**Background & Objectives**

Effective visitor communication is essential to market, plan, & manage tourism & outdoor recreation. Authors concur E-travel is a major trend for trip research & online booking (Smith, 2012; Pew Research, 2012). To better understand traveler use of internet, social media, & technological devices, this project assessed visitor use & differences in use between nature- & non-nature based tourists in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, Minnesota.

**Objectives**
- Compare socio-demographic characteristics of nature-based (NB) & non-nature based tourists
- Identify use of electronic media among nature-based tourists
- Compare electronic media & technology use between nature-based & non-nature based tourists

**Methodology**

**On-site questionnaires**
- Administered to a convenience sample of Twin Cities (TC) Metropolitan Area visitors summer 2012
- 13 communities across the 7 county TC Metro

**Selecting nature-based tourists**
- Visitors who stayed 1-30 nights or who were on a day trip 50+ miles from primary residence
- Participated in outdoor recreation during their trip

**Analysis**
- Descriptive & Chi-square ($\chi^2$) statistics

**Findings: Nature-based tourists & media/device use**

**Socio-demographic comparisons**
- Younger & more frequently male than non-NB tourists (average 43 vs. 45 yrs.; 59% vs. 51%, p< .01)
- Similar income: Most frequently $50,000-99,999 (41.2%), $100,000+ (38.6%)

**Trip planning & information sharing among NB tourists**
- Main planning resources: friends/family (67%), area or travel website (41%) (Fig. 1 to the right)
- Main info sharing: websites (48%), Facebook (36%), smartphone (35%), & text message (23%) (Fig. 2, 3 below)

**Findings: Comparison of nature & non-nature based tourists media/device use**

**Nature-based tourists**
- Information sources: 1 of 10 differs in use to plan trip:
  - Trip Advisor reviews among NB tourists
  - 5 of 12 > use e-devices & apps to share trip info (Fig. 4)

**Non-nature based tourists**
- Significantly less use of e-media to plan trips & share/obtain info (Fig. 4 to the left)
- Fewer changed plans due to social media than NB tourists (Fig. 5 below)

**Implications & Opportunities**

- Balance marketing across channels, with attention to e-placement
- Maintain accurate & timely data on websites & other online sources
- Monitor & respond to online reviews
- Expand information where it does not exist on the web
- Engage markets with opportunities to share pictures, experiences, or information via mobile devices in a variety of spaces with attention to Trip Advisor for nature-based tourists
- Format websites & other online resources for mobile & tablet design
- Continue to monitor use & changes in use of social media electronic devices

**Future research**
- Replicate project in a rural tourism setting to identify possible differences in social media & e-use
- Explore what content was shared & why
- Monitor multi-device use & patterns of use for booking, reservations

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