



## Regional travel behavior of international VFR travelers

### What is the issue?

Many international travelers visit multiple destinations on their trips, and these often involve and are influenced by personal relationships with residents. The relationships between visitors and residents have generally been ignored by academics and practitioners, which is a major gap in the understanding of international travelers' behavior.

### What did the researcher do?

The Statistics Canada International Travel Survey (ITS) is used by many National, Provincial, and Regional tourism agencies to measure and categorise visitors to their destinations. This study used the ITS to find respondents from all international countries (excluding the U.S.) who stayed in paid accommodation in Ontario destinations outside of Toronto. The proportion of these visitors who also stayed with a friend or relative in Toronto was then considered. The unit of measure is person nights rather than visitors in order to better reflect the interests of the accommodations sector.

### Why is this research Useful?

This study provides a better understanding of the importance of residents in shaping their region's tourism activity. This research helps destinations consider an alternative communication channel to specific markets by engaging residents of large regional urban centres and their personal networks, developing new and efficient ways to market that draws on personal connections between people and place.

### What were the outcomes?

The findings of this study reveal the extent to which the paid accommodation sector relies on people who are visiting friends and relatives in an urban centre. Of all person nights spent in paid accommodations by international visitors in Ontario (excluding Toronto) in 2010, 17% were spent by people who also stayed with a friend or relative in Toronto. Four out of ten (39%) of nights spent in paid accommodation by UK visitors were from people who also stayed with a friend or relative in Toronto, and for German visitors this number was 19%. Other markets ranged from 3%-16%.

### About the Researcher

Tom Griffin is an Assistant Professor at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University, whose research focuses on residents and tourism activity.

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