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Mike Wendland
mike@rvlifestyle.com

Jennifer Wendland

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LIFE STYLE: RV CONSUMER ISSUES

Mike Wendland, Author

Owner

Jennifer Wendland, Author

Owner

RV Life Style

Michigan

mike@rvlifestyle.com

<https://rvlifestyle.com/>

ABSTRACT

The RVing lifestyle can be challenging, yet highly satisfying. To effectively cater to the diverse range of RV enthusiasts, it is crucial to comprehend their unique requirements and preferences. This level of understanding can only be achieved through direct engagement with each segment of the audience. The authors of this article possess extensive expertise in discerning key factors that will shape consumers' experiences in the future. Both manufacturers and service providers must address these issues to ensure a high-quality and impactful experience for individuals and their families.

INTRODUCTION

The information in this article was generated from an interview. This format is new to the Journal. The information was developed through an open ended design. The discussion is divided into two primary topic areas of future issues that will have an influence upon RVing in the future and conditional factors that are important in understanding RVing lifestyle. The order of the future issues addressed is not in order of importance. The discussion about the economic

factors seems to be the most important that has had a consistent influence through history. Economic factors are cyclic and caused by different environmental factors. The conditional factors represent rudimentary outcomes that give insight into the different audience segments and possible ways of conceptualizing lifestyles.

FUTURE LIFE STYLE ISSUES

Inflation

Currently, there is a significant challenge facing the RV industry, and that is inflation. High interest rates are discouraging consumers from purchasing RVs. It is essential to note that RVs depreciate similar to cars, and they require a substantial initial investment. Once an individual drives their newly purchased RV off the lot, its value decreases. In fact, an RV is typically the second most expensive purchase for consumers after their homes.

Given the financial aspect of purchasing an RV, it comes as no surprise that most buyers opt for financing options. However, this poses another challenge for the industry in light of high interest rates. The crucial question becomes how the industry can sustain demand under these circumstances.

Throughout this challenging situation, my primary concern remains focused on the impact it has on consumers. Fortunately, prices are gradually returning to a somewhat normal state after being affected by Covid-19.

Increase Need for more Units and Campgrounds/Better Quality

To meet the growing demand, there will be an expansion in manufacturing and campground facilities. Effective and sustainable planning is crucial in this process. Currently, it takes approximately three years from obtaining all necessary approvals to actually constructing and opening a campground.

Manufacturers are experiencing a decline in shipments compared to last year, but interest remains high. To maintain interest in RVing, it is essential to develop future promotional programs.

Unfortunately, more companies will be forced to close their doors. However, other manufacturers will likely consolidate, resulting in larger entities.

Consumer satisfaction is of utmost importance, with quality being the primary concern.

Advocates within the industry are actively pushing for improvements on these fronts. In the

future, the industry will place greater emphasis on meeting consumer needs. As competition intensifies, understanding and catering to consumers' desires will be crucial for growth and sustainability.

Fast Production Decreases Quality

The primary objective of the industry is to maximize unit sales while maintaining high quality and minimizing costs. Unfortunately, there has been a widespread occurrence of significant quality problems that have impacted most manufacturers. Additionally, many individuals hired during the COVID surge lacked motivation and adequate training.

In the manufacturing sector, the key challenge lies in balancing cost and price while ensuring the delivery of top-notch products. From a retail standpoint, sales agents often face comparisons to used car salesmen. Ultimately, profitability serves as the driving force within this industry.

Technology and its Influence upon Life Style

The advent of Internet access has been the primary catalyst for transforming the RVing landscape. This technological advancement has ushered in a new wave of individuals known as digital nomads, who are able to work remotely while traveling on the road. Thanks to reliable

and fast Internet connections specifically designed for mobile vehicles, these digital nomads can now enjoy seamless connectivity wherever their journeys take them.

Technology is playing a significant role in the fact that the Internet has made RV availability for remote work. This life style is very attractive to a lot of other people. You can think of the benefits of looking out your window at a national Park, mountains, or the beach or wherever you would like to be. You sign off the work for the day and you know you're in beautiful country and territory.

CATER to WANTS and Desires of Clients

Understanding the structure and function of RVs in relation to user groups is an essential aspect. It is crucial to develop designs that cater to the wants and desires of clients, as consumers have become increasingly sophisticated over time. Comfort plays a significant role in creating an experience that feels like home for individuals. As a result, having an outside cellular antenna has become a desirable dimension, especially with the game-changing advancements by Elon Musk and Starlink satellite.

Another important factor to consider is accommodating pets during travel. Trailer designs must prioritize providing creature comforts for consumers' furry companions. Many individuals choose RVing specifically because it allows them to journey alongside their beloved pets.

Solar panels on the roof have been a fascinating development in the RV industry. Additionally, the introduction of lithium-ion batteries has revolutionized the lifestyle associated with RVing. These batteries boast significantly longer lifespans compared to their predecessors and are much lighter in weight. They also possess superior charging capabilities, particularly when combined with solar panels. With these advancements, RVers can now explore remote and secluded destinations while remaining independent from traditional power sources – these adventurous enthusiasts are often referred to as boondockers. An example is that in January around the little town called Quartzsite there is over 1 million RVers who camp in the desert for a month. It is an event like wood stocking for RVers. This freedom associated with the technology of the solar panel and the battery provides new adventures.

Ultimately, these innovations enable RVs to be positioned and enjoyed virtually anywhere one desires.

Decision Fatigue/Need for Education

Another important aspect of this lifestyle is the phenomenon known as decision fatigue. Living on the road requires constant decision-making regarding various aspects such as choosing locations, finding pharmacies and supermarkets, among others. The ability to make effective decisions is crucial for success in this lifestyle. Each day presents new challenges and

opportunities for personal growth. Many individuals express regret that they did not discover this way of life sooner, recognizing its numerous benefits.

However, it's worth noting that this type of lifestyle may not be suitable for those who prefer a highly structured existence. Some people are hesitant to embrace it due to the inherent risks involved, ranging from safety concerns to adapting to unfamiliar settings and meeting new people. These individuals find contentment in conventional family vacations or occasional getaways, perhaps opting for an extended summer trip at most. They prioritize stability by having a permanent physical residence and a close-knit community of family and friends. The idea of constantly being on the move without a fixed home can be quite daunting and unsettling for them.

One common fear associated with this lifestyle is the potential loneliness that may arise from not having a solid support network nearby. If one falls ill while traveling, there may be concerns about receiving adequate care and assistance in unfamiliar surroundings. However, it's important to note that many nomads develop alternative support systems through online communities or by building connections with fellow travelers along their journeys.

About 10 to 12% of our audience is solo travelers. In fact, on our podcast, I have interviewed women who are retired and have been on the road by themselves for several years. There are whole communities of solo travelers. Many are women who want to travel and their husbands

either because of their work or just lack of interest has no interest. Women in these cases take off on long trips. There is an element of vulnerability, especially in things that we hear in the news every day. When you get out there and travel you quickly realize the positive character of most American communities.

Economy an Important Impact/Reactive Response

In every industry, there is a common truth that holds true. The RV industry is a prime example of this complexity and the difficulties in generalizing its various segments. Each segment is uniquely influenced by economic factors, making it challenging to project future events and their potential impact. Instead of taking proactive measures, the industry tends to react to these developments.

Following the recession of 2008, the RV industry took an extended period to recover. Just as it was gaining momentum, the emergence of Covid-19 became another significant factor.

Surprisingly, Covid-19 turned out to be a catalyst for the industry's growth. As traditional travel options became less appealing due to safety concerns, RVing emerged as a popular alternative.

Consequently, demand skyrocketed, leading to substantial price hikes. Some dealers even charged premiums above suggested retail prices, a cost many customers willingly paid.

One intriguing outcome of this situation has been the introduction of new RVers who discovered the excitement and adventure that RVing offers during Covid-19. The pandemic stimulated renewed interest in RVing among various demographic groups. As a result, many individuals have chosen to keep their RVs and upgrade them for enhanced experiences.

The dynamic nature of the RV industry makes it both fascinating and challenging to navigate through changing circumstances such as economic fluctuations and unforeseen events like pandemics. Nonetheless, it continues to captivate individuals with its unique appeal and enduring allure of travel on wheels.

CONDITIONAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT LIFE STYLE

Segmentation Key to Understanding Life Style

The RV industry has undergone significant changes, with major manufacturers now offering multiple brands as a result of consolidation. These brands are specifically targeted towards different demographic segments, demonstrating the sophistication involved in developing manufactured products. The price range for these vehicles varies greatly, starting from \$25,000 and reaching well over \$1 million. Manufacturers are continuously striving to enhance their products, utilizing advanced technology to improve both mobility and comfort in trailers. The

demand for specialized truck towing capabilities and improved mobility and comfort features in trailers has driven advancements in technology within the industry.

Among these offerings are deluxe Class A motorhomes, which represent high-end, technologically advanced options that come with a substantial price tag. As campgrounds have adjusted their pricing policies, rates have increased from a previous average of \$30 per night to a current range of \$50-\$100 per night - comparable to the cost of staying in a motel room. This shift has proven highly profitable for the industry as whole.

RVing has transformed into more than just a recreational activity; it has become an entire lifestyle for many individuals and families alike.

Increased Demand

The primary demographic that drives the RV industry is individuals aged 55 and over. This group represents the main consumer base and continues to generate demand for RVs. While there is also an emerging interest from millennials and those in their 30s to 40s, it is the older populations who have the financial means to purchase RVs outright, whether new or used. In the coming years, we can anticipate more reasonable prices in the market as supply-side issues persist even after the effects of COVID-19. An intriguing aspect of this trend is that repairs will become increasingly important, as both new and used RVs may require maintenance. Although

growth may not reach the same heights experienced during the Covid era, there will undoubtedly be sustained interest and enthusiasm for RV travel in the future.

Outcomes from RVing and/Camping Experience/Past and Future

With the introduction of Covid, a new kind of camping emerged often referred to as glamping. These modern vehicles offer all the comforts of home including fireplaces, washers, and dryers. They provide an incredibly comfortable experience that we often refer to as our very own condominium on wheels. As a result, there are now countless destinations where you can go camping such as national parks or beach locations.

For many newfound RV enthusiasts, this lifestyle offers not only peace but also an opportunity to escape the chaos of everyday life.

Remote Living/Travel Experiences provides for a Quality Life

A significant number of individuals who lack a traditional permanent home are raising families while embracing a nomadic lifestyle. These families often start their journeys in the Southern States, gradually making their way to the Southwest, and then venturing up to New Mexico,

Arizona, the Western States, and eventually the Northwest. This annual loop takes them through various regions.

The pressures of modern life and the fast-paced nature of society have led many people to question if there is a more fulfilling way to live. It is within the realm of RV living that many have discovered their answer.

Statistics vary depending on sources. Approximately 12 million individuals identify themselves as RVers today, compared to around 9 million when our blog was initially launched. Among these numbers are weekend warriors who embark on RV trips whenever their schedules allow. Additionally, there are those who embrace this lifestyle as a long-term choice. Furthermore, approximately 2 million snowbirds migrate to RV communities in Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona as an escape from harsh winters.

The reason for the lifestyle is to escape the pressures and stress from our fast-paced culture. It is also the flexibility of being able to work while on the road and enjoy the diversity of locations in the United States. The fast pace of life in our society puts a lot of stress upon the family. It has made it harder to have quality life and family time. RVing provides this lifestyle. With this type of lifestyle, you can spend quality time with your family.

Friendship

The disparity between reality and media portrayal is a significant one. It becomes evident that news outlets often sensationalize stories for dramatic effect. However, it is important to note that in most areas, people are incredibly friendly and helpful. Engaging in this lifestyle is a secure undertaking, similar to any other decision you make in life. Being aware of the risks and avoiding certain areas is crucial.

It is quite astonishing how many friendships you develop while on the road. Many individuals express surprise at having more friends now than when they lived in a rooted home. You become part of a vast community of like-minded individuals residing throughout the country who often gather at their preferred destinations. The risk factor initially exists but quickly diminishes once you embark on your journey.

One interesting aspect of this way of life is that when you visit an area repeatedly, you will often come across acquaintances from previous visits. It is common to gather with them and exchange stories about your travels on the road, which significantly reduces any risks involved. Ultimately, you find yourself belonging to a large community spread across the nation, and these connections become some of your favorite places to visit again and again.

Benefits

Nature and tranquility are integral aspects of the RVing experience that cannot be replicated in urban areas. Urban environments are generally considered undesirable for living due to their lack of these experiences.

Many parents have observed how their children's lives revolve around digital screens and devices. These children often perceive their world as limited to what they see on these screens, prioritizing Wi-Fi connections and spending the first few days engrossed in technology. However, when they embark on outdoor activities such as hiking or fishing, they gain a new perspective on life.

Similarly, adults find themselves constantly attached to their phones, checking them incessantly from morning till night and even bringing them into the bathroom. However, after a couple of days spent in nature, they realize what they have been missing and begin to make changes to their lifestyle. This newfound appreciation for the RVing lifestyle is often sparked by this realization.

Ultimately, it is the deep connection with nature and the break from digital distractions that attract people to the RVing lifestyle.

In terms of education, children have a unique response when they are able to directly experience the reality of their travels and history lessons. By visiting historical sites mentioned in their textbooks, they have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the very places that shaped our nation. Strolling through these streets and exploring monumental buildings provides them with a profound experiential learning journey. Undoubtedly, such experiences have the power to transform lives.

Age

The RVing community is primarily made up of individuals over the age of 55, but there is a growing group of millennials in their early 30s who are also embracing this lifestyle. These younger individuals often see RV travel as a way to experience life before settling down and are seeking happiness and flexibility in their careers. Meanwhile, older individuals who have waited their whole lives for these experiences are now approaching retirement age and using RVing as a way to enjoy freedom and adventure. Health is a consideration, especially for those in their 70s, but the RVing lifestyle offers options for finding good healthcare services.

With the advent of telemedicine and retail pharmacies, our prescriptions can be transferred to any location. There is RV insurance and clubs that will take individuals to home communities if emergencies arise. They will even fly the spouse with the individual to their home community. Health obviously is a limiting factor in an issue and in some circumstances. In the future, you're going to see the average age of RVers in their 40s and 50s. They have fallen in love with lifestyle and have realized that they can digitally stay connected to family and work.

We have a friend who just turned 93 years old and he just came back from Alaska driving. His RV just turned 300,000 miles and he does all of his own maintenance. Health is a factor, especially when individuals reach their 70s. You can find great healthcare and you have the ability to find the best possible. We have had medical and dental emergencies and have found excellent service.