

Chapter 9

Perceived Challenges and Beyond to Caravan Traveling: A Case Study on Customer Insights

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Caravan traveling as an alternative mode of travel and lifestyle has been receiving increased attention, especially after Covid-19. The study aims to reveal the perceived challenges of caravan travellers having an influence on decision-making, especially in a country where caravan tourism is at its infancy. Data were collected by semi-structured interviews with eighteen customers, and then were evaluated using content analysis. The results reveal that the biggest perceived challenges are finding a qualified camping site, accessibility of safe transportation, budget constraints, risks related to security, unfavourable interactions with companions, and mechanical problems. Thus, travel constraints and perceived risks have emerged as interwoven challenges that reduce both perceived value and future intentions. Further, the experiential and hedonic aspects of value are seen as the most expected benefits of caravan travel and influence future intentions more than perceived challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traveler behaviour has changed considerably with the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic (Miao et al., 2021). People have isolated themselves from others and preferred more outdoor activities (Craig & Karabas, 2021) and personalized services (Gössling et al., 2020). However, hedonic needs such as having fun and traveling to as many different places as possible have not been abandoned completely. Hence, caravan traveling has gained more popularity (ECF, 2022) as an alternative type of lodging or lifestyle, driven by desires for escape, freedom, sociability, and the discovery of new destinations, as well as spending time with friends and family. Indeed, it is a dreamlike travel style for many; however, it has not been widely adopted in practice. The reasons behind this may differ depending on a variety of factors, some of which are personal in nature while others are dependent more on external factors. Perhaps,

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the infrastructure quality of caravan parks, safety and security concerns, the availability of companions, the power of affordability, and time constraints (Aziz & Long, 2022; Brooker & Joppe, 2013; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008; Prideaux & McClymont, 2006) can be significant challenges perceived by travellers. Moreover, perceived risks associated with services may also have an impact on their decision-making processes (Fan et al., 2022).

Caravanning has become quite popular in Australia after World War II; it is the second most popular accommodation option for the short term, and the country enjoys a leading position in this market (Gaładyk & Podhorodecka, 2021). Furthermore, this recreational activity is also widespread in many countries throughout North America and Europe. For example, caravans will be in great demand in 2022, and it is anticipated that the European caravanning sector will have its most successful year in history, with almost 260,000 new recreational vehicles registered (ECF, 2022). In Europe, about 6 million caravan vehicles are available, and Germany (1.3 million), France (1.1 million), and England (800 thousand) are the leading countries (ECF, 2022). Caravan tourism has become a salient recreational activity in some emerging countries, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. As an example, there has been an increase in demand in Turkey which peaked with the pandemic (T.C.KalkınmaAjansı, 2022). Actually, the National Camping and Caravan Federation of Turkey (UKKF) was founded in 1966 which then became a member of the Federation of International Camping and Caravanning (FICC). However, despite its long history, caravanning is still at an immature stage in Turkey (T.C.KalkınmaAjansı, 2022; UKKF, 2022). Turkey's Travel Agencies Association (TÜRSAB) Highways Tourism authorities estimate that there are 25,000 caravans in Turkey (Daily Sabah, 2021), but the recorded number of caravans is less than 10,000 (TOBB, 2021). In the sector, essential data and statistics are not formed or available (T.C.KalkınmaAjansı, 2022). Today, caravan tourism in Turkey has many struggles, such as legislation, producers, infrastructure, and even caravan culture, and needs to be developed by benefiting from the experience of the other countries that started caravan tourism more than 100 years ago (UKKF, 2022). The Turkish Eleventh Development Tourism Plan (2019-2023) addresses this development needs for caravan tourism in Turkey (TOBB, 2021).

Despite the fact that caravanning has been a part of travellers' lives for a long time, it has not received the attention it deserves from scholars. Lodging studies are mostly focused on hotels; thus, there is a gap for other forms including caravan parks and recreational vehicles (Craig & Karabas, 2021; Köseoglu et al., 2019; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). Furthermore, caravan traveling studies are mostly focused on North American and Australian recreational vehicle travellers (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Wu & Pearce, 2014). The literature analysis on caravanning shows that the majority of research studies focus on the lifestyles, demographics (Doğantan et al., 2022), motivations of travellers, and caravan park attributes. Furthermore, scholarly research on short-term caravanning experiences is limited. There is a scarcity of studies that take a holistic approach to the challenges faced by caravanners, taking into account both travel and accommodation. In addition, some studies show that perceived risk has mitigated the perceived value of customers (Chang, 2008; Liang et al., 2018), but this relationship for traveling services is discussed limitedly (Paker & Gök, 2021).

Considering the aforementioned gaps, the main purpose of the present study is to reveal the perceived challenges that influence caravan travellers' decision-making through a case study on Turkish caravanners in a comprehensive approach. To achieve the study aims, the concepts of travel constraints were used as a theoretical framework in the research, and additional factors such as perceived risks and perceived value that influence caravan travellers' behaviours were allowed to emerge thanks to the explorative design of the study. Caravanning in Turkey was chosen as the research context since Turkey is

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