

What makes travelers stop?

Background

What makes you stop while you are traveling on the highway? Despite what travelers say, they rarely stop “for no real reason” or to “just look around.” There’s almost always at least two reasons they stop (such as get gas, coffee, snacks, shop, ask directions, use a restroom).

Younger people, people with lower education, or people with children seem to prefer travel plazas because they are large, fast, convenient, safe and have a wide variety of merchandise. Older travelers stop more often, spend less money, and seem to prefer rest areas for their convenience and quietness.

Key Teaching Points

- ❑ There’s almost two or more reasons why people stop.
- ❑ Differences in gender, age, education, and number of children make travelers stop at different locations, different times, and for different needs.
- ❑ On average, people stop driving after 170 miles.

Student Demonstration

At the beginning of this session have the students take out a piece of paper and a pencil. Read the following instructions to them:

Try to remember your most recent “road trip” in car (approximately 200 miles) and where and when you stopped on the road.

Also ask them to brainstorm on why they stopped. The following questions are some examples of what you can ask them about their road trip:

- *Who was driving?*
- *How many people were in the car?*
- *At what time did you leave?*
- *When was the first stop you made?*
- *Where did you stop (rest area, travel plaza)?*
- *What reason(s) made you decide to stop?*
- *Did you buy anything? How much did you spend?*
- *Did you do anything while you stopped?*
- *How many times did you stop during the entire trip?*
- *At what time did you arrive at your final destination?*
- *How long was the total trip?*
- *How long did you stop in total?*

Focus the discussion on the reasons that made them decide to stop and what their needs were. You can survey the group to see who prefers rest area vs. travel plazas and why.

Finally, give them some statistics about where, when and why travelers stop, according to their gender, age, education, and number of children.

Wansink, Brian and Koert van Ittersum (2004), “Stopping Decisions of Travelers,” Tourism Management, 25: (June), 319-330