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A Relationship between Family Leisure and Tourism & Hotel Industry: A Importance of
Family Leisure

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between family leisure behavior and apply its relationship into the tourism and hotel industry. Exploratory sample data (N=50) were collected from international students at Johnson and Wales University, primarily of Chinese and Korean ethnicity. The instrument consisted of three parts: demographic features, past family leisure tendency, and current family leisure tendency. Ho: There is not a significant difference between the past frequency and satisfaction of family leisure and the current family leisure frequency and satisfaction. A t-test for independent samples is used to address the hypothesis. The results of the study indicated that there is no significant relationship between the past and the present family leisure activities, however, it is important to fully understand the underlying explanations of this result. There are many other variables that can affect the family leisure such as study, change of the interest, parents' divorce, economic conditions, and adolescence. These reasons indicate that tourism and the hotel industry have to target the families as their main customers with considering the factors that might affect the family leisure activities. However, one of the more interesting findings is that almost 66.00% of those surveyed are satisfied with their reduced family leisure time.

Keywords: family leisure, family leisure activities, leisure and tourism and hotel industry

Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, working hours have been reduced... the importance of leisure time has increased. As people can spend more time with their family than the past, people start to be interested in quality free time with their family. The strong tie between leisure and family values focused new importance on shared time and interaction for family solidarity (Orthner & Mancini, 1990). In the leisure literature, many researchers have reported positive relationships between leisure and life satisfaction (Ragheb & Griffith, 1982; Ray, 1979; Riddick, 1986) and between involvement in shared leisure activities and satisfaction with family life (Holman & Jacquart, 1988; Miller, 1976; Orthner, 1975; Orthner & Mancini, 1990; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003).

With the improvement of living standards, each family desires to have a quality time with their family and it has affected the tourism industry a great deal. It is an important opportunity to get the whole family together to enjoy their family leisure experience. For example, more and more families have plans to go traveling as their family leisure activities. As the result holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas, parents are willing to make some plans for the whole family to have some memorable and valuable family experience together. This trend will help tourism and the hotel industry for opportunities to develop their business. Nevertheless, the tourism and hotel industry does not realize the importance of this kind of family leisure activity for every family member. If the hotel or tourism agency can provide

their best service to make the family satisfied, then future trip planning and using the agency for their vacation needs time and time again. So the hotel and travel agency will have a big group of loyal customers. On the other hand, if the family members have bad experiences during their travel, the family may not continue this family leisure activity (or the agency). So, the hotel and tourism will lose their business in the future. Moreover, family leisure will influence their children's interests in their lives. If children can have great experiences when they go traveling with their family, they will have a good impression of the hotel or travel agency. As the result, when the children grow up, they will regard the same hotel or tourism agency as their first choice whenever they desire a family vacation. The hotel and tourism company will have potential customers in the future.

Review of Related Literature

Family Leisure

Family leisure has significant relationships with positive family outcomes for many years (Holman & Epperson, 1989; Orthner & Mancini, 1991). Kaplan (1975) argued that leisure behavior should not only be examined among individuals, but should focus on families as well because of the meaningful inter-relationship between the two. Family play the most important role in a child's leisure socialization which is described as a process through which individuals acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and motives about leisure (Iso-Ahola, 1980).

Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning

The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning is grounded in family systems theory and indicates that involvement in different patterns of family leisure

contributes to the family functioning in different ways. Based on this model, the tourism and hotel industry can separate family customers into two groups.

Iso-Ahola (1984) indicated that people have a tendency to look for both stability and change, structure and variety, and familiarity and novelty in their leisure. That is, individuals tend to meet needs for both stability and change through their leisure behavior. The Core and Balance Model indicates that there are two basic categories or patterns of family leisure. Core family leisure includes "common, everyday, low-cost, relatively accessible, often home-based activities that many families do frequently" (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). This may include family activities such as playing board games, making and eating dinner, shooting hoops in the driveway or sharing the same hobbies together. Such activities provide a consistent, safe and usually positive context in which family relationships can be enhanced and feelings of family closeness increased (Freeman & Zabriskie, 2003). Balancing family leisure, on the other hand, is depicted by activities that are generally less common, less frequent, more out of the ordinary, and usually not home-based. Thus, providing novel experiences may include family activities such as vacations, camping, fishing, special events, and trips to theme parks (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003).

Family Leisure Activities

Family vacations are considered as one of the main family leisure activities, providing an input necessary for family systems to be challenged, to develop, and to progress as a working unit. When Americans are on a vacation, it is only about the family. According to a recent survey about the vacation which conducted by Expedia.com (2005), almost a third of Americans answered that they spend most of their vacation by traveling with their immediate

family. Family travel is turning into a lucrative segment for many businesses with an affinity toward this specialized market. The existing active literature in the tourism context has mostly focused on individual travelers (Brey & Lehto, 2007; Choi & Tsang, 1999; Frändberg, 2010; Hsieh, O'Leary, & Morrison, 1992; Weaver, McCleary, Han, & Blosser, 2009). In a recent study on family rural vacation, Chen, Lehto, and Cai (2012), state that family composition can be an influential factor that explains rural activity participation behavior of family travelers. More specifically, age and the number of the children in a vacationing family can exert influence on the activities that the family may be interested in.

Study Objectives

The objective of this study is to identify the relationship between the past and the present family leisure behavior. For example, if families frequently spent leisure time with their family and were satisfied with their past family leisure activities, would they tend to continue their family leisure time? On the other hand, if they were not satisfied, would they tend to stop spending time together? The tourism and hotel industry should understand what kind of customers they should focus on to intrigue them into their business. Also, the tourism and hotel industry should try their best to provide the best services to help the families to have the memorable time because they might become permanent customers. In order to do that, it is important to know how often family leisure activities have been done in the past and how satisfied the family members were. Also, it is necessary to compare these data with the current family leisure activities. These findings will be effective for the tourism and hotel industry to segment, target, and position their main customers specifically. For example, the tourism agency can make a marketing promotion only for the families with young children

because they are the main customers who will enjoy family leisure time. Therefore, we make a specific hypothesis for this study.

Ho: There is not a significant difference between the past frequency and satisfaction of family leisure and the current family leisure frequency and satisfaction.

H_a: There is a significant difference between the past frequency and satisfaction of family leisure and the current family leisure frequency and satisfaction.

Method

Research Instrument

The quantitative research methodology approach was used in this research which conducted by survey. The population of this research involves a large group of family who did family leisure time together. Although this research is exploratory in nature, some attempt to generalize is in order. Thus, we collected sample data from a target population (N=50). The article focuses on the university and MBA students from Johnson and Wales University, mostly international students from China and Korea. The questionnaire consisted of three structured parts and is based on the past literature review. The first part was to get demographic features of the participants which consist of: gender, the number of the family members, and the ages of their siblings. In the second and third section, participants were asked about their past and current family leisure activities. Responses about frequency and satisfaction were measured by using the five-point Likert type scale from 1 (“never” or “poor”) to 5 (“always” or “excellent”). In the second parts, some items were asked to determine what types of factors have impacts on the current family leisure activities.

Sampling and Data Collection

In total, fifty data were collected. Our sample was selected from Johnson and Wales University students. Most of them were Asian international students, especially Chinese and Koreans. Since this data is not collected randomly but a conveniently, there are some chances that the data may be biased.

Analysis and Results

Overall, from the sample of Johnson and Wales students (N=50) were involved in this research. The demographic profiles of the participants are displayed in Table 1 below. There were 56.00% of male respondents and 44.00% of female respondents. The most common type of families was the families consisted of 2 children at 46.00%. Families with only child were 40.00% and families with three children were the least at 14.00%. Families who have siblings were also asked to answer the ages of their siblings. Most of the siblings were over 18 years old (63.34%), and 10-18 years old were 43.33%. Only 6.60% of siblings were younger than 10 years old.

Table 1.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	28	56.00%
Female	22	44.00%
Number of the family members		
Only child	20	40.00%
One sibling	23	46.00%
Two siblings	7	14.00%
Age of the siblings		
0-9 years old	2	6.67%
10-18 years old	11	43.33%
18+ years old	19	63.34%

The past family leisure behavior of the respondents is shown in Table 2. Most respondents answered that they often or sometimes had family leisure time at 36.00% and 34.00% respectively. Following frequencies were always (20.00%), seldom (8.00%), and never (2.00%). Seventy-six percent of the respondents were satisfied with their family leisure activities and only 8.00% of them were dissatisfied. Sixteen percent answered neutral to this statement.

Table 2.

Past Leisure Behavior of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Frequency		
Always	10	20.00%
Often	18	36.00%
Sometimes	17	34.00%
Seldom	4	8.00%
Never	1	2.00%
Satisfaction		
Very satisfied	20	40.00%
Satisfied	18	36.00%
Neutral	8	16.00%
Dissatisfied	3	6.00%
Very dissatisfied	1	2.00%

Table 3 shows the **present leisure behavior** of the respondents. Unlike the past leisure behaviors, the percentage of those who answered never has risen from 2.00% to 14.00%. Also, the percentage of those persons who rarely enjoy family leisure has increased by almost 12.00% compared to the past. In current family leisure, most respondents answered that they often or sometimes enjoy the family time, but the percentages have been diminished

to 30.00% and 32.00% respectively. From our results, the most significant finding is that even though the frequencies of the family leisure time have been reduced, it seems like the families do not really care about it. Almost 66.00% are satisfied with their reduced family leisure time. And only 5.00% answer that they are not satisfied.

Table 3.

Current Leisure Behavior of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Frequency		
Always	2	4.00%
Often	15	30.00%
Sometimes	16	32.00%
Seldom	10	20.00%
Never	7	14.00%
Satisfaction		
Very satisfied	12	24.00%
Satisfied	20	40.00%
Neutral	13	26.00%
Dissatisfied	5	10.00%
Very dissatisfied	0	0.00%

As it is shown in Table 4, the t-Test is used to determine whether two sets of data are statistically significant or not. In this case, t-Test is both applied to the frequencies between the past and the current family leisure and the satisfaction between the past and the current

family leisure. Both p-values are 0.50 and 0.14 which are greater than 0.05. Therefore, there is no statistically significant relationship between the past frequency and satisfaction of family leisure and the current family leisure frequency and satisfaction. However, according to the mean of the past and the current frequencies, it has been reduced and so does the mean of the satisfaction.

Table 4.

T-test of The Survey

Variable	M	S.D.
Frequencies		
Past	3.64	0.96
Current	2.90	1.11
T value		0.71
P value		0.50*
Satisfaction		
Past	4.06	0.93
Current	3.78	0.93
T value		-1.83
P value		0.14*

* $P > 0.05$ Note. The assumption is that both scales are interval.

Table 5 shows the reasons why the family leisure has been diminished and when it begins to be reduced. When children go to the high school, the families begin to reduce the

family leisure time (56.00%). The second largest period was the junior high school at 32.00%. The major reason of the decrease of the family leisure time was due to study (66.00 %). The following reasons were change of the interest at 14.00%, economic difficulty at 8.00%. Parents' divorce and adolescence were same at 6.00%.

Table 5.

Period and the Reasons for the Decrease of the Family Leisure Time

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Period of family leisure reduced		
Kindergarten	1	2.00%
Elementary school	3	6.00%
Junior high school	16	32.00%
High school	28	56.00%
College/University	2	4.00%
Reasons of family leisure reduced		
Study	33	66.00%
Parents' divorce	3	6.00%
Change of the interest	7	14.00%
Economic difficulty	4	8.00%
Geographic difficulty	0	0.00%
Adolescence	3	6.00%

Even though there is no significant relationship between the past and the current leisure time, it is important for the tourism and hotel industry to keep their focus on targeting

the family. According to the Table 5, study was the main reason why the families stopped the family leisure activities. However, this reason is not permanent but temporary, because after the high school, most of the examinations for college will be finished. Then, the families can go back to their routine family leisure life. Table 3 supports this idea because it is indicated that most of university students answered that they are spending their time with family frequently.

Summary, Conclusions, Recommendation

The prior research found out that family leisure plays an important role in the family functioning. Thus, in this study, the research was focused on how family leisure can apply effectively for the tourism and hotel industry. Although, the survey failed to reveal the significant difference between current and past family leisure time, by clarifying the reasons why it failed, it is able to connect the family leisure behavior to the tourism and hotel business. It turned out that family leisure is very important for the tourism and hotel industry. By targeting the families as their main customers, tourism and hotel industry can build a strong, permanent and loyal customer structure. Some tourism agencies or hotels already have packages which are targeting the families. Further studies should be conducted to figure out what kinds of factors can help families to continue to spend their time together.

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