

**Why do some Tourists choose
to spend their Vacation Close to home**

Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt

December 2004

All rights reserved. No part of this Report may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without the written permission of IME except in case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

© University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg and the author, 2004.

Editor: Eva Roth

Department of Environmental and Business Economics
IME REPORT 7/04

ISSN 1399-3232

Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt
Department of Environmental and Business Economics
University of Southern Denmark
Niels Bohrs Vej 9-10
DK-6700 Esbjerg
Tel.: +45 6550 4139
Fax: +45 6550 1091
E-mail: bsb@sam.sdu.dk

Table of contents

1. Introduction and Research Questions	9
2. Research Approach and Literature Review	9
3. The Empirical Study	11
3.1. Why Investigate Why People go on Vacation Close to Home?	12
3.2. Why Talk to Tourists Visiting a Caravan Site?	13
3.3. Why Focus on the ‘Peak Season’ - the Month of July?	14
3.4. Choice of Caravan Site and Tourist Informants	14
3.5. Why Go to the Tourists <i>at</i> the Caravan Site?	15
3.6. Others Whys - the Answering of Which Remains Pragmatic	16
4. Findings of the Study	17
4.1. Number and Characteristics of informants	17
4.2. Inductively Derived Framework	23
4.3. Information Search and Vacation Decision-Making	26
4.4. Flexibility Regarding Duration and Risk Reduction	32
4.5. Going on Vacation; Doing Good for and to Children	35
4.5.1. Good for Children	35
4.5.2. Good for Children-[Grand]Parent Interactions	37
4.5.3. Children-Related Decision Criteria	38
4.5.4. You Need not Supervise the Children	39
4.5.5. Teenagers	40
4.6. Getting into the ‘Vacation’ Mood	41
4.7. Loosening up Networks	44
4.8. Not Getting around to Visiting Attractions	48
4.9. Getting Away from Home	51
4.10. Having Nothing Better to Do	54
4.11. Freedom	57
4.12. Relaxation	59
4.13. Final, Inductively Derived Framework	61
5. Enfolded Literature	63
5.1. Findings regarding Consumer Vacation Decision-Making	63
5.1.1. The Notions of Family and Groups	64
5.1.2. Family Vacation Decision-Making, Involvement, and Perceived Risk	64
5.1.3. Problem Recognition	66
5.1.4. Information Search	68
5.1.5. Evaluation of Alternatives	69

5.1.6. Product/Brand Choice.....	69
5.2. Findings relating to Consumer (Tourist) Satisfaction	70
6. Research Implications.....	71
6.1. Implications for the Ways in which We Study Vacation Decision-Making and/or Tourist Experiences.....	71
6.2. Contribution to Extant Knowledge on Vacation Decision-Making	73
6.3. Contributions to Extant Knowledge on Consumer (Tourist) Satisfaction	73
7. Conclusion	74
8. References.....	75

Abstract

Traditionally, we focus on the types of tourism that involve tourists' going 'far away' from home. Thus, most research focuses on the types of tourism we engage in when we visit other countries (e.g. when we go 'exotic' places). Also, we, as a research community, tend to emphasise the reasons to go away on vacation that relate to 'seeing things' and 'doing things'. However, some types of vacation do not involve tourists' going to foreign countries; nor do all types of vacation foremost hinge on tourists' wishes to 'see' or 'do things'.

In recent years, Danish caravan sites have experienced 'above-average' increases in numbers of people who choose to stay at these sites. Such increases are mainly attributable to (more) Danes choosing to go (more) to these sites. Due to (1) stays at Danish caravan sites accounting for a substantial portion of Danes' vacation spending in Denmark as well as (2) the fact that we know little about why these Danes choose to go to caravan sites, this paper accounts for an empirical study focusing on Danes staying at Danish caravan sites and especially, on reasons why these Danes spend their vacation at a Danish caravan site.

Drawing on 31 in-depth interviews involving 61 informants and observations made at a caravan site, the paper suggests that especially Danes stay at Danish caravan sites in order to 'do nothing'. The paper elaborates on reasons why these Danes appreciate 'having nothing (better) to do' as well as linkages between 'doing nothing' and the results these Danes wish to obtain from going on vacation (i.e. freedom and relaxation).

1. Introduction and Research Questions

According to Jacobsen (1988), a most challenging research endeavour is to uncover *why* people go away on vacation, *i.e.* understanding *why* people choose to be tourists is a challenging task. Further Jacobsen (1988) argues that the key reason why this particular research endeavour is utmost challenging is that, at most times, even the tourists themselves do not know exactly why they go on vacation. Thus, although “everyone wants to be on holiday” (Todd, 2001, p. 194), we may experience severe difficulties when we try to understand and explain why we want to be on holiday; and especially it may prove particularly difficult for us to explain why we (want to) engage in particular types of holidays. This paper is the end result of exactly the sort of curiosity as to *why* people ‘go tourist’ that Jacobsen (1988) mentions. As such, the paper supervenes on a researcher’s (unscientific) hunches and gut-feelings; hunches and feelings suggesting that although tourist researchers and academicians hunt the phenomena of tourism with forks and sticks (and advanced statistical techniques), I am not convinced that we have (yet) captured the essence of these phenomena. Trying to grasp (a little bit more of) such essence, this paper presents the findings of an empirical study, the purpose of which was to engage (a certain type of) tourists in explanations and discussions on ‘whys’ underlying their engagement in (a certain type of) tourist activities.

2. Research Approach and Literature Review

Primarily, the study underlying the writing of this paper draws on a marketing perspective. Within the boundaries of marketing thinking, the empirical study relies on two segments of marketing theory, *i.e.* theory on consumer decision making processes and theories on consumer (tourist) satisfaction. Following an argumentation, the purpose of which is to explain why these two parts of marketing theory seem especially promising in relation to a study focusing on why Danish tourists go on holiday in Denmark, the two focal parts of marketing theory are discussed in greater depths.

Decision-making theories focus on the processes by means of which consumers choose certain products and services. Thus, this stream of marketing theory seems especially promising in relation to investigation of the processes and activities tourists engage in *prior* to their actual tourist endeavours. Whereas decision-making theories are concerned with explaining, understanding, and/or predicting *how* consumers *choose* between alternatives (e.g. various types of holidays, destinations, and forms of accommodation), in a consumer context satisfaction is a key *judgment* consumers make regarding tourism products and services (Bowen and Clarke, 2002). Thus, if one wishes to investigate both why (and how) people choose to ‘go tourist’ and how they feel whilst ‘being tourists’, it seems reasonable to draw on consumer decision-making theory in regard to the first goal of such research whereas satisfaction research seems especially promising in regard to the second research goal.

Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) divide the overall experience that tourists buy into the following three phases: The anticipation phase (before the trip commences); (2) The consumption phase (during the trip); and (3) The memory phase (after the trip is ended). In comparisons with Swarbrooke and Horner's (1999) division of the tourist experience into sub-phases, this paper focuses on retrospective self-reporting of the first phase (by means of decision-making theory) and actual experiences during the central phase (primarily by means of satisfaction theory), whereas the paper does not address the memory phase. Although a research design aiming at addressing all three phases would be ideal, the memory phase is excluded from the study, upon which this paper draws due to the wish to let informants focus on reasons why they choose to go on vacation close to home and experiences inherent in such vacations.

Decision-making theory seems crucial to the study of tourism as "effective tourism marketing requires that managers understand not only what people do on vacation but also how people make leisure travel decisions" (Wang *et al*, 2004, p. 183 drawing on Fodness, 1992). Furthermore, in relation to tourism decision-making it seems that research on *family* decision-making is (much?) more relevant than research on individual decision-making (see e.g. Cunningham and Green, 1974; Davis and Rigaux, 1974; or Sharp and Mott, 1956 for corroboration of this claim). Also, this line of reasoning is corroborated by the fact that the vast majority of tourists go on vacation in groups and furthermore, mostly such groups are comprised of couples or families (discussions on difficulties of defining the 'post-modern' family excluded for present purposes). Traditionally, family decision-making theory prescribes that, during decision-making processes, family members play different roles (see e.g. Kotler *et al*, 1999, for further information on the roles as e.g. initiator, influencer, decision-maker, buyer, and user). Also, family decision-making is classified as husband-dominant; wife-dominant; or joint decision-making by researchers (e.g. Jenkins, 1978) focusing on husband/wife roles during decision-making processes. Furthermore, more recently researchers (e.g. Asael, 1995) have focused on childrens' roles in family decision-making.

In regard to vacation decision-making, several studies indicate that, mostly, decision-making qualifies as joint decision-making (e.g. Cunningham and Green, 1974; Davis and Rigaux, 1974; and Sharp and Mott, 1956). Also, research suggests that children influence decisions regarding choice of destination, accommodation, and activities as well as the different steps in decision-making processes (e.g. Jenkins, 1979 and Szybillo and Sosanie, 1977). In relation to the present study, it thus seems relevant to obtain tourists' accounts for roles of each family member during the decision-making process as well as for the ways in which the group (*i.e.* family) has handled the different steps of such decision-making processes. However, in relation to the current study the 'outcomes' phase of such models is of minor relevance due to the fact that consumer satisfaction theory seems to hold much greater potential for fruitful investigation of this part of the overall 'choosing to be and being a tourist' process.

The concept of satisfaction seems especially relevant in relation to investigation of tourists' judgments of tourism services due to the fact that generally the notion of satisfaction emphasises affective or emotional dimensions of judgment more than concepts such as quality do. Although we traditionally define satisfaction as an entity related to comparison of actual experience with expectations, emphasising experience seems especially important in relation to tourism. Although the vast amount of literature on satisfaction identifies various components and antecedents hereof (e.g. expectation, performance, expectancy disconfirmation, attribution, emotion, and equity), the various entities do not seem equally relevant when focusing on tourist satisfaction. For example, Botterill's (1987) longitudinal study suggested that 'unpredictability of tourism events' better describes tourist satisfaction than do traditional views according to which satisfaction is determined by the extent to which actual experience or performance succeeds expectations. Drawing on Botterill (1987), we may thus expect tourist satisfaction to rely more on performance by the tourist and successful adaptation of the tourist to unpredictable events than on the experience being close to (or above) predefined expectations.

Both the characteristics traditionally associated with services (*i.e.* intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability according to Zeithaml *et al.*, 1985) and the unique characteristics of tourism services (according to Seaton and Bennett, 1996, such characteristics can be defined as high involvement and high risk, holistic 'products', partly comprised of dreams and fantasies and further qualifying as extended product experience) corroborate the claim that actual experiences are much more decisive in relation to tourist satisfaction than predefined expectations. Also, Seaton's (1994) suggestions that tourists commit large sums of money to 'purchase' of vacations; that such purchases cannot be evaluated prior to actually buying them; and that opportunity costs of failed holidays are irreversible (*i.e.* most tourists do not have time and money to spend making up for a holiday that went wrong; at least not for another year) corroborate the claim that especially tourists' actual experiences are of crucial importance.

To summarise, at the outset the investigation of why some Danes choose to spend their holiday at a Danish caravan site draws on two segments of marketing theory, *i.e.* decision-making theory and satisfaction theory seem especially promising in relation to such an investigation. However, as the empirical study draws on a qualitative and thus, highly flexible research design, additional literature might be enfolded if the two segments of marketing theory discussed in this section prove insufficient during the central stage of the empirical study.

3. The Empirical Study

As mentioned above, the empirical study, upon which this paper draws is a qualitative study. Primarily, the reason why a qualitative methodology guides the study is the wish to prioritise the de-

sideratum realism before the desiderata precision and generalisation (Brinberg and Magrath's, 1985, notions). Thus, the researcher's reliance on qualitative research is primarily grounded in the wish to let tourists explicate 'whys' underlying their being tourists while they are engaged in being tourists. Bowen and Clarke (2002, p. 305) discuss needs for innovation in tourism (satisfaction) research methodologies and argue that "no longer is it acceptable (if it ever was) to avoid research *in situ* as the experience unfolds". Thus, apart from the obvious fact that qualitative research is highly relevant when one investigates 'whys', also prioritisation of the desideratum realism suggests that qualitative *in situ* research is of relevance.

Arguing that tourist (satisfaction) research would benefit from stronger emphasis on the tourists' own voice and from letting tourists express themselves verbally, Bowen and Clarke (2002) conclude that holistic views and reliance on more qualitative approaches would generate more natural, unforced, honest, and detailed evaluations of tourist satisfaction. Expanding the arguments put forward by Bowen and Clarke (2002) to the investigation of tourists accounted for in this paper, I argue that letting tourists express themselves during dialogues with the researcher qualifies as a viable strategy if we wish better to *understand* tourists. Thus, a primary reason underlying the choosing of a qualitative research strategy is the wish to investigate tourism in real-life tourism contexts. In this section, critical methodological choices that are decisive for trustworthiness of the findings and conclusions accounted for in section 4 are discussed. As such, the subsequent subsections should explicate methodological choices that reduce trustworthiness of the study and hence, I urge the reader to assess (lack of) trustworthiness of the study, upon which this paper draws on the basis of the sections that follow.

3.1. Why Investigate Why People go on Vacation Close to Home?

Traditionally, to at least some extent tourism research focuses more on tourists going on vacation in other countries than on tourists staying in their native country. Obviously, a reasonable argumentation underlying this focus is that foreign tourists add to the wealth of a national on conditions quite similar to those related to the positive effects of exports on the focal country's balance of payments. Thus, primarily we focus on foreign tourism due to the obvious economical effects hereof. However, tourists who choose to go on vacation in their native country (*i.e.* 'home' tourists) are also important. Especially, economic importance of such tourism hinges on the fact that the mere choosing of going on vacation in one's native country does *not* affect the balance of payments negatively. Also, one might argue that due to the fact that the tourism industry (considerations on the severe difficulties of defining one such industry excluded from the present context) assures employment for people otherwise difficult to employ (e.g. unskilled labour and students working 'odd' hours' and part-time), this industry affects employment rates positively. Furthermore, apart from reasons why to investigate 'home tourists' related to balances of payment and employment, one might also

argue that investigation of ‘home tourists’ qualifies as a first research endeavour whenever one wishes to investigate a specific type of tourism. After all, in relation to most tourist destinations, attractions, and accommodations ‘home tourists’ are amongst the first to visit such places.

Apart from the arguments explicated above, unique characteristics of ‘home’ tourists suggest that further investigation of this particular group of tourists is worthwhile. One such unique characteristic of ‘home’ tourists (at least Danish ‘home’ tourists) is that often these tourists do not engage in information searches prior to their vacation (Marcussen, 1998). Furthermore, Marcussen (1998) suggests that if ‘home tourists’ engage in information searches at all primarily they seek information among friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Thus, investigation of such ‘home’ tourists seems to qualify as a unique chance to investigate decision-making processes, upon which marketers have limited (if any) direct influence.

Therkelsen (1996) suggests that some researchers discriminate between the notions of ‘going on vacation’ and ‘to travel’. Primarily, it seems reasonable to discriminate between these two notions due to the fact that although travel and vacation may qualify as interdependent entities in relation to most types of tourism, severe conflicts may arise between these two entities (*i.e.* vacation has to do with being free to do (perhaps) exactly what one wishes to do whereas mostly travelling relates to meeting time schedules etc., in relation to which one has little (or even no) saying). In relation to ‘home’ tourists one may argue that the ‘travelling dimension’ is reduced as much as possible; *i.e.* both travel time and distances are reduced to minimums (at least in e.g. a Danish context). Hence, if one wishes to investigate tourism without incorporating travel, investigation of ‘home’ tourists seems to qualify as an especially promising research endeavour.

3.2. Why Talk to Tourists Visiting a Caravan Site?

Rassing and Lundtorp (1999) argue that different types of overnight accommodations do not compete extensively with one another, *i.e.* caravan sites, hotels, chalets, and holiday houses do not compete directly. One viable interpretation of Rassing and Lundtorp’s (1999) findings is that very early on in the decision-making process, tourists decide on type of overnight accommodation and henceforward, the choosing of accommodation is highly integrated with tourists’ initial or primary reasons why to go on vacation. Thus, at the outset segmentation of Danes on vacation in Denmark on the basis of accommodation types seems fruitful. Furthermore, in-depth investigation of one such segment seems especially relevant due to the adoption of a qualitative research design.

Furthermore, at Danish caravan sites tourists can choose between various forms of accommodation. For example, they may choose to rent a caravan or a cottage or they may supply part of accommodation themselves, *i.e.* they may bring caravans, mobile homes, or tents to the site themselves. Thus,

investigation of tourists choosing to stay at caravan sites should ensure that diversity among types of accommodation is represented in the study.

3.3. Why Focus on the ‘Peak Season’ - the Month of July?

According to Rassing and Lundtorp’s (1999) investigation of overnight accommodations in Denmark in the month of July, chalets do not account for many person-night and mainly hotels person-nights relate to for business travellers whereas the vast majority of person-nights is to be found in the two remaining accommodation types; holiday houses and caravan sites. Moreover, stays in holiday houses are comprised mostly of foreign visitors whereas stays at caravan sites include a majority of Danish visitors. Newer statistics replicate Rassing and Lundtorp’s (1999) distribution of overnight accommodations across various types of accommodations and nationalities of visitors (e.g. Serviceerhverv, 2004:21 and 2004:51). Drawing on these estimates, especially Danish accommodation is comprised of holiday houses and caravan sites. Furthermore, the month of July qualifies as ‘peak season’ for both major segments of accommodation (*i.e.* holiday houses and caravan sites). Consequently, if one wishes to draw on Danish ‘home’ tourist informants, the month of July seems to qualify as an especially promising time for contacting such tourists.

3.4. Choice of Caravan Site and Tourist Informants

Early on in the research process, a choice was made to do the empirical study at one, specific caravan site. Two lines of reasoning favour this choice. First, pragmatic considerations favour this choice; *i.e.* the researcher was offered access to this particular caravan site by the owners (with no strings attached except from the dissemination of findings to the owners after the research process is completed). Secondly, this particular caravan site seems to qualify as a critical case due to the fact that, for this particular caravan site, growth rates of ‘person-night’ accommodations as well as ‘percentage of non-vacant places at the site’ have been significantly higher than for other Danish caravan sites during the last decade (*i.e.* according to the owners of the site, even during seasons characterised by decline for caravan sites in general, this particular site has experienced much-above-average numbers of ‘person-night’ accommodations compared to competitive sites). Thus, the notion ‘critical case’ is adopted due to the fact that, seemingly, this site may offer ‘something’ that severely affects potential tourists during the ‘alternative evaluation phase’ and/or ‘something’ affecting satisfaction and henceforward, loyalty and/or positive word-of-mouth communication. Discussions on the soundness of such assumptions on criticality of the focal case are integral parts of section 4 of the paper.

Drawing on Rassing and Lundtorp’s (1999) investigation of various types of accommodations and tourists, Danes visiting a caravan site are not easily characterised, *i.e.* Danes at caravan sites is the

group of tourist/accommodation that is most diverse on factors such as length of stay; number of people in the groups; age; and stage in the family lifecycle. For example, Rassing and Lundtorp (1999) found that length of stays at caravan sites varied much more than length of stays at other types of accommodation (range from 1 to 21 days); that half of the visitors at caravan sites are couples while the other half is comprised of both singles and families with children; that although empty-nesters prefer to stay at caravan sites, 42 percent of caravan site tourists are under 45 years old; that the majority of visitors at caravan sites are Danish (65 percent of all visitors); and that 88 percent of guests at caravan sites have been visiting the particular site or other caravan sites in Denmark in the past (a percentage well above the ‘repurchasing’ rates of other types of accommodations). Hence, at the site, selection of informants should ensure that various types of tourists are included in the study. Discussions as to whether actual selection of informants at the site reflects diversities as suggested by Rassing and Lundtorp (1999) are to be found in section 4 of the paper.

3.5. Why Go to the Tourists *at* the Caravan Site?

Much tourism research is either done after tourists have been away on vacation or at a point in time, at which the individual has not been away on vacation/has not planned a vacation recently. However, due to the problems relating to informants’ reporting of attitudes and intentions (and lack of correspondence between such attitudes or intentions and actual behaviour), a deliberate choice was made to ‘disturb’ tourists whilst they were engaged in the tourism experience. Traditionally, qualitative tourism research done at the destination is done at attractions or whilst tourists are engaged in transportation. However, this paper draws on a qualitative research design, according to which tourists were relaxing at a caravan site at the time of interviewing. Primarily, the reason why tourists were contacted *at* the caravan site is grounded in Grauburn’s (1989) claim that temporality is central to the tourist experience. Further, it is grounded in Mannell and Iso-Ahola’s (1987) call for us to analyse individual moments; a call based on conception of leisure (and tourist) experience as being immediate and personal. Hence, a primary methodological consideration underlying the design of qualitative interviewing, upon which this paper draws is that “the tourist moment is complicated by the fact that there is a slippage between the “actual, onsite, real-time nature of this interior experience and its representation” (Hom Cary, 2004, p. 64). Consequently, contacting tourists while they relax at the caravan site should minimise differences between the ‘tourist moment’ at the time it is experienced and the representation, reproduction, or recreation of this moment that tourists may engage in during interviews. Thus, if at all we can create a true synthesis between the tourist moment and tourists’ reporting hereof, ‘on site, real-time’ interviewing seems a viable choice of place and time for interviews to take place. However, one key reason why ‘on site, real-time’ interviews are rare might be that it is ethical problematic to disturb tourists in the precious time they call vacation time. Henceforward, I do acknowledge the ethical dilemma inherent in any research design incorporating researchers’ attempts to ‘steal’ precious vacation time away from the tourists. In order to

solve this ethical dilemma two strategies were applied. First, although they had, initially, allowed for the researcher to visit the site and disturb their customers, subsequently the owners of the caravan site were contacted in order to discuss at which times, situations, and parts of the site tourists were likely to feel less imposed on by the researcher's approaching them. Following this discussion, the researcher spend the first days at the site making observations in order to (dis)confirm appropriateness of the times, situations, and parts of the site the owners suggested to be especially appropriate when approaching tourists. Based on the owners' suggestions and researcher's observations a choice was made to approach tourists at different times, situations, and places. First, some informants were contacted in the pool area whilst they were relaxing and at the same time, possibly supervised their children. Secondly, some tourists were contacted while they were sitting around the centre of the caravan site (*i.e.* at tables located in front of the office, cafeteria, and convenience store). Thirdly, the rest of the tourists were contacted at various other parts of the caravan sites deemed 'inactive' by the researcher, e.g. at the beach; waiting for their kids to finish pony rides; or fishing at the 'put& take' lake located at the one end of the caravan site. However, no attempts were made to contact tourists at their 'private zones' at the site (*i.e.* at caravans, tents, and/or cottages) due to the overriding wish to respect tourists' privacy.

Apart from interviews, due to the owners' acceptance of the researcher's 'imposing' on their customers, unique possibilities for doing observations arose. Consequently, contacting tourists at the caravan site enabled the researcher to triangulate sources of evidence, *i.e.* interviews are supported by activation of other sources of evidence and especially, by the researcher's observations at the site.

Due to the ethical dilemma inherent in the researcher's contacting tourists while they relax at the caravan site, initially one would expect many (or at least some) tourists *not* to willingly subject themselves to an interview situation and thus, one might fear that most potential informants would refuse to participate in the study. Furthermore, one might also fear that informants being 'disturbed' while relaxing may adopt a 'time minimisation' strategy, *i.e.* while they, out of politeness, agree to participate in an interview, they may also try to reduce time devoted to the interview situation by given very short, non-reflective answers and/or by rejecting lines of dialogue altogether. In section 4, further elaborations on these issues are offered.

3.6. Others Whys - the Answering of Which Remains Pragmatic

No matter how hard a researcher tries to account for all methodological choices that may hamper a qualitative study's findings, a discomforting line of issues and choices remains. Primarily, this line of issues and choices is comprised of the pragmatic choices we make in order to access the field. However, in section 4.1 attempts are made to account explicitly for all such pragmatic choices. Es-

pecially, section 4.1 offers additional considerations regarding actual contacting of tourists at the caravan site and the fact that most interviews qualify as group interviews. Furthermore, interviews qualified as semi-structured interviews due to the researcher's initial reliance on an interview guide reflecting the issues introduced in section 2.

4. Findings of the Study

The purpose of this section is to account for the key findings of the empirical study. However, due to breadth and depth of the study's findings, this section is divided into subsections, each of which accounts for a particular line of findings. Henceforward, the structuring of this section is as follows. The first section (4.1) accounts for the number and characteristics of informants, upon whom the study draws. Hence, this section is closely related to the content of section 3 as section 4.1 discusses the actual research design as well as differences and similarities between the actual and the 'ideal' research design as accounted for in section 3. Afterwards (in section 4.2), the key findings of the study as well as relations between these findings are presented by means of an (inductively derived) framework. Subsequently, the remaining parts of section 4 discuss the key findings in further depths. Thus, section 4 qualifies as 'case close' accounts of findings whereas the two focal streams of literature introduced in section 2 of the paper are not, explicitly, enfolded until section 5 of the paper is opened.

4.1. Number and Characteristics of informants

Contradictive to the researcher's initial concerns regarding informants' (un)willingness to subject themselves to interviews, tourists contacted at the caravan site were quite willing to participate in the study. Thus, of the 32 contacts I made with (groups of) people at the site, only one group of tourists did not wish to submit themselves to an interview (and the reason offered for this lone rejection was that they were just about to leave the caravan site in order to go into the near by town). Thus, participation rates were quite overwhelming. Furthermore, initially I anticipated that informants might reduce the time devoted to the interview situation as much as possible. However, this initial concern also proved false. In fact, interviews were quite long (*i.e.* lasting from 20 to 90 minutes with an average duration of 30-45 minutes). Thus, in retrospective the decision to contact tourists at the caravan site proved to be an utmost viable research strategy. In table 1, some key characteristics of the 31 interviews and 61 informants included in the study are listed

Table 1. Characteristics of Interviews and Informants

No.	Informant(s)	Location	Key characteristics
1	Male in his 50ties	By the fishing lake	Gone caravanning with his wife for the last 10 years. Goes to Germany every summer and ends the vacation at this particular Danish site every year
2	Female in her 50ties or 60ties	Supervising a grand child at the play ground	On her way, with her husband, to vacation in Sweden. A stop at this particular site because they are babysitting the grandchildren for some days
3	Mom, dad, and two teenagers	By the convenience store and office; eating ice-cream	Canoeing down the Gudenå because they wanted to try something different. Normally they would go camping in France
4	Mom, dad, and two children around 10 years old	In the pool area	Never camped before. Staying at one of the cottages at the site. Normally they would do a packaged tour to e.g. Spain
5	Male in his 30ties	Supervising his 5 years old daughter at the playground	On their way with their caravan to another site in another region of Denmark. The family has been caravanning for several years
6	Couple in their 60ties or 70ties	At the fishing lake; looking at people fishing	Started camping in '78 and have done so ever since (with children, grandchildren and alone). At this particular site because they are going to a party in the nearby village
7	Couple with younger children	At the pool area	Regularly caravanning. This is the 4 th year in a row they visit this particular caravan site
8	Group interview with 5 'regulars' (people staying at the same caravan site for many years)	At a caravan	The couple and the three other 'regulars' (whose spouses have deceased) have all stayed at the site for 20-25 years. They go to the site and their caravan whenever time allows for it (most of them are retired by now, but before they retired they went to the site at weekends and holidays)
9	Mom, dad, 16 year old daughter and 8 year old son	At the pool area	The family goes caravanning every summer (visiting different caravan sites). At the moment, they are considering to become 'regulars'

10	Woman with children	At the pool area	The informant is part of a group comprised of 3 couples and their children. The group goes camping (caravans and/or cottages) for one week every second year
11	Couple in their 40ties and their 'neighbour' at the caravan site	By the fishing lake	Couple with a motorcycle and a tent. He has been to a lot of caravan sites over the years; it is her first time at a caravan site. The 'neighbour' has also gone camping previously
12	Younger mother	Supervising two children at the play-ground while taking care of the youngest in a pram	The family has always gone to Southern Europe in the summer holiday. At a Danish caravan site this year because the youngest child is too young (8 weeks) to go to Southern Europe and thus, they have borrowed a caravan for the holiday
13	Group of 5 'regulars'	By the shower, toilet, and kitchen facilities	Have been staying at this particular caravan site in their leisure time for 17-30 years. Are still working and thus, they come to the caravan site in weekends and during holidays
14	Female	At the pool area	Mom, dad, and two small children in a caravan. They have stayed at this particular site every summer since 1999
15	Mom and son	Fishing at the fishing lake	The family (mom, dad, daughter, and son) has visited different caravan sites (with their caravan) in this particular geographical area for many years
16	2 couples in their 50ties; 'regulars'	By the fishing lake	Both couples have stayed at this particular caravan site for years
17	Male in his 30ties	Supervising three kids at the play-ground	The family has borrowed a caravan in the past (and they have also tried a variety of alternative types of holidays) and this year, they have bought a caravan themselves
18	Couple in their 40ties	By the fishing lake	She started camping many years ago because it was the type of vacation she could afford as a single mother. He has tried it a couple of times before

19	Couple in their 30ties	By the convenience store and office	The couple from interview 11. They approached the researcher because they had thought about the previous interview during the last couple of days and had additional comments regarding the positive elements of camping
20	Elderly couple	At the fishing lake: looking at people fishing	They have been camping for 40 years; at first with a tent, later on with a caravan. They fit their vacations to the holiday plans of their adult children and their grandchildren
21	Couple with a 10 year old daughter	At the pool area	The family has been camping ever since the daughter was born. Every second year they caravan to Southern Europe and every second year they go to Danish caravan sites
22	Couple with children	At the pool area	The family goes caravanning both in Denmark and in Southern and Eastern Europe
23	Mom with 4 children	At the pool area	Part of a group comprised of the focal couple (who has borrowed a caravan) and their children as well as of friends and their children (the friends and their children come by the caravan site for a day at a time)
24	Couple with 3 boys	At the convenience store and office	The mom's parents are 'regulars' at the site and she (as well as her sister) borrow the caravan during their 3 weeks of summer holiday
25	Elderly woman	Supervising her grand children in the pool	She and her husband have been caravanning for 20 years. Off season (spring and fall) they are regulars at another caravan site. Sometimes they go caravanning alone and at other times they bring along their children and/or grand children
26	Mom and daughter	Fishing at the fishing lake	Mom, dad and three children are staying at one of the cottages at the site. They have never gone camping before; instead they have always rented a holiday house for the summer holiday
27	Female	Supervising kids at the pool area	Her parents are regulars at the site and this summer, she, her husband and their children are staying in a tent at the site

28	Couple in their 30ties	They contacted the researcher at the convenience store and asked to be interviewed	The couple has been regulars at the site for 6 years and goes there most weekends from spring to fall as well as during their summer holiday. Apparently, they had overheard the researcher's contacting of other informants prior to one of the previous interviews
29	Woman in her 50ties	At the pool area	A regular whose children and grandchildren are visiting her and her husband at the site during their summer break
30	Male in his 40ties	At the pool area	Coming by the caravan site with his 3 children for the day
31	Female in her 30ties	At the convenience store and office	She and her 6 years old son have bought a tent and are now camping for the first time (she has tried camping a few times many years ago)

As indicated by table 1, the group of tourists staying at Danish caravan sites is comprised of 'regulars' (*i.e.* people who go to the same caravan sites during weekends and holidays and who often do so for several years) and 'normal' tourists. One might argue that inclusion of 'regulars' 'blurs' the picture somewhat due to the fact that these people do not 'neatly fit' traditional definitions of tourists. However, in relation to the study accounted for in this paper a deliberately choice was made to include 'regulars'. Drawing on table 1, soundness of this choice is validated by the fact that, in practice, it seems very difficult to discriminate between the two groups of visitors. For example, some informants qualify as tourists during their stay at the focal caravan site whereas they qualify as 'regulars' off-season at another caravan site. Likewise, some informants are 'close to being regulars' due to their staying at the caravan site more than once during 2004 – although they do not come to the site most weekends and holidays. Furthermore, more informants stay at the site because relatives (mostly their parents) are 'regulars' and thus, they are part of a group/family comprised both of 'regulars' and 'tourists'. In sum, actual problems related to distinction between 'regulars' and 'tourists' suggest that inclusion of both groups in the study is reasonable.

At the location, a deliberate choice was made only to approach potential informants at the 'public zones' of the site. Thus, visitors were not approached while they stayed at the 'private zones' of the caravan site (*i.e.* at caravans, cottages, and tents). Although a reasonable choice when focusing on ethics, this choice has implications for trustworthiness of the study. Especially, contacting visitors only at the public zones might very well lead to 'over-representation' of people who spend much time at the caravan site (as opposed to those people, who only sleep at the site and go away all day in order to see attractions, go to amusement parks, nearby towns, museums etc.). However, although

the empirical study suggests that informants value ‘doing nothing’ at the caravan site, at the same time, the study suggests that informants also leave the caravan site in order to go places and see things. Thus, it seems that ‘staying at the caravan site’ and ‘going away in order to see things’ are not mutually excluding entities. On the contrary, it seems that visitors engage in both types of activities. Consequently, although the research design certainly favours interviewing of visitors spending more time at the caravan site, if we argue that these informants also go and see things, this does not mean that a certain type of (not spending much time at the caravan site) tourists are neglected. On the other hand, if we assume that some tourists only stay at the site at night then, by all means, the research design incorporates serious problems. As I was not able to answer the question on whether two such types of visitors exist, during data analysis I contacted the owners of the caravan site and asked for their opinion. Drawing on 25 years of experience with visitors at the caravan site as well as on a number of studies conducted over the years, the owners argued that two such types of visitors do exist. However, further they argued that the group of ‘only staying at the site during night’ visitors is comprised, almost exclusively, of foreign (*i.e.* German and especially Dutch) visitors. Consequently, drawing on the owners’ experiences, I suggest (although only vaguely corroborated) that it is reasonable to rely on informants contacted at the ‘public zones’ of the caravan site.

Regarding Rassing & Lundtorp’s (1999) findings accounted for previously, a number of key findings are replicated by the study accounted for in this paper (thus indicating robustness of findings). For example, along with Rassing and Lundtorp’s (1999) findings, length of stay varies much (*i.e.* from 1 to 21 days for all informants apart from a few retired ‘regulars’ who stay at the caravan site all summer long). Furthermore, concordant with Rassing and Lundtorp (1999), considerable variation is to be found across characteristics such as: (1) Number of people in the group (especially so as ‘groups’ staying at caravan sites tend to have much in common with loosely coupled and thus, flexible and ever-changing networks); (2) Age (although people in their early twenties are not among the people interviewed, all other age groups are represented); and (3) Stage in the family life cycle (*i.e.* all stages – except from singles and couples without children in their early twenties – are represented in the study). Drawing on the empirical study’s replication of key findings of Rassing and Lundtorp’s (1999) quantitative study I thus argue that there seems to be no reason why the empirical study and its findings should not, analytically, generalise beyond the 61 informants, upon whom it draws. Furthermore, I argue that the 61 informants included in the study do, at least to some extent, represent Danes staying at Danish caravan sites.

Apart from relying on the 31 interviews, the researcher has relied heavily on observation. Thus, during the fortnight I spent at the caravan site a host of (qualitative) observations were done. In practice, what I did at the site was that I went to one location at the site; sat down; observed people; and then made one contact. Also, when I had done one interview at that specific location, I closed that interview and went to another location; sat down and wrote down initial impressions regarding the

previous interview while I observed people at that location; made one contact there; and so forth. Apart from the obvious effects of such conduct on visitors' willingness to participate in the study, this approach also enabled me to do a host of observations.

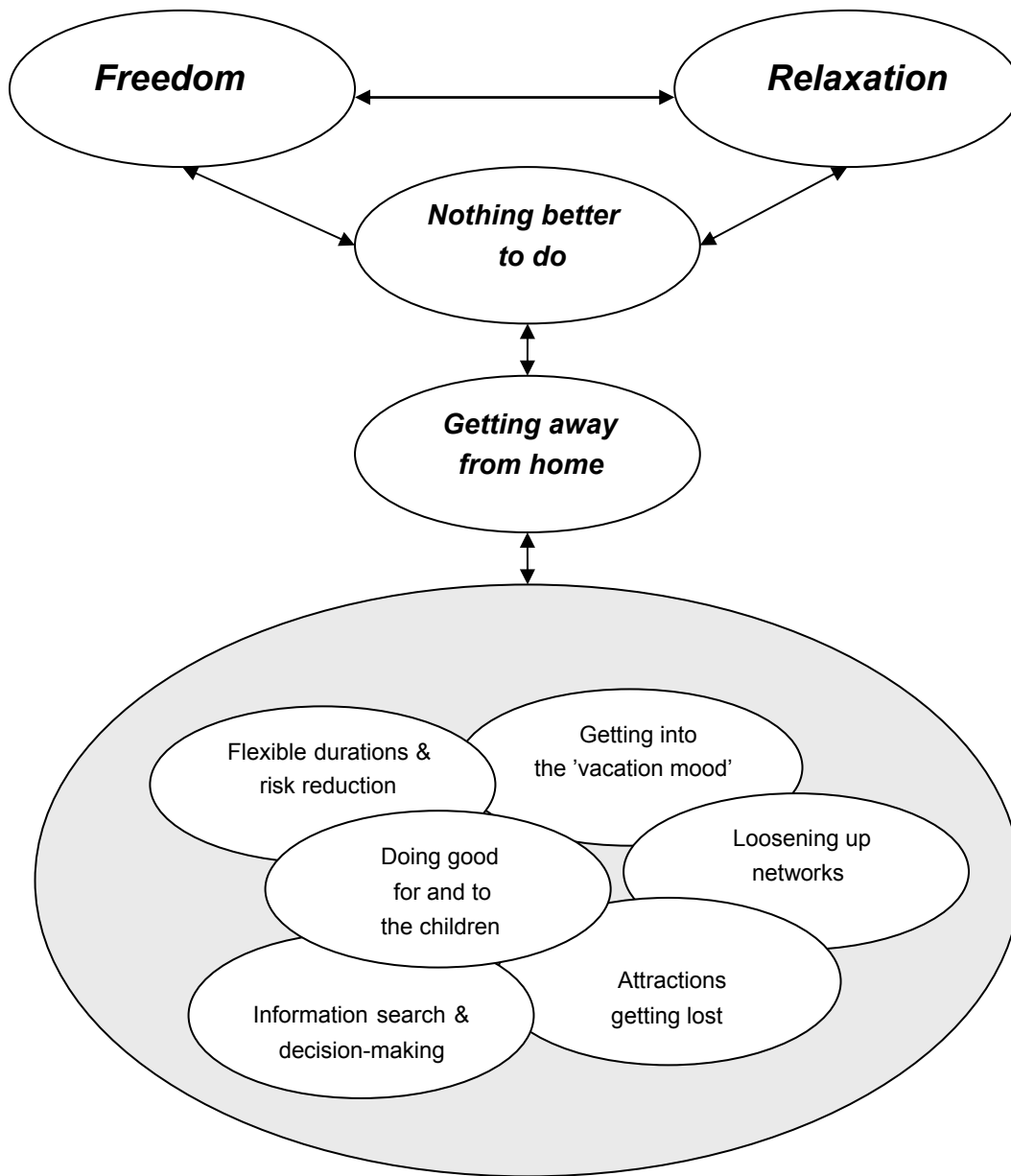
In relation to analysis of the vast amount of observations, one key feature stands out. This feature is that, on all accounts related to behaviour at the caravan site, these observations corroborate the key findings that emerged during analysis of interviews. Thus, sections 4.2 to 4.12 draw equally on interviews' explications of the 'tourist experience' and observations of people at the caravan site. Drawing on the lack of difference between interviews and observations, it thus seems that, although I have only interviewed a few of the site's guests, there seems to be no reason why informants' accounts for the 'tourist experience' do not generalise across more of the visitors staying at this particular caravan site at any particular day during the month of July (scenarios of visitors who only sleep at the caravan site excluded).

4.2. Inductively Derived Framework

Following individual analysis of the 31 interviews, meta-matrices were constructed in order to draw conclusions across these interviews (as well as across the multiplicity of observations done at the site). These matrices are inductively derived and thus, a major challenge while producing them was the search for codes that generalise across all interviews (without missing the central elements of each individual interview). Also, due to the fact that both codes and relationships between codes are grounded in informants' explications more than they reflect theory, it is rather difficult to establish trustworthiness of codes and relations without relying on informants' own voices. Thus, trustworthiness of codes and relations between codes is not discussed at present; instead this is an integral part of sections 4.2 to 4.11, in which I account for contents of codes and relations between the various codes.

However, across the 31 interviews as well as across observations, a rather robust set of findings emerged. In figure 1, the codes that qualify as end results of numerous iterations of analysis across interviews as well as the relations between these focal codes are visualised.

Figure 1. Focal Codes and Relationships between these Codes

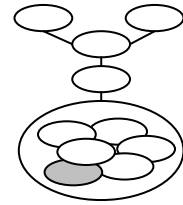


As suggested by figure 1, reasons why informants stay at a caravan site as well as experiences during the vacation can be categorised into different groups. Furthermore, such categories seem to relate to different levels of abstraction. Thus, at lower levels of abstraction, informants find that categories such as ‘possibilities for shortening or stretching stays; ‘possibilities for doing good to and for the children’; ‘getting into the ‘vacation’ mood’; ‘engaging in word-of-mouth communication’; ‘loosening up networks’; and ‘not getting around to seeing attractions’ adequately describe their tourism endeavour. Furthermore, the six categories introduced above all qualify as attributes, or properties, of the entity ‘getting away from home’. For example, ‘getting into the vacation mood’ is

a positive state that is only (or at least more) attainable if informants go away from home. As another example, ‘doing good for, and to, children’ is a key reason why it is important for informants to go *away* during their vacation. However, at a higher level of abstraction, most informants seem to relate reasons why they are spending their vacation at a Danish caravan site to ‘having nothing better to do’. Thus, the primary reason why informants (wish to) get away from home is that it is a means to the end ‘having nothing better to do’. Whereas these two categories (‘nothing better to do’ and ‘getting away’) seem highly interrelated as well as highly dependent on the specific type of tourism, in which informants engage (*i.e.* staying at a caravan site), the remaining two categories of findings seem to qualify as findings at the highest level of abstraction and thus, these two categories (*i.e.* relaxation and freedom) seem to relate to tourism in general more than they are uniquely attributable to tourists, who go to caravan sites. Consequently, these two categories qualify as the most abstract and universal of the categories accounted for in this paper and henceforward, especially these two categories should replicate findings of other studies regarding reasons why people (wish to) go on (various types of) vacation.

Drawing on figure 1, a key finding of the empirical study is thus that it suggests reasons why Danes visit a Danish caravan site to relate to different levels of abstraction. Drawing on the rationale underlying means-end-chain theories (Gutman, 1997; Nielsen *et al*, 1998; Reynolds & Olson, 2001), we may argue as follows: At the lowest level of abstraction, we find ‘attributes’ of staying at a caravan site as well as immediate, or lower level, consequences of such attributes. For example, in comparison with packaged tours or rental of a holiday house, stays at caravan sites are not characterised by pre-specified or ‘fixed’ durations (*i.e.* stays at caravan sites are highly flexible in regard to the attribute ‘duration’). Furthermore, informants ascribe positive consequences to ‘flexibility regarding duration’ due to the fact that such flexibility enables them to shorten, or stretch, length of stay. At higher levels of abstraction, informants find that flexibility, positively, affects probability of leaving home (getting away) and thus, flexibility regarding duration offers them better opportunities for having ‘nothing better to do’ than vacations with ‘fixed’ durations do (*i.e.* ‘flexibility regarding duration’ reduces risk associated with going away from home due to the higher levels of reversibility inherent in the ability to stretch or shorten stays). Finally, at the highest level of abstraction informants associate the attribute ‘flexibility regarding duration’ and consequences hereof with the values ‘freedom’ and ‘relaxation’.

In the subsections that follow, elaborations on the content of the various categories are offered. Furthermore, relations between categories are also discussed in further depths in the forthcoming sections of the paper.



4.3. Information Search and Vacation Decision-Making

Concordant with Marcussen's (1998) findings, not all informants engage in (active and/or external) information searches prior to deciding on going to a Danish caravan site; nor do they engage extensively in information gathering prior to deciding on going to the specific caravan site (although most informants arrange their vacation as early on as in the months of December and/or January). For example, a key characteristic is that the few informants who account for extensive, active information searches (e.g. informants who called upon different caravan sites in a particular region of Denmark in order to get a brochure) cannot recall exactly how they generated an evoked set of sites; nor do these evoked sets seem to hinge on a pre-specified set of evaluation criteria (apart from informants' explication of criteria such as 'having a pool and/or playgrounds'). For example, an informant who is part of a group comprised of three couples and their children who go on vacation together every second year recalls the following in relation to information search:

"One of us finds a number of caravan sites at which we might stay. The only prerequisites are that the site needs to have a pool, playgrounds, something for the kids and something for us to look at too. Then we look at information on those sites"

[Interview 10 – author's translation]

In the same vein, informants made comments such as:

"There has to be a pool ... and fresh water [lakes] ... and a nice region of Denmark"

[Interview 21 – author's translation]

"There has to be nice playgrounds, and a pool is nice"

[Interview 26 – author's translation]

"When we bring our grandchildren along there has to be a pool and playgrounds, but when we go caravanning alone we seek the more simple sites"

[Interview 25 – author's translation]

"It has been a big deal [when deciding on a particular site] that there is a pool area, but also the surroundings. I think it has been those two things"

[Interview 27 – author's translation]

However, in opposition to the quotations above that reflect informants' reliance on specific criteria when choosing a caravan site to visit, one informant argued that:

“There need not be something special at a caravan site, no activities are necessities...It is of no use to have too great expectations”

[Interview 22 – author’s translation]

Also, an elderly couple who has been caravanning for 40 years says that:

“This time, our grandchildren and children decided which caravan site we went to and they chose this one because it has got a pool area, that was what they wanted. Otherwise we choose sites on the basis of a guide on caravan sites – rather randomly”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotations above, it seems that informants do not rely on an elaborate set of criteria when (deciding on) going to a Danish caravan site. On the contrary, apart from the criteria ‘pool’ and ‘playgrounds’ adopted by informants spending their vacation with children, informants seem not to rely on pre-defined evaluative criteria when planning to go caravanning in Denmark; nor do informants rely extensively on marketer-controlled sources of information when planning such vacations. Furthermore, most of the (indeed few) informants, who relied on marketer-controlled sources of information during their information searches have experienced gaps between what was promised by marketers and what they actually experienced when (arriving) at a caravan site. For example, a couple who – this year - undertook active information search by means of a guidebook on caravan sites followed by internet searches for specific sites argued that:

“We became very fascinated by a specific caravan site when looking at it on the internet, but we became so disappointed when we arrived. Our daughter and I agreed that it was a case of false advertising. It is very difficult to decide on a site when you see them on the internet and that is the reason why it is so nice that you can come and look around and then decide whether you want to stay at the site. It is difficult to decide on a site before arriving; you need to be there and feel the atmosphere”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotation above, informants seem to compensate for lack of (adequate) information search by means of visiting sites. Thus, if a site is not what informants wanted it to be/if it doesn’t meet their expectations, they will leave the site shortly and thus, it seems that informants reduce negative side-effects of lack of adequate information search *prior* to their vacation by ensuring reversibility of choices *during* their vacation. Thus, informants do not rely extensively on marketer-controlled sources of information prior to going on vacation because they do not trust such sources; or at least they do not trust such sources to enable them to make the ‘right’ decisions. For example, regarding websites and brochures on caravan sites, informants argued:

“[Looking at caravan sites on the web:] Pictures are so easy to manipulate”

[Interview 23 – author’s translation]

“It is difficult to evaluate caravan sites before you arrive at them. I mean, the brochure we received from this site showed that there were all sorts of strange things here; some of them aren’t here – maybe they have been here once in the past, I don’t know? Nevermind, it will be okay, I think. Anyway, we have planned to stay here for a fortnight, but if we don’t feel like that, we can go home (perhaps coming back later) or do something different – it is no big deal, it only takes 30 minutes to drive back home”

[Interview 17 – author’s translation]

In sum, more informants argue that reliance on marketer-controlled information (e.g. websites) during the information search phase is problematic (or even worthless) because caravan sites cannot be evaluated on the basis of such information. For example, regarding lack of appropriateness of marketer-controlled information one informant made the comment replicated below:

“You need to go out to the caravan sites and ‘smell the air’ [to find the kind of caravan site that is right for you]”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

Instead of active, external information searches relying on marketer-controlled sources of information, to the extent that most informants engaged in information search primarily they relied on their own, previous experiences with Danish caravan sites and/or word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. For example, an informant who spends his three weeks of summer holidays touring the country on motorcycle answered a question as to whether he relied on marketer-controlled sources of information prior to the three weeks of touring as follows:

“No, no, not at all ...I have toured a lot before and been to a lot of caravan sites, so you remember the pearls”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

Also, a woman who usually goes abroad with her husband and children, but who – this year – stays at a Danish caravan site due to their youngest child only being 8 weeks old argues that they did not engage in external information search prior to going to this particular caravan site. Instead, the reason why they came to this site was explicated as follows:

“When I was young, we were here and it was great. And then we heard from someone that it has gotten really great after the pool area came, and then we decided to go here

where there is something for the kids. If there is no pool or playgrounds time gets too long for the children”

[Interview 12 – author’s translation]

In the same vein, one informant said that:

“We have been to this caravan site before and we like it and it is close to where we live, so we chose to go here again”

[Interview 23 – author’s translation]

Apart from reliance on their own experiences, WOM seems to be of utmost importance in relation to informants’ choice of caravan site. For example, regarding WOM, a couple who has never been to a caravan site before said that:

“Going to a caravan site – isn’t that all about word of mouth? That’s what we have heard; some people like to go caravanning and that’s the reason why we have tried it this year. Is it also a thing for us?”

[Interview 4 – author’s translation]

Apart from the couple who has never tried camping before and who defines WOM as what they *heard* that made them try this type of vacation, informants did not enact WOM to be a strategy solely applied when searching for information. On the contrary, across informants, dissemination of their own tourism experiences by means of WOM communication seemed equally important to gathering information by means of WOM. Thus, for the informants, upon whom this paper draws, WOM is *not* ‘just’ a device for information gathering. Instead, WOM communication seems to qualify as an important part of social interaction whenever they meet people, who have also been caravanning and/or when they meet people, who plan to do so. For example, a couple who has been caravanning ever since their daughter was born 10 years ago (and a couple who goes caravanning in Denmark every second year and in Southern Europe every other year) says that they find caravan sites in the following way:

“That is what we hear from people, sometimes brochures, but mostly what we hear from other people who have been there. Because one thing is to look at pictures, but it is not always the easiest thing to find [a nice site]”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

In accordance with the quotation above, regarding reliance on own experiences and/or WOM informants made a host of comments, some of which were:

“I heard that this should be a very nice site and it isn’t that far from home”

[Interview 31 – author’s translation]

“We have never gone to a caravan site that we haven’t heard about before going ... we also recommend sites to other people, when we talk to them”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

“You hear a little here and say a little there, right? That’s the way it goes. It is not as if we sit down with a guidebook and look at all the lists of activities that the different caravan sites offer. Not at all, it is more like ‘okay, then we drive there’”

[Interview 22 – author’s translation]

“When choosing a caravan site, we look at the guidebook on caravan sites, or we hear something, talk to people about sites”

[Interview 25 – author’s translation]

“We are at this site because one of our children’s class teacher arranged a trip to this site for the class and the parents last year and it was great to try, so that is why we went here”

[Interview 26 – author’s translation]

“We chose this site because my father has been a ‘regular’ here, so we knew the site beforehand, we have been here before”

[Interview 27 – author’s translation]

“We started coming here because we had some friends who stayed here and we were here for a birthday party they gave at this site and we just got bitten with this site and the life here”

[Interview 28 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotations above, it seems that Danes staying at Danish caravan sites rely heavily on own experiences and WOM when they choose a caravan site to visit. One line of reasoning that might explain informants’ exceptional reliance on own experiences and WOM during the decision-making process is that caravan sites are perceived as being very different from one another while unique characteristics of each site cannot be evaluated before actually visiting them. For example, a couple who has been caravanning for 40 years agrees that:

“There is a huge difference between caravan sites”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

Furthermore, other informants made comments such as:

“It is very much [the owners] and their way of doing things that attract us”

[Interview 28 – author’s translation]

“Your holiday experience depends much on the caravan site you stay at, and on the people working there”

[Interview 30 – author’s translation]

Consequently, it seems that the holiday experience depends heavily on factors that cannot be evaluated before having that experience and further, it seems that the most reliable information on such factors are own experiences and WOM.

Apart from the roles that own experiences and WOM play, regarding vacation decision-making processes, more informants say that children are of major importance. For example, a couple who has never stayed at a caravan site before says that:

“We talk a lot with the children about where we want to go on holiday. For example, our children have heard a lot about camping from their friends at home, who have been to caravan sites. The children would very much like us to buy a caravan ... We are not going to do that... but trying to go camping is caused by to the children’s talking about it”

[Interview 4 – author’s translation]

Elaborating on children’s level of involvement in the vacation decision-making process and especially during the information search phase, informants also made comments such as:

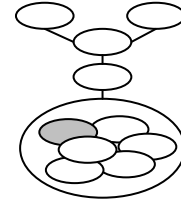
“In the months of March or April, we always look at the guidebook on caravan sites with our children, talking with them about regions we would like to go to and then deciding on a site. We talk a lot about where we are going, yes we do”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

“We are here because of the cosiness of it and because there are 4 children with us. And it is a friendly place for children...Quickly children find someone to play with....And more or less, we go on vacation for the children’s sake”

[Interview 27 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the two quotations above, it seems that children influence decision-making processes regarding vacations directly (by being involved in the various sub-processes of such processes) as well as indirectly ('vacating for the children's sake'). In section 5 further discussions on children's direct influences on decision-making processes are offered whereas the notion 'for the children's sake' is further discussed in section 4.4.



4.4. Flexibility Regarding Duration and Risk Reduction

As mentioned previously, stays at caravan sites are characterised by highly flexible duration spans. Furthermore, informants ascribe positive consequences to 'flexibility regarding duration' as such flexibility enables them to shorten, or stretch, length of stay. At higher levels of abstraction, informants find that flexibility, positively, affects probability of leaving home (getting away) and thus, flexibility regarding duration offers them better opportunities for having 'nothing better to do' than vacations with 'fixed' durations do. In relation to 'shortening or stretching stays' and positive effects hereof, informants made a host of comments. However, all of the different comments regarding shortening and/or stretching of stays at caravan sites seem to relate to four underlying lines of reasoning.

First, a line of comments relates to the ability to stretch stays at caravan sites and positive effects hereof. Thus, in regard to stretching of stays informants made comments such as:

"We have flexibility. We have 3 weeks of holiday and the only rule is that we would like to be home for the last couples of days; the garden gets overgrown during 3 weeks"

[Interview 1 – author's translation]

"When we find a place [caravan site] where it is great to stay then we stay a little longer ... Also, immediately when we arrived I told [my boyfriend]: I have a very good feeling about this place"

[Interview 11 – author's translation]

"If you go to a hotel or a holiday house then during a week, more or less, you have spend your savings whereas when you go caravanning it is much easier to say 'well okay, we take an extra week'"

[Interview 12 – author's translation]

Apart from comments concerning ability to stretch stays and favourability of such ability, informants made comments concerning ability to shorten stays and positive attitudes towards such ability. However, across informants two separate lines of reasoning relate to shortening of stays. Thus,

some informants relate shortening of stays to the ability to go home/end the vacation. For example, informants argue that:

“It is important to be able to shorten your stay. For example, if it is bad weather, then you can say, then we do something else: So the freedom in deciding what to do and when to do it”

[Interview 30 – author’s translation]

“When caravanning you can also say ‘okay, it has just been raining and raining for a fortnight, so now we go home’. You are not tied up that way, whereas if you rent a holiday house it is more like ‘we better get our money’s worth’ and then you stay till the last minute no matter what”

[Interview 12 – author’s translation]

“We are caravanning for a fortnight, but if it rains the whole time, you can pack your things and go home earlier”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

“If the weather gets really bad, then we go home; being at home, that is much easier in really bad weather”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

“I think part of the reason why I chose a site close to home was that if it isn’t for us then it is easy to go home. That was important, especially as it is our first time being at a caravan site”

[Interview 31 – author’s translation]

Whereas the quotations above relate to one positive effect of ability to shorten stays (*i.e.* going home, especially, if the weather is bad), other informants argue that the ability to shorten stays enables them to go somewhere else for the rest of their vacation. For example, these informants argue that:

“If the weather is bad you can pack your things and go. You can’t do that if you take a packaged tour. The weather is not fine in Denmark this year. So during these days of canoeing we have decided that tonight we go home and then tomorrow, we take off and go to Southern Germany. So our vacation is not pre-planned all that much”

[Interview 3 – author’s translation]

“Our stay at this caravan site is a break on our way to another region of Denmark. It is quite easy just to move in at a Danish caravan site; if you don’t like it you can just find another one”

[Interview 5– author’s translation]

“This year, we started [our vacation] at a caravan site that just wasn’t us ... it was nice and clean, but the atmosphere did not fit us – we stayed 2 nights and then we left for the next site ... It only takes a couple of hours to pack your things and go to another place”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

“You can always take your caravan and go elsewhere; you cannot do that if you take a packaged tour”

[Interview 17 – author’s translation]

“We haven’t tried that [shortening a stay], but if the site doesn’t meet your expectations then you find another site”

[Interview 27 – author’s translation]

Finally, apart from ability to shorten stays two couples argue that flexibility regarding duration of stays enables them to go on *short* vacations, or, as they put it:

“This time, we are only caravanning for a couple of days because we couldn’t find the time for a longer stay, so we had to do with a couple of days”

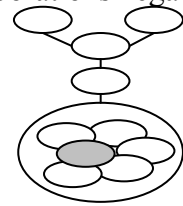
[Interview 22 – author’s translation]

“We are new at camping, so we are just here for a couple of days”

[Interview 31 – author’s translation]

In sum, informants’ positive perceptions of ‘flexibility of duration’ seem to cover a spectrum going from ‘being able to stay a little longer’ towards ‘going home or abroad when the weather is not good’ and ‘going to another caravan site if unsatisfied with a particular site’. Thus, reversibility of decisions on how to spend your vacation seems to be highly appreciated by informants because such reversibility ‘lowers the stakes’ of, initially, making the wrong decision on where to spend the vacation. Thus, abilities to shorten or stretch stays seem highly appreciated by informants due to the fact that possibilities for shortening or stretching stays increase reversibility of vacation decisions and henceforward, such possibilities reduce perceived risk regarding vacation decisions and ‘purchases’. Finally, reversibility of decisions on ‘spending your summer holiday at a Danish caravan site’ seems to qualify as a risk reducing factor and henceforward, reversibility of such decisions in-

creases likelihood of going away from home during the summer holiday. Elaborations regarding this line of reasoning are offered in section 5 of the paper.



4.5. Going on Vacation; Doing Good for and to Children

According to all informants, children socialise more with other children, and they do so easier and more independently of adults, at caravan sites than when staying at a holiday house or when going on a packaged tour. Furthermore, informants also argue that children's interactions with other children are less complicated (or at least less pre-planned) than are such interactions at home. To all the informants, who go camping with their children and/or grandchildren (and/or have done so in the past), the possibility for children to interact and socialise with other children qualifies as a major reason why they visit a caravan site. Thus, across all informants who go on vacation in the company of children, doing good for the children qualifies as a key reason why they spend their vacation at a caravan site, or, as one couple argues:

"We have asked our children and they say that this stay at a caravan site is the best type of vacation they have ever tried"

[Interview 26 – author's translation]

However, 'doing good for and to children' can be divided into individual, although interrelated, themes, each of which acts as one dimension of the construct 'doing good for and to children'. These dimensions are introduced in sections 4.5.1 to 4.5.5.

4.5.1. Good for Children

'Doing good for the children' is important to informants due to the fact that they find that quality of their own tourist experience depends on the children having a good time, or in the words of informants:

"We have [a daughter]. There are lots of children to play with; that is why we go caravanning. If she has a nice time, then we have a nice vacation"

[Interview 21 – author's translation]

"I don't care to spend my holiday at a holiday house. We do it for the children and at a caravan site it takes 10 minutes for them to find someone to play with ... If the children are happy, then we are happy. Your holiday can get so long if there is nothing for the children and you need to activate them the whole time. Not that we don't want to be with them, but they also need to get away from us and be with other children"

[Interview 12 – author's translation]

“There is more for the kids than if you take a packaged tour... Also some at the other kids back home only get away for a week’s packaged tour and then the parents have spend all their money and then they just hang out at home for the rest of their summer holiday. When you can you should do something for the kids, making sure they have fun, doing things with them”

[Interview 17 – author’s translation]

“8 years ago, I got a caravan as a present and I couldn’t afford to take my kids abroad for the holidays and then caravanning was ideal because there were lots of children for mine to play with... Kids just go to the playground and immediately, they get friends”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

According to informants, children’s having a good time is a prerequisite if adults are to have a nice vacation. Moreover, especially staying at a caravan site seems to ensure that children have a good time. For example, one informant argues:

“I say: Caravanning is the best thing there is for children. On Monday we told the kids that we were going to the caravan site on Wednesday, and Monday evening the kids had packed their things and wanted to go here. They simply love it”

[Interview 14 – author’s translation]

Especially, informants relate children’s enjoying to stay at a caravan site to the superiority of caravan sites in relation to children’s playing with other children. A few of the multiple comments regarding this aspect of staying at a caravan site are reproduced below.

“The children so enjoy to play here ... they always find someone to play with”

[Interview 1 – author’s translation]

“[What the best thing for children at a caravan site is?] Playmates, playmates, finding someone to play with”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

“We have tried holiday houses for some years. We have three children and it is better at a caravan site; better opportunities for finding playmates and other things to do...It has been so great for the children; we have hardly seen them [laughing]”

[Interview 26 – author’s translation]

“The children get to go out and get some fresh air and meet other children...It is nice to see the children like this; it is nice to give them that opportunity”

[Interview 22 – author’s translation]

“It’s life! Also for the children; there is always someone to play with”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

“It never takes more than around 40 minutes before the children find someone to play with; and then they have fun...and if they don’t want to play they can also have a cosy time”

[Interview 30 – author’s translation]

“We arrived 3 hours ago and I have hardly seen my son since that”

[Interview 31 – author’s translation]

Across the comments reproduced above, informants emphasise the positive aspects of children being able to have a good time. Furthermore, informants emphasise the ability of children to have a good time *without* relying on adults to facilitate play, enjoyment, and/or entertainment. Thus, a key reason why informants stay at a Danish caravan site is that they deem it ‘good for the children’ and henceforward, good for themselves, or, in the words of one couple:

“As you get older, you don’t necessarily have the same interests at the kids, so you have to find a caravan site with lots of activities for the kids ... it is best for the adults if the (grand)children can entertain themselves some of the time, you go on vacation in order for everybody to have a good time”

[Interview 6 – author’s translation]

Closing this section, informants thus choose to go to a caravan site in order for both adults and children to have a good time.

4.5.2. Good for Children-[Grand]Parent Interactions

Whereas the preceding section focuses on children’s having a good time – independently of adults – this section focuses on an interrelated strand of findings; *i.e.* informants’ lines of reasoning suggesting caravan sites to be excellent at facilitating children-parent interactions. Thus, apart from children’s interacting with other children, informants also argue that interactions between children and (grand)parents are a valued dimension of stays at caravan sites. For example, informants argued:

“It is that the family is together ... that you are so close”

[Interview 5 – author’s translation]

“Putting up the tent together, having to do things together, no TV, it is another way of being with you kid – a wholesome way I think”

[Interview 31 – author’s translation]

“The children like to help making dinner and laying the table”

[Interview 2 – author’s translation]

“The children have looked forward to going here. Even though we are quite close to one another at home, then we are a bit closer when we are here”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

“You can enjoy being with your [grand]children”

[Interview 25 – author’s translation]

“Here we sit down and eat breakfast together, at home we hardly ever have breakfast together...that is nice. You can do that because there is nothing you have to hurry on with. And all the time you agree on what you are going to do next”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotations above, informants find that a key reason to stay at a caravan site is that they are closer to their children. Thus, physically as well as psychologically reduction of distance between children and parents seems utmost important to informants’ choices of how to spend their vacations.

4.5.3. Children-Related Decision Criteria

Elaborating on the discussion opened in section 4.3, the only evaluative criteria informants, explicitly, argued were decisive for their choosing to spend vacation at a Danish caravan site as well as for their choosing of a particular caravan site relate to (enactment of) children’s needs, wants, and wishes. For example, when asked to explicate criteria activated during the ‘evaluation of alternatives’ phase, informants made the comments reproduced below.

“A nice caravan site? There has to be a pool and a playground for the children’s sake”

[Interview 3 – author’s translation]

“Nice for the children; all sort of activities; pool and playgrounds and a lot of events”

[Interview 29 – author’s translation]

“We are three families spending our vacation together every second year and we stay at a caravan site because we like it and there are lots of things for the children”

[Interview 10 – author’s translation]

“We often bring our grandchildren along when we go caravanning ... without the parents being here. This time, our grandchildren and children decided which caravan site we went to and they chose this one because it has got a pool area, that was what they wanted”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotations above, caravan sites are favoured by informants due to their ‘possessing attributes’ (activities) that children appreciate. Consequently, it seems that the decision to spend the summer vacation at a caravan site is much influenced by (grand)parents’ wishes to choose a type of vacation fulfilling children’s needs. Further discussion on these findings is offered in section 5, part of which focuses on the distinctive phases of vacation decision-making processes.

4.5.4. You Need not Supervise the Children

As mentioned previously, doing good for children qualifies as a key reason why informants spend their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site. However, to the researcher, initially, it seemed that a Danish caravan site qualifies as but one place where children can have a good time with other children. However, when asked why especially a Danish caravan site is a means to the end ‘children having a good time’, informants argue that a unique characteristic of Danish caravan sites is that they qualify as a ‘safe environment’, *i.e.* a place where children can run around and play without being supervised the whole time. For example, informants explicated this line of reasoning as follows:

“The children can just run around at the caravan site – they have no trouble finding other children to play with. If you go to Spain or so, you have to keep an eye on them all the time. Even our kids who aren’t that out-going have no trouble finding kids to play with at a caravan site”

[Interview 4 – author’s translation]

“It is safer, it is like a closed, controlled area. When you are staying at the site you keep an eye out [taking care of each other]”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

Apart from informants arguing that a valued dimension of caravan sites is that children need not be supervised the entire time, one informant argues as follows:

“At a holiday house, the parents have to look after and be around the kids the whole time, you need not do that at a caravan site. You have to keep an eye on the kids at a caravan site, but you need not keep them preoccupied”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

Thus, apart from the fact that parents’ supervision of children is less crucial at a Danish caravan site, this informant argues that, when staying at a caravan site, parents need not activate children in any way resembling the required level of activation if staying at e.g. a holiday house. Consequently, quality of grown-ups’ tourism experience seems to rely both on the fact that a Danish caravan site qualifies as a ‘safe environment’ and on the fact that adults need not ‘entertain’ or ‘activate’ children during the whole vacation.

4.5.5. Teenagers

Whereas the preceding sections emphasise the fact that staying at a caravan site is good for children, this section focuses on the unique characteristics of teenagers and reasons why these characteristics, often, result in teenagers *not* having a good time at a caravan site. For example, one couple argued:

“It has been great for our son in the past. But he has just turned 14, so now he is in that age group where he is like ‘oh no, what if someone speaks to me?’ So he is not with us this time. But before, there are many children, and lots of things happening all around them. If you rent a holiday house, they don’t play with other children”

[Interview 7 – author’s translation]

In the same vein, other informants having with teenagers argued:

“Now my son has turned 16 and he was bored, so he has gone to stay with someone we know”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

“When children grow older they become more shy, less impulsive. I can see that in our 12 years-old son; he has started looking after his younger brothers instead. Teenagers have a harder time socialising”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

Further, regarding reasons why teenagers do not (always) have a good time at a caravan site, other informants argued as follows:

“It is important that there is also room for teenagers. At some caravan sites, they are hardly allowed to breath after 11 p.m. ... it is great if there is a place for them to hang out at, at night. It is great if they have somewhere to be at nights”

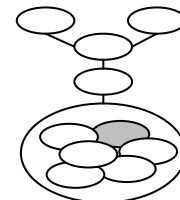
[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

“When she [their daughter] becomes a teenager, then we are going to sell the caravan. Yes, if she looses interest for this then we will probably not go on caravanning. It is for her sake that we bought a caravan”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotations above it seems that having teenagers qualifies as a key reason *not* to spend vacation at a caravan site, *i.e.* most caravan sites simply do not offer the sorts of activities appreciated by teens.

Concluding on section 4.5 it seems that ‘doing good for children’ is a key reason why Danes stay at Danish caravan sites during the summer. Also, it seems that the notion ‘doing good for children’ relates to children’s having a good time with other children as well as to parents (and grandparents) having a nice time together with their children. Thus, the empirical study suggests ‘doing good for children’ to be quite decisive during decision-making processes, the end result of which is the decision to spend vacation at a Danish caravan site.



4.6. Getting into the ‘Vacation’ Mood

Across interviews, informants argue that it is much easier to get into the vacation mood if one leaves home during the holiday. Thus, this code concerns the kind of experiences informants expect from a stay at a Danish caravan site. Furthermore, more informants argue that stays at Danish caravan sites enable them to get away from home while minimising the travel dimension. Also, informants argue that it is much easier to get into the ‘vacation mood’ at a caravan site than it is at other types of accommodations. Furthermore, they argue that a key feature of ‘getting into the vacation mood’ is the loosening up of networks. Although the two constructs ‘getting into the vacation mood’ and ‘loosening up networks’ are highly interdependent, a deliberate choice is made to discuss the two constructs in separate sections of the paper.

Primarily, getting into the ‘vacation mood’ is easier when staying at a caravan site due to the ‘social’ dimension of caravan sites (being positively influenced by people around you who are already in the ‘vacation mood’). For example, informants put this line of reasoning as follows:

“There is something social about a caravan site. Something you don’t find in a holiday house for example. At a caravan site you say your hellos and very quickly the children find other children to play with. All people are equal at a caravan site and you talk with all sorts of people ... you don’t know who is who”

[Interview 3 – author’s translation]

“Danish caravan sites are more secure and safe than cities ... because you socialise and keep an eye on each others things and children; I think that is part of the socialising dimension of camping”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

Although the quotations above focus on different issues, they all reflect the idea that caravan sites are somehow different from other places; a difference that makes people act differently, socialising more, and getting more into the vacation mood. Furthermore, ‘getting into the vacation mood’ seems closely related to getting away from schedules and planning. For example, one couple said that:

“Once, with my brother and sister-in-law, we tried to take a week’s vacation where everything was pre-planned, every day had a schedule ... that was damn hard , when we got home, we really needed a vacation: We were more bombed out when we came home, than we were when we left...That was not vacation; getting up every morning, getting into the car, driving somewhere, going around there for hours, getting into the car, getting back to the caravan site, get something to eat, get to bed, and start all over the next morning ... That is not vacation; that is stress”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

Also, an important dimension of the vacation mood is argued to be the way, in which one interacts with, and enacts, other people. For example, regarding this dimension informant argued as follows:

“It is nice to be here, people are very nice; also you can tell that the people working here enjoy it”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

“I remember once there was a terrible blizzard and I think I was the only one who walked to work that morning. But all the people I met that morning said hallo and it is like ...if there is a blizzard or something like the 11th of September, you talk about that. Here you just talk with people about nothing, but it is the same way, you are concerned, you care much more about other people”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

“We are here for our daughter’s sake, but it is true that you talk more with people and is in another mode and it is so relaxing”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

“You talk more with other people when caravanning. It is not as if you just walk up to people, but you talk a little with people here and there. And when walking by you talk to people...people are relaxing, you know”

[Interview 22 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotations above, at a Danish caravan site people seem to ‘enact’ one another differently than they do in other contexts. Furthermore, especially people seem to enact others more positively when staying at a Danish caravan site. The pieces of interviews reproduced below elaborate on this line of reasoning.

“Usually, I would not talk to people I meet in the streets, no way. But at a caravan site it is more like ‘hello’, ‘hey’, ‘so you are from that region of Denmark? – so are we’, ‘have you tried this and that’”

[Interview 12 – author’s translation]

“You trust people more when your are at a caravan site”

[Interview 14 – author’s translation]

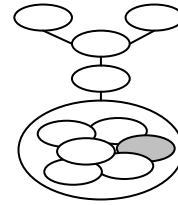
“If children get lost, a caravan site is no bigger than they will be found”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

“The fact that you are so close to other people, I think that closeness [at a caravan site] is important”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

In section 4.6, I elaborate on the effects of enactment of others while staying at a Danish caravan site on the ways, in which people interact during such stays.



4.7. Loosening up Networks

Apart from the interactions with ‘strangers’ at caravan sites mentioned in section 4.6, informants also argue that caravan sites enable them to loosen up networks and henceforward, they get closer to people they already know (especially friends and relatives). Furthermore, informants argue that the positive enactment of others at a caravan sites makes people interact more during their stays at such a site. Moreover, some informants, explicitly, argue that the fact that you interact more with other people at a caravan site qualifies as an utmost positive dimension of such stays. The arguments reproduced below are concerned with the ‘interaction-oriented’ dimension of reasons why people choose to spend their vacation at a Danish caravan site. Thus, this code concerns the issue that informants change context (going away from home) in order to act (and enact others) differently than they do at home.

“Talking to people; we like that. Some people that we got to know last year we were here are arriving today and some others come on Saturday (I think)... I also talked to some friends on the phone just before and they are coming around for a couple of days. And an old friend living in this region has also come by. You can’t do that when staying at a hotel”

[Interview 1 – author’s translation]

“You talk more while you do the dishes than you do on a packaged tour, where you close your door. At a caravan site you sit outside and talk to other people ...the playmates, parents or grandparents of your (grand)children’s playmates... You don’t do that on a packaged tour; there everyone looks after his own interests...We have had friends and relatives coming by the caravan site. When you do a packaged tour you don’t ask the neighbour to come by for a Sunday lunch”

[Interview 2 – author’s translation]

“We have tried to stay at the same caravan site two summers in a row. And during the second stay, you make up for the past year with the people you met last year.”

[Interview 3 – author’s translation]

“At a caravan site, regardless of time of day, you say hello to other people ... it doesn’t matter if you have seen them before”

[Interview 6 – author’s translation]

“We like to have some privacy ... although you know that caravan sites is about socialising, you also need some privacy ... You are more open and social when you stay at a caravan site; there is a lot of people on not so much space; part of this type of vacation

is that you socialise more than you do at home at your own house or at a holiday cottage where everybody minds their own business”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

“If you want to socialise there is always somebody to have a chat with. I think most people who go to a caravan site have similar attitudes towards socialising. You hardly ever meet people who are cross”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

“It is different. You are, physically, a lot closer to other people, so off course it is something different than it is at home...that is part of the cosiness. I don’t think you could do this if you didn’t want anything to do with other people at all. And you have to control yourself a little bit once in a while; not call out to loudly and so; thinking about other people being around. That is wholesome”

[Interview 23 – author’s translation]

Quite contradictory to the many informants, who explicate that a positive dimension of being at a caravan site is that it is very easy to come into contact with other people, some informants argue that ‘loosening up networks’ is not a reason why they go caravanning, or as they put it:

“Having a barbeque with the people in the caravan next to you? No, I don’t feel like doing that, at all. We have friends and relatives coming by, that’s enough. We do not go on vacation in order to talk to other people. We have plenty of that at home, we want to be on our own ... not that we don’t like people, don’t get me wrong. But if I talk to somebody that does not mean that we have to have a barbeque in the evening, no way!”

[Interview 7 – author’s translation]

“You don’t just go to other people’s holiday houses, but you walk straight into their tents. If you want to, it is easy to find people to talk to. But when I go caravanning, I don’t want to talk to other people; I want peace and relaxation”

[Interview 30 – author’s translation]

In sum it thus seems that an aspect of staying at a caravan site that most informants appreciate is *not* that they actually socialise a lot, instead it is the possibility to socialise (if one feels like it) that is highly appreciated. For example, informants argued as follows:

“I think it is entirely up to yourself if you talk to other people a lot. You can do that, if that is what you want to do you can meet all sorts of people. You can do both [talk to

people or keep to yourself]; but if you want to talk to other people it is very easy to do so. And it is easy across countries and everything”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

“At a caravan site it takes 10 minutes for the children to find someone to play with and, very quickly, we also get in contact with other people; you don’t do that when staying at a holiday house. Sometimes we have talked about getting a hotel room when we travel to Southern Europe, but then, you have no idea who is there and then the kids cannot be on their own whereas at a caravan site you know that either other people also have children or they are middle-aged and it is accepted that children run around and everyone looks after them”

[Interview 12 – author’s translation]

“If our children get lost, then someone who knows who we are brings them back. People help a lot. In a holiday house you wouldn’t get that close to other people”

[Interview 14 – author’s translation]

“We have a dog, so we get around the site and then people ask ‘what breed of dog is it?’ or ‘how old is it?’ and then you get talking. [Answering a direct question regarding why you socialise more at caravan sites]: People are so relaxed, they are not stressed”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

“It just, it is cosy!”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

“We keep to ourselves. Some people find friends at a caravan site, we don’t do that. We keep to ourselves for the 8 days we stay at a caravan site”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

“We have visited friends who stayed at a caravan site. But we never tell where we are going, because we don’t want visitors when we go away on vacation”

[Interview 30 – author’s translation]

“We are not that [interested in meeting new people] that is not what we are looking for; in everyday life we have a lot of that, talking to customers, we don’t need that... But you say your hellos and small-talk, it is true that it is easier to talk to people because you live close to one another at a caravan site”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

Also, regarding having friends coming to visit while you stay at a caravan site, a couple living in another region of Denmark says that:

“We have friends in [two cities close to the caravan site] and we have arranged for them to come and visit us while we are here ... [Reasons why the friends come to the caravan site instead of the informants going to visit the friends at their homes:] then they have a reason to get out and get away from home, and there is something for the kids as well, so coming here, they get a one-day trip...It is more cosy, nothing fancy”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

Also, a woman living closer to the site who also have guests while staying at the site says that:

“They also live close by and then they come around with their children, and they enjoy it as well. It is the thing for the children. When you visit people staying at a caravan site you know it is simple, you don’t expect much”

[Interview 23 – author’s translation]

Concluding on this section, especially informants relate ‘getting into the vacation mood’ to the difference in enactment of other people they feel characterises stays at caravan sites. Although they might not socialise a lot, informants do seem to appreciate the possibility to socialise (more than usually) at a caravan site. The three comments reproduced below reflect this line of reasoning.

“You can choose to socialise and you can choose not to”

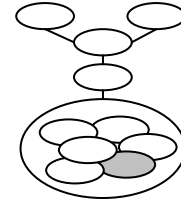
[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

“You can talk with other people and that is what draws us; you meet people while relaxing ... people are more open and motivated for talking when they are at a caravan site”

[Interview 28 – author’s translation]

“Staying at a holiday house, you don’t get the same interaction with other people. At a caravan site, when you meet people you say hello”

[Interview 29 – author’s translation]



4.8. Not Getting around to Visiting Attractions

Traditionally, we argue that visiting attractions ('seeing things') as well as taking part in events, activities, and the likes ('doing things') are important elements of tourism experiences. However, in response to the researcher's question as to whether informants stay at the caravan site during their entire vacation and/or whether they go to other places and especially, to tourist attractions, most informants made comments such as the ones reproduced below:

"It depends on where we are staying and whether we have been there before. Now we are not in such a fuzz to go looking here as we were in the first 1 to 3 years (in which we rushed around). We don't do that any more; now we relax more. If it's the first time we visit a place, we like to go see things... But if we don't get around to see something the first day, we might do it the next day. It is not urgent"

[Interview 1 – author's translation]

"If the children are with us, we stay at the caravan site because they enjoy playing here But yesterday we went to another region of Denmark [laughing]. This is our country, so we have seen most of it before (or we can do that on an ordinary Sunday). So this is just relaxation"

[Interview 2 – author's translation]

"If you ask me [laughing] then I just want to be here, relaxing, enjoying it, letting the children run around playing. But my boyfriend likes to go fishing and so, and we are going to see Sky Mountain [local attraction], but otherwise we have planned just to be here ... I could live here ... If I had brought along enough food, I wouldn't leave the site at all. Getting around to seeing everything is stressful; 'we also have to get around to this and that'; I don't want to do that. It is not that when we come home we are going to sit around saying 'oh no, we didn't see that', not at all"

[Interview 12 – author's translation]

"When at the caravan site, you take a couple of days off, then you go see something, and then you take a couple of extra days off. But we have tried not to get into the car at all while staying at a caravan site for a fortnight"

[Interview 3 – author's translation]

"Depending on the weather we go see things. We have planned things to see in the region before we come ... we have different opportunities and it is not all of the things

that we actually go and see. Also, on your way you hear of other things to see. We have spent some days at the caravan site and some days going and see things.”

[Interview 5 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the quotations above, it seems that whether people stay at the caravan site or go see/do something else is not a decision made in advance (*i.e.* prior to going on vacation). Additional insight into the ways, in which families actually decide whether to stay at the sight or go ‘do and see things’ is offered by the following piece of a conversation that took place between an informant and his 5 years-old son during an interview situation:

“So, what do you want to do this afternoon? Would you like to [suggestions regarding two different nearby attractions], go fishing in the fishing lake or just stay at the caravan?”

[Interview 17 – author’s translation]

Across informants it seems that – although they all have (more or less) comprehensive, mental lists of things they would like to see and attractions they would like to go to – they do not necessarily (have to) go places or see things. Instead, informants argue that it is a good thing if they do not ‘get around’ to all of the things and attractions on their mental lists because their ‘not getting around to it’ means that they have had a great time during their vacation. Thus, according to informants ‘getting around to seeing all the things and visiting all the attractions’ actually indicates that they have been bored and/or that they have not been able to move into the ‘vacation mood’, or, as they put it:

“Now we are caravanning by ourselves [without the busy brother and sister-in-law], so each morning we check how the mood is and ... I mean, we are on vacation in order to get away from the grind and in order to do nothing, if that is what we feel like”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

“We have seen what there is to see. And the children have as good a time here. So no, we don’t feel like doing all that”

[Interview 14 – author’s translation]

“If the weather is nice, we just enjoy ourselves at the caravan site; if the weather is great you don’t want to get into the car and drive around; the children don’t want to anyway”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

“I remember once I was in a big city, in high heels and 35 degrees Celcius, and I was dragged around so see everything and that was no fun, no fun at all. But we had to do it because when you are somewhere like that, it is like, you have to see everything and it is horrible that you have to see all that. But if you don’t then, when you come home, people are like ‘oh no, didn’t you go see this or that?’”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

“During our stay at a caravan site, it is not many days that we go see things. We want to relax and we want to have a cosy time. Our daughter has a great time at the site, and then we can relax”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

“We stay at the site... We live so close by that what we like to see, we (can) see at other times. Had we been farther away from home, we would have gone to see things”

[Interview 23 – author’s translation]

“We do both [stay at the site and go see things]; we take days relaxing and other days we drive somewhere to see something”

[Interview 25 – author’s translation]

“I think that we ‘do’ something, go somewhere, everyday, but it needs not be something ‘big’”

[Interview 27 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the welter of quotations relating to tourists’ choices to either stay at the caravan site or go ‘see and do things’, a key finding is that, apparently, informants have not decided on an exact mix of these two alternatives before they go on vacation. Instead, informants decide whether to ‘stay’ or ‘go’ on a day-to-day basis; making decisions on such matters as they go along. Furthermore, informants explicate negative attitudes towards ‘doing/seeing’ too much during their vacation while no interviews uncovered negative attitudes towards staying at the caravan site during the entire vacation. Consequently, it seems that people spending their summer holiday at a Danish caravan site value the possibility to go ‘see and do things’ during their stay, albeit they might not, actually, use that opportunity. Also, to the extent that they actually go ‘see and do things’, the decision to do so is rather spontaneous. Thus, much decision-making leading to tourists’ leaving the site during the day are made late in the evening before or during breakfast. For example, informants say that:

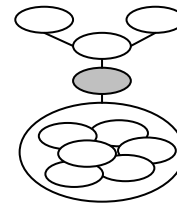
“We are staying at a caravan site in order to be at the site. Actually, in the past when we stayed at a holiday house we were tired of always having to get into the car in order to see or do things”

[Interview 26 – author’s translation]

“We have stayed at the caravan site the entire time since we arrive, but we have talked about going somewhere, it is not as if we stay here the entire week. We have talked about some places that we might go”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

Due to the importance of the ‘stay/go’ decisions made during the vacation, these findings are further discussed in section 5, part of which focuses on the tourism experience and the various elements hereof.



4.9. Getting Away from Home

Across interviews, ‘getting away from home’ is explicated as a decisive reason to go to a caravan site. Thus, ‘getting away from home’ seems focal in relation to decision-making processes leading to informants’ staying at a caravan site. Furthermore, thorough investigation of the welter of quotes relating to ‘getting away from home’ suggests that (apart from the notion ‘having nothing better to do’) ‘getting away from home’ is the concept that triggers most explicit linkages with the other notions included in the framework presented in figure 1. Thus, this code concerns the importance informants ascribe to ‘having no duties’ and ‘the simple life’. Consequently, the structuring of the framework relies on the centrality of the two constructs ‘getting away from home’ and ‘having nothing better to do’ in informants’ knowledge structures regarding why they spend their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site. Explicating reasons why it is important to get away from home during the summer holiday and the nature of the, for example, informants argue as accounted for below:

“It has been relaxing. It is about getting away from home, getting away from your everyday surroundings. We have just lazed about for these days – doing nothing [laughing]”

[Interview 4 – author’s translation]

“We go on vacation in order to get away from home [laughing] and just being ourselves ... In today’s world perhaps we mind our own business, everybody is so busy and there isn’t much time for socialising; you get up early, go to work, pick up the children

on your way home, make dinner, help the kids with their homework, get them to sleep and that was that day; everything is so structured; this is just relaxation”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

“If you get away from home, then you have vacation, you know? You are allowed to be lazy and you can let the days drift by. It is an important part to get away from home, I think it is”

[Interview 10 – author’s translation]

“It is about getting away from home and freedom and deciding for yourself”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the comments reproduced above, it seems important to informants to get away from home in order to relax. Furthermore, informants explicate the reasons why ‘getting away from home’ is necessary if one wishes to relax as follows:

“If you stay at home there are lots of things that need to be done. You need to paint, mow the lawn, remove weeds ... If you get away from home, you do not have to think about anything but relaxing. In today’s world, your everyday life is so stressful and pre-planned from 6 o’clock in the morning till you go to sleep”

[Interview 3 – author’s translation]

“[When staying at home] you can keep on finding things to do”

[Interview 22 – author’s translation]

“When you are at home, you find chores to do”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

“Caravanning gives us the sort of freedom we wish for. If you are at home you have to do something [laughing]”

[Interview 25 – author’s translation]

“When you go away from home, then there is nothing you have to do”

[Interview 30 – author’s translation]

According to the five comments reproduced above, informants find that it is extremely difficult to relax at home because they feel they have to do things (even if that means that you have to ‘find’ things to do). Elaborating on exactly what it is one has to do when being at home (or when staying

at a holiday house) that hinders one's relaxation, informants offered arguments as diverse as the three lines of reasoning reproduced below.

"A holiday house, that is just another house and very quickly, you end up cleaning and organising that, there is more freedom at a caravan site"

[Interview 12 – author's translation]

"At home, you are hung up by time all the time, like 'oh, now it is 2 p.m., then we have to pick up the children, do the shopping, doing this, doing that, here it isn't that important what time it is"

[Interview 12 – author's translation]

"Getting away from home; house and garden. If we are at home, then we do something. Here there is no laundry and no nothing [laughing]"

[Interview 15 – author's translation]

Also, a couple explicates the difficulties of getting into a mood enabling them to relax as follows:

"In spring, when we start caravanning, it is actually difficult to get used to doing nothing, there is nothing to do, that is very hard, it is hard to start relaxing. Actually, it is damn boring the first couple of weekends ... very boring, you get restless until you learn to settle down during weekends. You have to get used to relaxing and doing nothing"

[Interview 21 – author's translation]

The quotation above reflects informants' reasons why it is utmost important to get away from home if one wishes to do nothing quite accurately. Thus, the entity 'being at home' does not merely reflect that informants actually have to do things when they are at home. Instead, foremost 'having to do things when you are at home' seems to reflect informants' inability to *choose* to do nothing when they are at home; or at least inability to do so and feel good about it.

Elaborating on the mental differences between 'staying at a caravan site' and 'being at home', informants made the following comments regarding 'going back home when the vacation ends':

"Well, now we have to go back to everyday life, but I would say that when you have spent a week here you can really need that. You want it all... but then again; when you have been at home for a couple of days, you think that caravanning is great"

[Interview 14 – author's translation]

“The worst thing about going home is the unpacking – because then you are like ‘oh, it better be put nicely into the cupboards’ and everything has to be washed and cleaned and everything has to look nice and tidy”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

“I couldn’t relax as much if we stayed at home, then I would do the laundry, tidy up, vacuum-clean and all that. That is why I want to go away; I don’t want to do all that”

[Interview 23 – author’s translation]

Further, informants explicated differences between ‘being at home’ and ‘staying at a caravan site’ as:

“You take things as they come. It is more primitive [when having guests at the caravan site] than it is at home in your dining room, and everybody helps making dinner”

[Interview 2 – author’s translation]

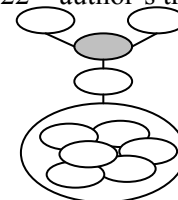
“At home, I devote much effort to preparing the right food; it being organic and eco-friendly and not to many additives. Here we live on hot dogs, French fries, canned food, ice cream, and soft drinks [laughing]. And that’s okay for those 2-3 weeks a year...I think that is what happens when you are somewhere like this; you forget it all and become indifferent – it doesn’t matter – and it doesn’t matter what people think about you”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the welter of data on why informants find that it is important to leave home during their vacation, the key contribution of this section could be summarised as follows:

“[Why go caravanning?] Because we need to go away in order to relax”

[Interview 22 – author’s translation]



4.10. Having Nothing Better to Do

In close relation to the construct ‘getting away from home’, informants argue that the decision to spend summer vacations at a Danish caravan site relates to the wishes to ‘have nothing better to do’ and to ‘have no duties or obligations’. However, the two constructs ‘getting away from home’ and ‘having nothing better to do’ are *not* identical. Especially, the reason why informants’ lines of reasoning are divided into two separate constructs is that ‘getting away from home’ is but a means to

achieve the end ‘having nothing better to do’; an end enabling informants to obtain the two valued end states at the highest level of abstraction; relaxation and freedom. Furthermore, ‘having nothing better to do’ is at the very heart of informants’ knowledge structures regarding why they (choose to) stay at a Danish caravan site during (at least part of) the summer vacation and henceforward, this construct is the focal contribution of the empirical study to the extant body of knowledge on why we choose to go on (one specific type of) vacation. In relation to ‘having nothing better to do’ and reasons why staying at a caravan site is excellent at providing for that, some informants argued as follows:

“As such, there is nothing you have to do. There is no hurry. If you buy a holiday house, then you lack freedom; there is maintenance; it needs being painted; windows and doors need maintenance. And already, we have a house and garden that we need attend to. No, that is too much of a bother”

[Interview 1 – author’s translation]

“... it is so wonderful; no strings attached ... uncomplicated. What you do a particular day depends on what the day brings, what the weather is like ... If you’re on a packaged tour lasting 8 days then you have to get up early to see something ... and if meals are included then you have to turn up at mealtimes ... at a caravan site you get up and you eat when you feel like it”

[Interview 2 – author’s translation]

“And then we think ... doing nothing; you can’t do anything but doing nothing: that is so wonderful ... If you are at home you need to paint, doing things, cleaning, you feel you have to do something all the time... We don’t change our schedule, but you can do what you want to do when you want to do it. There is no TV in the caravan, so we read a lot ... When we are on vacation, we want to be ‘vacant’, we don’t want to run around seeing everything ... That’s just not us. We just enjoy doing nothing”

[Interview 7 – author’s translation]

“Previously, I have been to a lot of cities, South America, everywhere, and nothing can persuade me to go to Costa del Sol or the French Riviera or anything like that, I simply don’t have the energy to do that. I don’t feel like that, not at all, I don’t want to do anything: I think that intelligent people need to reflect, you can do that here, you can’t do that in a hotel room in Paris. You can’t reflect there, you can’t think and you have to look fine all the time if in Paris”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

Although the comments above compare staying at a caravan site to different alternatives (*i.e.* staying at home, at holiday houses, going on a packaged tour, or visiting a metropole) the end result across these comparisons is that caravan sites offer superior opportunities for doing nothing. Furthermore, informants offered the following explicit linkages between ‘doing nothing’ and ‘getting away from home’:

“It’s all about getting away from home. If it is 20 kilometres or 200; it doesn’t matter, just you get away from home, that is what it is all about”

[Interview 7– author’s translation]

“You don’t have to mow the lawn, you don’t have to do laundry all the time, no domestic chores, no windows to polish, no hovering to do, you don’t have to do anything, that is what it is about ... It is incredible how much recharging it gives you [to stay at a caravan site]”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

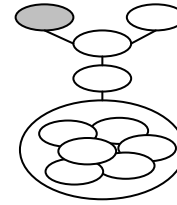
“Even something like making dinner becomes very easy. We just barbeque – even when it rains, then we just put the sunshade over the barbeque. It is so easy”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

“At a caravan site, you can’t do anything anyway... no worries or stuff like that from everyday life, because you can’t do anything anyway. You force yourself to relax. You don’t feel guilty about doing nothing. That is so nice. At home, everything is pushing you...you can’t not do things with a clear consciousness; you can do that here”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

Concluding on this section, informants argue that they choose to spend their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site because stays at caravan sites offer unique possibilities for ‘having nothing (better) to do’. Furthermore, for people who choose to go to a Danish caravan site during the month of July ‘having nothing better to do’ seems to be a prerequisite if one wishes to ‘feel free’ and/or ‘relax’. Thus, this finding is rather different from the traditional wisdom that relaxation during vacations is best achieved if one goes on a ‘sun and beach’ holiday. Linkages between ‘having nothing better to do’ and the two end states ‘freedom’ and ‘relaxation’ are further discussed in sections 4.11 and 4.12.



4.11. Freedom

At the highest level of abstraction, two valued ends (*i.e.* freedom and relaxation) were identified. This section addresses the first of these ends (*i.e.* freedom), an end achieved by means of having nothing (better) to do and getting away from duties and obligations. Regarding freedom and the ways in which freedom is achieved by staying at a Danish caravan site, one informant's comment seems to sum this construct up very well, the comment in question being:

"Caravanning gives us the sort of freedom we wish for"

[Interview 25 – author's translation]

However, when informants were asked to elaborate on the notion of freedom, primarily, they related this notion to freedom of choice. Thus, the comments reproduced below reflect the fact that informants feel free while staying at a caravan site because – throughout the vacation – they can choose between various alternatives and especially, they can reverse decisions made previously.

"It is a nice way to spend one's holiday; there is lots of freedom. Why stay at a caravan site? It is the freedom; freedom that is what I think it is. You can choose; so you are never bored. It is your own fault if you are bored when you stay at a caravan site"

[Interview 1 – author's translation]

"It gives you a lot of freedom that you can just park the caravan and then go somewhere else"

[Interview 5 – author's translation]

"I think what we like is the freedom of it. If the weather is great we just say: Well, shall we go caravanning? There is nothing fancy about caravanning"

[Interview 14 – author's translation]

"You can hook your caravan onto the car and then you can go anywhere in the world you would like to"

[Interview 17 – author's translation]

"I enjoy staying at a caravan site. It is the freedom and relaxing peace... and now my children have gotten older I have a lot of freedom; I can do what I want to do"

[Interview 18 – author's translation]

Also, informants relate the notion of freedom to a 'special way of being', that characterises caravan sites and the people staying there. For example, they argue as follows:

“There is cosiness and soul ... There is a good atmosphere, it is nice to be here. You feel at home. There is freedom, you can do what you want to do. Off course, there are limits, but the freedom of camping, that’s what I think it is”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

“There is more freedom at a caravan site, no rules and norms, that is nice. The clock doesn’t mean anything; we haven’t even brought an alarm clock along [laughing]. The only ‘timer’ we brought along is the one in the mobile phone”

[Interview 12 – author’s translation]

“Why go to a caravan site? You take things as they come along; there are no strings attached ... You have no ties, no deadlines regarding e.g. breakfast or dinner ... I think all the days we have stayed here we have had something that might, slightly, resemble brunch and dinner and that’s it, you don’t have to do more”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

Whereas the quotations above reflect informants’ explication of reasons why stays at a caravan site enable them to feel free, the following quotations reflect informants’ lines of reasoning that compare the freedom enacted at Danish caravan sites with (lack of) freedom characterising other types of vacations.

“We once took a packaged tour to Rhodos and while we sat down there we talked about how much we missed our barbeque. You have to go out to get dinner, you can’t put your feet up or read a book while eating. So no, we enjoy the free life at the caravan site”

[Interview 2 – author’s translation]

“Why stay at a caravan site? The conclusion must be freedom...There is more freedom in taking your car and go away ... There is no freedom when you take the plane; and when you arrive at the destination you have to catch the bus if you want to see something. If you go caravanning you can go wherever and whenever you like to. We don’t have a list of things to do or see. The only thing that is planned is to arrive at the caravan site”

[Interview 3 – author’s translation]

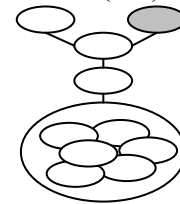
“Our daughter and son-in-law have recently been to a Croatian caravan site – they stayed at a site enclosed by a fence for the whole time – what kind of vacation is that? For us that would be like paying to be imprisoned – not being able to decide anything yourself”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

“You know that she [the daughter] is somewhere at the caravan site, but you don’t have to keep an eye on her all the time, so there is a more freedom in it for us. It is safer. There are a lot of people, most of them with children, and everybody keeps an eye out for the children”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

Concluding on this section it seems that informants choose to spend their vacation at a Danish caravan site because it offers them an opportunity to feel ‘free’. Furthermore, primarily freedom seems to relate to freedom of choice and thus, it seems that especially informants value that – while staying at a Danish caravan site – it is entirely up to themselves what they choose (not) to do; and when (not) to do so.



4.12. Relaxation

The last of the two end states that drive decisions to stay at a Danish caravan site is relaxation. For example, a couple with children who have never been staying at a caravan site before summed up their ‘caravanning’ tourism experience (so far) as follows:

“It has been relaxing ...very relaxing”

[Interview 4 – author’s translation]

Furthermore, other informants offered the following explanations as to why one relaxes more when staying at a caravan site than if one had stayed at home or engaged in other types of vacations:

“In today’s world, your everyday life is so stressful and pre-planned from 6 o’clock in the morning till you go to sleep; so when we go on vacation we prioritise to take one day at a time: So what you don’t get around to doing one day, perhaps you get around to it another day ... and if you don’t get around to it, then that is okay. If you get up around 9 then it’s okay, it’s also okay to get up around 6. Dinner time is not set. It’s all about stressing off and doing whatever you want to do whenever you feel like it”

[Interview 3 – author’s translation]

“It is nice that you can just look as you feel like ... it is all about settling down, reducing stress, and enjoying the atmosphere; drinking in nature; it is the best there is”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

Further, one couple relates to relaxation as follows:

“You don’t have any time schedule ... you don’t have to think about that; if you are hungry, then you just eat. I don’t know exactly what it is that is so relaxing, but you don’t do anything, you know? You could do the same relaxing at home, only, it wouldn’t be the same. Because at home, you could paint; do some things you feel you have to do. When you are at home you feel you have obligations. So we have chosen to get away for at least one of the three weeks of summer vacation we have, in order to relax We are going to paint and do stuff like that when we come home [laughing]”

[Interview 4 – author’s translation]

Also regarding reasons why stays at caravan sites enable them better to relax, informants made comments such as:

“Staying at a caravan site; that is relaxation. That is why I don’t like packaged tours; I don’t feel ready for that because I can’t relax. You have to go see things and there are some guided tours that you feel you have to take: Then it is not vacation. It becomes so structured that it is too much”

[Interview 9 – author’s translation]

“The children can run around, if they get lost someone helps – people are, somehow, more obliging [at a caravan site] ... and it makes it easier just to relax”

[Interview 10 – author’s translation]

“I don’t know exactly what it is about caravanning. I think it is that you are allowed to just laze around, no problems, no obligations. If the weather is great you just take an extra day ... When you are on vacation, you do nothing, not a damn thing [laughing]. I think caravanning is all about ‘we can do without’; we can do with a sleeping back, a TV and a phone and then we don’t have other things; you cannot just put a movie on the VHS. That way, you go more native. The things you have at home or at a holiday house, things you don’t have here, it is not as if you miss them”

[Interview 14 – author’s translation]

“Caravanning? It is about landscape and relaxation; it’s life!”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

“The week before we came here, my husband turned 40, so we have stressed around, preparing the party, the food and so. So we really enjoyed that now was the time to get away; it couldn’t happen soon enough ... You have more resources when you come back home because you have picked up resources while caravanning”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

“I think it is that, when you are at a caravan site, you don’t give a damn about a lot of things, you don’t bother. Nothing really matters ... It is more relaxing ... It is a lazy vacation, I think. You don’t have to achieve anything, what gets done gets done”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

“For us, caravanning is all about relaxation, simply speaking”

[Interview 20 – author’s translation]

“Caravanning? That is all about relaxation and enjoying life”

[Interview 21 – author’s translation]

“[Why we are staying at a caravan site?] In order to relax...When going to Southern Europe you watch out all the time, you can’t relax the same way”

[Interview 24 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the comments regarding relaxation that are reproduced above, people seem to spend (at least some of) their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site because such a site enables them to relax. Thus, this section is closed with a comment that sums up the content of the entity ‘relaxation at a Danish caravan site’ nicely:

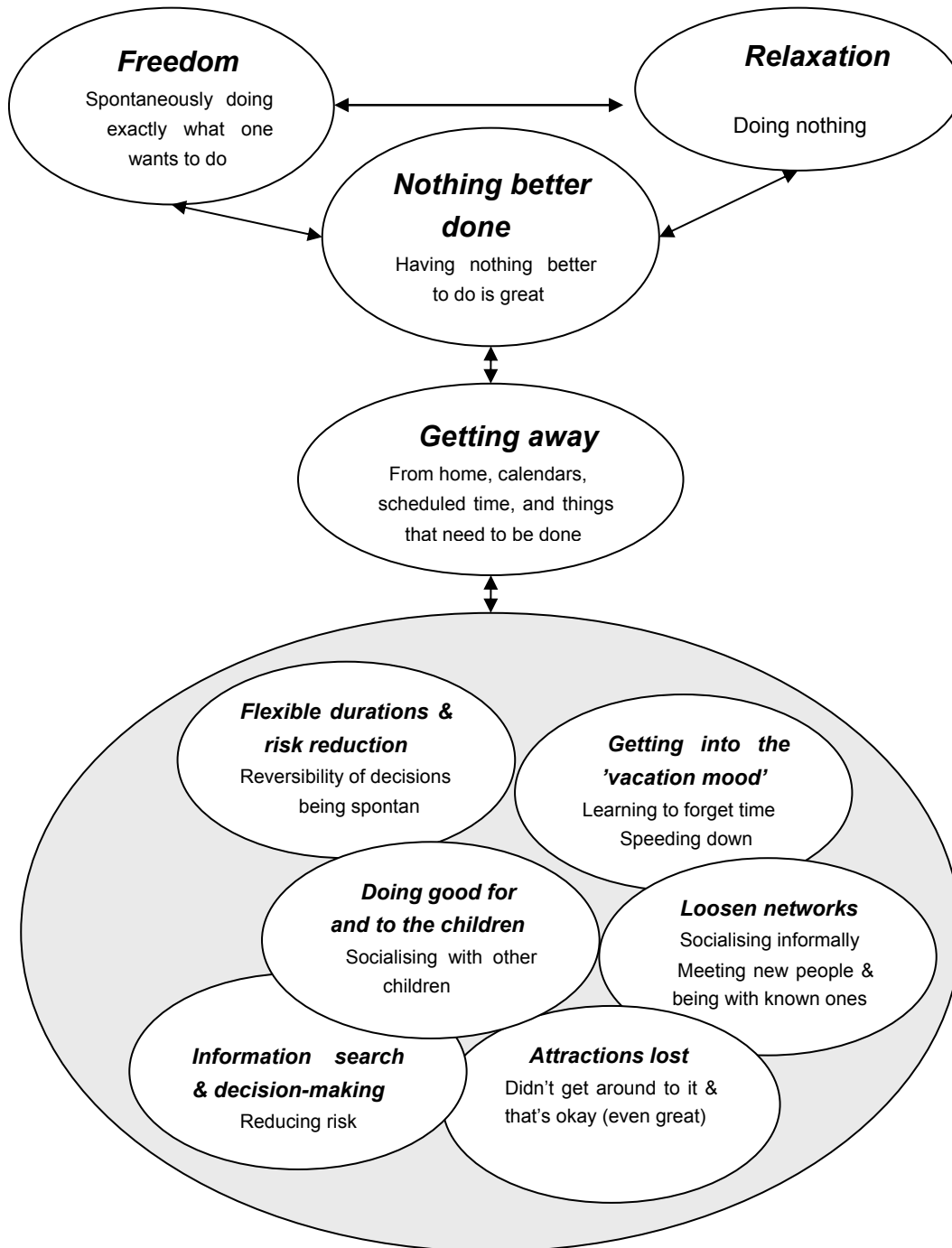
“And my god, we relax when staying at the caravan site”

[Interview 28 – author’s translation]

4.13. Final, Inductively Derived Framework

Drawing on the contents of sections 4, Figure 2 summarises the key findings of the empirical study.

Figure 2. Final Framework: Why some Danes Stay at a Danish Caravan Site



Drawing on the content of figure 2 and especially on the refinement of codes visualised in this figure, it is appropriate to return to the answering of the question inherent in the paper's title. Primarily, the study suggests that Danes spend their summer vacation at Danish caravan sites in order to obtain 'freedom' and 'relaxation'. Furthermore, the study suggests that Danes go to caravan sites in order to obtain 'freedom' and 'relaxation' by means of 'having nothing better to do'.

Traditionally, we ascribe negative emotions (e.g. boredom or lack of creative thinking) to the notion ‘having nothing better to do’. However, the empirical study suggests people staying at caravan sites to enact ‘having nothing better to do’ to be utterly positive. Thus, a primary reason why they stay at a caravan site is that they have to leave home if they wish ‘to do nothing’, *i.e.* had they stayed at home, they would have had plenty of things to do; things such as mowing the lawn; painting the house; redecorating the living room; doing the garden etc. Furthermore, doing all of these things inhibits informants from feeling ‘free’ and further, it inhibits them from ‘relaxing’. In sum, the empirical study thus suggests that ‘having nothing better to do’ is ‘great’ and further, it suggests that the key advantage of staying at a caravan site is that – compared with other types of accommodations – staying at a caravan site eliminates all the things that need to be done as well as the feeling that ‘we only have so many days here, so we had better make the most of it’. Henceforward, the key reason why Danes stay at a caravan site seems to be that it allows for them (and their children) to have nothing better to do – and enjoying that.

5. Enfolding Literature

Whereas section 4 accounts for the study’s findings in a manner close to informants’ own voices, the purpose of this section is to confront these findings with theories on vacation decision-making as well as with theories relating to the ‘tourist experience’. Thus, primarily this section discusses the study’s findings by means of enfolding of literature. Consequently, this section also lays the grounds for the discussions on research implications offered in section 6 of the paper.

5.1. Findings regarding Consumer Vacation Decision-Making

In regard to consumer decision-making and more specifically, in regard to the ways, in which consumers decide on where, when, and how to go on vacation the study offers some interesting insights. Thus, the study offers insights into what Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) call ‘the anticipation phase’, *i.e.* the processes consumers engage in *prior* to their going on vacation. Especially, these findings relate to unique features of *family* vacation decision-making as well as to unique aspects of various phases of the decision-making process (e.g. information searches and evaluation of alternatives). In the following subsections, these findings are discussed in further depths. However, at first, the concept of family is discussed due to the fact that – across all informants – vacation decision-making qualifies as decision-making processes involving the family; not just the individual consumer. Secondly, the characteristics of the kinds of decision-making processes families engage in when planning their vacations are discussed. Especially, such discussions focus on word-of-mouth communication, reliance on own previous experiences, lack of reliance on marketer-controlled information, and other reasons why tourists choose one specific type of holidays, destinations, and accommodations.

5.1.1. The Notions of Family and Groups

Drawing on Boutilier (1993) and Fay (1993), Solomon *et al* (2002) discuss the fact that the ‘modern family’ might better describe family structures than does the concept of the traditional family unit. Table 1, which accounts for (parts of) the family structures ‘embedding’ informants corroborates the claim that families staying at a Danish caravan site qualify as ‘post modern’ or ‘extended’ families. Thus, most informants are part of groups including more people than just parents and children. For example, some groups include grandparents (possibly without parents being present) whereas other groups include friends. Also, during stays at caravan sites composition of groups changes as (1) tourists have friends and relatives coming by the site for a day or two, (2) for each group, children, parents, and grandparents come to the site or leave it at different points in time, or (3) people get to know other people at the site and socialise with them. Thus, the empirical study suggests the following: (1) That often people staying at Danish caravan sites are part of groups ‘larger’ than traditional families; (2) That groups change during the stay; and (3) That relations beyond the scope of the group one goes on vacation with are also important during the stay at a caravan site. In sum, the empirical study suggests that people go to Danish caravan sites in groups and that such groups may be comprised of friends and/or family. Consequently, the study also suggests that decision-making processes leading to choices to go to a Danish caravan site are processes involving a group of people (predominantly a family). Due to this characteristic of such decision-making processes, the next section focuses on the unique characteristics of family (group) vacation decision-making.

5.1.2. Family Vacation Decision-Making, Involvement, and Perceived Risk

According to Engel *et al*’s (1978) classical model, decision-making processes are comprised of a series of sub-processes (the first four of which are ‘problem recognition’, ‘information search’, ‘evaluation of alternatives’, and ‘product choice’). In sections 5.1.3 to 5.1.6, findings of the empirical study regarding each of these four phases are discussed. However, as involvement and perceived risk are decisive for actual contents of these four phases, this section also focuses on involvement and risk in relation to vacation decision-making.

Mostly, we would define vacation decision-making as extended problem solving (Engel *et al*, 1978) undertaken by the family (not the individual). Especially, the reasons why we would expect most vacation decision-making processes to qualify as extended problem solving are the following:

- Purchase is infrequent and expensive
- Process is characterised by unfamiliarity
- The service scores highly on credence and experience qualities
- Process is characterised by extensive thought, search, and time given to purchase
- Fairly high degree of perceived risk due to irreversibility of choice as well as (1) possibility of making ‘wrong’ decision times (2) impact of wrong decisions

Furthermore, holidays are services and thus, one would also expect Zeithaml *et al*'s (1985) four characteristics of services (*i.e.* intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability) to characterise the services that people decide to buy when they plan their vacation. Apart from Zeithaml *et al*'s (1985) four characteristics of services, several academics have focused on unique characteristics of tourism services and products. For example, Seaton and Bennett (1996) argue that (1) high involvement; (2) high risk; and (3) holistic 'products' (including dreams and fantasies) qualify as key tenets of tourism services. Furthermore, Seaton (1994) argues that (1) vacations are expensive; (2) they cannot be evaluated before purchase; and (3) opportunity costs of failed holidays are irreversible. According to the works of Zeithaml *et al* (1985); Seaton and Bennett (1996); and Seaton (1994), we would expect vacations to be 'products' characterised by high risk and high involvement. However, the findings accounted for in section 4 do not corroborate the claim that high levels of risk and involvement make informants engage in extended problem-solving. Instead, the study suggests that vacation decision-making processes, the end result of which is the choice to spend (part of) the summer vacation at a Danish caravan site resemble limited problem-solving to a far greater extent than they qualify as extended problem solving. Furthermore, especially the reason why informants have engaged in limited problem-solving is that, deliberately, the (reversible) choice to go to a Danish caravan site lowers perceived risk. One feature that seems to lower risk of vacation decision-making is the fact that most informants have visited Danish caravan sites in the past. Thus, most informants are quite familiar with caravan sites in general and further, most of them are also familiar with the focal caravan site. Due to high levels of familiarity, informants' thought, search, and time devoted to vacation decision-making are less extensive than prescribed by literature. Furthermore, informants argue that both the choice to go caravanning in Denmark and the choice of a particular caravan site to visit are reversible while such reversibility of choice reduces perceived risk inherent in vacation decision-making. Moreover, especially people choose to spend (part of their) vacation at a Danish caravan site in order to do nothing. Thus, one might argue that people who wish to go to a Danish caravan site engage in less extensive decision-making processes than people who wish for their vacation to fulfil more complicated needs and wants.

In sum, the empirical study suggests vacation decision-making to be profound different from the kind of decision-making that characterises most processes people engage in in order to decide where, when, how, and with whom they will spend their vacation. Especially, as accounted for by informants, such differences relate to the following issues: (1) Lower levels of perceived risk; (2) less extensive thought processes; (3) little external search; and (4) less thorough evaluation of alternatives. Elaborations on these issues are offered in sections 5.1.3 to 5.1.6.

In regard to unique characteristics of vacation decision-making processes that are attributable to the fact that more people (primarily a family) are involved in such decision-making processes, the empirical study offers some insights. For example, concordant with Jenkins (1978) the study suggests

that vacation decision-making is neither husband- nor wife-dominant. Instead, concordant with e.g. Davis and Rigaux (1974); Cunningham and Green (1974); and Sharp and Mott (1956) vacation decision-making seems to qualify as a process of *joint* decision-making. Apart from the fact that vacation decision-making could be characterised as joint decision-making, also, children play important roles in vacation decision-making. Concordant with e.g. Jenkins (1979) and Szybillo and Sosanies (1977), the empirical study suggests children to influence decisions regarding choices of destination, accommodation, and activities. Also, children seem to influence several of the steps in such decision-making processes. However, a key contribution of the empirical study is that it suggests children to influence vacation decision-making in two different ways. First, children are directly involved in vacation decision-making and the various sub-processes hereof and thus, they influence such decision-making directly. Thus, although primarily children occupy roles as influencers and users, additionally they may also act as initiators (e.g. when talking, or pestering, about their friends' stays at caravan sites) or decision-makers (in so far parent styles are permissive and/or parents offer children much responsibility during democratic decision-making processes). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, children influence vacation decision-making processes indirectly. Especially, such 'indirect influences' hinge on the fact that a key reason why informants spend (part of) their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site is that they want to do 'good for children', or, as some informants put it:

"There are lots of children to play with; that is why we go caravanning"

[Interview 21 – author's translation]

"We do it [go on vacation] for the children. If the children are happy, then we are happy"

[Interview 12 – author's translation]

"When you can you should do something for the kids, making sure they have fun"

[Interview 17 – author's translation]

In sum, empirical evidence corroborates the claim that children are of utmost important in vacation decision-making. Furthermore, such importance supervenes both on direct influences (taking part in the decision-making process) and indirect influences (doing good for the children).

5.1.3. Problem Recognition

Going through the welter of empirical evidence, upon which this paper draws, at first, it was rather surprising that not much evidence concerns the problem recognition phase. In fact, no informants, directly, addressed this phase during interviews. Instead, comments such as the following qualify as the only pieces of evidence regarding initiation of vacation decision-making processes:

“One of us finds a number of caravan sites at which we might stay”

[Interview 10 – author’s translation]

“In the months of March or April, we always look at the guidebook on caravan sites with our children”

[Interview 15 – author’s translation]

Due to the fact that the researcher did ask informants about the problem recognition phase, lack of evidence regarding this phase indicates a number of things. First, the study does not corroborate traditional wisdom suggesting problem recognition to be a result of increase in ‘ideal state’ and/or reduction of ‘actual state’ (Solomon *et al*, 2002). Instead, the empirical study suggests that initiations of vacation decision-making processes are far less ‘dramatical’. Thus, the process (or at least various parts hereof) are ‘routinised’ in so far informants simply engage in such processes each year during late winter/early spring. Thus, the study suggests vacation decision-making to be ‘institutionalised’ to such an extent that no external triggers seem necessary in order for informants to engage in such decision-making. Consequently, vacation decision-making does not seem to be triggered by informants’ considerations regarding whether or not they are interested in ‘buying a vacation product’. Instead, the study suggests the initiation of such decision-making to be more accurately described as something like: ‘It is time to plan our summer vacation. Do we want to go somewhere? If so, where, when, and how do we want to go on vacation?’. However, to a majority of informants initiation might be even simpler than that because an integral part of deciding to go on vacation might be the decision to go caravanning in Denmark and further, which caravan site to go to may also be an integral part of that decision. These two issues are discussed in further depths subsequently.

Regarding the notion ‘caravanning in Denmark’ as an integral part of decision to go on vacation, ‘having nothing better to do’ qualifies as the key reason why informants go to a Danish caravan site. Furthermore, informants argue that Danish caravan sites qualify as excellent if one wishes to have nothing better to do. Henceforward, deciding to go to a Danish caravan site may very well be an integral part of deciding on one’s wanting to have nothing better to do during (part of) one’s summer vacation. This interpretation is concordant with Rassing and Lundtorp’s (1996) finding that different types of accommodations do not compete directly; instead, early on in the decision-making process tourists decide on a particular type of accommodation. Consequently, the decision to go to a Danish caravan site might be an integral part of the decision to go on vacation due to the fact that informants decide to go on vacation (at a Danish caravan site) in order to have nothing (better) to do during (part of) their summer vacation. As indicated by empirical evidence, the entities ‘spending vacation at a Danish caravan site’ and ‘having nothing better to do’ might thus be so interdependent and interrelated that the two decisions are made simultaneously.

Primarily informants rely on own experiences and WOM communication when choosing a particular Danish caravan site to visit during the summer vacation. Furthermore, many informants have visited the focal caravan site previously; and more of them have visited that site numerous times. Also, investigation of the reasons why informants have chosen to go to the focal caravan site, again, suggests that such reasons correspond better with the notion of loyalty than with the notion of inertia. Thus, especially for informants who are highly experienced at caravanning it seems that, once in a while, they choose to go to a 'new' caravan site because they engage in variety seeking behaviour, but most summers, they choose to go to a site, at which they have stayed previously and with which they have nice experiences. Thus, it seems that mostly informants choose to go to a site, towards which they enact some kind of loyalty. To the extent that informants choose to go to a 'familiar' caravan site it thus seems that this choice hinges on loyalty and consequently, choice of caravan site might very well be an integral part of the overall decision to go caravanning in Denmark.

In sum, a key finding of the study is that decision-making processes, the end result of which is that Danes spend (part of) their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site do *not* include a problem recognition phase concordant with that accounted for in traditional models of consumer decision-making or in models of vacation decision-making.

5.1.4. Information Search

Drawing on section 2, Marcussen (1998) argued that 'home' tourists do not engage in information searches and if they do, they only seek information from friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Section 4 replicates Marcussen's (1988) findings in so far that informants rely much heavier on own experiences and WOM than on marketer-controlled sources of information during information search. Solomon *et al* (2002) argue that information obtained by means of WOM is perceived as more trustworthy and reliable than information obtained from marketer-controlled sources of information. Furthermore, Solomon *et al* (2002, p. 333) replicate the argument that "today, 80 percent of all buying decisions are influenced by someone's direct recommendations". Also, high involvement with a certain type of product/activity is one factor facilitating product-related conversation (Engel *et al*, 1969). The empirical study corroborates these suggestions and especially, the study suggests that people rely on own experiences and WOM communication when they decide on a caravan site to visit during their summer vacation. Furthermore, informants have not spent much time, actively, seeking information before going to the caravan site and in so far they have engaged in such information searches, most of them argue that they are well aware of the fact that marketer-controlled sources of information are not especially trustworthy or reliable. Due to the fact that lack of active, external searches for information is mainly attributable to informants' choosing not to engage in thorough evaluation of alternatives, elaboration on these findings are offered in the subsequent section.

5.1.5. Evaluation of Alternatives

Due to informants' levels of involvement in vacation decision-making, one would expect tourists to choose a particular caravan site on the basis of (1) careful ranking of 'attributes' of caravan sites and (2) careful evaluation of the extent to which each site/alternative possesses relevant attributes. Thus, one would expect tourists to engage in evaluation of alternatives based on thorough processes similar to those central to e.g. multi-attribute attitude models (Fishbein, 1983). However, empirical evidence suggests tourists staying at Danish caravan sites *not* to engage in thorough evaluation and comparison of alternatives. Instead, they seem to rely on a very limited set of evaluative criteria and especially, they rely on the criteria 'pool' and 'playgrounds'. Furthermore, informants argue that they do not engage in extensive evaluative processes because they do not feel able to evaluate alternatives adequately. Also, they relate inability to evaluate sites to two different kinds of problems. First, they feel incapable of identifying and ranking 'attributes' of relevance when deciding on a caravan site to visit. Thus, apart from 'pool' and 'playgrounds', before going to the site informants do not seem to know exactly which activities etc. they will value during their stay at the site. Concordant with the finding that informants do not decide on attractions to see before they go on vacation, neither do they decide on entertainment, activities etc. to engage in at the caravan site prior to their vacation. Secondly, due to informants' enactment of marketer-controlled sources of information as inadequate, they do not find that it is worthwhile to try to assess the extent to which various sites 'possess' various attributes. In sum, Danish tourists staying at Danish caravan sites do not engage in thorough evaluation of alternatives before they go on vacation because they do not know exactly 'what' they want to do during the stay; or if they want to do anything at all. Furthermore, they find that thorough evaluation is not crucial because choice of caravan site is irreversible (*i.e.* stays can be shortened if the site is deemed inadequate or unsatisfactory). Finally, informants do not engage in thorough evaluation of different caravan sites because it is difficult to obtain reliable and valid information on sites.

In sum, a key finding of the empirical study is that Danes staying at a Danish caravan site do not engage, extensively, in evaluation of alternatives. Especially, it seems that they do not do so because choice of site is reversible and henceforward, characterised by lower levels of risk than if such choices were not reversible.

5.1.6. Product/Brand Choice

According to section 5.1.5, informants seem very aware of the fact that comparison of different caravan sites is based on insufficient knowledge and thought processes. Consequently, informants do not engage in thorough evaluation of different caravan sites prior to their vacation. However, informants seem quite comfortable making choice of site on the basis of less than adequate information. Especially, they are comfortable making 'under-informed' choices because the choice is reversible. Thus, reversibility of choice of caravan site seems utmost important in relation to product

choice as such reversibility allows for informants to ‘just go’ to a caravan site without such choice hinging on elaborate thought processes. Furthermore, to a large extent elaborate thought processes are substituted by reliance on own experiences and WOM communication.

In relation to the various other elements that the vacation experience depends on (*i.e.* ‘purchase’ of services in the form of going to attractions, dining at nearby restaurants, going to nearby towns shopping, or buying additional services at the caravan site), in general, such choices are not made in advance. Instead, during the vacation, on a day-to-day basis people staying at caravan sites decide whether they want to ‘buy’ such additional services and which specific services to buy. Thus, stays at caravan sites are characterised by the fact that people do not decide – in advance – on what they want to do during their vacation. Instead, such decision-making is rather spontaneous and further, any choices regarding additional service elements to be purchased are made on a daily basis during vacation.

5.2. Findings relating to Consumer (Tourist) Satisfaction

In regard to consumer, or tourist, satisfaction as experienced by the tourists while they engage in ‘tourist moments’ a series of interesting aspects emerged during the qualitative study. Thus, the empirical study offers a number of insights of special value when focusing on consumers’ judgments regarding tourism products, services, and experiences. Henceforward, the study offers insight into the ways tourists feel while being tourists and consequently, the study offers insight into what Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) label ‘the consumption phase’.

Drawing on section 4 of this paper, a key finding is that informants do not enact satisfaction as the extent to which actual experiences exceed expectations. In fact, it seems that, deliberately, most informants lower expectations in order not to get disappointed. Furthermore, most informants relate satisfaction to their own ‘performance’ during the vacation. For example, one informant argued that:

“It is a nice way to spend one’s holiday; there is lots of freedom. Why stay at a caravan site? It is the freedom; freedom that is what I think it is. You can choose; so you are never bored. It is your own fault if you are bored when you stay at a caravan site”

[Interview 1 – author’s translation]

The empirical study thus corroborates Botterill’s (1978) claim that ‘performance by the tourist’ and ‘successful adoption of the tourist to unpredictable events’ are decisive for tourist satisfaction. Especially, it seems that satisfaction relates to other entities than fulfilment of expectations due to the fact that, deliberately, people who go to caravan sites do not pre-plan actual contents of their vaca-

tion. Due to the fact that people go to caravan sites in order to have nothing better to do, they seem reluctant to define satisfaction regarding their tourist experience in terms of the vacation ‘meeting’ expectations. Instead, they define satisfaction in terms of the extent to which the vacation enables them to relax. Thus, whereas people seem to have certain expectations regarding stays at holiday houses or packaged tours, especially stays at caravan sites seem to be evaluated on the basis of ‘having nothing better to do’.

6. Research Implications

The purpose of this section is to account for implications of the study’s findings for (1) the ways in which we study the focal phenomena as well as for (2) the two focal bodies of theory drawn on in this paper.

6.1. Implications for the Ways in which We Study Vacation Decision-Making and/or Tourist Experiences

Returning to the very first section of the paper, Jacobsen (1988) argued that, at most times, tourists do not know exactly why they go on vacation. Contradictive to Jacobsen (1988), the empirical study accounted for in this paper suggests that – given an interview situation and time enabling reflection and in-depth dialogue – Danes interviewed at a Danish caravan site seem to know exactly why they go on (this specific type of) vacation. Furthermore, these tourists were also able to explicate and disseminate the lines of reasoning underlying their stay at a Danish caravan site. Especially, quite surprisingly informants did not seem to have any problems in relation to ‘moving up and down’ the ladder of analytical abstraction (Carney’s, 1990, notion) during interviews. Drawing on the fact that informants were both knowledgeable and willing and able to disseminate such knowledge to the researcher, the empirical study has implications for the ways, in which we do empirical studies relying on tourists’ accounts of their experiences.

First and foremost, drawing on the fact that tourists staying at the caravan site were quite willing to engage in dialogues with the researcher, I suggest that in-depth interviewing is an utmost viable research strategy when investigating ‘tourist moments’ experienced by visitors at a Danish caravan site. For example, one informant argued that:

“Actually, I think that people enjoy talking about it being great to be staying at a caravan site”

[Interview 11 – author’s translation]

Further, discussing the fact that informants were not only willing to participate in interviews, but also willing to spend much time being interviewed, one informant argued that:

“I think it is because people at caravan sites have time, lots and lots of time”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

Drawing on the content of section 4, it seems that especially people, who, deliberately, seek to have ‘nothing better to do’ during their vacation qualify as informants who are both willing and able to discuss vacation decision-making and the tourist experience with a field researcher. Thus, especially the overwhelmingly positive attitudes of informants towards engaging in an interview situation during their vacation seem to relate to the notion of ‘having nothing better to do’. Also, the fact that people seem to enact others more positively while staying at a caravan site might offer a plausible reason why informants agreed to participate in the research at hand, or, as one informant said during the closing of an interview:

“It wasn’t an unpleasant experience to be interviewed. Although, when you approached me, I was ready to smack you with the newspaper in my hand in case you were a Jehovah’s witness [a religious group known to ‘sell’ their religion door to door]. But then I thought: No way will I be approached by someone trying to ‘sell’ religion, or someone with other dubious intentions, at a Danish caravan site, no way!”

[Interview 18 – author’s translation]

Thus, informants’ willingness to subject themselves to interviews also seems to relate to their enactment of a Danish caravan site as a ‘safe environment’, *i.e.* an environment in which they would not be imposed on for ‘unethical’ or ‘dubitable’ reasons. Thus, it seems that willingness to participate in interviews relies on informants’ enactment of the researcher as trustworthy and further, such enacted trustworthiness seems to relate to the fact that informants were contacted at a caravan site.

Secondly, categories as well relations between categories explicated in figure 2 suggest that qualitative research is appropriate when focusing on reasons why people spend (part of) their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site. Especially, qualitative research is appropriate due to informants’ abilities to ‘move up and down’ the ladder of analytical abstraction during interviews, thus explicating linkages between entities focal to vacation decision-making and tourist experiences. Thus, the qualitative study, upon which this paper draws indicates that when studying a specific set of phenomena (*i.e.* vacation decision-making and tourist experiences) one needs not rely (solely) on co-variation between focal constructs, but instead, one can (also) rely on informants’ own voices accounting for such linkages.

Last, but certainly not least, the study offers valuable insights related to research trying to grasp ‘the tourist experience’; a notion that seems to become increasingly central to tourism research. For example, Manner and Iso-Ahola (1987) argue that we ought to study individual tourist moments. Furthermore, HomCary (2004) argues that we should embrace the actual, on site, real time nature of tourist experiences. Finally, Grauburn (1989) finds that temporality is central to the tourist experience. The empirical work accounted for in this paper corroborates the claim that studies focusing on reasons why we engage in being tourists should focus on individual, on site, and real time tourist experiences. Henceforward, a key contribution of this piece of work is that it’s focus on tourists’ own explications of tourists’ experiences and moments, at the point in time at which tourists have such experiences and engage in such moments, reveals informants’ lines of reasoning leading to engagement in such experiences and moments.

6.2. Contribution to Extant Knowledge on Vacation Decision-Making

A key finding is that vacation decision-making (as accounted for by informants) does not correspond well with extant knowledge. Thus, drawing on sections 4 and 5, it seems that Danes choosing to spend (part of) their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site engage in decision-making processes that are rather different from the processes, one would expect them to engage in if one draws on traditional models and theories on (vacation) decision-making processes. Consequently, it seems that – in future – we have to be extremely aware of the fact that it might not be wise to rely on *one* model when we investigate vacation decision-making processes. Instead, it seems that we have to rely on different models in relation to different types of vacations and accommodations. For example, it seems that we need a model capable of capturing the unique essence of decision-making processes regarding ‘purchase’ of stays at caravan sites; a model that pays due respect to the effects of e.g. reversibility of decisions and reliance on own experiences and WOM on such decision-making processes. Consequently, a key contribution of this paper is that it (1) questions the soundness of focusing on ‘vacation decision-making’ in general while it (2) offers some suggestions regarding the unique features of vacation decision-making processes, that lead to Danes’ choosing to go to a Danish caravan site.

6.3. Contributions to Extant Knowledge on Consumer (Tourist) Satisfaction

In regard to tourist satisfaction, the key finding of the empirical study is that, in general, Danes spending (part of) their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site do not define satisfaction as the extent to which actual experiences succeeds expectations. In fact, informants argue that expectations are not important in relation to satisfaction. Instead, they argue that primarily satisfaction relates to the extent to which they are able to relax during the stay at a caravan site. Opposed to extant literature on satisfaction, it thus seems that informants take responsibility for the level of satisfac-

tion they enact during their stay. Consequently, a key contribution of the empirical study is that it suggests that expectations are not focal to tourist satisfaction and hence, the study suggests that we had better focus on other elements related to satisfaction than expectations.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of the empirical study accounted for in this paper was to try (better) to understand *why* people engage in one specific type of vacation. Drawing on 61 informants and a welter of observations done at a Danish caravan site in July 2004, the key contribution of the qualitative study is that some Danes spend their summer vacation at a Danish caravan site because this particular type of vacation offers them an opportunity to ‘have nothing (better) to do’. Thus, staying at a Danish caravan site enables tourists to feel free and to relax by means of ‘having nothing (better) to do’. Furthermore, ‘having nothing better to do’ seems to qualify as a prerequisite if people, upon whom this paper draws, are to relax. Returning to title of this paper, actually, people have a lot of better things to do than relaxing at a Danish caravan site. However, primarily they stay at such a site because they want to get away from things to do. Consequently, the main conclusion to be drawn is that Danes spend (part of) their precious summer vacation at a Danish caravan site in order to have nothing (better) to do.

8. References

- [1] Assael, H. (1995). *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Action*. Boston, MA: Kent Publishing Company.
- [2] Botterill, D. T. (1987). Dissatisfaction with a Construction of Satisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 14(1), pp. 139-150.
- [3] Boutilier, R. (1993). Diversity in Family Structures. *American Demographics Marketing Tools*, pp. 4-6.
- [4] Bowen, D. and J. Clarke (2002). Reflections on Tourist Satisfaction Research: Past, Present and Future. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 8(4), pp. 297-308.
- [5] Brinberg, D. & J. E. McGrath (1985). *Validity and the Research Process*. London: Sage.
- [6] Carney, T. F. (1990). *Collaborative Inquiry Methodology*. Ontario, Canada: University of Windsor.
- [7] Cunningham, I. C. M. and R. T. Green (1974). Purchasing Roles in the US Family, 1955 and 1973. *Journal of Marketing*, 38(4), pp. 61-64.
- [8] Davis, H. L. and B. P. Rigaux (1974). Perceptions of Marital Roles in Decision Processes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1(1), pp. 51-62.
- [9] Engel, J. F., R. J. Kegerreis and R. D. Blackwell (1969). Word of Mouth Communication by the Innovator. *Journal of Marketing*, 33, pp. 15-19.
- [10] Engel, J. F., R. D. Blackwell and D. T. Kollat (1978). *Consumer Behavior*. 3rd Edition. Chicago: The Dryden Press.
- [11] Fay, W. B. (1993). Families in the 1990s: Universal Values, Uncommon Experiences. *Marketing Research: A Magazine of Management and Applications*, 5, pp. 1-47.
- [12] Fishbein, M. (1983). An Investigation of the Relationships Between Beliefs About an Object and the Attitude Toward that Object. *Human Relations*, 16, pp. 233-240.

- [13] Fodness, D. (1992): The Impact of Family Life Cycle on the Vacation Decision-Making Process. *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(2), pp. 8+13.
- [14] Graburn, N. (1989): Tourism: The Sacred Journey. In V. Smith (ed): *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, pp. 21-36. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- [15] Gutman, J. (1997): Means-End-Chains as Goal Hierarchies. *Psychology and Marketing*, September, pp. 545-560.
- [16] Hom Cary, S. (2004). The Tourist Moment. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(1), pp. 61-77.
- [17] Jacobsen, J. K. (1988) (ed). *Friheten I det fjerne – turismens myter og realiteter*. Working paper, Nordiske Sommeruniversitet, no. 29.
- [18] Jenkins, R. L. (1978). Family Vacation Decision-Making. *Journal of Travel Research*, 16(4), pp. 2-7.
- [19] Jenkins, R. L. (1979). The Influences of Children in Family Decision-Making: Parents' Perceptions. In W. L. Wilkie (Ed.): *Advances in Consumer Research* 6 (pp. 413-418). Ann Arbor: Association for Consumer Research.
- [20] Kotler, P., J. Bowen and J. Makens (1999). *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*. 2nd edition. London: Prentice-Hall.
- [21] Mannell, R. and S. Iso-Ahola (1987). Psychological Nature of Leisure and Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism research*, 14, pp. 314-331.
- [22] Marcussen, C. H. (1998). *Distribution af danske turistprodukter I Europa – status, trends og udviklingsmuligheder*. Report 13/1998. Nexø, Denmark: Bornholms Forskningscenter og Danmarks Turistråd.
- [23] Nielsen, N. A., T. Bech-Larsen & K. C. Grunert (1998). Consumer Purchase Motives and Product Perceptions: A Laddering Study on Vegetable Oil in Three Countries. *Food Quality and Preference*, 9(6), pp. 455-466.
- [24] Rassing, C. and S. Lundtorp (1999). *Konkurrence mellem overnatningsformer*. Nexø, Denmark: Bornholms Forskningscenter.

- [25] Reynolds, T. J. & J. C. Olson (2001). *Understanding Consumer Decision Making*. New jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [26] Seaton, A. V. (1994). Tourism and the Media. In S. J. Witt and L. Moutinho (Eds): *Tourism Marketing and Management Handbook*. London: Prentice-Hall.
- [27] Seaton, A. V. and J. Clarke (1996). *Marketing Tourism Products*. London: Thomson Business Press.
- [28] Sharp, H. and P. Mott (1956). Consumer Decisions in the Metropolitan Family. *Journal of Marketing*, 21(2), pp 149-156.
- [29] Serviceerhverv, (2004:51). *Antal overnatninger på campingpladser juli 2004. Foreløbig opgørelse*. Danmarks Statistik.
- [30] Serviceerhverv, (2004:21). *Antal overnatninger på campingpladser 2003*. Danmarks Statistik.
- [31] Solomon, M., G. Bamossy and S. Askegaard (2002). *Consumer Behaviour – A European Perspective*. 2nd Edition. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- [32] Swarbrooke, J. and S. Horner (1999). *Consumer Behaviour in Tourism*. Oxford, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- [33] Szybillo, G. J. and A. Sosanie (1977). Family Decision Making: Husban, Wife and Children. In W. D. Perrault Jr. (Ed.): *Advances in Consumer Research* 4, pp. 46-49. Atlanta: Association for Consumer Research.
- [34] Therkelsen, A. (1996). *Little Big Denmark – will the British Love it? Dansk Turismemarkedsføring i Storbritannien*. Sprog og kulturmøde 17. Ålborg, Denmark: Ålborg University Press.
- [35] Todd, S. (2001). Self-concept: A Tourism Application. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 1(2), pp. 184-196.
- [36] Wang, K.-C., A.-T. Hsieh, Y.-C. Yeh and C.-W. Tsai (2004). Whi is the Decision-maker: The Parents or the Child in Group Package Tours? *Tourism Management*, 25, pp. 183-194.
- [37] Ziethaml, V. A., A. Parasuraman and L. L. Berry (1985). Problems and Strategies in Service Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(1), pp. 33-46.