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Park Visitors: A Summary

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Introduction

This report is the last of a series of three reports which detail results from a study conducted in 2008 and 2009 of visitors to Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks. The first report focused on a seasonal comparison of visitors to Glacier National Park. The second report again analyzed the data in the form of a seasonal comparison but for Yellowstone National Park visitors. The purpose of *this* report is to summarize results from the whole sample of visitors to both parks.

The first two reports explained that season is not a differentiating feature of visitors to Glacier or Yellowstone National Parks. Visitors to the two parks did not differ significantly in the way they view their lifestyles, travel-related habits, preferred experiences, or park values.

One of the purposes of this data collection effort was to segment all park visitors by their lifestyle, habits, experiences, and values. This was not possible due to the lack of differences among visitors in these variables. Visitors to the Montana parks are similar and only vary in demographic characteristics, like household income, place of residence, and age ranges in travel group. Using some of these demographic characteristics as differentiating features, segmentation was attempted. However, once the visitors were grouped, no meaningful differences were found among the groups, making comparisons futile.

Considering that segmentation was not possible here, the purpose of this report is to show data that was not included in the previous two reports. This data is for both parks and is for the entire 2008 and 2009 sampling period. To view all of the other data from this study, see the “all seasons” column of the Glacier and Yellowstone reports. For full methods, also see the Glacier and Yellowstone reports:

<http://www.itrr.umt.edu/research09/GNPvisitorsRR2009-5.pdf> and
<http://www.itrr.umt.edu/research09/YNPvisitorsRR2009-8.pdf>

Results

In this survey, visitors were asked how many vacations they typically take in a year. This was one of the variables used for potential segmentation of visitors. The result was a large group who indicated taking 1-3 vacations per year and very small groups indicating other responses (Table 1).

Table 1: The Number of Vacations Typically Taken in a Year

Number of Vacations	Percentage of People
0	1%
1	20%
2	38%
3	21%
4	10%
5+	11%

There were no significant differences between these groups. Looking at the income of the people in the largest group, it was clear that all income levels were represented. Even those with lower incomes are taking 1-3 vacations a year. Their vacations may not be as elaborate as those with a higher income (although we do not know this) but they are taking them, none-the-less. As Table 1 shows, the majority (79%) of respondents indicated taking 1-3 vacations per year. Only one percent indicated that they do not take any vacations while 11 percent said they take five or more vacations in a year.

Table 2: The Number of Trips taken by Previous Montana Visitors in the Past 10 Years

Number of Trips	Frequency (n= 1733)
1	24%
2	19%
3	13%
4	10%
5	8%
6-10	14%
11-20	6%
21+	6%

Out-of-state park visitors were asked if they had ever been to Montana before and if they had, how many times they had visited in the past 10 years (Table 2). Sixty-three percent of these respondents indicated they had visited Montana before this trip. Most (24%) had only visited once in the past, with 19 percent indicating they had visited twice in the past. Fourteen percent indicated that they had visited 6-10 times in the past.

Table 3: Percentage of Visitors who had previously visited the Parks

Park	Percent of People who have Visited each Park Previously
Glacier National Park	45%
Yellowstone National Park	65%

Montana residents and non-residents who had previously visited Montana were asked if they had ever visited Glacier National Park or Yellowstone National Park before this trip (Table 3). Forty-five percent of people indicated that they had visited Glacier on a past trip to Montana and 65 percent of people had previously visited Yellowstone.

Table 4: The Age at which Previous Park Visitors First Visited Glacier & Yellowstone National Park

Age	First visit to Glacier % of Visitors	First visit to Yellowstone % of Visitors
5 or Younger	6%	7%
6-10	8%	14%
11-15	9%	11%
16-20	7%	9%
21-25	13%	12%
26-30	10%	10%
31+	47%	37%

If they had visited previously, they were asked at what age their first visit to each park occurred (Table 4). The majority of respondents indicated that they had first visited the parks after 16 years of age (77% Glacier, 68% Yellowstone). Twenty-three percent of previous Glacier visitors indicated that they first visited when they were fifteen or younger, while thirty-two percent were 15 or younger when first visiting Yellowstone.

This variable was also used as a potential segmentation characteristic for visitors who had previously visited the parks with a potential hypothesis that those who had visited earlier in their lives may have different values, habits, and preferred experiences than those who visited later in life. The result of this segmentation showed that there were 3 distinct groups for both Glacier and Yellowstone previous visitors: those that had visited at five or younger, those that visited when they were six to 20 years of age, and those who had visited after they were 20 years of age. When these groups were examined further, it was evident that their values, habits, and preferred experiences did not differ from one another. Again, these visitors are very similar in these aspects.

Conclusions

This report presented some new data for park visitors to help understand these visitors more completely. Interestingly, the majority of visitors take 1 to 3 vacations, regardless of their household income. A relatively large number of people have

visited the parks previously, but most have done this later in life with Yellowstone having a higher number of people who visited as youngsters.

Park visitors represent all income levels and all regions of the country as well as many international locations. So while they are diverse in income and place of residence, they do not differ significantly in their lifestyles, habits, preferred experiences, or values. The implication of this is a simpler method of marketing with a message that need not change for certain types of visitors. These visitors do differ somewhat in their demographic characteristics and this information is given in detail in the two reports which preceded this one.