

2-14-2021

Glamping after the Coronavirus Pandemic

Christopher Craig

Murray State University, ccraig8@murraystate.edu

Ismail Karabas

Murray State University, ikarabas@murraystate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/faculty>



Part of the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Craig, C. A., & Karabas, I. (2021). Glamping after the coronavirus pandemic. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 21(2), 251-256.

This Journal Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Works at Murray State's Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty & Staff Research and Creative Activity by an authorized administrator of Murray State's Digital Commons. For more information, please contact msu.digitalcommons@murraystate.edu.

Glamping after the coronavirus pandemic

Abstract: Glamping is an increasingly popular and accessible modern form of camping. To address current and future impacts of COVID-19 on glamping, 2,926 active leisure travelers in the US and Canada were surveyed. Respondents were asked about post-COVID-19 glamping trip plans and hotel/resort trip plans for comparison. Independent variables of interest include 2019 accommodation experiences, 2020 accommodation plans prior to COVID-19, and socio-demographics. Results indicate more active leisure travelers have plans to take glamping trips (45.9%) after COVID-19 when permissible than hotel/resort trips (24.7%). The results highlight that the broad accessibility of glamping make it a viable leisure travel alternative during and after the pandemic.

Keywords: glamping; camping; COVID-19; coronavirus; outdoor recreation; outdoor tourism; tourism

This manuscript has been accepted for publication. Please cite as:

Craig, C.A., & Karabas, I. (2021). Glamping after the coronavirus pandemic. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 21(2), 251-256. doi: 10.1177/1467358421993864

Introduction

Camping is an over \$150 billion tourism segment; however, it remains understudied (Rice et al., 2019). Glamping is a modern form of camping that retains an outdoor recreational experience while providing “glamorous” amenities and accommodations (Brooker & Joppe, 2013). Glamping offers modern amenities (e.g., WIFI) available in a variety of accommodation structures including cabins, treehouses, and tents thus removing many of the discomforts of traditional camping (Brochado & Brochado, 2019; Lyu et al., 2020). Glamping’s allure among new and experienced campers is due to the wide range of services, amenities, and its positioning as a high-end alternative to traditional camping (Cairn Consulting Group [CCG], 2019). In fact, interest in glamping increased from 21% in 2017 to 45% in 2018 irrespective of age (CCG, 2019).

In response to the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), researchers suggest that outdoor settings and individuals’ ability to maintain social distance lowers perceived and/or actual risks compared to traditional accommodations (Craig, 2020; Gossling et al., 2020). Because glamping combines outdoor recreation with accommodations (Craig, 2020; Brooker & Joppe, 2013), it provides an activity for those seeking to be outside where permissible (Gossling et al., 2020). Craig (2020) reports that glamping decisions are closely related to traveler desire to avoid crowds, though to-date, this is the first study to the authors’ knowledge that explores factors related to traveler plans to glamp after COVID-19.

To address this knowledge gap, active leisure travelers were surveyed about glamping trips they took in 2019, plans to glamp in 2020 made prior to COVID-19 (pre-COVID-19, hereafter), and plans to glamp made after COVID-19 (post-COVID-19, hereafter). To provide a comparison, leisure travelers were also asked about hotel/resort travel.

Methods

Procedure

A for-profit tourism business contracted a professional marketing firm to conduct a survey among active leisure travelers in the US and Canada. Respondents from Canada are included as the most salient international segment of domestic tourists in the US (International Trade Administration, 2010). The firms provided de-identified data for non-commercial academic purposes but neither firm participated in the study. We omitted identifying information about the firms to maintain confidentiality.

A stratified random sampling approach was used to geographically balance respondents within the four US Census Regions (US Census Bureau, n.d.) and Canada. An initial pool of 7,659 randomly selected participants responded to an outbound email solicitation to participate in an online survey available from April 27th to April 30th, 2020. The pool was comprised of known leisure travelers from the marketing firm's proprietary database. Only travelers who had traveled for leisure in 2019 or had plans to travel (n=3,195) completed the survey. Cases without completed responses were removed for a final of 2,926 respondents providing a margin of error of 2% at the 99% confidence level (see Table 1 for sample socio-demographics).

[Table 1]

Measures

The dependent variable is post-COVID-19 trip plans for glamping and hotels/resorts. Independent variables include trips taken in 2019 and pre-COVID-19 trip plans in 2020. Travelers were prompted with the two questions: "Which of the following types of leisure trips, if any, have you taken in the past 2 years? And how many trips did you plan to take prior to the

COVID-19 pandemic?” Travelers were then asked to enter the number of leisure trips they had taken or planned over the past two years:

- “Glamping” trips, where you stay in unique accommodations with enhanced services and amenities: (1) Trips in 2019 [enter]; (2) Planned trips for 2020 [enter]; (3) Planned trips after COVID-19 [enter]
- Stays at a hotel or resort: (1) Trips in 2019 [enter]; (2) Planned trips for 2020 [enter]; (3) Planned trips after COVID-19 [enter]

To prepare for data analysis, dependent and independent variables about previous and planned trips were binary recoded: (1) traveler entered one or more trips or plans or (0) traveler did not (see Table 1 for trip plan frequencies). The socio-demographic factors of interest are age, household income, employment, gender, and ethnicity. Employment, gender, and ethnicity were binary recoded because of the small percentage of respondents in some of the categories: (1) full time employed or (0) other employment status; (1) male or (0) female or other; and (1) identified as White/Caucasian or (0) did not.

Statistical Analyses

This exploratory study used binary logistic regression and the forward stepwise method to determine variables in the model, model fit (Nagelkerke R^2), and likelihood of occurrence (odds ratios or $Exp(B)$). Table 2 progresses through the sequential steps, or order, that each variable was added to the model with fit improvement indicated by ΔR^2 . Odds ratios indicate the likelihood, or odds, of dependent variable occurrence for each significant independent variable. Researchers from tourism and health fields have used the method to determine likelihood of outcomes among large samples (e.g., Bujang et al., 2018; Schroeder et al., 2013).

[Table 2]

Results

Active leisure travelers report more post-COVID-19 glamping trip plans (45.9%) than hotel/resort trip plans (24.7%). Active travelers report plans for more than twice as many post-COVID-19 glamping trips than they took in 2019 (21.4%). Furthermore, travelers report 16.0% more post-COVID-19 glamping trip plans than pre-COVID-19 trip plans. The glamping model includes five factors that demonstrate good fit and a 33.9% improvement over the null model ($R^2 = .339, p < .00$). The primary predictor of post-COVID-19 glamping trip plans are pre-COVID-19 plans ($R^2 = .276, p < .00$) where active travelers who had previous plans are 5.23 times more likely to have post-COVID-19 glamping trip plans. 2019 glamping trips are also significant, though variability explained is modest ($R^2 = .034, p < .00$). Likewise, glamping decisions are only modestly related to income, employment, and age.

The percentage of post-COVID-19 hotel/resort trip plans (24.7%) is substantially lower than 2019 hotel/resort trip plans (35.5%) and pre-COVID-19 trip plans (40.2%). The hotel/resort model includes seven factors that demonstrate good fit and a 45.4% improvement over the null model ($R^2 = .454, p < .00$). The primary predictor of post-COVID-19 hotel/resort trip plans are 2019 trips ($R^2 = .296, p < .00$) where active travelers who took a hotel/resort trip in 2019 are 5.17 times more likely to have post-COVID-19 hotel/resort trip plans. Pre-COVID-19 hotel/resort plans are the second strongest predictor ($R^2 = .084, p < .00$). Like glamping, hotel/resort decisions are also only modestly related to demographic factors (except ethnicity).

Discussion

The results highlight the increased viability of glamping to a broader potential market of leisure travelers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to COVID-19, the accessibility,

popularity, and interest in glamping were already increasing (CCG, 2019; Milohnic et al., 2019). Furthermore, glamping is well-positioned among a growing body of travelers interested in eco-tourism and eco-accommodations (Bagheri et al., 2020). Present day, consumer desire in a COVID-19 climate is for accommodations that allow for social distancing, are closer to home, and offer outdoor recreation (Craig, 2020; Glusac, 2020; Gossling et al., 2020; Hong et al., 2020; Sanford & Dubois, 2020). With the effects of COVID-19 expected through at least 2022 (Kissler et al., 2020), perceived and actual health risks will regionally persist thus influencing leisure travel accommodation choices. And, adverse risk perceptions are inversely related to destination choice and previous experience (e.g., glamping experience during COVID-19) are positively related to future travel (e.g., Schroeder et al., 2013).

Two primary themes emerged among our sample of active leisure travelers:

Traveler characteristics: Plans and experience

Our first characteristic of interest is traveler plans. Those who make plans for a future behavior are more likely to engage in the behavior (e.g., Rogers et al., 2016) such as voting (Nickerson & Rogers, 2010), getting vaccinated (Leventhal et al., 1965; Milkman et al., 2011), and taking preventative health screenings (Milkman et al., 2013). Based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991), future behavior is a function of intention (e.g., intention to go glamping). The results show that pre-COVID-19 trip plans are the primary predictor for glamping trip plans ($R^2 = .276, p < .00$) and second strongest for hotel/resort trip plans ($R^2 = .084, p < .00$). Prior to COVID-19, travelers planned leisure trips further in advance creating various channels to examine past consumer plans (Kiesnoski, 2020). One consumer targeting strategy is to target leisure travelers based on their past Google searches by expanding time parameters. For instance, consumer profiles can be refined beyond recent searches (e.g., May/June 2020) to

include travel interest in prior years. Identifying previous plans may be particularly fruitful for glamping considering travelers with pre-COVID-19 plans are exponentially more likely to have post-COVID-19 plans ($Exp(B) = 5.24$).

Our second traveler characteristic of interest is experience. Future consumer behaviors are closely linked with their past experiences (e.g., Ouellette & Wood, 1998). For instance, research shows that previous experience with a travel destination can predict likelihood of future travel to that destination (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). In addition, research has extended the TPB to consider past behavior as an additional predictor of behavioral intention (e.g., Han et al., 2016). Comparably, the results of this study also reveal that recent travel to hotel/resort trip plans are the primary predictor for post-COVID-19 plans ($R^2 = .296, p < .00$). For hotels/resorts this is particularly relevant considering that the number of active leisure travelers with post-COVID-19 plans (24.7%) substantially declined compared to those with pre-COVID-19 plans (40.2%). Thus, a second targeting strategy for hotels/resorts is to communicate with leisure travelers that stayed at a specific and/or comparable hotel/resort in 2019. Despite accommodation type, identifying former customers and associated contact points (e.g., email, social media) is crucial as current travelers are making plans more rapidly (Kiesnoski, 2020).

Accommodation characteristics: Social distance

The second primary contribution of the study is the finding that more active leisure travelers have post-COVID-19 glamping trip plans (45.9%) than hotel/resort trip plans (24.7%). The popularity of glamping appears to be increasing because (1) it allows for social distancing and (2) it is an accessible form of outdoor recreation (Gossling et al., 2020; Milohnic et al., 2019). Recreational deprivation began with the stay-at-home orders followed by the closures of recreational facilities (e.g., gyms, parks) coinciding with an overall decline in outdoor recreation

(Rice et al., 2020). Not surprisingly, outdoor tourism and recreation have persisted globally where local travel restrictions allowed. For instance, outdoor activities such as hiking, running, and cycling increased in the Netherlands while forestry visits increased in Germany underscoring the importance of nature-based leisure activities like glamping (Derks et al., 2020; Leeuwen et al., 2020). Indeed, since social distance is inherent in glamping (Craig, 2020), travelers experience lower risks compared to traditional accommodations (Gossling et al., 2020) while also participating in outdoor recreation. Accommodation attributes (e.g., recreation) influence desirability (Chattopadhyay & Mitra, 2020), thus, it is important for practitioners, regardless of accommodation type, to craft communication that minimize risk concerns (e.g., social distancing, cleaning protocols) while also stressing access to safe outdoor recreational activities either at or nearby the location.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite offering novel contributions, the current work is not without limitations. First, the results are attributable to leisure travel but not to other reasons for travel (e.g., business). Future research should examine the preferred accommodation types considering the reason for travel. In turn, this will require researchers to expand their scope beyond glamping and hotels to include other accommodations (e.g., Airbnb, tent camping, rustic cabin camping, recreational vehicle camping). Researchers can also expand the focus to the general population to provide insights into the size of the active leisure traveler market segment.

Second, the wording for the dependent variable (i.e., “planned trips after COVID-19”) was included to capture trips planned after COVID-19 when permissible. However, “after COVID-19” was not clearly defined and level of restrictions differed widely making it permissible for some but not others to glamp at the time the survey was administered (Center for

Disease Control, 2020). The survey prompt asking respondents “how many trips did you plan to take prior to the COVID-19 pandemic” for “planned trips for 2020” suggests that “planned trips after COVID-19” means trips planned after the onset of the pandemic. However, based on the definition and lack of survey prompts for “after COVID-19” we cannot be certain that post-COVID-19 plans were made prior to the pandemic. Additionally, “after COVID-19” also introduces a potentially longer timeframe for trip plans than the other two variables (i.e., 2019 trips or 2020 plans).

Third, the study was cross-sectional and correlational in nature. Future researchers should take a longitudinal approach to studying trip plans over time to develop causal relationships. Research that can capture the persistence of COVID-19 risk perceptions on accommodation decisions would be particularly fruitful. And fourth, while the number of respondents who participated in the survey provided an acceptable margin of error and confidence level for the study, the number of initial outbound email solicitations was not made available by the marketing firm thus it was not possible to calculate a response rate.

References

- Aubrey A, Wamsley L and Wroth C (2020) From camping to dining out: Here's how experts rate the risks of 14 summer activities. *NPR*, 23 May. <https://www.npr.org>.
- Bagheri M, Shojaie P, Jahromi SA and Kiani M (2020) Proposing a model for assessing green hotels based on ecological indicators. *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 20(4): 406-422.
- Brochado A and Pereira C (2017) Comfortable experiences in nature accommodation: Perceived service quality in Glamping. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism* 17: 77-83.
- Brochado A and Brochado F (2019) What makes a glamping experience great? *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 10(1): 15-27.
- Brooker E and Joppe M (2013) Trends in camping and outdoor hospitality—An international review. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism* 3-4: 1-6.
- Bujang MA, Sa'at N, Sidik T and Joo LC (2018) Sample size guidelines for logistic regression from observational studies with large population: Emphasis on the accuracy between statistics and parameters based on real life clinical data. *Malaysia Journal of Medical Science* 25(4): 122-130.
- Cairn Consulting Group (CCG; 2019) *The 2019 North American Camping Report*. Sponsored by Kampgrounds of America. <https://koa.com/north-american-camping-report/>
- Center for Disease Control (2020) *Travel in the US*. United States Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>
- Chattopadhyay M and Mitra SK (2020) What Airbnb host listings influence peer-to-peer accommodation prices? *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* 44(4): 597-623.

- Craig, C.A. (2020). Camping, glamping, and coronavirus in the United States. *Annals of Tourism Research*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103071>.
- Glusac E (2020) Hotels vs. Airbnb: Has COVID-19 disrupted the disrupter?" *The New York Times*, 15 May. [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com).
- Gossling S, Scott D and Hall M (2020). Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1758708>.
- Hong Y, Cai G, Mo Z, Gao W, Xu L, Jiang Y and Jiang J (2020) The Impact of COVID-19 on tourist satisfaction with B&B in Zhejiang, China: An importance-performance analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17(10): 3747.
- International Trade Administration (2020) *Canadian travel to the United States*. U.S. Department of Commerce. https://travel.trade.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/Canadian_Travel-US_2010.pdf
- Kiesnoski K. (2020) Travel changed after 9/11; Here's how it will look after the COVID-19 pandemic finally recedes. *CNBC*, 10 May. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/10/heres-how-travel-will-change-after-the-covid-19-pandemic-recedes.html>.
- Kissler SM, Tedijanto C, Goldstein E, Grad YH and Lipsitch M (2020) Projecting the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 through the postpandemic period. *Science* 14: eabb5793. DOI: 10.1126/science.abb5793.
- Lyu SO, Kim J-W, and Bae SW (2020) Family vacationers' willingness to pay for glamping travel sites: A family functioning segmentation. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 22(2): 155-167.

- Milohnic I, Bonifacic JC and Lieul I (2019) Transformation of camping into glamping—trends and perspectives. *Tourism in Southern and Eastern Europe* 5: 457-473.
- Rice WL, Newman P and Pan B (2019) Forecasting campground demand in US national parks. *Annals of Tourism Research* 75: 424-438.
- Sanford W and Dubois D (2020) *COVID-19 impact on hotels and short-term rentals*. STR and AIRDNA. <https://airdna-website-reports.s3.amazonaws.com/documentation/Hotels+vs+Short+Term+Rentals.pdf>
- Schroeder A, Pennington-Gray L, Kaplanidou K and Zhan F (2013) Destination risk perceptions among U.S. residents for London as the host city of the 2012 summer Olympic Games. *Tourism Management* 38: 107-119.
- US Census Bureau (n.d.). *Census regions and divisions of the United States*. https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf

Table 1. Sample socio-demographics and trip plan frequencies.

Census Region	Midwest (16.3%), Northeast (18.7%), South (27.8%), West (21.1%), Canada (16.1%)
Age	Range: 18-102; Mean: 43; Standard Deviation: 16.8
Gender	Male (43.4%), Female (56.0%), Other (.5%)
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian (71.0%), Hispanic/Latino (9.1%), African American (10.9%), Asian/Pacific Islander (6.8%), Native American (2.2%), Other (1.2%), Prefer not to answer (6.5%)
Annual Household Income	Under \$25,000 (11.9%), \$25,000-\$49,999 (21.6%), \$50,000-\$74,999 (17.6%), \$75,000-\$99,999 (15.3%), \$100,000-\$149,999 (18.6%), \$150,000-\$199,999 (8.0%), Over \$200,000 (7.0%)
Employment	Working full-time (52.9%), Working part-time (12.0%), Student (6.0%), Retired (13.6%), Home maker/stay at home parent (5.3%), Unemployed as result of COVID-19 (3.6%), Unemployed prior to COVID-19 (2.4%), Furloughed/laid off as a result of COVID-19 (3.8%), Furloughed/laid off prior to COVID-19 (.2%)
Trip Plans	Glamping 2019 (21.4%), Pre-COVID-19 (29.9%), Post-COVID-19 (45.9%), Hotel 2019 (34.7%), Pre-COVID-19 (39.6%), Post-COVID-19 (24.4%)

Table 2. Binary logistic regression models.

Post-COVID-19 Glamping Trip Plans (R² = .339)						
<i>Variable</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Step 1. 2020 Planned Glamping Trip	.276	1.66	0.11	1.00	.00	5.23
Step 2. 2019 Glamping Trip	.034	1.18	0.14	1.00	.00	3.24
Step 3. Income	.024	0.19	0.03	1.00	.00	1.21
Step 4. Employment	.004	0.26	0.09	1.00	.01	0.26
Step 5. Age	.001	-0.01	0.00	1.00	.05	1.00
Constant		-1.44	0.16	1.00	.00	0.24
Post-COVID-19 Hotel/Resort Trip Plans (R² = .454)						
Step 1. 2019 Hotel/Resort Trip	.296	1.64	0.12	1.00	.00	5.17
Step 2. 2020 Planned Hotel/Resort Trip	.084	1.60	0.12	1.00	.00	4.93
Step 3. Age	.035	-0.03	0.00	1.00	.00	0.97
Step 4. Gender	.022	0.56	0.11	1.00	.00	1.74
Step 5. Income	.011	0.14	0.03	1.00	.00	1.15
Step 6. Employment	.006	0.48	0.12	1.00	.00	1.62
Constant		-2.57	0.21	1.00	.00	0.08