



TOURISM BRITISH COLUMBIA
C A N A D A

RESEARCH SERVICES

VALUE OF THE SMITHERS VISITOR INFO CENTRE STUDY RESULTS - FOR DISTRIBUTION

March 2006

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Executive Summary

Due to increasing needs in communities around the province, Research Services, Tourism British Columbia has developed a methodology that Visitor Info Centres (VICs) can use to measure the impact of the VIC on traveler behaviour and to determine the economic impact of the VIC. The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the Smithers Visitor Info Centre. Specifically, the study objectives were:

1. To profile travelers who use the Smithers VIC in terms of traveler and trip characteristics.
2. To measure the influence the Smithers VIC has on the decision-making process of travelers in British Columbia: the influence the VIC has on the length of stay, expenditures, and selection of additional or alternative activities, attractions or destinations.

A two-location, two-stage survey design was used to examine the study objectives. Travelers were interviewed at two main locations, the Smithers VIC and a reference site. The main street in central Smithers (Main Street) was selected as the reference site. Main Street has a number of shops, restaurants and other businesses that are frequented by travelers. The purpose of collecting information at Main Street was to obtain information about the typical traveler to the Smithers region for comparison with travelers who used the VIC. On-site interviews were used to collect information from travelers during their trip and a mailback questionnaire collected information from travelers after their trip. The primary purposes of the mailback questionnaire were to compare mid-trip and complete trip perceptions of the VIC impacts on traveler behaviour and to understand traveler perceptions of the Smithers region and British Columbia after their trip was complete.

- Between June and August of 2005, 788 people were approached at the Smithers VIC or Main Street. Of those, 474 agreed to complete the interview but 217 were excluded because they were from the Smithers region. Five respondents who were part of an organized tour group were also removed from the analysis to ensure the sample was composed of independent travelers, resulting in 252 useable surveys. Of those, 180 (71%) were conducted at the Smithers VIC and 72 (29%) were conducted at the Main Street reference site.
- At the Smithers VIC, 27% of travelers were from British Columbia, 22% were from other provinces in Canada, 32% were from Overseas and 19% were from the United States. A much higher proportion of travelers at Main Street were from British Columbia (50%), but fewer were from other provinces in Canada (14%), from Overseas (24%) or from the United States (13%). This suggests residents of British Columbia were less likely to use the VIC.
- At the Smithers VIC, the average party size was 2.3 people and 13% of travel parties included children. Those parties at the VIC that traveled with children had, on average, 3.8 members in their party. The average travel party size (2.2), the proportion of parties that included children (8%) and the average size of parties with children (3.5) tended to be smaller at the Main Street reference site.

- The majority of respondents at the Smithers VIC were traveling for leisure purposes (77%) while fewer were traveling to visit friends and family (13%) or for business (9%). Fewer visitors at Main Street were traveling for leisure (53%) or business (8%) whereas more were traveling to visit friends and family (36%).
- Most travelers at both the Smithers VIC and Main Street used a private vehicle for transportation (77% and 79%, respectively).
- A significantly higher proportion of travelers at the Smithers VIC stayed at campgrounds/RV parks compared to those interviewed at Main Street (50% Smithers VIC; 20% Main Street). Travelers at Main Street were significantly more likely to stay with friends and relatives (9% Smithers VIC; 38% Main Street).
- Compared to those interviewed at the Smithers VIC, Main Street travelers were more likely to have a primary destination within British Columbia (39% Smithers VIC; 69% Main Street). Smithers VIC respondents were more likely to be visiting destinations outside British Columbia (27% Smithers VIC; 11% Main Street) or to be touring with no particular primary destination (34% Smithers VIC; 19% Main Street).
- Overall, travelers intercepted at the Smithers VIC planned to spend an average of 47 days away from home, including 20 days in British Columbia and 4 days in the Smithers region. Travelers intercepted at Main Street planned to spend less time away from home (31 days), about the same amount of time in British Columbia (21 days), and more time in the Smithers region (12 days)
- Over three-quarters of the travelers at the Smithers VIC (89%) planned their trip more than three weeks in advance. Main Street respondents were less likely to plan ahead of time as 68% had made plans more than three weeks in advance.
- For overall trip planning, the Internet was the top information source for both travel groups (62% Smithers VIC; 56% Main Street). However, a significantly larger proportion of travelers at the Smithers VIC used brochures and books than did those at Main Street (44% Smithers VIC; 28% Main Street). Also important, but less frequently mentioned information sources included friends, relatives, clubs and other associations (34% Smithers VIC; 47% Main Street); travel agents, airlines and auto clubs (22% Smithers VIC; 16% Main Street) and VICs (13% Smithers VIC; 18% Main Street).
- When planning their time in the Smithers region, VICs (61% Smithers VIC; 34% Main Street) and friends and relatives (20% Smithers VIC; 37% Main Street) were the most frequently cited information sources used by both travel groups.
- Travelers at the Smithers VIC were very flexible in the activities that they planned to participate in while in the Smithers region, similar to travelers at Main Street (75% Smithers VIC; 73% Main Street). Travelers at the Smithers VIC were more flexible in terms of the time that they had to

spend in the Smithers region (44% Smithers VIC; 35% Main Street) and in British Columbia (41% Smithers VIC; 26% Main Street).

- Travelers were asked about their primary leisure activity. The most frequently cited activities by travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC included sightseeing (41%), land-based outdoor recreation (30%) and water-based outdoor recreation (11%). The most common responses given by those intercepted at Main Street included land-based outdoor recreation (33%), sightseeing (17%) and visiting friends and relatives (12%).
- Most travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC spoke with a Visitor Information Counsellor (98%).
- Almost all travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC indicated that the VIC met or exceeded their expectations. Fifty-five percent of travelers said that the VIC exceeded their expectations while 44% said the VIC met their expectations. The majority of travelers (81%) felt the VIC provided good information. Many travelers also commented on the helpful staff (61%) and the friendly people (55%) at the VIC.
- Only 6% of travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC had suggestions for products and/or services that were not available that they would have liked to have found. These included the need for additional maps along with more information on water-based recreation opportunities and telephone access services.
- In the mailback survey, one-third of travelers (33%) indicated an interest in purchasing souvenirs if they were made available, with postcards (19%), arts and crafts items (19%) and clothing (15%) representing the most popular items.
- Almost half (46%) of the travelers interviewed on Main Street had stopped, or planned to stop, at the Smithers VIC on their current trip.
- Almost three-quarters of mailback respondents (73%) visited another VIC in British Columbia during their trip. The vast majority (95%) indicated they were likely or very likely to visit another VIC in British Columbia as a result of their experience at the Smithers VIC.
- Four-fifths (80%) of mailback respondents possessed a valid passport. Whereas all Overseas visitors (100%) and a majority of those from the US (93%) owned passports, passport ownership was lower among Canadians, especially those from British Columbia (58%).
- In the mailback survey, almost-three-quarters of respondents from the Smithers VIC (73%) indicated that they had visited another VIC in British Columbia during their trip.
- Natural beauty/scenery, friendly people, and local activities and attractions were the most frequently cited positive images mailback respondents had of their visit to the Smithers region.

- In the mailback survey, poor weather/forest fire smoke, traffic/transportation or construction issues, and the lack of attractions/amenities or early closures were the most frequently cited negative images travelers had of the Smithers region.
- Outdoor activities, beauty/nature and friendly people were most frequently cited as unique characteristics of the Smithers region by mailback respondents.
- On average, travelers at the Smithers VIC spent \$142.28 per day and those at Main Street spent \$155.30 per day. The expenditure varied depending on primary accommodation type, ranging from \$107.50 for those staying with family and friends to \$186.69 for those using resorts/hotels/motels/B&Bs at the Smithers VIC. For those interviewed at Main Street, the expenditures ranged from \$73.87 for those staying with family and friends to \$240.80 for those using resorts/hotels/motels/B&Bs.
- In the summer of 2005, Smithers VIC users spent almost \$1.5 million in the Smithers region and over \$8.1 million while traveling throughout the rest of the province.
- The Smithers VIC had a positive impact on traveler behaviour. Thirty-eight percent of travelers indicated that they learned about a new activity or destination at the VIC. Fourteen percent replied that they would stay at least one extra night as a result of the information that they had obtained at the VIC, and 52% said that they would make another trip to British Columbia as a result of the information that they had learned.¹

¹ Additional spending as a result of these findings was calculated and presented in the full study results. These estimates can be obtained from the Smithers Visitor Info Centre.

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Introduction

Visitor Information Counsellors at British Columbia's 111 Visitor Info Centres (VICs) provided travel counselling and advice to over 1.7 million visitor parties in 2005. In addition, many more visitors used VICs without actually speaking with a Counsellor. The use of VICs provides communities with an opportunity to influence the activities and satisfaction of travelers, increasing their length of stay and the probability of a return visit to the community and British Columbia. Due to increasing needs in communities around the province, Research Services, Tourism British Columbia has developed a methodology that Visitor Info Centres (VICs) can use to measure the impact of the VIC on traveler behaviour and to determine the economic impact of the VIC. A pilot project was conducted in 2001 to test the methodology of measuring such impacts. This study at the Smithers VIC in the summer of 2005 was based on the methodology developed in the 2001 pilot project.

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the Smithers Visitor Info Centre. Specifically, the study objectives were:

1. To profile travelers who use the Smithers VIC in terms of traveler and trip characteristics.
2. To measure the influence the Smithers VIC has on the decision-making process of travelers in British Columbia: the influence the VIC has on the length of stay, expenditures, and selection of additional or alternative activities, attractions or destinations.

Methods

Data Collection

A two-location, two-stage survey design was used to examine the study objectives. Travelers were interviewed at two main locations, the Smithers VIC and a reference site. The main street in central Smithers (Main Street) was selected as the reference site. Main Street has a number of shops, restaurants and other businesses that are frequented by travelers. The interview location was approximately mid-point along Main Street. The purpose of collecting information at the Main Street reference site was to obtain information about the typical traveler to the Smithers region for comparison to travelers who used the VIC. On-site interviews collected information from travelers during their trip and a mailback questionnaire collected information from travelers after their trip. The primary purpose of the mailback questionnaire was to compare mid-trip and complete trip perceptions of the VIC impacts on traveler behaviour and to understand traveler perceptions of the Smithers region and British Columbia after their trip was complete.

Two interviewers collected data between June 17 and August 30, 2005 at both the Smithers VIC and Main Street. For the most part, the interviewers' schedules consisted of a systematic sample of four days on and two days off, alternating, on a daily basis, between the VIC and Main Street (Appendix A).

Potential respondents at the VIC were randomly chosen as they exited the building while, on Main Street, pedestrians were approached on a random basis. Respondents were asked if they were willing to participate in the interview and were given a *Super, Natural British Columbia*[®] refrigerator magnet for their time, if they agreed to participate. Respondents were asked if they were residents from the Smithers

region (includes areas between Houston and Hazelton). If so, they were eliminated from the remainder of the interview, ensuring that only non-resident travelers were interviewed. Business travelers were eliminated after the first several questions of the interview. The interviewers recorded most responses on Palm handheld computers using Techneos Data Entryware software.

During the interview, questions were asked about (see Appendix B for questionnaires):

- traveler demographics,
- trip-planning habits,
- primary trip purpose,
- primary destination,
- primary accommodation,
- primary leisure activity,
- mode of transportation,
- length of stay in the Smithers region and in British Columbia,
- use of the VIC,
- trip flexibility,
- daily expenditures,
- perceived impacts of the VIC on the rest of their trip, and
- satisfaction with the VIC.

In addition, mailing addresses were collected from those respondents in the interview who agreed to participate in the mailback questionnaire. A copy of British Columbia Magazine and a chance to win a digital camera were used as incentives to achieve a high participation rate in the mailback questionnaire.

Mailback questionnaires were sent out to visitors with a business reply envelope and a British Columbia Magazine in mid-September 2005. The mailback questionnaire collected a variety of information including (see mailback questionnaire in Appendix B):

- length of stay in the Smithers region and British Columbia,
- primary trip purpose,
- primary destination,
- primary accommodation,
- daily expenditures,
- the VIC's impact on their trip,
- positive and negative images of the Smithers region,
- the unique characteristics of the Smithers region as a vacation destination,
- satisfaction with the VIC,
- satisfaction with the Smithers region and British Columbia,
- the likelihood of returning to the Smithers region and British Columbia, and
- suggestions to improve the VIC.

Data Analysis

The study design produced three sets of data that are available for analysis – the interview responses at each location (Smithers VIC and Main Street) and mailback responses from the Smithers VIC. Mailback surveys were not sent to those interviewed at the Main Street reference site because, taking into account

the anticipated response rate, it was determined that the sample size would be too small for analysis purposes.

The respondents and the responses could vary between the interview and mailback questionnaires because travelers could drop out of the study by not agreeing to complete the mailback questionnaire or by not completing the mailback questionnaire even if they had agreed to complete it (which could cause non-response bias). Both instances could cause the mailback questionnaire results to be unrepresentative of travelers interviewed on-site.

The responses to similar questions in the interview and mailback questionnaires could vary due to real differences in traveler behaviour (for example, a traveler may have perceived that the VIC had a different impact on their trip when they were interviewed compared to the responses on the mailback questionnaire). A series of significance tests were conducted to assess the statistical significance of differences between the two data sets (Appendix C). Results of those tests and several other factors (sample size issues and results from similar studies at other locations) indicated that the interview information is the best source of data when the same or similar questions were asked on both the interview and mailback questionnaire. Thus, mailback questionnaire responses were used only when the question was not previously asked in the interview and when sample sizes permitted. Therefore, all results presented in the remainder of this report are from the interview unless otherwise noted.

Where possible, results are presented for both locations --the Smithers VIC and the reference site (Main Street). Where practical and when assumptions such as sample size were met, significance tests were conducted to assess differences between the locations. All statistical tests used a 0.05 significance level. To ensure that results represented independent travelers, respondents who indicated that they were part of an organized tour group were removed from analysis.

Results

Between June and August 2005, 788 people were approached at the Smithers VIC or at the Main Street reference site. Of those, 474 agreed to complete the interview but 217 were excluded because they were from the local area. Five respondents who were traveling in an organized tour group were also excluded from the analysis in an effort to represent the results of independent travelers. This resulted in 252 useable surveys. One hundred and eighty (71%) were conducted at the Smithers VIC and 72 (29%) were conducted at Main Street (Table 1).

Table 1. Travelers surveyed at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

	Travelers Approached	Agreed to Interview	From Local Community ¹	Part of Organized Tour Group	Useable Traveler Surveys
Smithers VIC	409	243	59	4	180 (71.4%)
Main Street	379	231	158	1	72 (28.6%)
Grand Total	788	474	217	5	252 (100.0%)

1. Residents living in the Smithers region which includes areas between Houston and Hazelton.

Tourist Characteristics (Demographics)

At the Smithers VIC, 27% of travelers were from British Columbia, 22% were from Other Canada, 32% were from Overseas and 19% were from the United States (Table 2). A much higher proportion of travelers at Main Street were from British Columbia (50%), fewer were from Other Canada (14%), from Overseas (24%) or from the United States (13%). Travelers' residence categories differed statistically between the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

At both the Smithers VIC and Main Street, the majority of travelers from provinces other than British Columbia were from Alberta (38% Smithers VIC; 40% Main Street) and Ontario (38% Smithers VIC; 30% Main Street). Fewer travelers were from Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia or New Brunswick (Figure 1). Over a quarter (27%) of US visitors at the Smithers VIC were from Washington and California. Other popular states included Oregon, Colorado, Arizona, Florida or Utah. Each of the travelers intercepted on Main Street came from a different US state (Figure 2). Most overseas travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street were European (91% and 94%, respectively), while fewer were from Asia/Pacific (7% and 6%, respectively; Figure 3). Travelers from Mexico were also represented at the Smithers VIC.

There were significant differences between respondents at the Smithers VIC and Main Street with respect to annual household income. A greater proportion of respondents at the Smithers VIC chose not to respond to the income question than did those intercepted at Main Street. Of those who did respond to the income question, a greater proportion of Main Street respondents came from lower income households relative to travelers at the Smithers VIC. The age of travelers intercepted at the VIC and Main Street exhibited slight differences, which were not statistically different. Seventeen percent of travelers at the VIC were under the age of 35, compared to 25% of those at Main Street. It was also more common for Main Street travelers to be older, with 22% of those interviewed over the age of 65, as compared to 16% at the VIC. With respect to education, there was no significant difference between travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC and Main Street (Table 2).

Table 2. Traveler demographics at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

	Smithers VIC		Main Street	
	Number of Responses ¹	Percentage of Responses	Number of Responses ¹	Percentage of Responses
Origin*				
British Columbia	49	27.2%	36	50.0%
Other Canada	39	21.7%	10	13.9%
US	34	18.9%	9	12.5%
Overseas	58	32.2%	17	23.6%
Age²				
Under 24 Years	4	2.5%	11	16.9%
25-34 Years	24	14.8%	5	7.7%
35-44 Years	25	15.4%	6	9.2%
45-54 Years	31	19.1%	13	20.0%
55-64 Years	51	31.5%	16	24.6%
65 Years or Older	26	16.0%	14	21.5%
Don't Know/No Response	1	0.6%	0	0.0%
Education²				
Less Than High School	3	1.9%	0	0.0%
High School	13	8.0%	8	12.3%
Some Technical, College or University	17	10.5%	11	16.9%
College or Technical Diploma	34	21.0%	11	16.9%
University Degree	54	33.3%	25	38.5%
Masters or a PhD Degree	36	22.2%	9	13.8%
Other	1	0.6%	0	0.0%
Don't Know/No Response	4	2.5%	1	1.5%
Income*, ²				
Less than \$25,000	9	5.6%	14	21.5%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	19	11.7%	7	10.8%
\$50,000 to \$64,999	26	16.0%	4	6.2%
\$65,000 to \$99,999	41	25.3%	18	27.7%
\$100,000 or More	26	16.0%	13	20.0%
Don't Know/No Response	41	25.3%	9	13.8%
Party Size²				
Average Party Size-Total	161	2.34	65	2.23
Average Party Size-Parties without children	138	2.09	59	2.10
Proportion with children	23	12.8%	6	8.3%
Average Party Size-Parties with children*	23	3.83	6	3.50

* Indicates there are statistical differences at the p=0.05 level between the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

1. The total number of responses does not always equal the number of useable surveys presented in Table 1 because some respondents did not complete all the questions of the interview.

2. Business travelers were not asked these questions and therefore were excluded from this analysis.

At the Smithers VIC, the average party size was 2.3 people and only 13% of travel parties included children. Those parties at the VIC who traveled with children had, on average, 3.8 members in their party. The average travel party size (2.2 Main Street), the proportion of parties that included children (8% Main Street) and the average size of parties with children (3.5 Main Street) tended to be smaller at Main Street (Table 2).

Origin of Canadian Travelers From Outside of BC by Province

Where are you from?

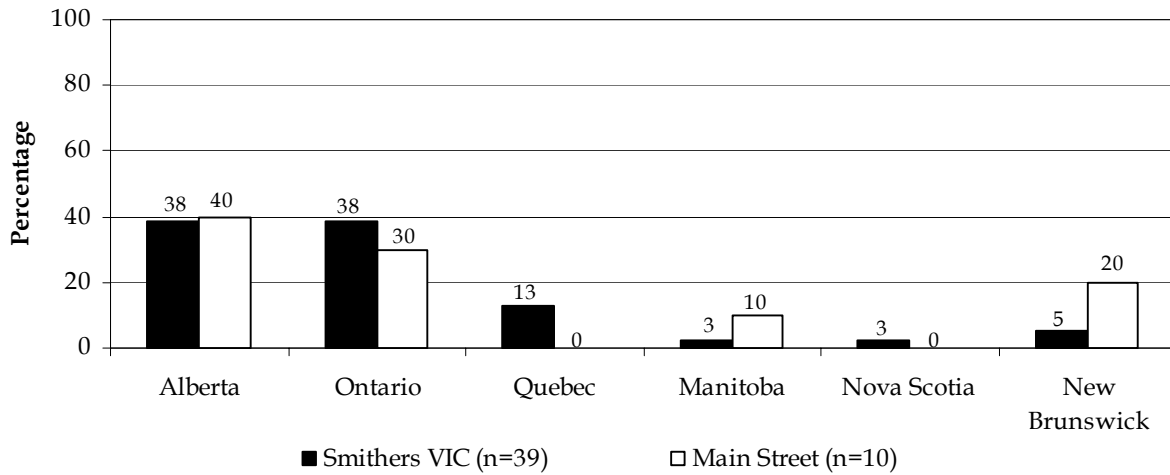


Figure 1. Percentage of travelers from provinces outside of British Columbia at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

Origin of U.S. Travelers by State

Where are you from?

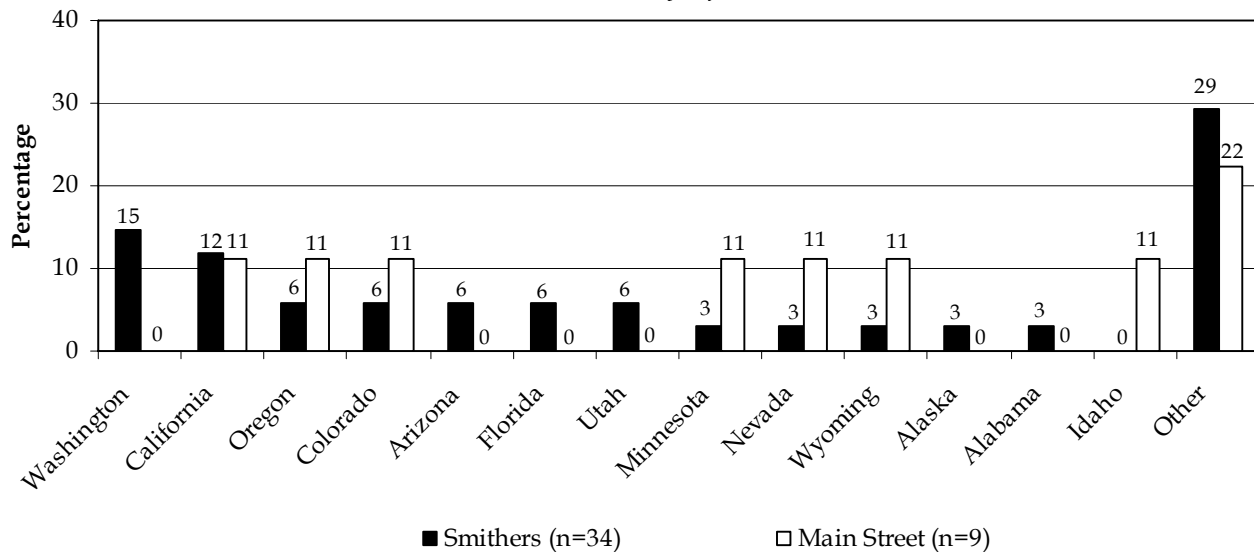


Figure 2. Percentage of US travelers from each state at the Smithers VIC and Main Street. Other includes Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wisconsin and West Virginia.

Origin of Overseas Travelers by Country

Where are you from?

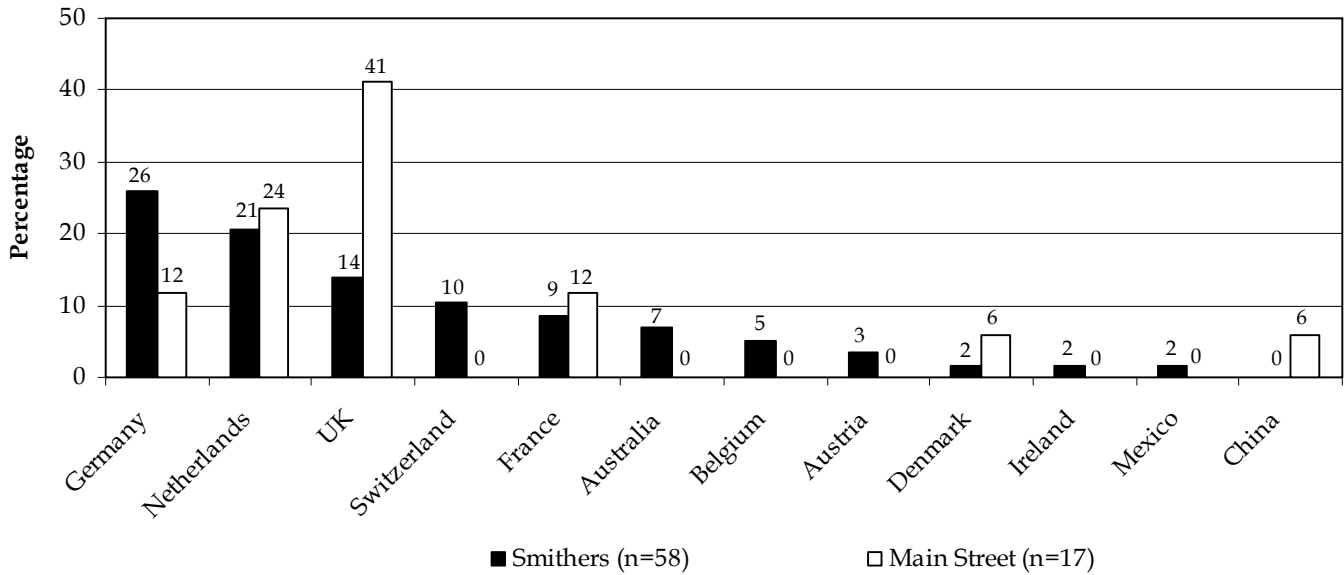


Figure 3. Percentage of travelers from each overseas country at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

Trip Characteristics

The majority of travelers at the Smithers VIC were traveling for leisure purposes (77%) while fewer were traveling to visit friends and family (13%), for business (9%) or other reasons (2%). Compared to the Smithers VIC, fewer visitors at Main Street were traveling for leisure (53%) or business (8%) whereas more were traveling to visit friends and family (36%) or for other reasons (3%: Table 3).

While visiting the Smithers region, most travelers at both locations used a private vehicle for transportation (Smithers VIC 77%; Main Street 79%). A larger proportion of travelers at the Smithers VIC used a private RV or camper (9%) than those at Main Street (5%). There was a noticeable amount of walk up traffic at both locations (9% Smithers VIC; 8% Main Street: Table 3).

A significantly higher proportion of travelers at the Smithers VIC stayed at campground/RV parks (50%) compared to those interviewed at Main Street (20%). Travelers at Main Street were more likely to stay with friends and relatives (9% Smithers VIC, 38% Main Street). Travelers at both locations were equally likely to use commercial accommodation such as a resort/hotel/motel/B&B (41% Smithers VIC; 38% Main Street: Table 3).

Table 3. The primary trip purpose, mode of transportation and primary accommodations of travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

	Percentage of Responses	
	Smithers VIC	Main Street
Primary Trip Purpose	n=180	n=72
Leisure	76.7%	52.8%
Visiting Friends & Family	12.8%	36.1%
Work/Business Activity	8.9%	8.3%
Other ¹	1.7%	2.8%
Mode of Transportation	n=180	n=66
Car/Truck/Motorcycle	77.2%	78.8%
RV	9.4%	4.5%
Bus	0.6%	1.5%
Bicycle	2.2%	0.0%
Walked	9.4%	7.6%
Other ²	1.1%	7.6%
Primary Accommodations*³	n=163	n=66
Resort/Hotel/Motel/B&B	40.5%	37.9%
Campground/RV Park	50.3%	19.7%
Friends or Relatives	9.2%	37.9%
Other ⁴	0.0%	4.5%

* Indicates there are statistical differences at the p=0.05 level between the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

1. Other purposes mentioned included relocation, looking for real estate or passing through.
2. Other modes of transportation included planes and trains.
3. Business travelers were not included in this analysis because they were not asked about primary accommodation.
4. Other responses included cabins and no accommodation.

Over a third (39%) of travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC had a primary destination within British Columbia, another third were touring with no particular primary destination (34%) and the remaining 27% had primary destinations outside British Columbia. At Main Street, a much higher proportion of travelers mentioned a primary destination within British Columbia (69%), with fewer touring with no particular primary destination or listing destinations outside British Columbia (19% and 11% respectively).

Of the 39% of visitors at the Smithers VIC who were traveling to destinations within British Columbia, the majority were traveling to the Northern British Columbia region (77%) - 34% of whom specified Smithers as their primary destination. The remainder were traveling to other regions - Vancouver Island (6%), Vancouver Coast and Mountains (6%), Kootenay Rockies (4%), Thompson Okanagan (3%) and Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (1%). A similar pattern existed for travelers at Main Street. The majority were traveling to Northern British Columbia (92%) - 64% of whom specified Smithers as their primary destination. The remainder were traveling to Vancouver Coast and Mountains (6%) or Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (2%).

Most travelers at the Smithers VIC whose primary destinations were outside of British Columbia were going to Alaska (50%) or the Yukon (23%). Fewer were traveling to Alberta (8%), the Northwest Territories (6%), other US states (4%) or to other Canadian provinces/territories (4%). At Main Street, travelers with destinations outside of British Columbia were all traveling to Alaska (100%).

Overall, travelers at the Smithers VIC intended to spend an average of 47 days away from home, including 20 days in British Columbia and 4 days in the Smithers region. Travelers at Main Street intended to spend 31 days away from home, including 21 days in British Columbia and 12 days in the Smithers region. While the average days intended to be spent in British Columbia is similar between locations, visitors at the Smithers VIC planned to spend significantly more time away from home and significantly less time in the Smithers region than did those intercepted at Main Street.

For travelers at the Smithers VIC, there was a significant difference in the average numbers of days intended to be spent away from home and in the Smithers region by visitors from different market origins (Figure 4). In contrast to this, no significant differences in the average numbers of days intended to be spent by visitors from different market origins were observed for respondents at Main Street (Figure 5).

Average Days Spent Away From Home and in British Columbia by Travelers to the Smithers VIC

How many days will you be away from home?

How many days will be spent in British Columbia?

How many of those days will be spent in the Smithers region?

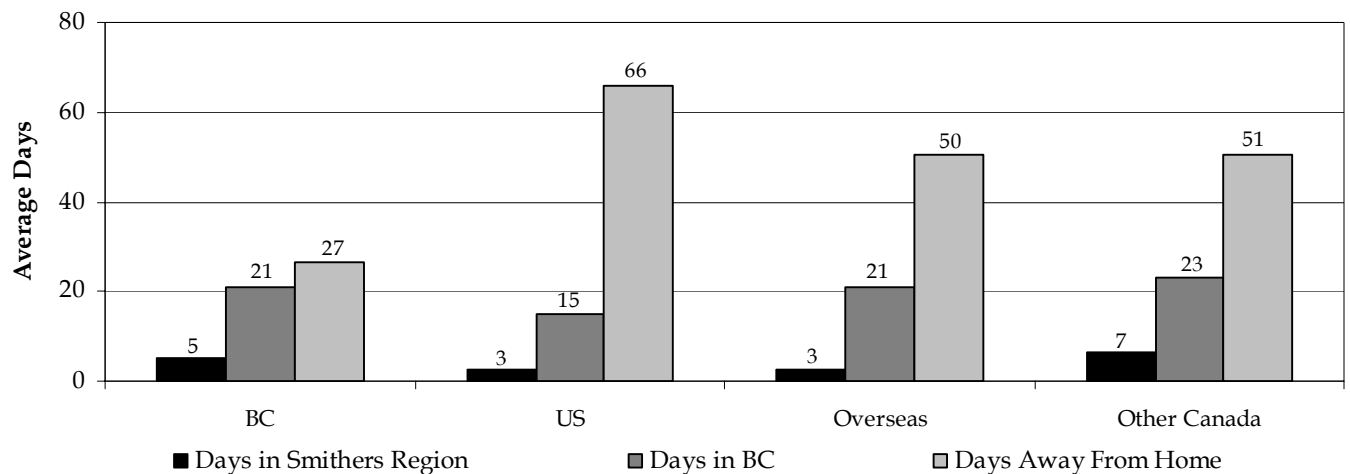


Figure 4. The average number of days intended to be spent away from home and in British Columbia by traveler origin at the Smithers VIC (n=171 'Away from home'; n=172 'Days in British Columbia'; n=134 'Smithers region').

Average Days Spent Away From Home and in British Columbia by Travelers to Main Street

*How many days will you be away from home?
How many days will be spent in British Columbia?
How many of those days will be spent in the Smithers region?*

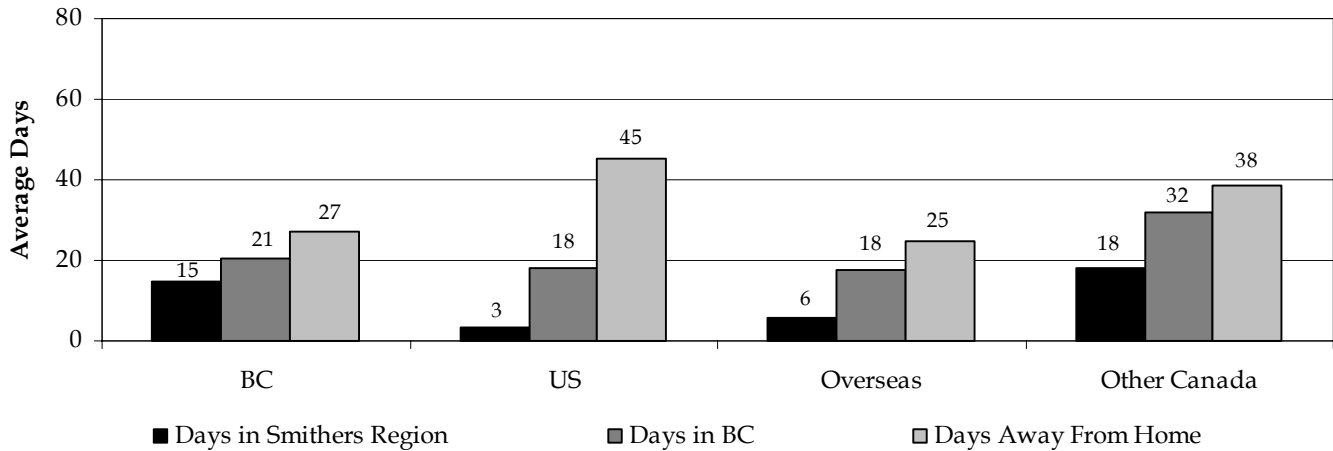


Figure 5. The average number of days intended to be spent away from home and in British Columbia by traveler origin at Main Street (n=69 'Away from home'; n=68 'Days in British Columbia'; n=59 'Smithers region').

Trip Planning

The majority of travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street spent more than 2 weeks planning their trip, with the most common planning horizon being greater than 13 weeks (51% Smithers VIC; 33% Main Street). Travelers at the Smithers VIC were more likely to have longer trip planning horizons than travelers at Main Street (Table 4).

Table 4. Trip planning horizons for travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

Trip Planning Horizons	Percentage of Respondents	
	Smithers VIC (n=163)	Main Street (n=66)
During The Trip	2.5%	3.0%
Day of Departure	1.2%	6.1%
1-6 Days	3.1%	16.7%
1-2 Weeks	3.1%	6.1%
3-8 Weeks	20.9%	19.7%
9-12 Weeks	17.2%	15.2%
13+ Weeks	50.9%	33.3%
Don't Know/No Response	1.2%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Travelers were asked what information sources they used to plan their trip. A fair proportion of travelers said that they did not use any information source (6% Smithers VIC; 14% Main Street). The Internet was the top information source for both travel groups; however, a larger proportion of travelers at the Smithers VIC used the Internet than did those at Main Street (62% Smithers VIC; 56% Main Street). Also important, but less frequently used information sources included brochures and books (44% Smithers VIC; 28% Main Street); friends, relatives, clubs and other associations (34% Smithers VIC; 47% Main Street); and travel agents, airlines, and auto clubs (22% Smithers VIC; 16% Main Street). A higher proportion of travelers at Main Street used VICs, tour operators/tourism specific businesses, and Tourism British Columbia as sources of information than did those visiting the Smithers VIC (Figure 6).

Percentage of Travelers Using Each Information Source

What information did you use to plan your trip?

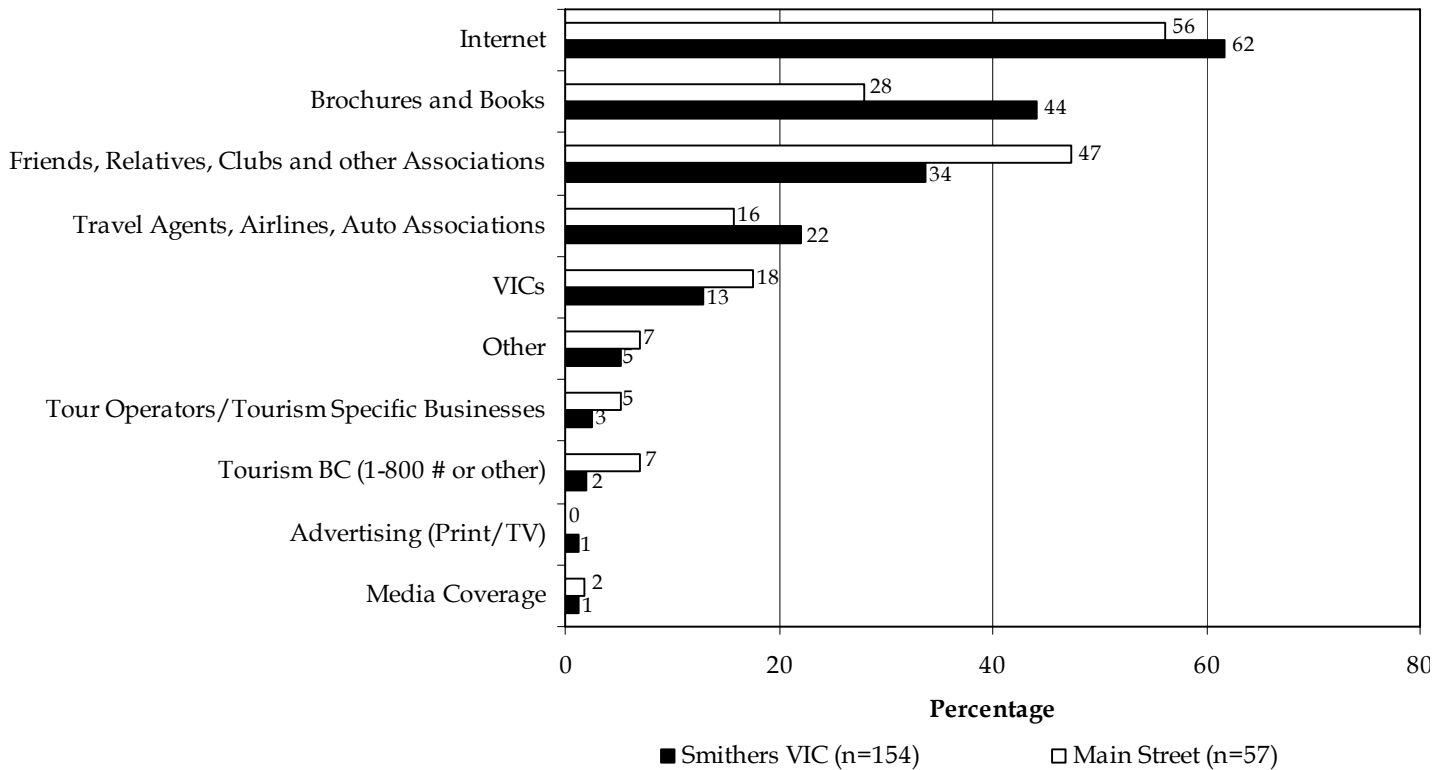


Figure 6. The percentage of travelers using each information source for trip planning at the Smithers VIC and Main Street. Percentages add to more than 100% because travelers could use more than one information source for planning their trip. Travelers who stated that they used no information sources were excluded from the analysis (n=10 Smithers VIC, n=9 Main Street). Significant difference exists with respect to the use of brochures and books between respondents at the Smithers VIC and Main Street. Other includes BC Ferries, maps, Milepost magazine, Canadian information centre in Germany, memory and trade show.

In addition to the previous trip planning question, travelers who were going to spend time in the Smithers region were asked what information sources they used to plan their time in the region (Figure 7). VICs, and friends and relatives were the two most frequently cited sources by these travelers. As would be expected, a significantly higher proportion of travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC were dependent on VICs (61% Smithers VIC, 34% Main Street). In contrast to this, a significantly higher percentage of travelers interviewed at Main Street were dependent on advice from friends and relatives (20% Smithers VIC, 37% Main Street). For travelers at Main Street, the proportion who depended on friends and relatives for advice (37%) was only slightly higher than those who relied on VICs (34%).

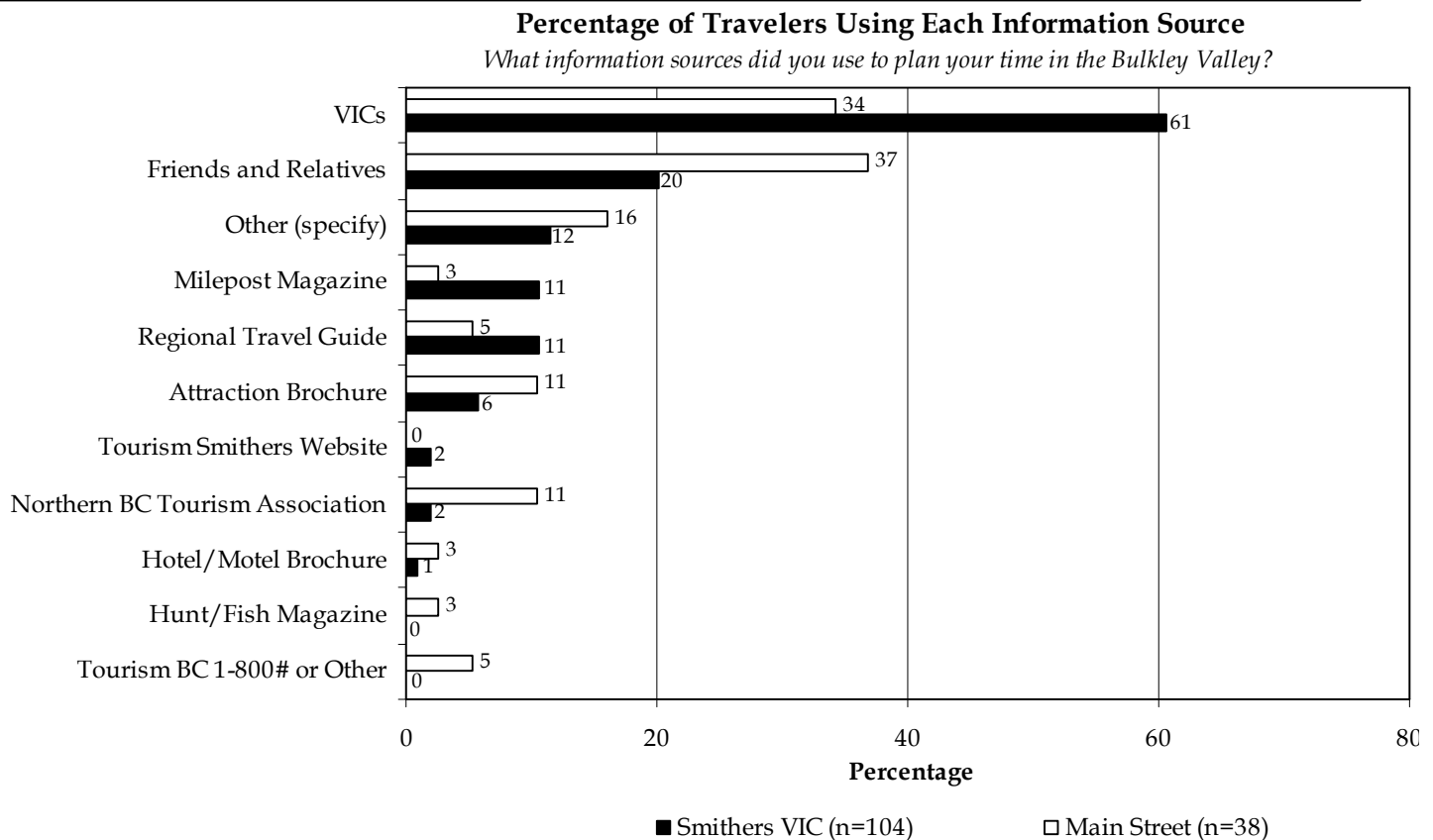


Figure 7. The percentage of travelers using each information source for planning their time in the Smithers region at the Smithers VIC and Main Street. Percentages add to more than 100% because travelers could use more than one information source for planning their trip. Travelers who stated that they used no information sources were excluded from the analysis (n=20 Smithers VIC, n=19 Main Street). Significant differences exist between Smithers VIC and Main Street respondents with respect to the use of VICs, and friends and relatives. Other includes Internet, maps, BCAA, accommodation guide, newspapers, Lonely Planet, travel agent, local people and guide books.

Respondents who were going to spend time in the Smithers region were asked to rate the importance of a number of activities in planning their trip to the Smithers region. Travellers interviewed at the Smithers VIC attached highest importance to the ability to view wildlife or birds (Smithers VIC) whereas those at Main Street placed emphasis on being physically active. Travelers at the Smithers VIC placed significantly more importance on viewing wildlife or birds than did their counterparts on Main Street (Table 5). There were significant differences between Smithers VIC respondents based on: viewing wildlife or birds (overseas residents placed highest importance, British Columbia residents placed lowest importance); visiting museums or art galleries (respondents aged 55 and older placed highest importance, respondents under the age of 35 placed lowest importance); and visiting wilderness and undisturbed areas (overseas residents placed highest importance, US residents placed lowest importance; respondents under the age of 35 placed highest importance, respondents aged 55 and older placed lowest importance). Sample size issues limited the extent to which similar tests could be conducted for Main Street respondents.

Table 5. Activity Importance in planning trip to the Smithers region

Activity	Important or Very Important (%) ¹	
	Smithers VIC	Main Street
Being physically active	64.5%	67.9%
Viewing wildlife or birds*	70.2%	51.8%
Learning about First Nations/indigenous cultures and arts	41.1%	28.6%
Visiting museums or art galleries	27.4%	25.0%
Visiting wilderness and undisturbed areas	69.4%	57.1%

* significant difference between VIC and Main Street respondents.

1. Combination of the proportion of respondent who stated that the activity was important or very important to them. For statistical purposes, these proportions were compared with the combined responses of those who did not state that the activity was important or very important to them.

Trip Flexibility

Travelers were asked about their flexibility in terms of:

- the activities they would participate in,
- the amount of time they could spend in the Smithers region, and
- the amount of time that they could spend in British Columbia.

Seventy-five percent of travelers at the Smithers VIC and 73% of travelers at Main Street were very flexible in the activities that they planned to participate in while in the Smithers region (Figure 8). Respondents at the Smithers VIC were more flexible in terms of the time that they had to spend in the Smithers region with 44% very flexible compared to 35% at Main Street (Figure 9). In regard to the flexibility in the amount of time in British Columbia, four in ten travelers (41%) at the Smithers VIC responded they were very flexible compared to just over a quarter (26%) of travelers at Main Street (Figure 10).

Trip Flexibility Regarding Activities in the Smithers Region

How flexible is your trip regarding activities in the Smithers Region?

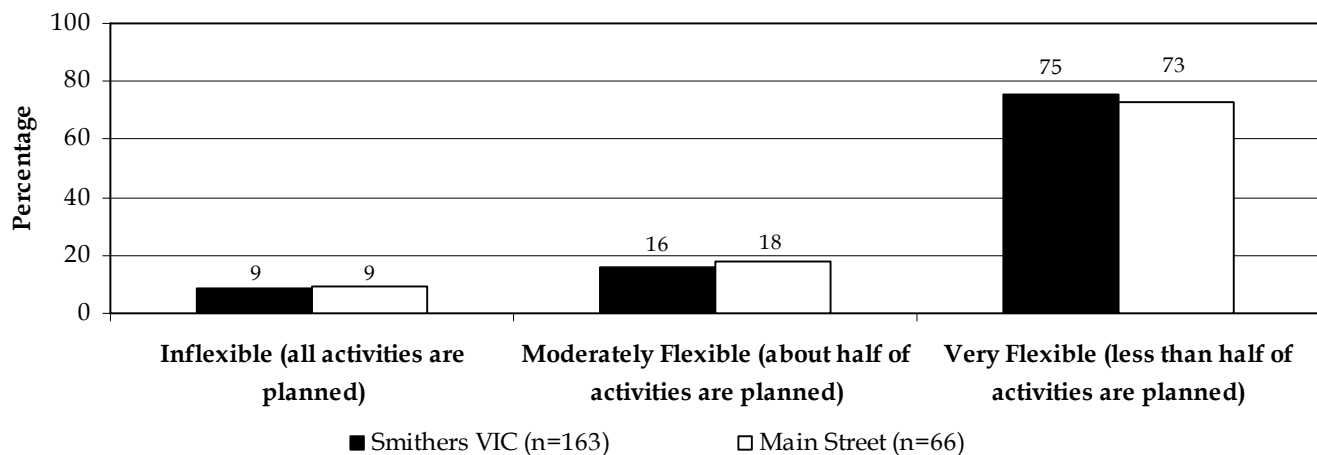


Figure 8. Travelers' rating of trip flexibility regarding activities in the Smithers region for travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

Trip Flexibility Regarding Time in the Smithers Region

How flexible is your trip regarding the amount of time you will spend in the Smithers Region?

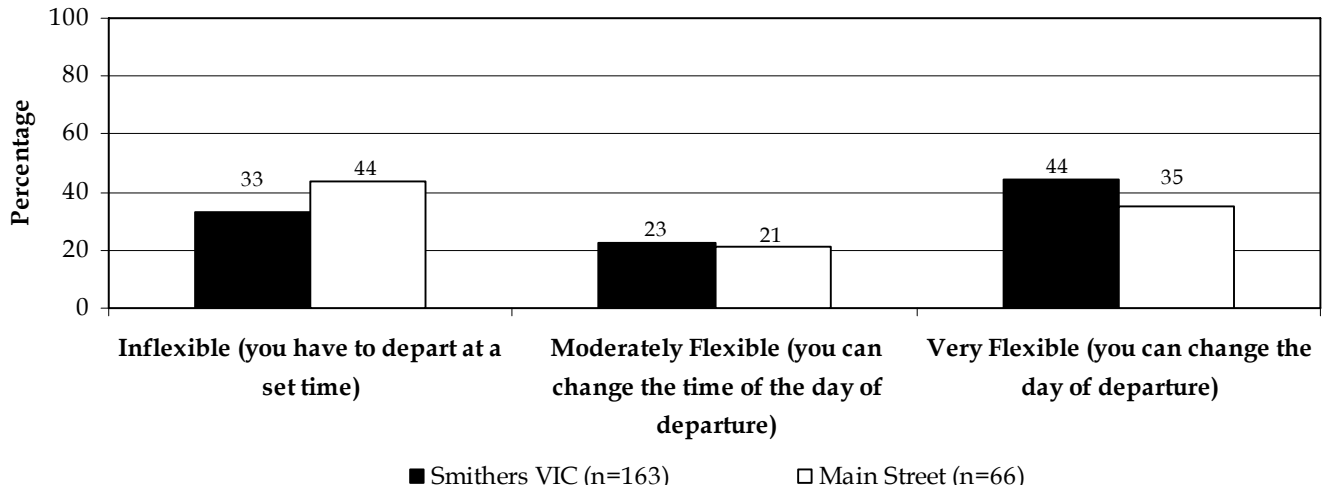


Figure 9. Travelers' rating of trip flexibility regarding the time in the Smithers region for travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

Trip Flexibility Regarding Time Spent in British Columbia

How flexible is your trip regarding the amount of time you will spend in British Columbia?

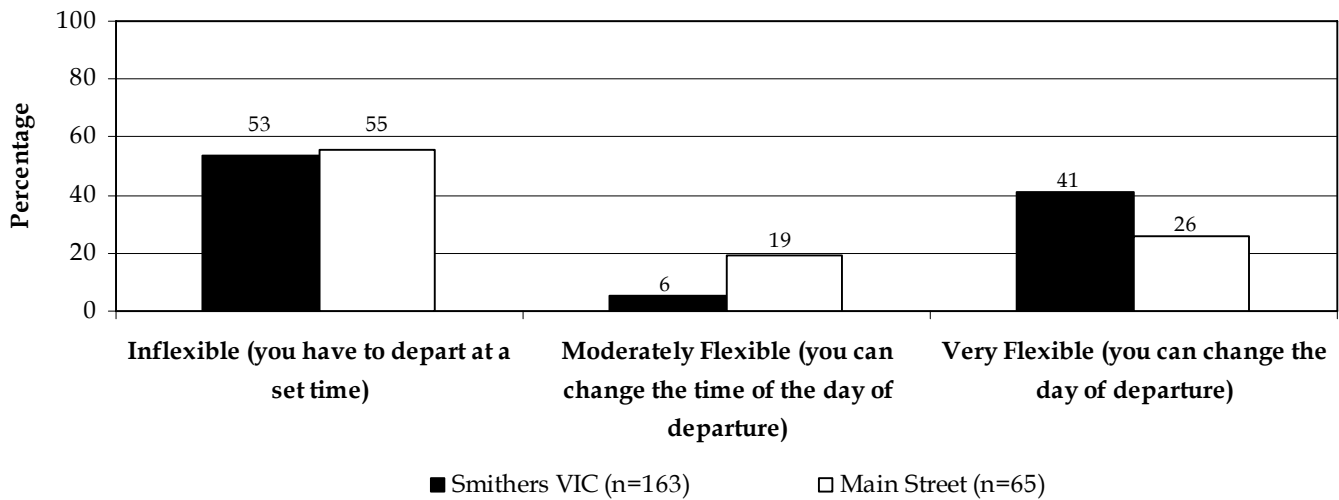


Figure 10. Travelers' rating of trip flexibility regarding the time spent in British Columbia for travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street. Don't Know/No Response = 1 (1%) at Main Street. Significant difference exists between responses from travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

Traveler Activities

Travelers were asked about their primary leisure activities while in the Smithers region (Table 6). The three most frequently cited activities at the Smithers VIC were sightseeing (41%), land-based outdoor recreation (30%) and water-based outdoor recreation (11%). The most common responses given at the

Main Street reference site were land-based outdoor recreation (33%), sightseeing (17%) and visiting friends and relatives (12%).

Table 6. Top ten primary leisure activities of travelers at Smithers VIC and Main Street.

Primary Activity	Percentage of Respondents	
	Smithers VIC (n=103)	Main Street (n=52)
Sightseeing	40.8%	17.3%
Rest & Relaxation	4.9%	5.8%
Visiting Friends & Relatives	2.9%	11.5%
Attractions ¹	1.9%	1.9%
Camping	1.9%	1.9%
Water-based Outdoor Recreation Activities ²	10.7%	9.6%
Golf	1.0%	1.9%
Shopping	1.0%	3.8%
Land-based Outdoor Recreation Activities ³	30.1%	32.7%
Special Events	1.9%	3.8%
Other ⁴	2.9%	9.6%

1. Attractions include historical sites, native villages and mine tour.

2. Water-based outdoor recreation activities include fishing and kayaking.

3. Land-based outdoor recreation activities include hiking, cycling, horseback riding, walking, climbing, birding and motorcycling.

4. Other activities include searching for real estate, photography, eating, dancing, volunteering and commercial activity.

Use of the VIC

This section mainly summarizes data from travelers who were interviewed at the Smithers VIC unless otherwise noted. Over one-third of travelers (35%) who had been to the Smithers region in the past had used the Smithers VIC on previous trips. Travelers who stopped at the Smithers VIC during their current trip did so for a variety of reasons (Figure 11). The most common reasons given were to obtain attraction information (47%), to get a map (27%), to attain route information (22%), to obtain accommodation information (14%) or camping information (14%). Seventeen percent of travelers stated other reasons for stopping at the VIC, which were to use the Internet, always stop at VICs, out of curiosity, to find an address or phone number, for information on local services, for information on local history, to have North British Columbia Passport to Adventure stamped, to obtain information on parks and lakes, to use the phone, to get picnic information, to get a walking stick, to plan next vacation and to get truck repair information.

When travelers were asked what kind of information they actually obtained at the VIC, they identified various types of information (Figure 12). Almost two-thirds obtained a map (65%) or attraction information (64%), two-fifths (40%) attained route information, and a fifth (20%) obtained non-camping related accommodation information. Additionally, travelers obtained camping information (16%) and information about adventure recreation opportunities (9%). Fewer travelers mentioned obtaining information about events (5%) or parking passes for British Columbia Parks (1%). Fourteen percent of travelers stated other information obtained at the VIC – the most notable included the following: use of the Internet, fishing regulations and guidelines, government speeches, historical information, located old friends, lunch ideas, phone number, picnic sites, town information, truck repair information, use of telephone, walking stick, location of sani station, and hiking/walking trails. Three percent of travelers stated that they did not obtain any information from the VIC.

Reasons for Stopping at the Smithers VIC

Why did you stop at the VIC today?

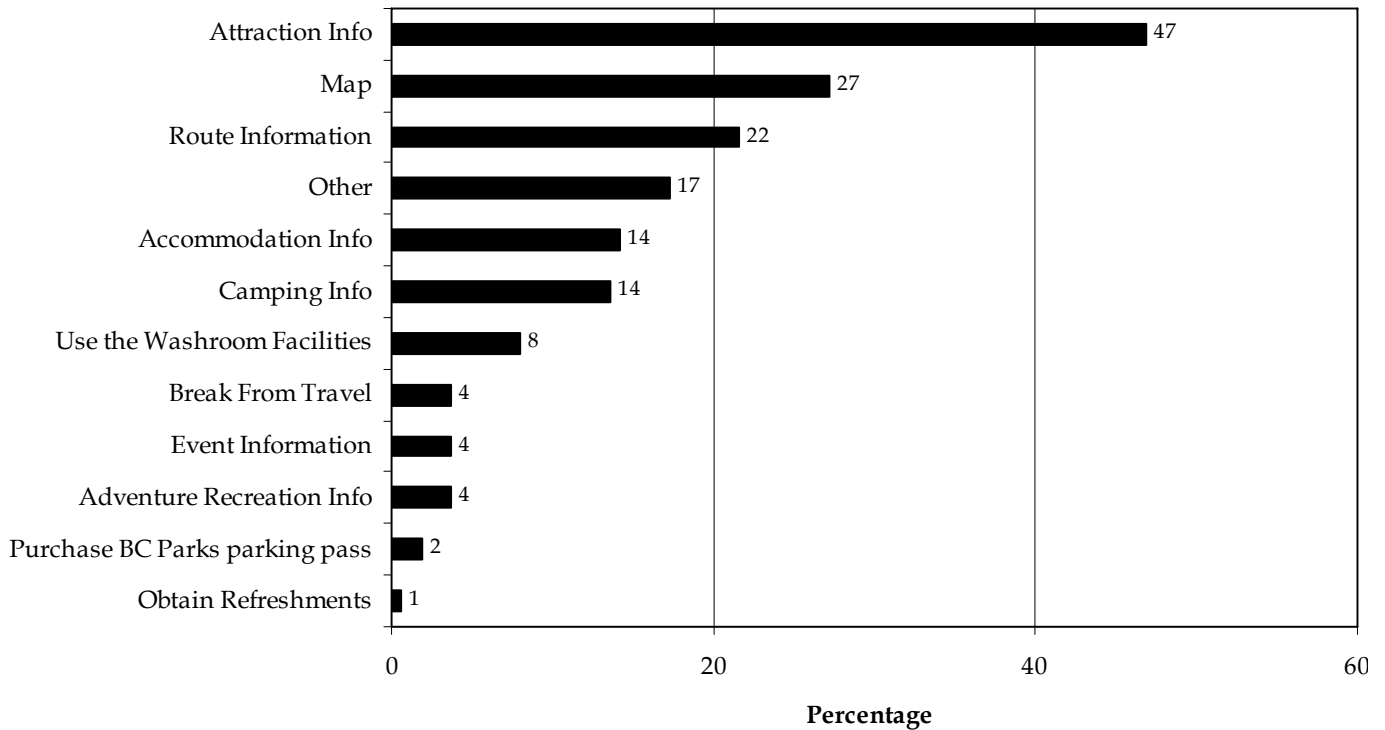


Figure 11. The reasons why travelers stopped at the Smithers VIC (n=162). The total exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one reply.

Information Obtained at the Smithers VIC

While visiting today, what kind of information did you obtain?

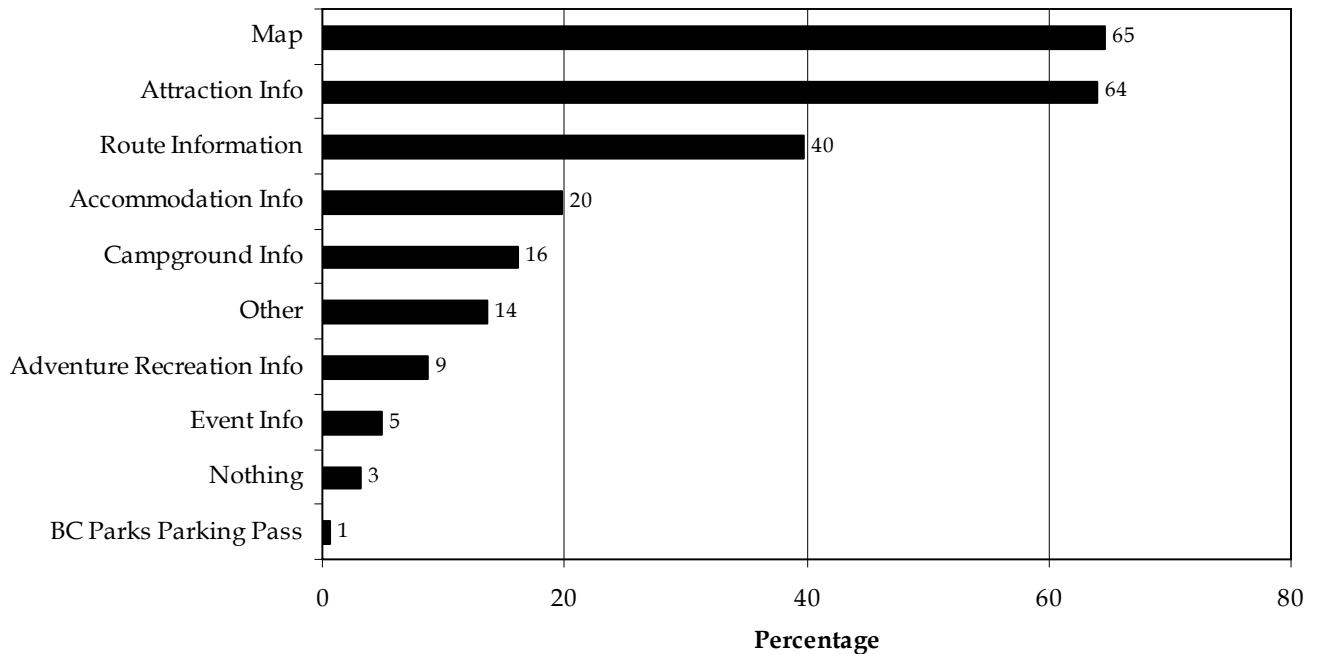


Figure 12. The information obtained by travelers at the Smithers VIC (n=162). The total exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one reply.

Most travelers interviewed at the Smithers VIC spoke with a Counsellor (98%; Table 7). While the proportion of travelers that spoke with a Counsellor was high across origin categories, Overseas (100%) and Other Canada (100%) visitors were slightly more likely to speak to a Counsellor than were visitors from the US (94%) or British Columbia (95%).

Table 7. The percentage of travelers who spoke with a Counsellor at the Smithers VIC by traveler origin.

Traveler Origin	Percentage that Spoke with a Counsellor	
	Yes (n=157)	No (n=4)
British Columbia	95.0%	5.0%
US	93.9%	6.1%
Overseas	100.0%	0.0%
Other Canada	100.0%	0.0%
Total	97.5%	2.5%

Travelers were asked, “Overall, how well did the VIC meet your expectations?” Almost all (99%) of travelers responded that the VIC either met or exceeded their expectations (Table 8). Fifty-five percent of travelers indicated that the VIC exceeded their expectations while 44% felt the VIC met their expectations.

The majority of US and Overseas travelers felt that the VIC exceeded their expectations (71% and 55%, respectively) whereas a lower proportion of travelers from British Columbia and Other Canada (50% and 47%, respectively) found that their expectations were exceeded. A higher proportion of travelers who spoke with a Counsellor replied that the VIC exceeded their expectations (56%) compared to those that did not speak to a Counsellor (33%). A higher proportion of travelers who were visiting family and friends (61%) felt that the VIC exceeded their expectations compared to 54% of those who were traveling for leisure. Leisure travelers most often indicated that their expectations were met (Table 8).

Table 8. The proportion of travelers who felt the Smithers VIC fell short, met or exceeded their expectations by traveler origin, those that did or did not speak with a Counsellor and primary trip purpose.

	Percentage of Travelers who Felt the Smithers VIC Fell Short, Met, or Exceeded Their Expectations ¹		
	Fell Short (n=2)	Met (n=69)	Exceeded (n=87)
Overall	1.3%	43.7%	55.1%
Origin			
British Columbia	2.5%	47.5%	50.0%
Other Canada	0.0%	53.1%	46.9%
US	0.0%	29.0%	71.0%
Overseas	1.8%	43.6%	54.5%
Spoke with a Counsellor			
Yes	1.3%	43.2%	55.5%
No	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%
Primary Purpose			
Leisure	0.8%	45.5%	53.8%
Visit friends & family	4.3%	34.8%	60.9%

1. Excludes 2 Don't Know/No Response responses.

Travelers at the Smithers VIC were also asked why the VIC met or exceeded their expectations (Figure 13). Of the 155 respondents, the majority (83%) felt that the VIC provided good information, while others felt that the VIC had helpful staff (61%) and friendly people (55%). Fewer made positive comments about the VIC providing Internet access (5%), being clean (5%), having a nice building/area (5%), good access (5%) and quick service (1%). Responses in the 'other' category included: anticipation of needs, open on Sunday, telephone, fantastic service, sani station and water, and standardization across the province.

There were only two negative responses given by travelers at the VIC as to why the VIC did not meet their expectations and they were related to slow service and poor signage.

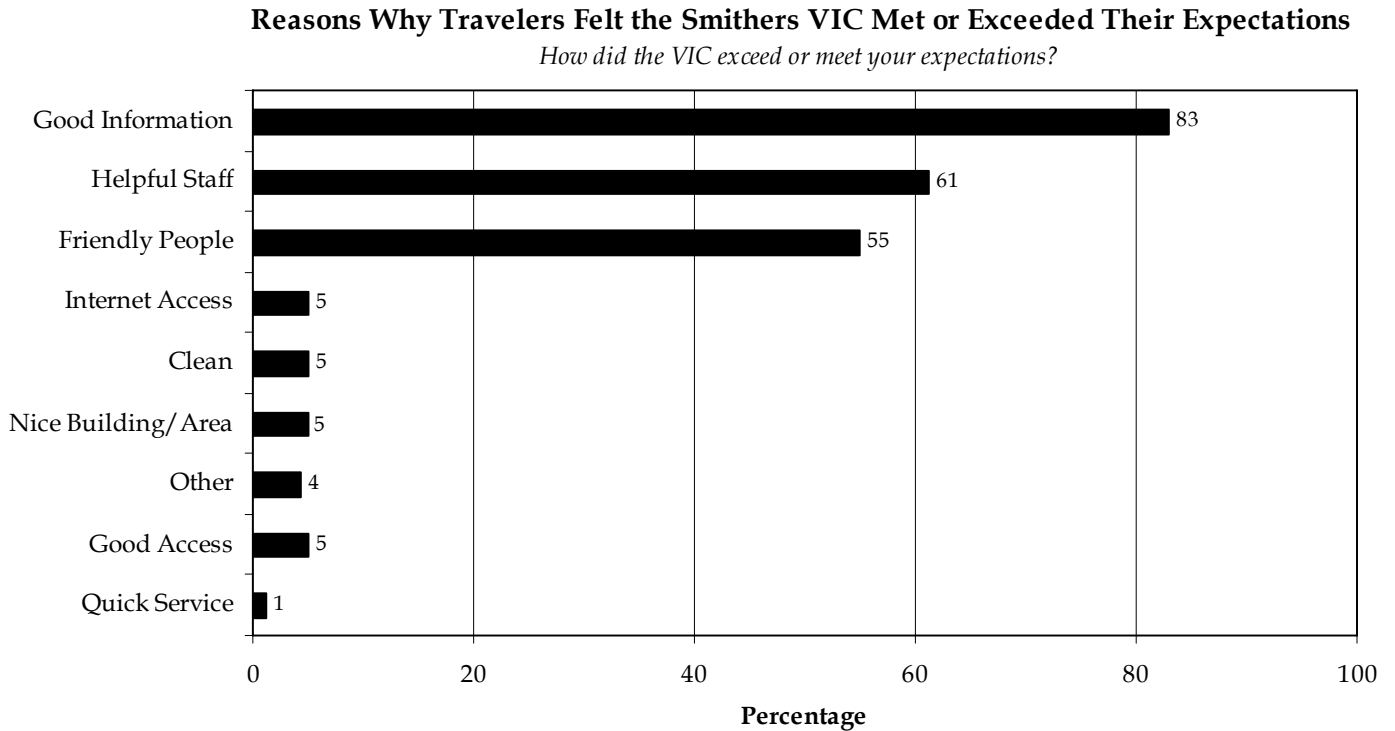


Figure 13. The reasons why travelers felt the Smithers VIC met or exceeded their expectations (n=155). Travelers who stated 'don't know' (n=2) were excluded from the analysis.

Respondents were asked, "Were there any products and/or services that were not currently available at the Smithers VIC that you would have liked to have found?" Only 6% of travelers (n=10) had suggestions for other products/services. These suggestions ranged from the need for maps inside brochures, route specific maps, maps of the Kispiox forest district, fishing specific information, kayak information, menus, outside phone, visa phone access, area for relaxation, sunshine and free cookies. Due to the small sample size, these results should be interpreted with caution.

In the mailback survey, respondents were also asked, "If available, would you purchase souvenirs at the Smithers VIC? If yes, what kind of souvenirs would you like to see?" One-third of travelers (33%; n=19) indicated they would purchase souvenirs. Postcards (19%) and arts & crafts items (19%) were most frequently cited, followed by clothing (15%), souvenirs related to the area (12%), historical books (8%), pins (8%), mugs and tea spoons (8%), aboriginal books (4%), magnetic pictures (4%) and salmon patches (4%). Due to the small sample size, these results should be interpreted with caution.

In the mailback questionnaire, travelers were asked if they had any difficulty finding the Smithers VIC. The majority of respondents (97%) did not have any problems finding the Smithers VIC. Those that did have difficulty finding the VIC attributed it to confusing signage.

Almost half (46%) of the travelers interviewed on Main Street had stopped, or planned to stop, at the Smithers VIC on their current trip. In the mailback questionnaire, travelers at the Smithers VIC were asked if they had visited any other VICs in British Columbia. Of the 56 valid responses, almost three-quarters (73% or 41 responses) indicated that they had visited another VIC in British Columbia. Of those that stopped at other VICs in British Columbia, 71% visited two or more VICs whereas 42% stopped at three or more. The locations of the other VICs visited are diverse, and are listed in Appendix D.

In addition, respondents were asked if, as a result of their experience at the Smithers VIC, they would stop to visit another VIC in British Columbia. A large majority indicated that they would, with 66% of visitors indicating that they were very likely, and another 29% stating they were likely to visit another VIC.

Passport Ownership

Mailback respondents were asked whether they owned a valid passport. Eighty percent of respondents reported owning a valid passport. Passport ownership varied by market of origin. Whereas all Overseas visitors (100%) and a majority of those from the US (93%) owned passports, passport ownership was lower among Canadians, especially those from British Columbia (58%; Table 9).

Table 9. Percentage of travelers holding valid passports by traveler origin.

Traveler Origin	Percentage Owning a Valid Passport (n=56)
British Columbia	57.9%
Other Canada	71.4%
US	93.3%
Overseas	100.0%
Total	80.0%

Perceptions of the Smithers Region and British Columbia

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a number of services and amenities in the Smithers region. On the whole, travelers expressed above average levels of satisfaction with all the services/amenities. Travellers interviewed at the Smithers VIC attached highest levels of satisfaction with respect to cleanliness whereas those at Main Street were most satisfied with the helpfulness of the local residents. The lowest rating (consistent for both VIC and Main Street respondents) was given to the town's theme. However, travelers at the Smithers VIC were significantly less satisfied (53%) with the town's theme than were their counterparts on Main Street (74%). There were no significant differences in the satisfaction levels based upon the origin or the age of respondents (Table 10).

Table 10. Satisfaction with tourism services or amenities in the Smithers region

Tourism Service or Amenity	Satisfied or Very Satisfied (%) ¹	
	Smithers VIC	Main Street
Information services	93.8%	89.3%
Helpfulness of local residents	88.5%	98.4%
Cleanliness	97.5%	87.7%
Town theme*	53.1%	74.2%
General appearance	92.5%	87.7%

* significant difference in means between VIC and Main Street respondents.

1. Combination of the proportion of respondent who stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the tourism service or amenity. For statistical purposes, these proportions were compared with the combined responses of those who did not state that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the tourism service or amenity. Respondents stating don't know/no response were excluded in the above calculations.

In the mailback questionnaire, travelers were asked “What positive and/or negative images come to mind when you think of the Smithers region as a vacation destination?” Positive and negative image questions were asked to obtain an understanding of what travelers perceive the Smithers region to be doing right and what the Smithers region can work on in terms of attracting and keeping travelers in the region.

Overall, respondents had over three times as many positive responses (118) as negative (36) of the region. Positive responses were dominated by the natural beauty and scenery of the Smithers region (32% of positive responses; Figure 14), followed by friendly people (25%), local activities and attractions (12%) and the cleanliness of the region (7%).

Ten Most Frequent Positive Images of the Smithers Region

What positive images come to mind when you think of the Smithers Region as a vacation destination?

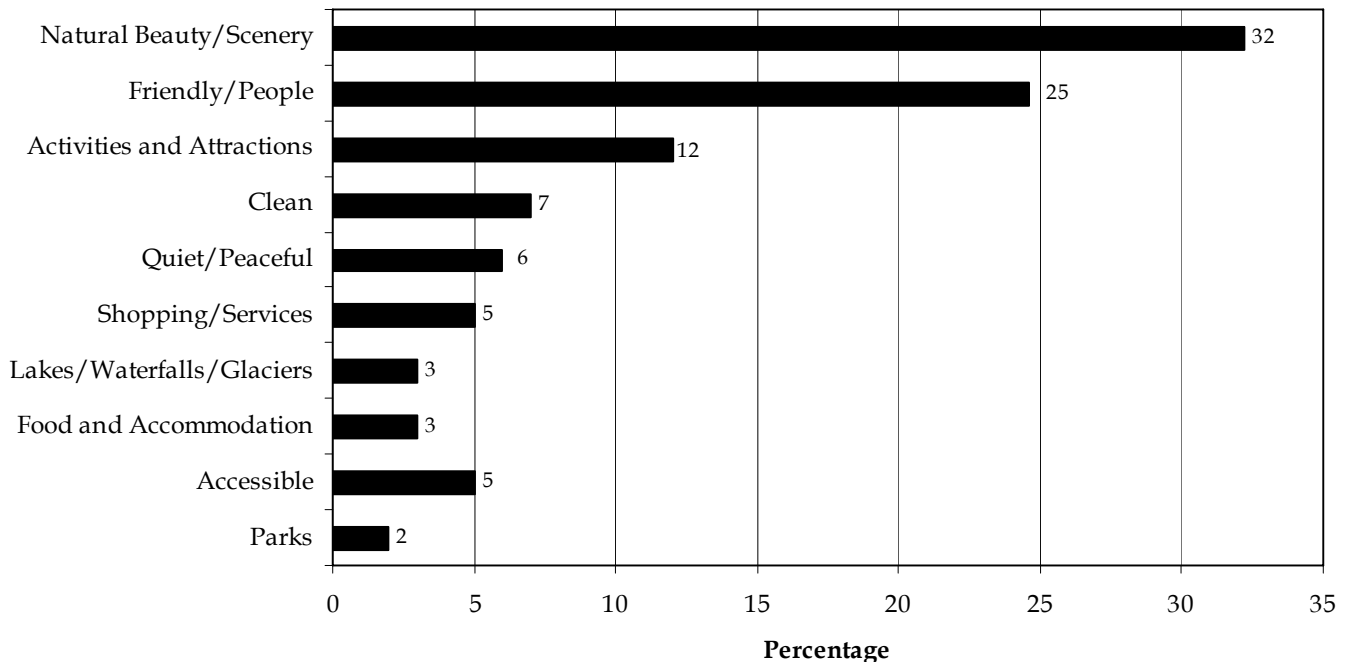


Figure 14. The most frequent positive images respondents had of the Smithers region. At the Smithers VIC, 52 respondents replied with 118 images.

The negative images respondents mentioned were associated with poor weather/forest fire smoke (19%), traffic/transportation or construction issues (17%), the lack of attractions or early closures (17%), distance (11%), restaurant (8%), mosquitoes (8%), poor or inadequate signage (6%), urban sprawl (6%), campground (3%) and other (6%) which included pine beetle and homeless people at the VIC (Figure 15).

Ten Most Frequent Negative Images of the Smithers Region

What negative images come to mind when you think of the Smithers Region as a vacation destination?

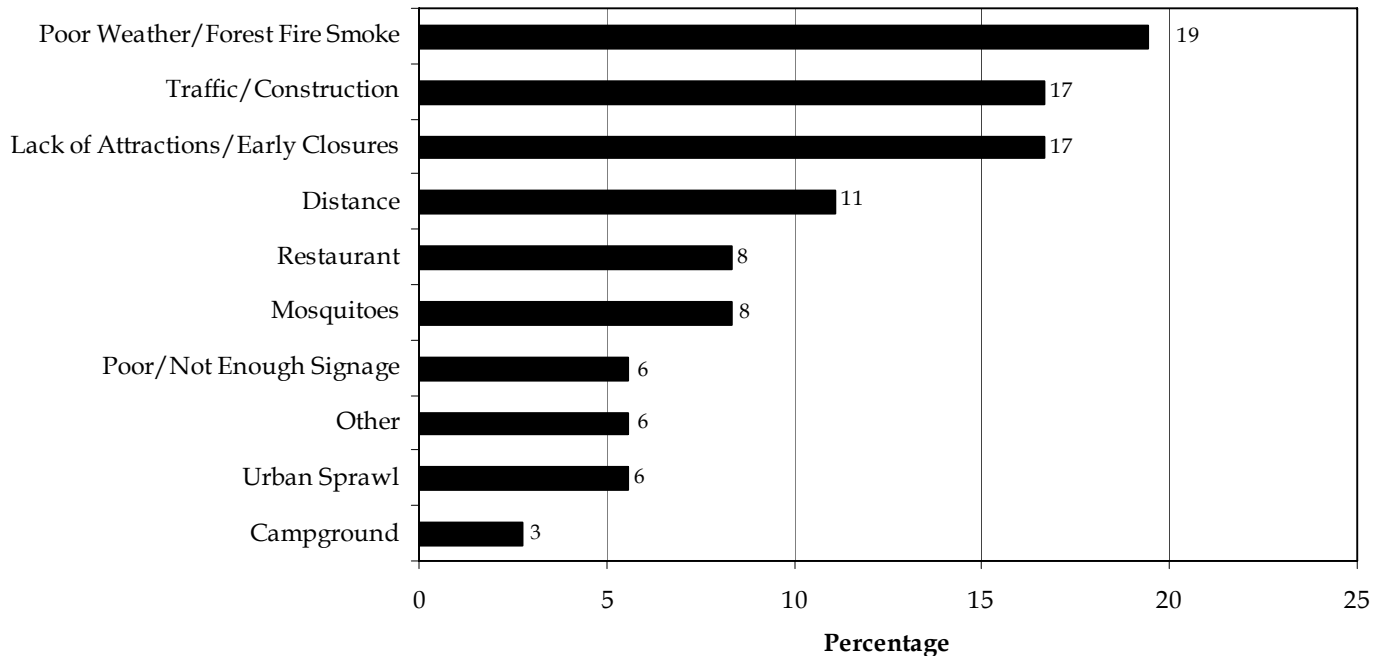


Figure 15. The most frequent negative images respondents had of the Smithers region. At the Smithers VIC, 29 respondents replied with 36 images.

Mailback respondents were asked to identify up to three unique characteristics of the Smithers region that differentiate it from other regions as a vacation destination. These characteristics can be used to attract more travelers to the area. A variety of characteristics were identified as unique to the area by respondents (Figure 16). The most common were outdoor activities (27%), beauty/nature (20%), friendly people (10%), lack of crowds/quiet (7%), aboriginal culture (6%), and attractions (5%). Other unique characteristics mentioned included fossil beds (4%), glaciers (4%), waterfalls (4%) and the history of the area (2%).

Respondents to the mailback questionnaire were asked about their satisfaction with their trip to the Smithers region and British Columbia (Figures 17 and 18). Eighty-nine percent of travelers were either 'somewhat satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their experience in the Smithers region. Trip satisfaction was even higher when travelers were asked about their experience in all of British Columbia, with 93% of respondents reporting that they were either 'somewhat satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

Ten Most Frequent Unique Characteristics of the Smithers Region

What are the unique characteristics of the Smithers Region as a vacation destination?

Unique characteristics are those that make the Smithers area different from other destinations

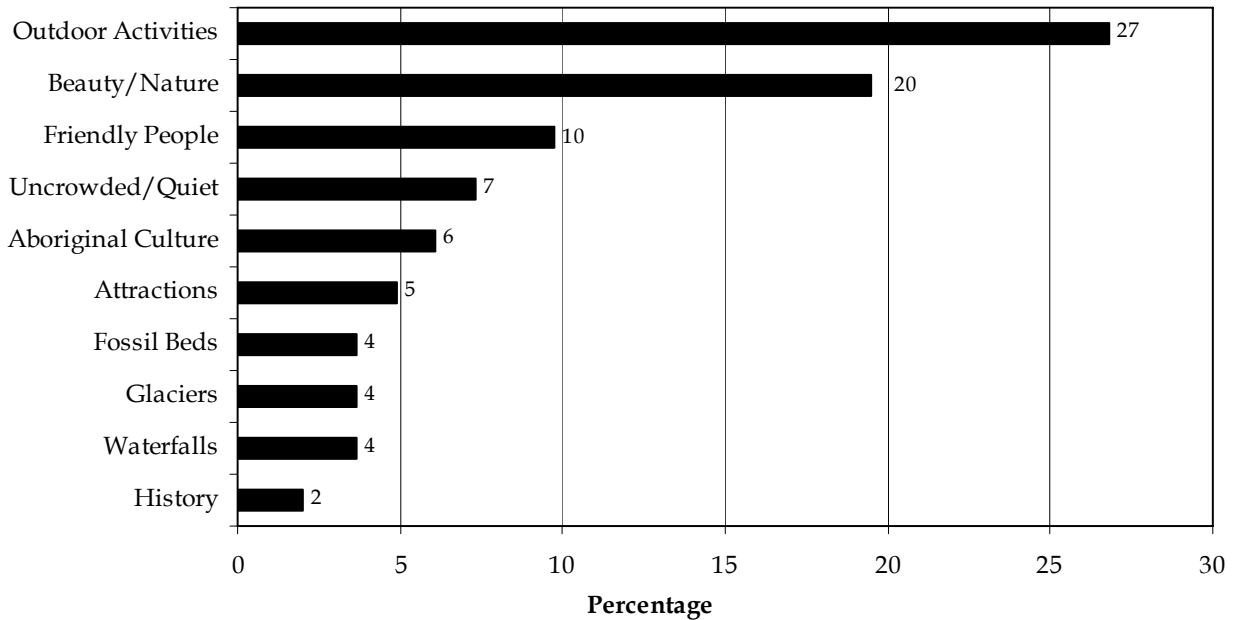


Figure 16. The most frequent unique characteristics respondents had of the Smithers region. At the Smithers VIC, 40 respondents replied with 82 images.

Travelers responding to the mailback survey at the Smithers VIC were asked their likelihood of returning to the Smithers region or the province of British Columbia on a leisure trip (Figures 19 and 20). Over half of the travelers (58%) indicated that they were either 'very likely' or 'likely' to return to the Smithers region on a leisure trip. A larger proportion of travelers indicated they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to take another trip to or within British Columbia (89%).

Satisfaction with Trip to Smithers Region

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your trip to the Smithers Region?

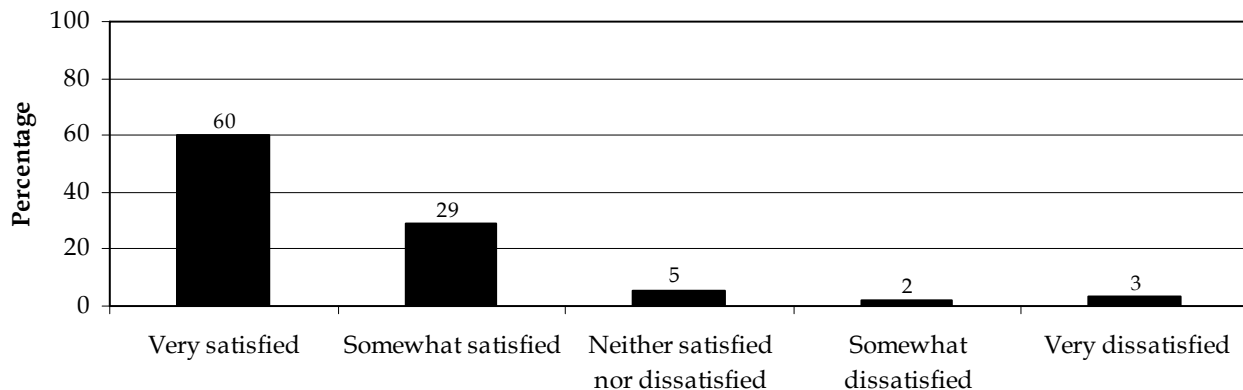


Figure 17. Smithers region trip satisfaction for travelers at the Smithers VIC.

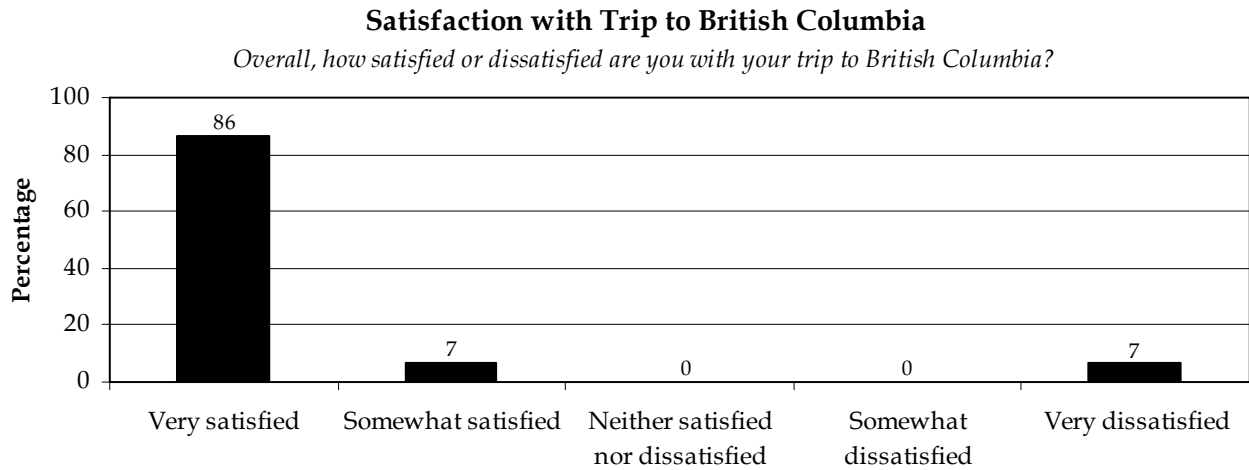


Figure 18. British Columbia trip satisfaction for travelers at the Smithers VIC.

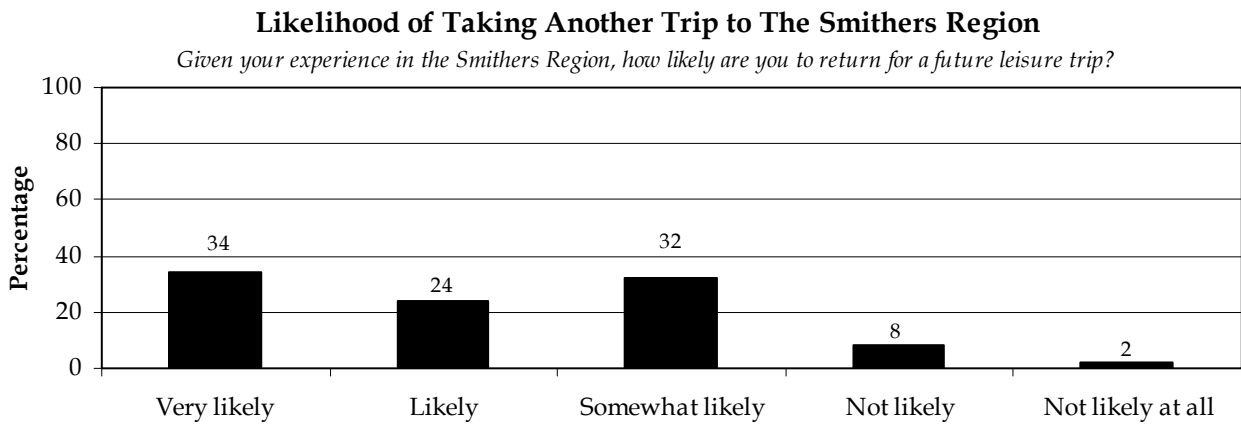


Figure 19. The likelihood of travelers taking another trip to the Smithers region. Travelers who responded 'Don't Know' (n=8) were excluded from this analysis.

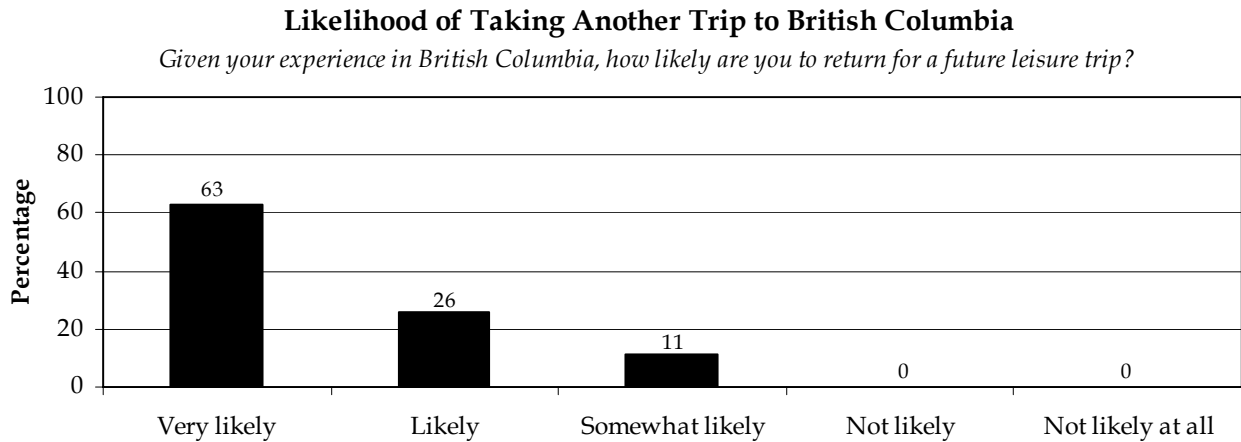


Figure 20. The likelihood of travelers taking another trip within British Columbia. Travelers who responded 'Don't Know' (n=2) were excluded from this analysis.

Expenditures

Travelers were asked, “In Canadian Dollars, what were your travel party’s total expenditures *yesterday*; including accommodations?” Overall, travelers at the Smithers VIC spent slightly less (average of \$142.28) than travelers interviewed at Main Street (average of \$155.30; Table 11). However, this difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. In general, Overseas travelers spent more per party per day than travelers from British Columbia, Other Canada or the US. At the Main Street reference site, Overseas travelers spent significantly more than did Overseas travelers at the Smithers VIC. There were no other significant differences in expenditures by traveler origin. However, there were significant differences in expenditures when broken down by primary accommodation type for both Smithers VIC as well as Main Street respondents. Respondents who were staying with family and friends spent the least while those using resorts/hotels/ motels/B&Bs spent the most (see Appendix E).

Table 11. The average daily expenditures of travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

\$ CDN Daily Expenditures*	Average Per Party Daily Expenditure	
	Smithers VIC (n=148) ¹	Main Street (n=57) ²
British Columbia	\$118.05	\$126.00
US	\$145.00	\$160.63
Overseas ³	\$158.47	\$223.07
Other Canada	\$141.71	\$118.13
Total⁴	\$142.28	\$155.30

*The top and bottom 2% of responses were trimmed to ensure an accurate mean daily expenditure.

1. 3% (n=4) of travelers began trip on the day of interview or were on the trip as a day trip, and therefore did not have responses, 3% (n=5) Don't Know/No Response. Business travelers were not included in this analysis.
2. 6% (n=4) of travelers began trip on the day of interview or were on the trip as a day trip, and therefore did not have responses, 5% (n=3) Don't Know/No Response. Business travelers were not included in this analysis.
3. Overseas visitors interviewed at the Smithers VIC spent significantly less than those interviewed on Main Street.
4. Overall, there is no statistical difference in the mean between the Smithers VIC and Main Street.

In the summer of 2005, Smithers VIC users expended nearly \$1.5 million in the Smithers region and over \$8.1 million on their trip throughout the rest of the province (Table 12). These figures do not represent the economic impact of the VIC but rather the total expenditures of travelers to the Smithers region and in the rest of the province while on the trip during which they were interviewed at the Smithers VIC.

Table 12. Estimated expenditures of travelers who visited the Smithers VIC.

June 17 - August 30, 2005 ^{1,2}	Smithers VIC
Estimated Total VIC parties for June, July and August 2005	3,390
Average Daily Expenditures	\$142.28
Estimated Total Expenditures in Smithers by VIC Users	\$1,485,68
Estimated Total Expenditures outside of Smithers by VIC Users	\$8,161,626
Estimated Total Expenditures in British Columbia by VIC Users	\$9,647,312

1. For details on the methods used to calculate the numbers, please see Appendix F.
2. Does not include residents of the Smithers region.

Impact of the VIC on Traveler Behaviour in British Columbia

Travelers were asked several questions to gauge how the Smithers VIC impacted their trip. They were:

1. *While at the centre today, did you learn about any activities, places or attractions that you were not previously aware of?*
2. *What were those activities and when will you participate in them?*
3. *Do you think you will make another trip in British Columbia in the future as a result of the information you obtained at this VIC?*
4. *On this trip, do you feel you will stay an extra night or nights in British Columbia as a result of stopping at the VIC?*

Results from these questions indicated that the Smithers VIC had an impact on traveler behaviour. Over a third of travelers (38%) at the Smithers VIC indicated that they had learned about new activities as a result of their stopping at the VIC. Fourteen percent replied that they would extend their stay by one or more nights and over half (52%) replied they would make another trip as a result of their stopping at the VIC (Figure 21).

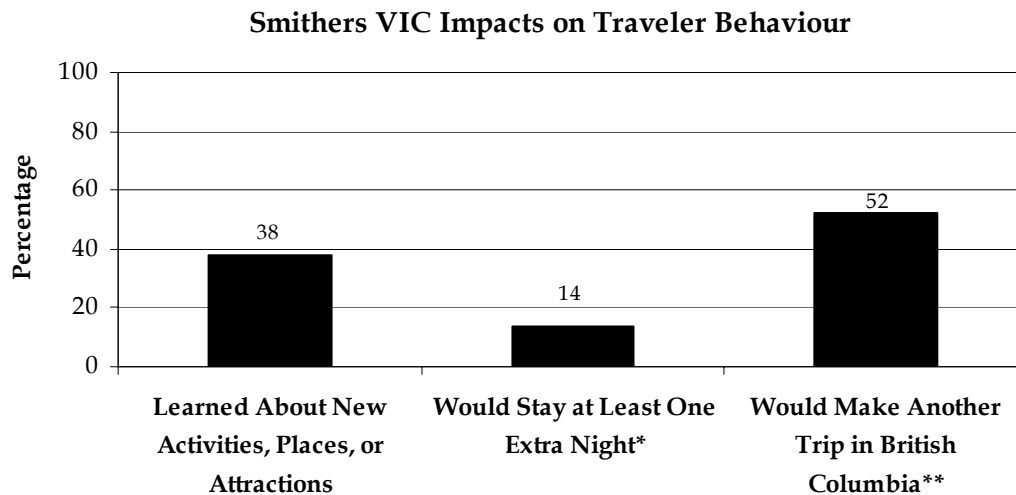


Figure 21. The proportion of travelers (n=160) at the Smithers VIC that learned about new activities, places or attractions, stayed at least one extra night or would make another trip to British Columbia as a direct result of the Smithers VIC. * Don't Know/No Response =6 (3.8%); ** Don't Know/No Response =7 (4.3%).

Those travelers who indicated they would stay extra time or would make another trip to British Columbia as a direct result of the VIC were used to calculate the economic impact of the Smithers VIC.²

A number of trip and traveler characteristics could influence the impact of the VIC on traveler behaviour. Characteristics such as traveler origin, speaking with a VIC Counsellor, primary trip purpose, flexibility in activities participated in while in the Smithers region, flexibility in the time spent in the Smithers region, or the time spent in British Columbia were examined to understand if they influenced the impact the Smithers VIC had on traveler behaviour (Table 13). Travelers from the US were more likely to learn about new activities, places or attractions, to stay an extra night, or to make another trip to British Columbia as a result of information obtained. Travelers from Overseas were less likely to stay an extra night or to make a return trip to British Columbia as a result of the information obtained.

Travelers who spoke with a Counsellor were more likely to be influenced by the information they received compared to those that did not speak to a Counsellor. A higher proportion of travelers who spoke with a VIC Counsellor would take another trip to British Columbia. Primary trip purpose influenced whether travelers would stay an extra night as a result of the information they obtained. Those who came on their trip for leisure purposes were more likely to learn about new activities, stay an extra night, and take another trip to British Columbia than those who came to visit friends and family. Although travelers who were inflexible regarding activity participation or spending additional time in the Smithers region and in British Columbia did learn about new activities, places or attractions, they were least likely to spend extra time as a result of information obtained at the Smithers VIC. However, about half of them (between 44%-51%) did indicate they would make another trip to the region in the future (Table 13).

² Economic impact estimates can be obtained from the Smithers Visitor Info Centre.

Table 13. The impact of the Smithers VIC on traveler behaviour by traveler origin, travelers who did and did not speak with a Counsellor, primary trip purpose and flexibility.

	Percentage of Travelers Who:		
	Learned About New Activities, Places or Attractions ²	Would Stay an Extra Night or Nights ³	Would Make Another Trip ⁴
Origin			
British Columbia	35.0%	17.5%	55.0%
US	41.9%	26.7%	58.1%
Overseas	41.1%	3.6%	47.4%
Other Canada	30.3%	15.2%	51.5%
Spoke With A Counsellor			
Yes	38.5%	14.2%	53.5%
No	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Primary Trip Purpose¹			
Leisure	39.6%	15.0%	53.3%
Visiting Friends and Family	26.1%	8.7%	39.1%
Flexibility with Activities			
Inflexible (all activities are planned)	21.4%	0.0%	50.0%
Moderately Flexible (about half of activities are planned)	36.0%	4.0%	65.4%
Very Flexible (less than half of activities are planned)	39.7%	17.5%	49.6%
Time Flexibility in the Smithers Region			
Inflexible (you have to depart at a set time)	35.2%	3.7%	44.4%
Moderately Flexible (you can change the time of the day for departure)	45.7%	8.6%	52.8%
Very Flexible (you can change the day of departure)	35.2%	24.3%	57.7%
Time Flexibility in British Columbia			
Inflexible (you have to depart at a set time)	40.0%	7.1%	51.2%
Moderately Flexible (you can change the time of the day for departure)	44.4%	22.2%	33.3%
Very Flexible (you can change the day of departure)	33.3%	21.2%	56.1%

1. Business travelers were not asked these impact questions.
2. Not statistically different at the 0.05 level.
3. Not statistically different at the 0.05 level.
4. Not statistically different at the 0.05 level.

Travelers at the Smithers VIC learned about a wide range of new activities (Table 14). A total of 71 new activities were learned about at the VIC, with over three quarters of travelers (76%) indicating that they planned to participate in these activities. Furthermore, most of the travelers who said that they would participate in these newly learned activities planned to do so on their current trip (94%). Of those who were participating in the new activity on their current trip, 16% indicated that they would spend extra time on the trip to complete the activity. Travelers reported learning about hiking/biking/walking trails, Twin Falls, Aboriginal attractions, festivals and events, camping/accommodations, lakes, fossil beds, Moricetown, Northern Hot Springs and walking/driving tours. They also learnt about farmers' markets, museums, Hell's Gate, murals, national parks, places to eat, sales on Main Street, Simpson Gulch, the local ski area, The Hazeltons and the size of Smithers.

Additional comments regarding the Smithers VIC made by respondents to the mailback survey are included in Appendix F.

Table 14. The proportion of travelers who learned about each new activity, the proportion that would participate in that new activity, when they would participate in those activities, the proportion that would spend extra time in the Smithers region and the average number of hours spent participating in each activity.

Top Ten New Activities That Travelers Learned About	% Of All New Activities (n=71)	% That Will Participate	Timeline For Participation (Percentage of Total for each)*			% That Will Spend Extra Time	Average Hrs. Spent On Each Activity*
			Sometime on this trip	On a future trip	Unsure		
Hiking/Biking/Walking Trails	19.7%	85.7%	91.7%	8.3%	0.0%	33.3%	19.0
Twin Falls	19.7%	57.1%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	N/A
Aboriginal Attractions	11.3%	87.5%	85.7%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	N/A
Festivals/Events	9.9%	57.1%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	N/A
Camping/Accommodations	5.6%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	1.0
Lakes	4.2%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	N/A
Fossil Beds	4.2%	66.7%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	N/A
Moricetown	4.2%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	5.0
Northern Hot Springs	2.8%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	N/A
Walking/Driving Tour	2.8%	50.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	N/A

N/A - Don't Know/No Response

*Caution is advised when interpreting these results due to small sample sizes.

Conclusions

1. Travelers who stop at the Smithers VIC differ from the typical traveler intercepted at Main Street. Relative to travelers at Main Street, those at the Smithers VIC were more likely to be:
 - From the US, overseas or from other Canadian Provinces and less likely to be from British Columbia,
 - Part of a larger travel party when the group includes children,
 - Reluctant to disclose their annual household incomes and more likely to come from higher income households,
 - Traveling for leisure and less likely to be visiting friends and relatives,
 - Staying in a campground/RV Park or a resort/hotel/motel/B&B and less likely to be staying with friends and relatives,
 - Touring independently with no particular primary destination,
 - Spending more days away from home on the trip,
 - Spending less days in the Smithers region on the trip,
 - Having longer trip planning horizons,
 - Using the Internet and brochures/books as information sources to plan the trip and less likely to be using friends/relatives/clubs and other associations,
 - More flexible in terms of time spent in the Smithers region and in British Columbia while on the trip,
 - Using VICs to plan their time in the Smithers region and less likely to rely on friends and relatives,
 - Sightseeing as their primary leisure activity, and less likely to be visiting family and friends.

Travelers at the Smithers VIC were similar to travelers at Main Street in their:

- Education,
 - Mode of transportation,
 - Average party size without children,
 - Duration of stay in British Columbia,
 - Flexibility in terms of activities they will participate in, and
 - Daily expenditures.
2. The profile of travelers at the Smithers VIC can be applied:
 - To ensure that the current information provided to VIC users reflects the needs of travelers using the VIC. For example, is there enough information at the Smithers VIC about local sightseeing?
 - To design a marketing plan to attract travelers who do not currently use the VIC. For example, a plan could be designed to encourage travelers who are in the Smithers region visiting friends and family to use the Smithers VIC.

3. The profile of travelers at the Smithers VIC and Main Street can be used for business planning and management of new and existing tourism businesses in the Smithers region. The data presented provides details on the types of clients new tourism businesses in the Smithers region can expect and characteristics, interests and trip flexibility of potential clients who could be attracted through marketing (brochures, etc.) at the Smithers VIC.
4. Nearly all travelers at the Smithers VIC spoke with a VIC Counsellor (98%) and nearly all (99%) said that the VIC met or exceeded their expectations. Reasons for this included the provision of good information as well as helpful staff and friendly people.
5. The Smithers VIC had a positive impact on traveler behaviour. Thirty-eight percent of travelers learned about new activities/places/attractions; 14% reported that they would stay at least one additional night and 52% would make another trip as a direct result of the information they obtained at the Smithers VIC.
6. The proportion of travelers who said that they learned about new activities, would stay an extra night or would make another trip to British Columbia as a result of the information obtained at the VIC was consistently larger for those travelers who had spoken to a VIC Counsellor. This finding highlights the importance of having a Counsellor available at all times to help travelers.

Limitations

1. These results are representative of travelers who stopped at the Smithers VIC or Main Street between June 17 and August 30 of 2005. The results do not represent the economic impact of the Smithers VIC for the whole year. Applying these results to the remaining months in the year could over estimate the economic impact of the VIC because the study was completed during the peak tourism period. In addition, trip and traveler characteristics of visitors at other times of the year could differ from those interviewed during the study period.
2. These results are representative of the impact the Smithers VIC had on travelers who did not live in the Smithers region. Also, this study did not explore the economic impact of travelers who call or email for information prior to their visit.
3. Some of the statistics contained within this report were produced with small sample sizes; consequently the results should be treated with caution.
4. Results from similar studies at other VICs have differed substantially from those presented here and therefore the results presented here cannot be applied to other Visitor Info Centres.
5. Results presented here do not represent the full range of analysis that can be completed with the data collected. Please contact Angela Xu, Research Services Tourism British Columbia (Angela.Xu@tourismbc.com) for more information on obtaining custom reports using this data. For example, a profile of travelers visiting friends and family versus those that were traveling for leisure could be developed.

Applications

An estimate of 3,390 parties visited the Smithers VIC between June and August 2005. A number of percentages have been produced in the pages of this report that can be applied to the total number of parties.

Example

If a user of this report wanted to know how many parties at the Smithers VIC were traveling by RV between June 17 and August 30, 2005 the following calculation could be done:

3,390 parties * 0.094 (percentage of travelers using an RV) = 319 parties with RVs used the Smithers VIC between June 17 and August 30, 2005.

Appendices

Appendix A - Interviewer schedule and interviews completed

Appendix B - Questionnaires

Appendix C - Response bias testing

Appendix D - Listing of other VICs visited

Appendix E - Expenditures by site and accommodation type

Appendix F - Comments regarding the Smithers VIC

Appendix A – Interview Schedule and Interviews Completed

Table A1. The day and number of travelers approached, the number who agreed to the interview, the number of residents, number of refusals, number traveling in a tour group and the number of tourists interviewed at Smithers VIC and Main Street during the study period.

	Smithers VIC					
	Number of People Approached	Agree to Interview-YES	Number of Residents	Refusals	Part of Tour Group	Tourists
June 17	18	15	6	3	0	9
June 19	18	12	1	6	0	11
June 23	19	11	3	8	2	8
June 25	12	5	2	7	0	3
June 29	13	10	1	3	0	9
July 2	9	3	0	6	0	3
July 4	22	11	3	11	0	8
July 6	17	6	1	11	1	5
July 7	8	5	3	3	0	2
July 10	16	7	0	9	0	7
July 12	16	12	4	4	0	8
July 16	18	12	1	6	0	11
July 18	22	8	3	14	0	5
July 22	9	4	1	5	0	3
July 24	16	7	0	9	0	7
July 28	19	15	6	4	0	9
July 30	6	2	1	4	0	1
August 5	20	13	4	7	0	9
August 7	19	11	1	8	0	10
August 11	30	17	7	13	0	10
August 13	13	10	3	3	0	7
August 14	10	6	2	4	0	4
August 17	20	15	2	5	0	13
August 19	7	4	0	3	0	4
August 23	22	15	3	7	0	12
August 25	8	5	1	3	1	4
August 29	2	2	0	0	0	2
Total	409	243	59	166	4	180

Table A2. The day and number of travelers approached, the number who agreed to the interview, the number of residents, number of refusals, number traveling in a tour group and the number of tourists interviewed the Main Street Reference Site during the study period.

	Main Street					
	Number of People Approached	Agree to Interview-YES	Number of Residents	Refusals	Part of Tour Group	Tourists
June 18	41	30	22	11	0	8
June 20	46	30	22	16	1	8
June 24	25	17	14	8	0	3
June 26	12	8	8	4	0	0
June 30	17	10	8	7	0	2
July 3	7	4	4	3	0	0
July 5	21	14	12	7	0	2
July 7	17	12	9	5	0	3
July 11	22	15	13	7	0	2
July 13	8	6	5	2	0	1
July 17	7	4	4	3	0	0
July 19	10	7	6	3	0	1
July 23	23	14	9	9	0	5
July 25	22	12	9	10	0	3
July 29	26	13	4	13	0	9
July 31	9	5	3	4	0	2
August 6	14	6	3	8	0	3
August 8	9	2	0	7	0	2
August 11	9	5	0	4	0	5
August 18	6	4	1	2	0	3
August 20	11	2	1	9	0	1
August 24	7	5	0	2	0	5
August 26	5	1	0	4	0	1
August 30	5	5	1	0	0	4
Total	379	231	158	148	1	72

Appendix B – Questionnaires

Appendix B – Interview Questions (Smithers VIC)

Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is _____ and I'm conducting a survey on behalf of Tourism BC. We want to ask you about your trip to the Bulkley Valley and your experiences in British Columbia. Can I please speak with someone in your party that is knowledgeable about your trip planning and expenditures?

Would you have approximately 10 minutes to answer some questions? If you participate, we would like to give you a complimentary gift for your time.

YES NO *Are you sure? You will receive a complimentary gift for completing the interview? Thank you.*

Are you a resident of the Bulkley Valley? *The Bulkley Valley includes areas between Houston and Hazelton.*

NO YES *Thanks for agreeing to participate, in this study we are only interested in visitors from outside the Bulkley Valley.*

Are you part of an organized tour group?

YES NO

Where are you from? **Prov.** _____ **State** _____ **Country (Overseas)** _____

Before this trip, have you ever been to the Bulkley Valley?

YES NO

To start with we have a few questions about your current trip.

What is the **primary** purpose of your trip to British Columbia? Is it for Leisure, Visiting Friends and Family or Business?

LEISURE VISIT FRIENDS & FAMILY WORK/BUSINESS ACTIVITY OTHER _____ DK/NR

What is your primary destination on this trip (i.e. the place that you spend the most time)?

_____ NONE, TOURING DK/NR

How did you get to the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? Was it by

CAR/TRUCK/MC RV BUS BICYCLE OTHER _____ DK/NR

What day did you leave your residence on this trip? ____/____ month/day

When did you enter British Columbia? ____/____ month/day **(do not ask if from B.C.)**

What day do you plan to return to your residence? ____/____ month/day

To confirm, you will be gone for a total of ____ days **(include day left and day returning)**

How many of those days will be spent travelling in British Columbia? _____ days

Of those, how much time will be spent in the Bulkley Valley? *The Bulkley Valley includes areas between Houston and Hazelton.*

NONE-JUST PASSING THROUGH *Go to Accommodation* _____ HOURS **OR** _____ DAYS DK/NR

If WORK/BUSINESS what is the likelihood that you will return for leisure? Is it

NOT LIKELY AT ALL NOT LIKELY SOMEWHAT LIKELY LIKELY VERY LIKELY DK/NR

If NOT LIKELY AT ALL or NOT LIKELY why not? _____ DK/NR

If SOMEWHAT LIKELY, LIKELY or VERY LIKELY why? _____ DK/NR

IF NOT JUST PASSING THROUGH, what is your **primary** (most time spent) leisure activity while in the Bulkley Valley?

_____ NONE DK/NR

On this trip, which of the following best describes your **primary** (most often used) type of accommodation? Is it a

Resort/Hotel/Motel/B&B Campground/RV FRIENDS Or Relatives OTHER _____

In Canadian dollars, what were your travel party's total expenditures yesterday, including accommodation?

\$ _____ BEGAN TRIP TODAY DK/NR

How flexible is your trip regarding the activities you will participate in while in the Bulkley Valley? Is it

INFLEXIBLE MODERATELY FLEXIBLE (about half of activities are planned) VERY FLEXIBLE (less than half of activities are planned) DK/NR

How flexible is your trip regarding the amount of time you will spend in the Bulkley Valley? Is it

INFLEXIBLE (You have to depart at a set time) MODERATELY FLEXIBLE (You can change the time of the day for departure) VERY FLEXIBLE (You can change the day of departure) DK/NR

How flexible is your trip regarding the amount of time you will spend in BC? Is it

INFLEXIBLE (You have to depart at a set time) MODERATELY FLEXIBLE (You can change the time of the day for departure) VERY FLEXIBLE (You can change the day of departure) DK/NR

How far in advance did you start planning this trip? Was it

DURING THE TRIP DAY OF DEPARTURE 1-6 DAYS 1-2 WEEKS 3-8 WEEKS 9-12 WEEKS 13 WEEKS+ DK/NR

What information sources did you use to plan your trip? **Do not prompt, check all that apply**

INTERNET TRAVEL AGENTS, AIRLINES, AUTO ASSOCIATIONS BROCHURES AND BOOKS VICs TOURISM BC 1-800 # OR OTHER DK/NR
 MEDIA COVERAGE FRIENDS, RELATIVES, CLUBS AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS TOUR OPERATORS/TOURISM SPECIFIC BUSINESSES ADVERTISING (PRINT/TV) OTHER _____ NONE

IF SPENDING TIME IN BULKLEY VALLEY, What information sources did you use to plan your time in the **Bulkley Valley**?

Do not prompt, check all that apply

VICs TRAVEL SHOW NORTHERN BC TOURISM ASSOCIATION FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TOURISM BC 1-800 # OR OTHER ATTRACTION BROCHURE
 HOTEL/MOTEL BROCHURE TOURISM SMITHERS, WEBSITE REGIONAL TRAVEL GUIDE BELL'S TRAVEL GUIDE ADVERTISING (PRINT/TV) MILEPOST MAGAZINE
 RV WEST MAGAZINE CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE HUNT/FISH MAGAZINE DIRECT OPERATOR CONTACT CAN TREK TOURS OTHER _____
 DK/NR NONE

IF SPENDING TIME IN BULKLEY VALLEY, On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not important at all, 5 being very important, how important were these activities in planning your trip to the Bulkley Valley?

	1 (not important at all)	2	3	4	5 (very important)	DK/NR
(Read scale)						
BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VIEWING WILDLIFE OR BIRDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LEARNING ABOUT FIRST NATIONS/INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND ARTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VISITING MUSEUMS OR ART GALLERIES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VISITING WILDERNESS AND UNDISTURBED AREAS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your use of the Smithers Visitor Info Centre.

IF HAVE BEEN TO BULKLEY VALLEY, On your previous trips to the Bulkley Valley, have you used this Visitor Info Centre?

NO YES DK/NR

What was your reason for stopping at the Info Centre today? **(Do not prompt-check all that apply)**

- TO OBTAIN A MAP
- TO OBTAIN ROUTE INFORMATION
- TO OBTAIN ATTRACTION INFO
- TO OBTAIN ACCOMMODATION INFO (NOT CAMPING)
- TO OBTAIN CAMPING INFO
- TO OBTAIN ADVENTURE RECREATION ACTIVITY INFO
- TO OBTAIN EVENT INFORMATION
- TO PURCHASE A BC PARKS PARKING PASS
- TO USE THE CENTRE'S WASHROOM FACILITIES
- TO TAKE A BREAK FROM TRAVELING AND GET OUT OF OUR VEHICLE
- TO OBTAIN REFRESHMENTS
- OTHER _____
- OTHER _____

While visiting today, what type of information did you obtain? **(Do not prompt-check all that apply)**

- NOTHING
- MAP
- ROUTE INFORMATION
- ATTRACTION INFORMATION
- ACCOMMODATION (EXCLUDING CAMPGROUND) INFORMATION
- CAMPGROUND INFORMATION
- ADVENTURE RECREATION ACTIVITY INFORMATION
- EVENT INFORMATION
- BC PARKS PARKING PASS
- DK/NR
- OTHER _____
- OTHER _____
- OTHER _____

While visiting today, did you speak with a Visitor Information Counsellor?

- NO YES DK/NR

While at the Centre today, did you learn about any activities, places or attractions that you were previously not aware of?

- NO-Go to Extend in BC YES DK/NR-Go to Extend in BC

IF YES, What were those activities, places or attractions?	Will you participate in them?	IF YES, Will it be sometime on this trip or on a future trip?	IF SOMETIME ON THIS TRIP Will you stay extra time to complete this activity?	If YES, how many additional hours?
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIME ON THIS TRIP <input type="checkbox"/> ON A FUTURE TRIP <input type="checkbox"/> UNSURE <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	_____hr
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIME ON THIS TRIP <input type="checkbox"/> ON A FUTURE TRIP <input type="checkbox"/> UNSURE <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	_____hr
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	<input type="checkbox"/> SOMETIME ON THIS TRIP <input type="checkbox"/> ON A FUTURE TRIP <input type="checkbox"/> UNSURE <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> DK/NR	_____hr

► Overall, will you extend this trip in British Columbia by staying an extra night or nights as a result of the information obtained at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre?

- NO YES If yes, how many nights _____ DK/NR

Will you make another trip in British Columbia in the future as a result of the information you obtained at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre?

- NO YES DK/NR

Overall, how well did the Smithers Visitor Info Centre live up to your original expectations? Did it EXCEED, MEET OR FALL SHORT of your expectations?

- FELL SHORT MET EXCEEDED DK/NR

How did the VIC exceed, meet, or fall short of your expectations? (*Don't prompt, check all that apply*)

POSITIVE

- HELPFUL STAFF
- GOOD INFORMATION
- FRIENDLY PEOPLE
- GOOD ACCESS
- NICE BUILDING/AREA
- CLEAN
- OTHER _____
- OTHER _____

NEGATIVE

- POOR SIGNAGE
- POOR WASHROOMS
- POOR PARKING
- IMPROVE OUTSIDE AREA
- OTHER _____
- OTHER _____
- DK/NR

Were there any other products and/or services that were not currently available at the Smithers VIC that you would have liked to have found?

- NO YES DK/NR

If YES, what were they? _____, _____,
_____.

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very dissatisfied, 5 being very satisfied, how would you rate the following tourism services or amenities in the Bulkley Valley?

(Read scale)	1 (Very dissatisfied)	2	3	4	5 (Very satisfied)	DK/NR
INFORMATION SERVICES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HELPFULNESS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CLEANLINESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOWN THEME	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GENERAL APPEARANCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now, I'd like to ask you a few more questions about yourself

Including yourself, how many people are in your travel party today? How many are children under 18 and how many are adults?

_____ Adult(s) _____ Child(ren) (under 18) = _____ Total

IF FROM CANADA or US, what is your postal/zip code? _____

In which of the following age category are you?

- A. UNDER 24 YEARS
- B. 25-34 YEARS
- C. 35-44 YEARS
- D. 45-54 YEARS
- E. 55-64 YEARS
- F. 65 YEARS OR OLDER
- G. DK/NR

What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- A. LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL
- B. HIGH SCHOOL
- C. SOME TECHNICAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY
- D. COLLEGE OR TECHNICAL DIPLOMA
- E. UNIVERSITY DEGREE
- F. MASTERS/PHD DEGREE
- G. OTHER _____
- H. DK/NR

Before taxes, in Canadian dollars, what is your approximate annual household income?

- A. LESS THAN \$25,000
- B. \$25,000 to \$49,999
- C. \$50,000 to \$64,999
- D. \$65,000 to \$99,999
- E. \$100,000 PLUS
- F. DK/NR

Gender of respondent (**Record, don't ask**)

- MALE
- FEMALE

As a follow-up to this interview, we would like to contact you after your trip to inquire how the Visitor Info Centre influenced the rest of your trip in British Columbia. Participation would involve completing a questionnaire that will be mailed to you. In exchange, we are pleased to offer you one free edition of British Columbia Magazine and a chance to win a digital camera. All contact information will be kept confidential and only used for this study. Would you like to participate?

- YES
- NO

If **YES**-can I get your name and mailing address?

Name:
Mailing Address:
City:
Province/State (<i>If from Overseas or skipped above</i>):
Country (<i>If skipped above</i>):
Postal/Zip Code (<i>If from Overseas or skipped above</i>):

Thank you for participating!

**Appendix B – Interview Questions
(Reference Site-Main Street)**

Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is _____ and I'm conducting a survey on behalf of Tourism BC. We want to ask you about your trip to the Bulkley Valley and your experiences in British Columbia. Can I please speak with someone in your party that is knowledgeable about your trip planning and expenditures?

Would you have approximately 10 minutes to answer some questions? If you participate, we would like to give you a complimentary gift for your time.

YES NO *Are you sure? You will receive a complimentary gift for completing the interview? Thank you.*

Are you a resident of the Bulkley Valley? *The Bulkley Valley includes areas between Houston and Hazelton.*

NO YES *Thanks for agreeing to participate, in this study we are only interested in visitors from outside the Bulkley Valley.*

Are you part of an organized tour group?

YES NO

Where are you from? **Prov.** _____ **State** _____ **Country (Overseas)** _____

Before this trip, have you ever been to the Bulkley Valley?

YES NO

To start with we have a few questions about your current trip.

What is the **primary** purpose of your trip to British Columbia? Is it for Leisure, Visiting Friends and Family or Business?

LEISURE VISIT FRIENDS & FAMILY WORK/BUSINESS ACTIVITY OTHER _____ DK/NR

What is your primary destination on this trip (i.e. the place that you spend the most time)?

_____ NONE, TOURING DK/NR

How did you get here? Was it by

CAR/TRUCK/MC RV BUS BICYCLE OTHER _____ DK/NR

What day did you leave your residence on this trip? ____/____ month/day

When did you enter British Columbia? ____/____ month/day **(do not ask if from B.C.)**

What day do you plan to return to your residence? ____/____ month/day

To confirm, you will be gone for a total of ____ days **(include day left and day returning)**

How many of those days will be spent travelling in British Columbia? _____ days

Of those, how much time will be spent in the Bulkley Valley? *The Bulkley Valley includes areas between Houston and Hazelton.*

NONE-JUST PASSING THROUGH *Go to Accommodation* _____ HOURS **OR** _____ DAYS DK/NR

If WORK/BUSINESS what is the likelihood that you will return for leisure? Is it

NOT LIKELY AT ALL NOT LIKELY SOMEWHAT LIKELY LIKELY VERY LIKELY DK/NR

If NOT LIKELY AT ALL or NOT LIKELY why not? _____ DK/NR

If SOMEWHAT LIKELY, LIKELY or VERY LIKELY why? _____ DK/NR

That completes the interview for business travelers. Thank you for participating!

IF NOT JUST PASSING THROUGH, what is your **primary** (most time spent) leisure activity while in the Bulkley Valley?

_____ NONE DK/NR

On this trip, which of the following best describes your **primary** (most often used) type of accommodation? Is it a

Resort/Hotel/Motel/B&B Campground/RV FRIENDS Or Relatives OTHER _____

In Canadian dollars, what were your travel party's total expenditures yesterday, including accommodation?

\$ _____ BEGAN TRIP TODAY DK/NR

How flexible is your trip regarding the activities you will participate in while in the Bulkley Valley? Is it

INFLEXIBLE (all activities are planned) MODERATELY FLEXIBLE (about half of activities are planned) VERY FLEXIBLE (less than half of activities are planned) DK/NR

How flexible is your trip regarding the amount of time you will spend in the Bulkley Valley? Is it

INFLEXIBLE (You have to depart at a set time) MODERATELY FLEXIBLE (You can change the time of the day for departure) VERY FLEXIBLE (You can change the day of departure) DK/NR

How flexible is your trip regarding the amount of time you will spend in BC? Is it

INFLEXIBLE (You have to depart at a set time) MODERATELY FLEXIBLE (You can change the time of the day for departure) VERY FLEXIBLE (You can change the day of departure) DK/NR

How far in advance did you start planning this trip? Was it

DURING THE TRIP DAY OF DEPARTURE 1-6 DAYS 1-2 WEEKS 3-8 WEEKS 9-12 WEEKS 13 WEEKS+ DK/NR

What information sources did you use to plan your trip? **Do not prompt, check all that apply**

INTERNET TRAVEL AGENTS, AIRLINES, AUTO ASSOCIATIONS BROCHURES AND BOOKS VICs TOURISM BC 1-800 # OR OTHER DK/NR
 MEDIA COVERAGE FRIENDS, RELATIVES, CLUBS AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS TOUR OPERATORS/TOURISM SPECIFIC BUSINESSES ADVERTISING (PRINT/TV) OTHER _____ NONE

IF SPENDING TIME IN BULKLEY VALLEY, What information sources did you use to plan your time in the **Bulkley Valley**? **Do not prompt, check all that apply**

VICs TRAVEL SHOW NORTHERN BC TOURISM ASSOCIATION FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TOURISM BC 1-800 # OR OTHER ATTRACTION BROCHURE
 HOTEL/MOTEL BROCHURE TOURISM SMITHERS, WEBSITE REGIONAL TRAVEL GUIDE BELL'S TRAVEL GUIDE ADVERTISING (PRINT/TV) MILEPOST MAGAZINE
 RV WEST MAGAZINE CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE HUNT/FISH MAGAZINE DIRECT OPERATOR CONTACT CAN TREK TOURS OTHER _____
 DK/NR NONE

IF SPENDING TIME IN BULKLEY VALLEY, On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not important at all, 5 being very important, how important were these activities in planning your trip to the Bulkley Valley?

(Read scale)	1 (not important at all)	2	3	4	5 (very important)	DK/NR
BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VIEWING WILDLIFE OR BIRDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LEARNING ABOUT FIRST NATIONS/INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND ARTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VISITING MUSEUMS OR ART GALLERIES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VISITING WILDERNESS AND UNDISTURBED AREAS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

On this trip, have you stopped or do you plan to stop at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre?

NO YES DK/NR

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very dissatisfied, 5 being very satisfied, how would you rate the following tourism services or amenities in the Bulkley Valley?

(Read scale)	1 (Very dissatisfied)	2	3	4	5 (Very satisfied)	DK/NR
INFORMATION SERVICES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HELPFULNESS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CLEANLINESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOWN THEME	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GENERAL APPEARANCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now, I'd like to ask you a few more questions about yourself

Including yourself, how many people are in your travel party today? How many are children under 18 and how many are adults?

_____ Adult(s) _____ Child(ren) (under 18) = _____ Total

IF FROM CANADA or US, what is your postal/zip code? _____

In which of the following age category are you?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A. UNDER 24 YEARS | <input type="checkbox"/> E. 55-64 YEARS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B. 25-34 YEARS | <input type="checkbox"/> F. 65 YEARS OR OLDER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. 35-44 YEARS | <input type="checkbox"/> G. DK/NR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D. 45-54 YEARS | |

What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A. LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL | <input type="checkbox"/> E. UNIVERSITY DEGREE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B. HIGH SCHOOL | <input type="checkbox"/> F. MASTERS/PHD DEGREE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. SOME TECHNICAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY | <input type="checkbox"/> G. OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D. COLLEGE OR TECHNICAL DIPLOMA | <input type="checkbox"/> H. DK/NR |

Before taxes, in Canadian dollars, what is your approximate annual household income?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A. LESS THAN \$25,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> D. \$65,000 to \$99,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B. \$25,000 to \$49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> E. \$100,000 PLUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. \$50,000 to \$64,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> F. DK/NR |

Gender of respondent (**Record, don't ask**)

- MALE FEMALE

As a follow-up to this interview, we would like to contact you after your trip to inquire how the Visitor Info Centre influenced the rest of your trip in British Columbia. Participation would involve completing a questionnaire that will be mailed to you. In exchange, we are pleased to offer you one free edition of British Columbia Magazine and a chance to win a digital camera. All contact information will be kept confidential and only used for this study. Would you like to participate?

- YES NO

IF **YES**-can I get your name and mailing address?

Name:
Mailing Address:
City:
Province/State (<i>If from Overseas or skipped above</i>):
Country (<i>If skipped above</i>):
Postal/Zip Code (<i>If from Overseas or skipped above</i>):

Thank you for participating!

Appendix B – Mailback Questionnaire (Smithers VIC)

The Smithers Visitor Info Centre

Did it change your trip?



Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope to:

**Tourism British Columbia
Research Services
Box 9830, Stn Prov Gov't, 300-1803 Douglas St.
Victoria, BC Canada V8W 9W5**



Section 1 – This first section asks questions about characteristics of your trip within British Columbia. Please answer all of the following questions in regard to the trip that we encountered you at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre.

1. How many days did you spend away from home on the trip that we encountered you on? *Fill in the most appropriate response.*

_____ DAY(S) AWAY FROM HOME

2. How many of those days were spent in British Columbia? If you are from British Columbia and you spent your whole vacation within the province, this reply should be the same as your reply to question 1. *Fill in the most appropriate response.*

_____ DAY(S) IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

3. How many of those days were spent in the Smithers region? The Smithers region includes the Bulkley Valley or areas between Houston and Hazelton. *Fill in the most appropriate response.*

_____ DAY(S) IN THE SMITHERS REGION

4. What was the primary purpose of your trip in British Columbia? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. LEISURE
- B. VISIT FRIENDS AND FAMILY
- C. WORK OR BUSINESS ACTIVITY
- D. OTHER *Specify:* _____

5. Was your primary destination the Smithers region? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES
- B. NO → Where was your primary destination?

- C. DON'T KNOW

6. Was this your first trip to the Smithers region? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES
- B. NO → How many trips have you made in the last 5 years?
Specify: _____ trips
- C. DON'T KNOW

7. We encountered you at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre. On that trip did you visit any other Visitor Info Centres in British Columbia? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES → Where? *Specify:* _____
- B. NO _____
- C. DON'T KNOW _____

Section 2 – This section asks questions about the **Smithers Visitor Info Centre** and its impact on your trip.

8. Were there any other products and/or services that were not currently available at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre that you would have liked to have found? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES → Specify: _____
- B. NO _____
- C. DON'T KNOW _____

9. If available, would you purchase souvenirs at the Smithers VIC? If yes, what kind of souvenirs would you like to see? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES → What kinds of souvenirs? _____
- B. NO _____
- C. DON'T KNOW _____

10. Did you have any problems finding the Smithers VIC? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES → Why? _____
- B. NO _____
- C. DON'T KNOW _____

11. Overall, did you extend your trip within British Columbia by staying an extra night or nights as a result of the information obtained at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES → How many additional nights did you spend?
Specify: _____ nights
- B. NO
- C. DON'T KNOW

12a. On the trip where we interviewed you, did you participate in any additional activities, attractions, events or destinations **as a result** of the information you received at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES → Go to Q12b and then 12c
- B. NO → Go to Q13
- C. DON'T KNOW → Go to Q13

12b. What were those additional attractions, events or destinations that you learned about at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? *Please list up to three (3) activities.*

Activity 1 _____

Activity 2 _____

Activity 3 _____

12c. For each activity listed above (Q.9b) please complete the questions in the table below.

Activity	Did you lengthen your stay to participate in this activity? <i>Circle YES or No</i>	If YES, how much additional time did you take for this activity? <i>Fill in the appropriate amount of time in hours or days.</i>
1	A. NO → <i>Go to Activity 2</i> B. YES → _____	_____ HOURS OR _____ DAYS
2	A. NO → <i>Go to Activity 3</i> B. YES → _____	_____ HOURS OR _____ DAYS
3	A. NO → <i>Go to Q10</i> B. YES → _____	_____ HOURS OR _____ DAYS

13. Will you take another trip to or within British Columbia as a result of the information that you obtained at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. YES
- B. NO
- C. DON'T KNOW

14. How useful was the information that you received at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. NOT USEFUL AT ALL
- B. NOT USEFUL
- C. SOMEWHAT USEFUL
- D. USEFUL
- E. VERY USEFUL
- F. DID NOT RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION
- G. DON'T KNOW

15. Overall, how well did the Smithers Visitor Info Centre live up to your original expectations? *Circle the most appropriate response.*

- A. FELL SHORT
- B. MET
- C. EXCEEDED
- D. DON'T KNOW

16. Given your experience at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre, how likely are you to visit other Visitor Info Centres within British Columbia? *Circle the appropriate response.*

- A. NOT LIKELY AT ALL
- B. NOT LIKELY
- C. SOMEWHAT LIKELY
- D. LIKELY
- E. VERY LIKELY
- F. DON'T KNOW

Section 3 – This section asks questions about your daily expenditures while in British Columbia.

17. On the trip you visited the Smithers Visitor Info Centre, what do you estimate was your travel party's average **DAILY** expenditure while in British Columbia? *Fill in the appropriate amount in Canadian dollars.*

\$ _____ CANADIAN DOLLARS

18. Approximately what percentage of your average daily expenditure (24 hr. period) in British Columbia was attributable to each of the following categories: *Fill in the appropriate proportion.*

- _____ % ACCOMMODATION
 - _____ % TRANSPORTATION
 - _____ % FOOD AND BEVERAGE
 - _____ % SHOPPING
 - _____ % ATTRACTIONS
 - _____ % OUTDOOR RECREATION
 - _____ % OTHER ENTERTAINMENT
 - _____ % OTHER *Specify:* _____
- = 100%**

Section 4 – This section asks questions about the **Smithers region** as a vacation destination.

19. What positive and/or negative images come to mind when you think of the Smithers region as a vacation destination? Please list up to three positive and three negative images.

Positive	Negative
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

20. What are the unique characteristics of the Smithers region as a vacation destination? Unique characteristics are those that make the Smithers region different from other destinations. Please fill in up to three unique characteristics.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

21. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your trip to the Smithers region? Circle the appropriate response.

- A. VERY DISSATISFIED
- B. SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
- C. NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED
- D. SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
- E. VERY SATISFIED
- F. DON'T KNOW

22. Given your experience in the Smithers region, how likely are you to return for a future leisure trip? Circle the appropriate response.

- A. NOT LIKELY AT ALL
- B. NOT LIKELY
- C. SOMEWHAT LIKELY
- D. LIKELY
- E. VERY LIKELY
- F. DON'T KNOW

Section 5 – This section asks questions about **British Columbia** as a vacation destination.

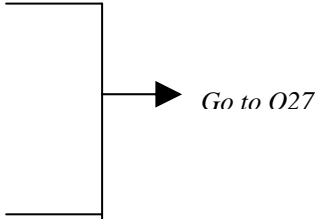
23. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your trip in **British Columbia**? *Circle the appropriate response.*

- A. VERY DISSATISFIED
- B. SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED
- C. NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED
- D. SOMEWHAT SATISFIED
- E. VERY SATISFIED
- F. DON'T KNOW

24. Are you a resident of British Columbia? *Circle the appropriate response.*

- A. YES → Go to Q26
- B. NO → Go to Q25

25. Given your experience in **British Columbia**, how likely are you to return for a future vacation? *Circle the appropriate response.*

- A. NOT LIKELY AT ALL
 - B. NOT LIKELY
 - C. SOMEWHAT LIKELY
 - D. LIKELY
 - E. VERY LIKELY
 - F. DON'T KNOW
- 

26. Given your experience traveling in **British Columbia**, how likely are you to decide to take another vacation within British Columbia? *Circle the appropriate response.*

- A. NOT LIKELY AT ALL
- B. NOT LIKELY
- C. SOMEWHAT LIKELY
- D. LIKELY
- E. VERY LIKELY
- F. DON'T KNOW

27. Do you have a valid passport? *Circle the appropriate response.*

- A. YES
- B. NO
- F. DON'T KNOW

28. Who was in your travel party when you stopped at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? Please indicate their relationship to you, age and gender. Please start with yourself. Fill in the appropriate response.

Who? <i>(e.g wife, husband, partner, son, daughter, parent, friend)</i>	Age <i>(in years)</i>	Gender <i>(M=Male, F=Female)</i>
1 Myself	_____	_____
2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____
5	_____	_____

29. Are you willing to participate in future research about your travel patterns and/or preferences in British Columbia? Participation could involve answering questionnaires similar to this one. Circle the appropriate response.

- A. YES
- B. NO
- C. DON'T KNOW

30. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience at the Smithers Visitor Info Centre? Any comments you have will help improve service at all Visitor Info Centres. Please attach a separate piece of paper for your response to this question.

Thank you for your help.

For your chance to win a digital camera, please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage paid envelope.

Appendix C - Response Bias Testing

Response Bias Testing

Methods

The study design produced three sets of data that are available for analysis - the interview questionnaires at each location (interview Smithers VIC and interview Main Street) and the mailback questionnaires (mailback Smithers VIC). At the Smithers VIC, the respondents and the responses could vary between the interview and mailback questionnaires. The respondents could differ because travelers could drop out of the study by not agreeing to complete the mailback questionnaires or by not completing the mailback questionnaire if they had agreed to complete it. Both instances could cause the mailback questionnaire results to be unrepresentative of travelers interviewed (non-response bias).

A series of tests were conducted to assess the mailback questionnaires' representativeness or, in other words, if the mailback questionnaire results portray the actual population of travelers interviewed.

Representativeness was assessed by:

1. Comparing demographics, trip and traveler characteristics between those who agreed and did not agree to complete the mailback questionnaire (Tables A3).
2. Comparing demographics, trip and traveler characteristics between those who responded and those who did not respond to the mailback questionnaire (of those who agreed; Tables A3).

Responses to similar questions in the interview and mailback questionnaires could vary due to real differences in traveler behaviour (for example, a traveler may have perceived that the VIC had a different impact on their trip when they were interviewed compared to the responses on the mailback questionnaire). Therefore a series of questions were asked in the same way on both the interview and mailback questionnaire. Differences between responses to the two questionnaires were assessed by comparing responses to key questions that were asked in both the interview and on the mailback questionnaire (Table A3, A4).

Results

Differences in Respondents who Agreed or Did Not Agree to Mailback

- At the Smithers VIC, the only significant difference from the standard set of variables used to compare respondents who agreed to participate with those who did not agree to participate in the mailback questionnaire was in annual household income.
- Respondents from household with higher incomes were significantly more likely to agree to participate in the mailback questionnaire.

Differences in Respondents that Returned/Did Not Return the Mailback Questionnaire

- At the Smithers VIC, there weren't many differences between those respondents who received and completed the mailback questionnaire compared to those that did not return it.
- Annual Household income varied statistically between respondents who returned the survey and those that did not. Non-respondents were more likely to have lower annual household incomes. A larger proportion of respondents who did not disclose their household incomes in the initial

interview completed the mailback survey. In addition to this, a higher proportion of non-respondents were from lower income households.

- Respondents who did not learn about any new activities, places or attractions whilst at the VIC were significantly more likely to send back a mailback questionnaire than were respondents who did learn something new.
- There were no non-responses bias issues with age or gender at either location.

Differences in Interview/Mailback Responses

- Overall, responses to the mailback survey were very consistent with those given during the interview at both locations.
- The only significant difference in the standard set of variables used to compare responses from the interview survey with those from the mailback survey relates to the average number of days away from home, participation in new activities as well as staying an extra night as a result of activities learned about whilst at the VIC. More specifically, respondents who completed the survey after they had visited the Smithers region ended up spending significantly less time away from home than they had anticipated when completing the intercept survey. A higher proportion of mailback respondents also participated in, or extended their stay as a result of, new activities they learnt about at the VIC than had indicated during the intercept survey.

Conclusions

- Overall, few differences existed between those who agreed to participate in the mailback questionnaire and those who did not agree to participate in the mailback questionnaire.
- Mailback responses are generally representative of the population that was interviewed.
- Responses to most of the questions regarding the impact of the VIC were similar in both the interview and mailback questionnaire responses. The only variable where a significant difference was found to exist was with respect to household income for those who agreed to participate in the mailback survey compared to those that did not. Additionally, the only variables where significant differences were found to exist between those that did and those that did not send in their agreed upon mailback surveys were with respect to household income and learning about new activities, places or attractions. Responses provided to similar questions in the intercept and mailback survey matched up well for the most part, except for the amount of time spent away from home and participation in activities learned whilst at the VIC where respondents ended up spending significantly less time away from home and participated in significantly more activities (including extending their stay) than they had initially anticipated.
- The interview data was used to summarize the impact of the Smithers VIC had on travelers because almost all of the other variables tested did not indicate bias between the mailback questionnaire and interview results. Mailback questionnaire responses were used only when the question was not asked in the interview. There is a chance that results presented here could underestimate the economic impacts from travelers extending their trip but overestimate economic impacts from travelers participating in new activities.

Table A3. A summary of the comparisons between those that agreed to the mailback questionnaire and those that did not, those that did and did not respond to the mailback questionnaire and between the interview and mailback responses for the Smithers VIC.

Smithers VIC	✓ Indicates a Statistically Significant Difference		
	Agreed to Mailback ¹	Mailback Responses (Non-Response Bias)	Interview/Mailback Responses
Residence Category	N	N	N/A
Gender	N	N	N/A
Age	N	N	N/A
Party Size	N	N	N
Parties With Children	N	N	N
Income	✓	✓	N/A
Education	N	N	N/A
Met Expectations	N	N	N
Days Away from Home	N	N	✓
Days in British Columbia	N	N	N
Daily Expenditure ²	N	N	N
Learn About New Activities	N	✓	✓
Overall Extend Trip	N	N	✓
Overall, Take Another Trip To/In British Columbia	N	N	N

1. Represents only people that agreed to participate in the mailback questionnaire.

2. Expenditure comparisons only include those that could answer the question in the interview. Those that started their trip on the day of the interview and those that did not answer the question were excluded. The top and bottom 2% of responses were trimmed.

Table A4. A summary of differences in data between the interview and mailback questionnaire at the Smithers VIC.

Concept/Questions ¹	Trip Characteristics Results		Statistically Different? ²
	Interview	Mailback	
Mean Days Away From Home	41.1	33.8	Y
Mean Days In British Columbia	15.9	16.1	N
Mean Daily Expenditures	120.53	141.17	N
Party Size	2.34	2.34	N
Primary Purpose - Leisure (%)	80.7	73.6	N
Primary Purpose - VFR (%)	17.6	22.6	N
Other	1.7	3.8	N
VIC Live Up To Expectations - Met (%)	40.0	53.7	N
VIC Live Up To Expectations - Exceeded (%)	60.0	46.3	N
Parties with Children (%)	13.4	14.3	N
Learn About New Activities (%)	34.5	48.1	Y
Overall Extend Trip (%)	12.9	14.3	Y
Overall, Take Another Trip to/within BC (%)	59.3	64.9	N

1. Travelers responding 'Don't Know' were excluded from statistical tests to meet sample size requirements.

2. Only those respondents that answered both the interview and mailback expenditure questions were used. A paired-samples t-test was used to compare the expenditures between the interview and the mailback. Bivariate correlations were used to determine existence of significant differences in proportions between interview and mailback data.

Appendix D - Other VICs Visited

Table A5. Location of other VICs visited by mailback survey respondents.

Location of Other VIC Visited ¹	Number of Responses	Location of Other VIC Visited ¹	Number of Responses
Campbell River	1	Peace Arch	1
Chetwynd	1	Penticton	2
Clearwater	1	Port Hardy	2
Dawson City*	1	Prince George	16
Dawson Creek	3	Prince Rupert	9
Fort Nelson	1	Queen Charlotte	2
Fort St John	2	Quesnel	2
Fraser Lake*	1	Revelstoke	2
General/Multiple	10	Stewart	1
Golden	2	Surrey	1
Grande Cache*	1	Terrace	5
Hazelton	7	Valemont	1
Hope	1	Vancouver	4
Houston	1	Vanderhoof	3
Lytton	1	Victoria	3
McBride	1	Waterton Nat. Park*	1
Mt Robson	3	Watson Lake*	1
Nanaimo	1	Wells	1
Nelson	1	Whistler	2
Osoyoos	1	Whitehorse*	1
Oyama*	1	Williams Lake	2
Parksville	1		

1. The locations marked with a * are not part of the official British Columbia VIC network but are listed here because they were mentioned by respondents.

Appendix E - Expenditures by Accommodation Type

Table A6. Smithers VIC Expenditure¹ by Accommodation Type (statistically significant difference)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
HOTEL/MOTEL/RESORT/B&B	59	186.69	84.42	10.99	30.00	400.00
CAMPGROUND/RV PARK	77	113.68	104.28	11.88	0.00	500.00
FRIENDS OR RELATIVES	12	107.50	123.52	35.66	0.00	400.00
TOTAL²	148	142.28	104.38	8.58	0.00	500.00

1. Expenditures comparisons only included those that could answer the question in the interview. Those that started their trip on the day of the interview and those that did not answer the question were excluded. The top and bottom 2% of responses were trimmed.

Table A7. Main Street Expenditure¹ by Accommodation Type (statistically significant difference)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
HOTEL/MOTEL/RESORT/B&B	20	240.80	126.42	28.27	0.00	500.00
CAMPGROUND/RV PARK	13	171.32	97.37	27.01	25.00	400.00
FRIENDS OR RELATIVES	23	73.87	68.44	14.27	0.00	300.00
TOTAL²	57	155.30	121.35	16.07	0.00	500.00

1. Expenditures comparisons only included those that could answer the question in the interview. Those that started their trip on the day of the interview and those that did not answer the question were excluded. The top and bottom 2% of responses were trimmed.
 2. Total includes 1 response in 'other' accommodation category, which was further specified as cabins.

Appendix F - Comments Regarding the Smithers VIC

Comments are typed exactly as they appear in the mailback surveys – sentences were not corrected for spelling and grammar.

Comments are grouped into the general categories of services/amenities, staff friendly and helpful, suggestions/need for improvement, enjoyed area, not enough or poor services, enjoyed activities and services and others.

Services/Amenities

There was a lot of parking for RVs.
Appreciate free internet and phone service available.
The availability of the internet.
Appreciate free internet access.

Staff Friendly and Helpful

Very knowledgeable staff.
We appreciated how knowledgeable the employees were.
I want to tell that in all the visitors centers we go, we have always become help and a very friendly welcome. We hope we can return in British Columbia, maybe the next year for the holidays. We wish you a good organization.
Very knowledgeable staff.
They were very helpful as were people in the other British Columbia Visitor Centres.

Suggestions/Need for improvement

I didn't notice a sign (a sandwich board) telling of events going on that day and week. I have at other info centers, Hope for example, and Tofino too, and the info on them allows me to participate in events.
I've been travelling through British Columbia and Alberta for about 6 weeks and went many times to Visitor Centres. And I was at most each time quite disappointed! I expect from the people in a visitor centre to speak with me, telling me things about the regions, they should be the soul of the region. But usually, they gave me brochures, plenty of them! Well, yes, I am able to read, but this is not what I was looking for.
There was one exception in the whole trip: the visitor centres of Queen Charlotte City, the people there were just great! I could feel that they were happy of giving infos and talking to people, and not just doing their job.
As you're trying to improve the Smithers Visitor Centre, you might have a thought about the way they give informations. Thanks.

Enjoyed Area

We all had a nice trip. See us next time.

Not enough or poor services

Staff seem a little inexperienced; knowledgeable about the area, but not with dealing with people. "Can I help you?" obviously, that's what I'm here for. So maybe more direct questions and asking how long people will be in the area, so you can help them experience more things.

Enjoyed activities or services

Your centers were wonderful.

Survey - others

We come to British Columbia every year because we have a daughter in Vancouver. In between two visits with her, we explore British Columbia for a week or two. We prefer leisurely (slow) travel, without a car (green). This time we flew to Smithers (3 nights), took the Skeena to Prince Rupert (3 nights), British Columbia ferry to Port Hardy (2 nights), bus to Campbell River (1 night) and bus back to Vancouver. Along the way, we enjoyed many opportunities to talk with local people and other travellers and to learn about the history of the areas we visited.

At Visitor Information Centers, we like to find info on local attractions (e.g. walks, farmers' markets, library, restaurants) and on any local transportation that can take us to points of interest. We often like to get info also on places we'll visit next, e.g. Smithers staff were so helpful to us in planning our days in Prince Rupert. On vacation, we prefer slow travel and green travel.

Slow Travel

With the publication of Carl Honore's book *In Praise of Slow*, we found a spokesperson for how we like to travel. We like to relax, soak up the local ambiance and have conversations with storekeepers, B&B hosts and waitresses. This requires time and energy (both of which are maximized by letting others do the driving). We probably would have rented a car for one day in Smithers, but our B&B host offered to drive us around. She took us to the twin glaciers, Hazelton and on several back roads where we even saw a bear! For us, that's better than an organized tour. We also spent a couple hours in the library reading local history books.

We chose to board the Skeena to Smithers because we thought 6+ hours on the train was enough for one day. In coach class, we met tourists from England on a Cross-Canada train tour. As I recall it involved 2 nights in Ottawa, 2 in Toronto, 3 on the train to Jasper, 1 in Prince George, 1 in Prince Rupert, 1 in Port Hardy, and 3 in Victoria. They were exhausted and disappointed. No chance to see wildlife and barely time to rest between journeys.

Green Travel

Getting around without a car is a challenge. We considered tours available when planning this trip but they all moved too quickly from one place to another. We liked the Smithers website and the idea of relaxing in an alpine town. We were lucky to find local transportation, though we chose our accommodation knowing this might be available from the hosts.

We found information on the Internet (Tourism British Columbia, Smithers, Air Canada, Via Rail, British Columbia Ferries, Greyhound), but it wasn't always easy. In England, where we also travel frequently, many attraction websites list Green Travel information; how to get there by bus or train.

In Prince Rupert, we were pleased to be able to visit the Cannery by public bus, even though it was Sunday. We spent 4 hours there, seeing every exhibit and having both lunch and tea. And we had conversations with guides and fellow visitors.

I hope some of what I've written is helpful to Smithers tourism.