.g., farms); urban or near-urban areas (e.g., conservation areas, city parks); quiet urban recreation areas (e.g., libraries, museums, art galleries, retreat centres); busy urban recreation areas (e.g., amusement parks, shopping malls, dance halls, sports stadiums,

community centres); and own home. Perceived time use referred to a person’s subjective assessment of his/her experience and use of time in daily life. This variable was measured using 10 questions adapted primarily from Statistics Canada’s General Social Survey (1986), which asked about working hours, free time, feeling rushed, having time on one’s hands, balance in life, and related topics.

3.3 Data Analysis

Correlation analyses were conducted on the data to examine the relationships between leisure style dimensions (leisure activity, leisure motivation, leisure setting, and leisure time) and rural recreation participation.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Sample

The mean age of the sample population was 43.5 years, and the range was 14 to 86 years. There was a range of educational and income levels. There were no significant relationships between frequency of participation in rural leisure settings and socio-demographic variables (age, sex, education, income) with the exception of a negative correlation between age and frequency of participation in nonurban natural areas.

4.2 Leisure Settings

Frequency of participation in the three rural recreation settings (nonurban natural areas, cottage or lodge settings, pastoral/rural areas) had lower means than the leisure settings of own home, urban and near-urban natural areas, quiet urban recreation areas, and busy urban recreation areas, but had higher means than primitive wilderness areas. In general, frequency of participation decreased with an increase in distance from one’s own home (see Table 1).

4.3 Rural Recreation Participation and Time Use

There were no significant relationships between scores of perceived time use and frequency of participation in any of the three rural leisure settings.

Table 1.—Frequency of participation in leisure settings (n=248)

	Mean	S.D.
Own home	4.32	.923
Urban and near-urban natural areas	3.22	.953
Quiet urban recreation areas	2.85	1.003
Busy urban recreation areas	2.79	1.071
Nonurban natural areas	2.78	1.002
Cottage or lodge settings	2.61	1.111
Pastoral/rural areas	2.53	1.183
Primitive wilderness area	2.14	1.141

Note: Mean score based on scale (1=Never, 5=Very Often).

4.4 Rural Recreation Participation and Leisure Settings

Frequency of participation in nonurban natural areas was significantly correlated at the .01 level with frequency of participation in three other leisure settings: primitive wilderness area, pastoral/rural areas, and urban and near-urban natural areas. Frequency of participation in cottage or lodge settings was significantly correlated at the .01 level with frequency of participation in the pastoral/rural leisure setting. Frequency of participation in pastoral/rural setting was significantly correlated at the .01 level with frequency of participation in the two other rural recreation settings and the urban or near-urban natural areas setting (see Table 2).

4.5 Rural Recreation Participation and Leisure Activity Participation

Frequency of participation in all three rural leisure settings was significantly correlated at the .01 level with frequency of participation in three leisure activity categories: outdoor activities, cultural activities and social activities. For all three rural settings, the strongest correlation was with outdoor activities. There were also significant relationships between: frequency of participation in nonurban nature areas and frequency of participation in travel and tourism activities; frequency of participation in cottage and lodge settings with frequency of participation in sports activities as well as travel and tourism activities; and frequency of participation in pastoral/rural areas and frequency of participation in hobbies and personal development activities (see Table 3).

4.6 Rural Recreation Participation and Leisure Motivations

Concerning leisure motivations, there were no significant correlations at the .01 level but there were positive correlations at the .05 level between: frequency of participation in nonurban natural areas and stimulus-avoidance motivations; frequency of participation in cottage and lodge settings and both competence-mastery motivations and social motivations; and frequency of participation in pastoral/rural settings and both competence-mastery motivations and intellectual motivations (see Table 4).

Table 2.—Spearman's rank order correlation coefficients for relationship between frequency of participation in rural leisure settings and frequency of participation in other leisure settings (n=248)

	Nonurban Natural Areas		Cottage or Lodge Settings		Pastoral/Rural Areas	
	<i>rho</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>rho</i>	<i>p</i>
Primitive wilderness area	.458**	.000	.157	.013	.074	.243
Nonurban natural areas	1.0		.042	.506	.281**	.000
Cottage or lodge settings	.042	.506	1.0	1.0	.204**	.001
Pastoral/rural areas	.281**	.000	.204**	.001	1.0	
Urban and near-urban natural areas	.287**	.000	.132	.038	.211**	.001
Quiet urban recreation areas	.043	.500	.071	.264	.174**	.006
Busy urban recreation areas	-.147	.020	.055	.393	-.062	.327
Own home	-.012	.854	.20	.752	.008	.906

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3.—Spearman's rank order correlation coefficients for relationship between frequency of participation in leisure activity categories and frequency of rural recreation participation (n=248)

	Nonurban Natural Areas		Cottage or Lodge Settings		Pastoral/Rural Areas	
	<i>rho</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>rho</i>	<i>p</i>
Outdoor activities	.409**	.000	.246**	.000	.274**	.000
Hobbies	.096	.133	.046	.473	.254**	.000
Cultural activities	.186**	.003	.169**	.008	.211**	.001
Social activities	.220**	.000	.168**	.008	.203**	.001
Personal development activities	.125	.049	.019	.766	.171**	.007
Sports activities	.133	.037	.203**	.001	.160	.012
Travel and tourism activities	.182**	.004	.182**	.004	.115	.072
Mass Media activities	.075	.241	.021	.740	-.124	.050

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.—Spearman's rank order correlation coefficients for relationship between leisure motivation scale component scores and frequency of rural recreation participation (n=248)

	Nonurban Natural Areas		Cottage or Lodge Settings		Pastoral/Rural Areas	
	<i>rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>rho</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>rho</i>	<i>P</i>
Intellectual motivations	.044	.493	.015	.818	.160*	.012
Competence-mastery motivations	.054	.401	.136*	.033	.152*	.017
Social motivations	.041	.518	.148*	.020	.119	.060
Stimulus-avoidance motivations	.129*	.042	.029	.651	.087	.174

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

5.0 DISCUSSION

Based on the results of this study, the three rural recreation leisure styles were characterized as follows:

Nonurban natural area visitors participated in outdoor, cultural, social, and travel and tourism activities, were motivated by stimulus-avoidance motivations, and preferred other natural leisure settings (primitive wilderness areas, pastoral/rural areas and urban and near-urban natural areas) in addition to nonurban natural areas.

Cottage and lodge setting visitors participated in outdoor, cultural, social, sports, and travel and tourism activities, were motivated by competence-mastery and social motivations, and preferred pastoral/rural areas in addition to cottage and lodge settings.

Pastoral/rural visitors participated in outdoor, cultural, social, hobby, and personal development activities, were motivated by intellectual and

competence-mastery motivations, and preferred nonurban natural areas, cottage or lodge settings, urban and near-urban natural areas, and quiet urban recreation areas in addition to pastoral/rural areas.

The current study found no significant relationships between socio-demographic variables and rural recreation participation with the exception that older people tended to participate less frequently in nonurban natural areas. This result is to be expected as the physical demands of recreation in nonurban natural areas such as provincial and natural parks are often greater than in the other two rural recreation settings and in more urban-based settings. The general lack of relationships between socio-demographic variables and the leisure style of rural recreation participants in the current study is not consistent with a number of empirical studies that found that rural recreation participation was related to socio-demographic

variables (Halseth 2004, Müderrisoğlu et al. 2005, Mulder et al. 2005, Sievänen et al. 2007).

In general, those who participated in the three rural recreation settings tended to participate in other leisure settings that were most like rural recreation settings. None of the three rural recreation settings was correlated with frequency of participation in the leisure settings of busy urban recreation areas or one's own home. The findings suggest a continuum of rural recreation settings with nonurban natural areas at one end and pastoral/rural areas and cottage/lodge settings at the other end. Thus, the nonurban natural area visitors were most like primitive wilderness area visitors while the other rural recreationists were more like urban area visitors. As Sievänen et al. (2007) have observed, "the recreational home is a symbol of closeness to nature... But, on the other hand, a trend of today is also to build modern-style houses with all the technical comforts of urban dwellings, far from the style of nostalgic rural style" (p. 227). Or, as Svenson (2004) has documented, Canadian "cottaging has become urban" (p. 63).

It is not surprising that the strongest correlation between frequency of participation in a leisure activity category and the three rural recreation settings was related to outdoor activities since all three rural recreation settings are nature-oriented and provide plenty of opportunity for outdoor recreation as has been previously documented (Sievänen et al. 2007, Warnick 2002). The correlation between frequency of participation in cottage/lodge settings and frequency of participation in sports activities is consistent with Sievänen et al.'s (2007) and Svenson's (2004) findings.

Participation in each of the rural recreation leisure settings was correlated with different leisure motivation components consistent with Müderrisoğlu et al.'s (2005) findings. The correlation of frequency of participation in non-urban natural areas with stimulus-avoidance motivations may reflect elements of the Restorative Environments Theory (Kaplan 1995), while the correlation between frequency of participation in cottage and lodge settings with social motivations may reflect the opportunity that

cottages and lodges provide to socialize with family and friends (Sievänen et al. 2007, Svenson 2004). The correlation of frequency of participation in cottage and lodge settings with competence-mastery motivations may reflect the need to learn and master certain skills in order to maintain a cottage as well as to live even temporarily in a rural setting (Sievänen et al. 2007, Svenson 2004, Williams and Kaltenborn 1999). A similar argument could be made to explain why competence-mastery and intellectual leisure motivations are associated with frequency of participation in rural/pastoral settings. These motivations may reflect the need to master certain skills and learn specific information to experience leisure in a rural/pastoral setting—for example, hobby farming.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions that may be helpful to agencies that provide rural recreation services can be drawn from this study. First, the concept of leisure style, which incorporates leisure motivations, leisure setting preferences, and perceived time use, in addition to recreation activity participation, appears to be a more complete approach to understanding the characteristics of rural recreationists than recreation activity profiles. Recreation providers need to have a thorough understanding of the rural recreationists in their community rather than using only activity classifications. Second, although the three rural recreation groups shared some of the same leisure style characteristics that distinguished them from those who had a higher frequency of participation in primitive wilderness or urban leisure settings, rural recreationists are not all alike and may be classified into different leisure styles. This study found differences in leisure style—in terms of leisure activities participated in, leisure motivations, and preferences for leisure settings—according to the leisure setting classifications of nonurban natural areas, rural/pastoral settings, and cottage and lodge settings. If a particular rural community is characterized primarily by one leisure setting classification (e.g., cottage and lodge settings), then the provision of recreation services should reflect the leisure activities, leisure

motivations, and leisure setting preferences of this specific group. If there is a mix of all three groups, then recreation services would become more complex and strategies need to be put in place to cater to the needs and interests of the diverse groups. Third, leisure activity participation and leisure motivation appear to be the most important dimensions in determining the leisure style of rural recreationists. Fourth, the current study, unlike other studies, found only one significant relationship between socio-demographic variables and the leisure style of rural recreationists. Thus, these assumptions should not be made unless a rural community has data to indicate that their rural recreation participants reflect certain socio-demographic characteristics.

Limitations of this study should be addressed in future research. First, the study was based on secondary analysis of data from a different study that used a purposive sample. To better understand the leisure styles of rural recreationists, a specific study on this research question with a representative sample is recommended. Second, this study's sample was primarily from central Canada. A representative sample from the entire Canadian population would provide a better picture of the leisure style of Canadian rural recreationists. Alternatively, regional studies (e.g., the Maritime Provinces) would be beneficial in determining the unique characteristics of rural recreationists in specific regions of Canada. Third, the current study did not ask whether the respondents were rural or urban residents but looked at rural recreation participation regardless of the place of residence. This data would provide the opportunity to compare the rural recreation of rural versus urban Canadians as in Warnick's (2002) U.S. study. Fourth, research could be conducted to determine if there are sub-categories in each of the main rural leisure styles. For example, based on interviews with Canadian cottagers, Svenson (2004) has suggested four cottager ideal types (cottager, suburbanite, wanderer, and homecomer). Further researcher as suggested in this paragraph would help address Markham's (1991) and Halseth's (2004) concerns about a lack of research knowledge concerning rural recreation.

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