Family and Relationship Benefits of Travel Experiences: A Literature Review

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Abstract
The purpose of this review was to examine existent research on the benefits of travel applicable to working adults, couples, families, and extended family members. While travel is often perceived as an outlet for relaxation, education, and a chance to escape the mundane, recent research suggests that travel has several deeper benefits for families, relationships, and the individual. Findings from an extensive review of literature revealed that tourism provides positive benefits for adults, children, and couples. Several studies cited time allotted for family bonding is decreasing, likely attributed to increased career demands and changing family structures. These studies further showed travel as a means to utilize limited family time to help improve communications within a relationship, reduce the possibility of divorce, strengthen lifelong family bonds, and increase a sense of well-being in adults and children. Gaps in the existent research were noted, and potential suggestions for future research are addressed.

For generations, a highlight of many childhood memories included the family vacation. However, amid an unstable economy and increasing workloads, Americans are dedicating more time and energy to their careers, often leading to increases in stress and decreases in family time. A vacation deprivation study ranked U.S. workers 18th of the 20 countries surveyed in vacation days granted and used (Expedia 2011). Survey respondents cited work constraints and financial concerns as reasons they forgo using their allotted vacation days (Expedia 2011). Similarly, Accenture (2012) revealed 42 percent of respondents sacrificed time with family because of their careers, and 58 percent of those admitted that this has negatively impacted their family life. This trend highlights a likely need for resources beneficial to the enhancement of family bonding amid constraints. Those in the tourism field have recognized this need and have begun to increase their focus on how vacations can be viewed as a resource that can build relationships and increase family bonds (Kozak and Duman 2012; Sirgy et al. 2011; Crompton and Keown 2009; West and Merriam 2009; Shaw, Havitz, and Delemere 2008).

The purpose of this review was to examine existent research on the benefits of travel applicable to working adults, couples, families, and extended family members, to identify gaps for future research. To gain a more rounded understanding of the current research on tourism's potential benefits, research was not limited to tourism literature. Information was also reviewed from practitioners in the field, as well as academic research from outside the tourism field. The review focused on three main hypotheses: *Hypothesis 1*: Travel creates strong family bonds and lifetime memories, *Hypothesis 2*: Travel maintains or increases overall well-being, which can strengthen marriages to reduce the likelihood of divorce, and *Hypothesis 3*: Travel increases total family happiness, including benefits for children and extended family members. Finally, this review offers implications for future research on the benefits travel may provide to increase family and relationship satisfaction.

Theoretical Context

A brief overview of research on the benefits of travel begins in 1968, when Klausner first noted positive family and personal effects of extended vacations. Crompton (1979) proposed categorized motivations to travel, in particular, motivations for pleasure vacations. Goodrich (1977) conducted research into the specific positive benefits of tourism and vacations through empirical studies of international travelers, and Rubenstein (1980) postulated "reasons" why people travel from a psychological standpoint. Research followed by Lounsbury and Hoopes (1986), and theirs was

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Figure 1. Conceptual model of quality of life determinants.

among the first to quantify positive changes in work and domestic satisfaction following a leisure vacation.

More recent research on the benefits of family travel has focused on how leisure, specifically vacations, can build relationships, create memories, and increase family bonds (Kozak and Duman 2012; West and Merriam 2009; Byrnes 2001; Newman 1996). Amid changing family dynamics, economic instability, and a continual increase in the pace of life, the family vacation could be suggested as a way to foster and maintain family well-being. Family vacations contribute significantly to the number and types of travelers in the United States, and throughout the world, on a yearly basis (Chesworth 2003; Shaw, Havitz, and Delemere 2008). However, Americans dedicating more time and energy to their careers is likely reducing the availability of time for family bonding and could potentially limit time for family vacations. According to a recent study, U.S. workers receive on average 14 vacation days per year (Expedia 2011). Only Japan with 11, and South Korea with 10, had fewer. Germany, France, Spain, Brazil and Denmark grant 30 paid vacation days on average, followed closely by Italy with 28, and the Netherlands, United Kingdom, India, Norway, and Sweden with 25 days per year. Further still, the study revealed that Americans who do not use their vacation days attribute the loss to work constraints and concerns with the economy (Expedia 2011).

Numerous studies cite work dissatisfaction due to long hours and little leave time, increases in job and domestic stress, and decreases in overall family well-being and quality time spent as a family unit (Fritz and Sonnentag 2006; Strauss-Blasche et al. 2005; Strauss-Blasche et al. 2004; Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, and Marktl 2002; Westman and Eden 1997). An online survey of business executives from medium to large organizations across 31 countries found that half of the respondents surveyed were dissatisfied with their jobs (Accenture 2012). Forty-two percent said they sacrificed time with family because of their careers, while 58 percent claimed career demands have negatively impacted their family life.

Considering these findings, resources that foster positive relationships, provide a break from routine obligations and daily career stressors, and help increase relationship and overall life satisfaction levels are becoming increasingly important. These issues may be attributed to a recent increase in research of marital satisfaction, and the variables that can enhance relationships, to include leisure activities. Neal, Sirgy, and Uysal (1999) were among the first to research this phenomena and concluded that overall life satisfaction was directly influenced by leisure satisfaction.

Following this finding, further research has cited leisure as a contributing factor in increased well-being in adults, a factor that reduces stress and increases relationship satisfaction (Sirgy et al. 2011; de Bloom et al. 2010; Gilbert and Abdullah 2004; Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, and Marktl 2002; Neal, Sirgy, and Uysal 1999). Leisure has also been found to provide an escape from the everyday stress of work and hectic family routines, while providing an outlet to perpetuate family bonding and life-long memories (Crompton and Keown 2009; Shaw, Havitz, and Delemere 2008; Pennington-Gray and Kerstetter 2001).

Several studies cite "travel" as the suggested leisure activity that may provide a break from the mundane, fast-paced routine way of life, thus leading to increases in quality of life and relationship satisfaction (Dolnicar, Yanamandram, and Cliff 2012; de Bloom et al. 2010; Fritz and Sonnentag 2006; Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, and Marktl 2000). Subsequently, research also supports the notion that healthy relationships promote positive physical health, psychological well-being, and overall increases in quality of life for adults (Schoenborn 2004; Williams 2003). Using existing studies as a guiding model for the current study, a model suggesting leisure satisfaction directly impacts relationship satisfaction, which in turn impacts quality of life, is conceptualized (Figure 1).

Methods

Utilizing guidance from Webster and Watson (2002), a literature review was conducted to build a foundation for which to address the gaps in existent research. It was believed this could provide direction for the advancement of the study of tourism benefits. Primary literature was obtained by searching 42 online databases including the primary five, EBSCO, Ovid, ProQuest, Elsevier, and ISI (Figure 2). An expert panel was used to generate initial keywords to utilize. After multiple searches, four key terms appeared most relevant, and were then each paired with 20 secondary relevant terms. Keywords were further reduced to 14 secondary terms producing the most optimal results. The four key words repeated with each of the secondary words were holiday taking, travel, tourism, and vacation. The 14 relevant secondary words were family, children, family satisfaction, couples, well-being, bonding, lifetime memories, family benefits, marriage, therapy, quality of life, relationships, grandparents, and life satisfaction. Thus, a search of each database listed previously included a search with the words travel and family, travel and children, travel and family satisfaction, etc., followed by a search of holiday taking and family, holiday
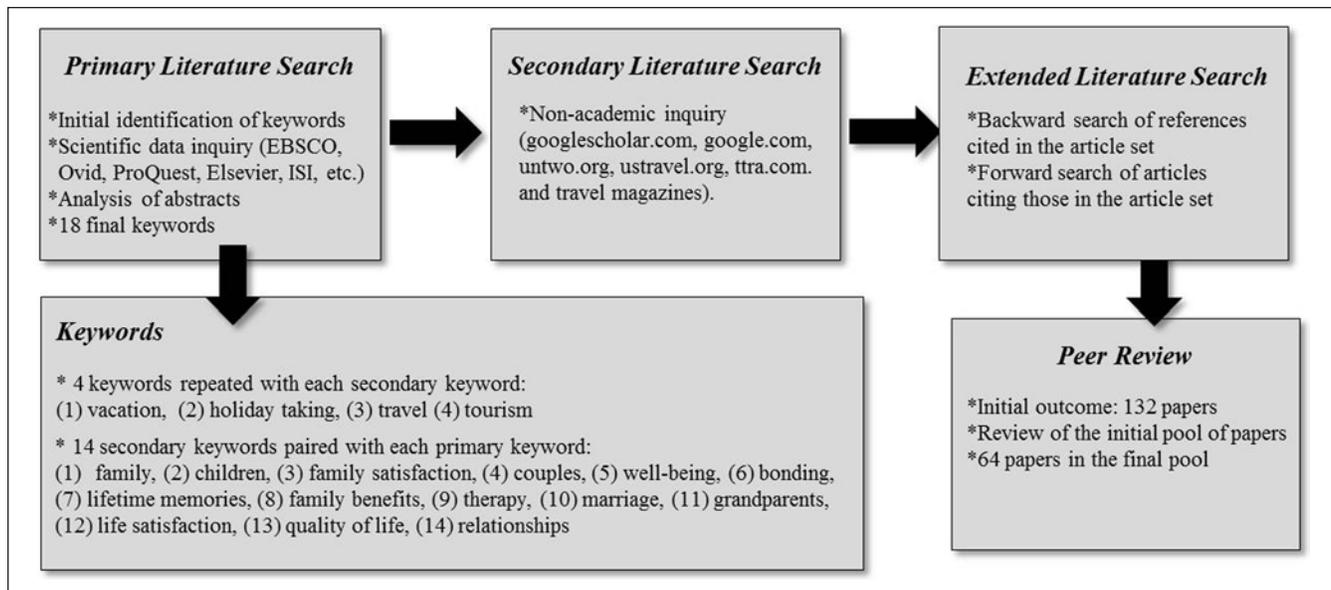
Figure 2. Methods for article search.

taking and children, holiday taking and family satisfaction, and so forth. The keywords were used in different combinations in different fields (title, abstract, and topic).

A secondary literature search was carried out to obtain nonacademic publications such as consumer trade articles, travel association publications, and public and nonprofit organization information not available or overlooked in the primary literature search. The following websites were searched: www.googlescholar.com, www.google.com, www.unwto.org, www.wto.org, www.ustravel.org, www.ttra.com, and various travel, leisure, and family-focused magazines. Finally, backward research was conducted to review material cited in the compiled article set, and forward research was completed to provide a review of material citing the research in the previously compiled article set. The literature searches initially yielded 132 journal articles, papers, and nonacademic resources. After review of all articles by three graduate students, and a reliability of sources check by two Full Professors with expertise in this area, 64 resources were deemed relevant to this research and inclusive of useable empirical, theoretical, and practical information. The majority of resources were recent; 37 published since 2006, 17 published between 2000 and 2005, 4 published in the 1990s, 4 in the 1980s, and 2 in 1970s. In terms of geographical representation, the majority of articles reviewed came from U.S.-published journals and nonacademic sources. Several others pertaining to Asian and European studies from international or foreign journals and nonacademic sources were also included. All articles used were published in English. A summary of the most relevant academic articles and their outcomes pertaining to the hypotheses for this paper can be found in Table 1.

Hypothesis Testing

The U.S. Travel Association definition of "family travel" includes many types of traveling parties, including married couples traveling together, spouses traveling with children, grandparents traveling with grandchildren, single parents with children, reunion-goers, and siblings with relatives (U.S. Travel Association 2012). They further note that these groups make up 30 percent of the U.S. adult leisure travel segment, and take an average of 4.5 trips each year. According to the Ypartnership/Harrison Group 2010 Portrait of American Travelers, family travel is on the rise, with 44 percent of all leisure travelers taking at least one family vacation in 2010 (as cited in Crossett 2010). The tourism industry has taken note of this trend by adding family amenities to vacation packages, marketing resorts to the family segment, and implementing family priority boarding on planes. However, research into the benefits of family travel, for adults, children, and extended family members has only recently begun to surface.

Hypothesis 1: Travel creates strong family bonds and lifetime memories.

Numerous studies have revealed positive effects on family cohesion due to recreation and leisure activities (Hornberger, Zabriskie, Freeman 2010; Poff 2010; Zabriskie 2003; Zabriskie and McCormick 2001; Holman and Jacquart 1988; Smith, Snyder, and Monsama 1988). As leisure activities are a major component of family travel and a leading reason for travel, research from the field of family studies and leisure is likely relevant to the benefits of travel for families.

Table 1. A Summary of Studies on Family and Relationship Benefits.

Author	Pre–Post Design	Location	Respondent	Hypothesis[a]	Result[b]
Lounsbury and Hoopes (1986)	Yes	USA	128 employees	Vacation satisfaction → Job performance (↑)	Yes
				Vacation satisfaction → Life satisfaction (↑)	Yes
Hill (1988)	No	USA	280 married couples	Shared leisure → Potential for divorce (↓)	Yes
Holman and Jacquart (1988)	No	USA	159 couples	Joint Leisure → Communication (↑)	Yes
				Joint leisure → Stress, males (↓)	No
				Joint leisure → Stress, females (↓)	Yes
Westman and Eden (1997)	Yes	Israel	76 clerks	Vacation → Burnout (↓)	Yes
				Fade-out → 3 weeks	No
				Duration of trip → Vacation effect (↑)	
Neal, Sirgy, and Uysal (1999)	No	USA	373 university employees	Vacation satisfaction → Life satisfaction (↑)	Yes
Lewis (2001)	No	UK	Children and caretakers	Vacation → Quality of life for children (↑)	Yes
Strauss, Ekmekcioglu, and Marktl (2002)	Yes	Austria	53 employees	Vacation → Perceived health (↑)	Yes
				Vacation → Psychological well-being (↑)	Yes
				Vacation → Recuperation (↑)	Yes
				Work load after vacation → Vacation effect (↓)	Yes
Gilbert and Abdullah (2004)	Yes	UK	6004 holiday takers	Vacation→ Overall happiness (↑)	Yes
				Vacation→ Subjective well-being (↑)	Yes
Strauss et al. (2004)	No	Austria	298 adults	Vacation satisfaction → Well-being (↑)	Yes
				Vacation satisfaction → Ill-being (↑)	No
				Fade-out → 4 Weeks	
Strauss et al. (2005)	No	USA	239 employees	Vacation → Exhaustion (↓)	Yes
				Vacation → Recuperation (↑)	Yes
Fritz and Sonnentag (2006)	Yes	Germany	233 nonacademic employees	Vacation → Health (↑)	Yes
				Joint leisure → Burnout (↓)	Yes
				Joint leisure → Job performance (↑)	No
Hilbrecht et al. (2008)	Yes	Canada	24 children	Vacation → Children relaxed (↑)	Yes
				Vacation → Family bonds (↑)	Yes
				Vacation → School focus (↑)	Yes
Lee, Graefe, and Burns (2008)	No	USA	1282 park visitors	Family recreation motive → Bonding (↑)	Yes
				Family recreation motive → Relaxation (↑)	No
Shaw, Havitz, and Delemere (2008)	Yes	Canada	15 families	Vacation → Togetherness (↑)	Yes
				Vacation→ Memories (↑)	Yes
Agate et al. (2009)	No	USA	898 family members	Leisure satisfaction → Family satisfaction (↑)	Yes
Lehto et al. (2009)	No	USA	265 family members	Vacation → Family bonding (↑)	Yes
				Vacation → Communications (↑)	Yes
				Vacation → Solidarity (↑)	Yes
West and Miriam (2009)	No	USA	306 state park visitors	Outdoor recreation → Family cohesiveness (↑)	Yes
de Bloom et al. (2010)	Yes	Netherlands	96 travelers	Vacation → Well-being (↑)	Yes
				Vacation → Stress (↓)	Yes
				Vacation → Sleep habit (↑)	No
				Fade-out → 2 Weeks	
Nawijn (2011)	No	Netherlands	3,650 citizens	No. of vacation days → Happiness (↑)	No
				Frequency of vacations → Happiness (↑)	No
				Anticipation of trip → Happiness (↑)	Yes
Kühnel and Sonnentag (2011)	No	Germany	131 German teachers	Vacation → Exhaustion (↓)	Yes
				Fade-out → 1 Month	
Sirgy et al. (2011)	No	South Africa	264 adult travelers	Vacation satisfaction → Life satisfaction (↑)	Yes
Dolnicar, Yanamandram, and Cliff (2012)	No	Australia	1,000 panelists	Vacation → Well-being (↑)	Yes

a. ↑ denotes positive effect; ↓ denotes negative effect.
b. *Yes* denotes hypothesis was demonstrated, while *No* denotes hypothesis was not demonstrated.

Participation in leisure activities by parents and children has been found to enhance family relationships and perpetuate family cohesion between parent and child (Agate et al. 2009; Zabriskie and McCormick 2001). These shared activities by family members can create a unique experience that leads to an increase in bonding and attachment. This can lead to children learning to share and getting along better with others, as well as creating loyalty within the family (Smith 1997). Lee, Graefe, and Burns (2008) interviewed 1,283 subjects recreating at a state park to find motives for leisure and family recreation. Subjects with children (vs. those without) revealed a greater expressed interest in family recreation and noted time spent together as the motive for their travel, rather than exercise and relaxation. Gilbert and Abdullah (2004) researched the benefits of "holidaytaking," and found that even the anticipation of a family vacation can increase positive feelings about life, family, and health.

Specifically focusing on the family benefits of leisure applied to the realm of vacationing, Shaw, Havitz, and Delemere (2008) researched the impact that family vacations have on intensifying family bonds by providing an escape from the routine of daily life. They concluded that family cohesion was strengthened through vacationing as it "created memories that would last, that would provide meaning in the future, and that would become a basis for future life decisions" (Shaw, Havitz, and Delemere 2008, p. 20). One surveyed participant commented, "I decided to invest in my kids' memories, because they're not going to remember a new couch, but, they will remember a vacation" (Shaw, Havitz, and Delemere 2008, p. 22). Adding to this research focus, Lehto et al. (2009) surveyed 265 leisure travelers, and concluded that family vacations contributed to family bonding and an increase in positive family communications. They found that "traveling with family appeared to be perceived as quality time well spent, strengthening family ties and contributing to connectedness of family members" (Lehto et al., 2009, p. 470).

Kozak (2010) studied 445 families in the United Kingdom and found that families depended on one another's evaluations of a vacation to assess their own satisfaction levels. Thus, this indicates that a happy and successful vacation was more likely to be achieved if all parties were satisfied once they returned home. Research by Lehto et al. (2009) included an overall focus on family functioning during vacation. They found a need to "understand family vacation as one consumption unit" (p. 475). "Activities and programs [at the vacation site] that can provide ample opportunities for [parents and children] to interact can be appreciated by family travelers" (p. 475). They concluded that future research should focus on how to create experiences during travel where children and parents are immersed in activities together, yet fulfill the vacation needs of parents and children alike.

Similarly, research by Gram (2005) included differences in children's and parents' overall motives for travel. Children were more likely to want fun and activities from a holiday, while parents were more inclined to hope for a relaxing vacation for all. Parents indicated a need for vacations to provide "togetherness," while still leaving room for rest. These findings could lead to research that focuses on vacation activities that promote togetherness, while also offering a chance for children to participate in activities at times separate from parents. In theory, this could potentially increase both parties' vacation satisfaction levels, which in turn could increase both their relationship and life satisfaction (i.e., Figure 1).

> *Hypothesis 2: Travel maintains or increases overall well-being, which can strengthen marriages to reduce the likelihood of divorce.*

Empirical studies have investigated relationships between leisure activities and marital satisfaction, and have found that increases in shared leisure activities can contribute to increases in relationship satisfaction (Newman and Newman 2008; Presser 2000; Holman and Jacquart 1988; Hill 1988). Hill (1988) analyzed 280 married couples interviewed for the 1975–1981 Time Use Longitudinal Panel Study, and concluded that increased amounts of shared leisure were correlated with a strong reduction in the probability of divorce or separation. These studies did not operationalize the term *leisure*; therefore it cannot be determined that travel was included as a tenant of the leisure component. However, early empirical studies have produced evidence for a direct relationship between shared leisure and marital satisfaction; and from this evidence, researchers have reasoned that this was a causal relationship moving from the shared leisure activities to increased levels of marital satisfaction or quality (Baldwin, Ellis, and Baldwin 1999).

Gilbert and Abdullah (2004) surveyed 6,004 holiday- and non-holiday-taking UK couples and found empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that those participating in a holiday (of at least four consecutive days) each year, compared to those who did not, increased their sense of well-being and enhanced their happiness. Similarly, Hoopes and Lounsbury (1989) conducted a study of 129 working adults and measured satisfaction with family and marriage pre- and postvacation. A vacation together was cited as a significant variable that attributed to increases in postvacation satisfaction in the domain of family and marriage. Their study supported previous research by concluding that satisfaction with tourism leads to satisfaction with leisure life, and in turn, contributes to overall well-being and life satisfaction.

Recently, travel has been introduced as a resource to combat domestic unrest and unhappiness and has been used to deter couples from divorce (Bernama Media 2010; Kuoni 2010; Schwartz 2009). With more than 33,000 divorces in 2010, the Malaysian government looked to travel to help reduce or eliminate divorce among Malaysian adult couples. The Terengganu Family Development Foundation introduced the "Second Honeymoon Program" in 2010 (Bernama

Media 2010). This government-funded program, open to troubled couples on the brink of divorce, provided a second honeymoon vacation to an island resort where couples were provided family and home management counseling, as well as time spent privately to rekindle marriages. As of 2012, the 278 couples who have participated in the program remain married after completion of the program (Chen 2012). The government of Malaysia cites communication issues as the cause of a majority of marriages ending in divorce, and believes vacation time spent away from routine stress is helping increase the quality of communication between couples, and their relationship satisfaction.

Further studies have also found support for the benefits of travel on relationships. A survey of 2,100 British adults aged 25–65 revealed holidays (vacations) were thought by 51 percent of respondents to be an ideal time to discuss important life decisions. Seventy-four percent of respondents said "a romantic getaway can make or break their relationship" (Kuoni 2010, p. 4). This was especially true for more than 25 percent of the female respondents, who revealed that a holiday helped "re-ignite the flames of love" (p. 4). Fifty-four percent of respondents who had a conversation with their loved ones during vacation about work, family, or relationships took action when they returned home. Vacation conversations thus became an inspiration for change. The majority (54%) of those surveyed who had discussed getting married or engaged while on vacation revealed that it led to actions and/or changes in their lives when they returned home: "Thirty-six percent of respondents said they had talked about their love life during vacation, and 34% actually carried out the decisions they discussed when they returned home" (p. 20).

Another outlet where travel is being used as a resource for couples to recharge their relationships is through Cambridge Beaches Resorts' Wellness Retreats. Dr. Pepper Schwartz, Professor of Sociology and one of the industry's leading relationship experts, partnered with the resort to develop relationship wellness getaways for couples to enhance communication and rekindle romance. "The pace of life today is frantic. Taking time out to refocus on one's relationship is what [Cambridge Beach Resort's Wellness Retreats] weekends are all about," noted Schwartz (Schwartz 2009).

Additional empirical research has been found to further the claim that vacations can increase marital satisfaction. A 2012 survey of 1,000 married or dating US adults, conducted by Royal Caribbean International, cited sex as the top activity on a couple's cruise itinerary. Eighty percent of respondents said they left a cruise feeling more connected to their spouse or partner, while 67 percent reported being more in love with their significant other after the vacation. Additionally, 75 percent of those surveyed said spending time together during the cruise improved their relationship when they returned home (Sierra 2012).

Similarly, Brown (2010) surveyed 1,927 UK adults engaged in a relationship who had traveled together in the previous 2 years. Sixty-seven percent of respondents revealed they didn't argue at all during their vacation, yet 54 percent admitted they had argued with their partner at least once a day before the vacation. The study also showed that couples are intimate on vacation eight times more than while they are at home (Brown 2010).

The previously documented studies have focused heavily on married adults and relationship satisfaction moderated by leisure (travel) activities. Future research evaluating the effects of relationship and vacation satisfaction for dating, cohabitating, and those married for varying lengths of time may be beneficial and suggested to the field. There also appears to be a gap in research of the effects of travel with, versus without, one's significant other. These studies could include research on the effects girlfriend getaways and mancations have on the overall satisfaction of the relationship and the vacation.

> *Hypothesis 3: Travel increases total family happiness, to include benefits for children and extended family members.*

Children's Benefits

Many motives and benefits of travel have been identified through empirical research, as previously revealed. However, a gap appears in the study of the potential benefits of taking a vacation from a child's perspective. While several studies have postulated that family leisure time and togetherness are positively correlated with childhood socialization and development (West and Merriam 2009; Lewis 2001; Shaw 2001), little research has been dedicated to empirically understanding whether travel inherently benefits children. With the push for year-round schooling being a popular debate that could potentially be detrimental to the tourism industry, future academic research is suggested in this area. Understanding the benefits children receive from vacations could provide parents, administrators, and the tourism industry documented research to support the need for summer breaks from school. The following gives a peripheral example of the research that has been conducted in this area.

A study by the English Tourism Council (Lewis 2001) revealed that 91 percent of practitioners throughout the United Kingdom agreed that vacations enhance the quality of life. Of those, 85 percent revealed that a "holiday" may reduce stress-related illness in children and control behavioral problems. To further expand these claims, the Department of Health (United Kingdom) funded an initiative called Time2Care. With the support from the country's travel industry, Time2Care provided 1- to 2-week vacations to 4,000 children and their caretakers from a state-run residential care facility. Typically, these children were not afforded the opportunity to travel. The government-funded travel ranged from Mediterranean beach holidays, to camping in

France, or training with football clubs throughout Britain. Measuring the effects of the program, researchers found that 60 percent of participants (children) felt more calm and relaxed after the vacation and had increased confidence and sense of well-being. Almost 33 percent of the caretakers noticed improvements in the participants' mental health directly after the vacation. Some participants commented they felt recharged after the holiday. One child remarked, "When I got back, I worked and concentrated. [Having a break] refreshed my memory . . . it made me feel like I've got a new brain . . . when I went away for a week . . . I was all fresh and ready to start over" (Lewis 2001, p. 38).

As previously stated, gaps exist in research focused on vacation and travel benefits from a child's perspective. Hilbrecht et al. (2008) focused research on the attitudes and feedback of family vacations from the standpoint of a child, by using in-depth interviews of 24 school-age children returning from vacation. They focused on what the children would hope to gain from a family vacation and what aspects of the vacation appealed most and least to the children. They concluded from the study that keeping children happy during extended periods of togetherness could in turn lead to an increase in the parents' happiness and an overall sense of family well-being. Yet, further research is needed to better understand the effects that travel has on children's education, family cohesion, and overall life satisfaction.

Grand Travel

Rugh (2009) wrote about the nostalgia of the family vacation that many American families took together after World War II throughout the early 1970s. She explained how family vacations declined in the mid-1970s with a rise in divorce and oil prices. However, she argued that the memories of those family vacations have lived on through the generations and are being recreated today as baby boomers move into retirement. With their freedom and savings, baby boomers are propelling quickly through the ranks of those who take the most leisure travel trips each year.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, mature and older travelers, those born before 1954, make up 35 percent of the U.S. leisure travel market and take an average of 4.25 leisure trips each year (U.S. Travel Association 2012). The 2010 report *Portrait of American Travelers* revealed that one out of five U.S. travelers is a grandparent, and two-thirds (67%) of those took at least one vacation with their grandchildren last year (as cited in Crossett 2010). Whether by choice, chance, or necessity, a new dimension of family living arrangements is emerging within the U.S. population. More than 7.8 million American children lived with a grandparent in 2009, up 64 percent from 1991 (Kreider and Ellis 2011). This trend is creating a new dimension in family travel coined "Grand Travel," or grandparents traveling with grandchildren. This sector of the tourism industry currently represents 7 percent of all U.S. adult leisure travel (U.S. Travel

Association 2012), and it was estimated that grandparents spent more than $4.6 billion on trips (including transportation) for grandchildren in 2009 (Francese 2009).

Grandparents traveling with their families have resorts, cruise lines, parks, and airlines vying for their growing business and creating "multi-generational" travel opportunities. The U.S. Travel Industry Association estimated that at least 5 million U.S. family vacations a year now span three generations, with grandparents often paying the bill (Hemlock 2011). Research by Gladwell and Bedini (2004) focused on the impact of deteriorating personal health, or caring for an aging spouse or family member, as an emerging constraint to travel within this population. As baby boomers are arguably a very marketable sector of the tourism industry, future research should be considered to determine best practices for catering travel to an aging population.

Recommendations for Future Research

Of the 64 useable resources, 20 were obtained outside of academic research. The majority of those focused on the benefits of travel for children (separated from the overall benefits to the family), and benefits for couples, in which the resources were obtained from travel magazines, destination publications, and publications from field representatives. Overall, academia is lacking studies related to the identification of the benefits of travel particularly for adult couples and children, thus suggesting a wide-open area for future research.

Recommendations for Immediate Research

As previously stated, gaps exist in research focused on vacation and travel benefits from three main perspectives: (1) tourism benefits for adult relationships, (2) U.S.-based research on tourism benefits, and (3) tourism benefits for seniors, or "Grand Travel."

The majority of academic articles used for this review studied tourists, adults, and children, living and traveling outside the United States. Of the information pertaining to the likelihood that travel may reduce divorce and improve relationships, the majority of research has been focused on industry programs operating outside the United States and has typically lacked evidence to determine the program's successes or failures. It is thus suggested that future studies be conducted to empirically examine the effects that travel has on family bonds and relationships, and in particular divorce rates. A suggested a priori and posteriori study of relationship satisfaction, measured before vacation and immediately following return, would be beneficial to determine the benefits travel may provide for couples. Findings from such a study could possibly be used to market travel as a counseling technique and a way to enhance the quality of a relationship.

Additionally, many of the reports that cited positive family benefits of travel were from European countries whose

employees are granted significantly more vacation time, and whose families travel together more than those in the United States. To supply employers, employees and families in the United States with research that determines if travel increases family and life satisfaction, it is suggested that future empirical academic research should also focus on the benefits of travel applied to U.S. companies, employees, and families. As baby boomers become the largest economic segment of the population, the travel wants, needs, and concerns of grandparents (senior market travelers) should be studied. Findings from such research could indicate which destinations are most sought after by this market and the issues seniors may have that constrain them from travel to certain destinations.

Only recently have practitioners begun to examine the trend of couples traveling (as a means of leisure) without their significant other as part of a girlfriend's getaway or "mancation" as a means to potentially increase satisfaction with their leisure choices and relationship satisfaction (Bond 2008; Cavallari 2008). Studies of marriages in America conducted in 1980 and again in 2000 found that couples reported consistent levels of happiness over the course of the 20-year study; however, a significant decrease in the amount of time spent together was reported. This was attributed to demanding career responsibilities for the male and female, and an increasing need for independence over the course of a relationship (Amato et al. 2003).

Research on the girlfriend getaway market has revealed that this emerging trend has developed into a $6-billion segment, which represents 4 percent of U.S. travel industry sales. This trend, up 230 percent in the past seven years, has been attributed to women and men needing time to partake in leisure activities they enjoy, which may be activities their significant other may not enjoy (Bond 2008). According to a recent survey, nearly a quarter of respondents planned to take a trip with female or male friends (independent of their significant other) this year, up 22 percent from 2011 (Long 2012). As this trend is quickly gaining momentum, future research is suggested to examine the positive and/or negative effects travel without one's significant other may have on a couple's relationship and vacation satisfaction.

Recommendations for Long-Term Research

As compared to the areas identified for immediate research, those suggested for future research in this section are more time consuming and costly and/or have more difficult study methods. The areas suggested for future research include (1) the effects of travel throughout a child's life, (2) a longitudinal study of the tourism benefits for families, (3) how motives for travel affect family cohesion and vacation satisfaction, (4) long-term effects of family bonds built and fostered throughout travel, and (5) vacation fade-out effects, in particular, how long families, couples, and children benefit from a vacation.

Hilbrecht et al. (2008) focused research on the attitudes and feedback of family vacations from the standpoint of a child, by using in-depth interviews of 24 school-age children returning from vacation. Future research could investigate the value of family travel through the eyes of a child, measuring those who traveled frequently during their childhood compared to those who did so less frequently, while controlling for socioeconomic factors. Further research into the health, educational, emotional, and societal benefits of travel for children is also suggested to better understand how summer breaks affect school-age children. This research could draw attention to the possible positive benefits a break from routine may provide for a child.

Several studies have been cited in the realm of vacation satisfaction and how long the effects last once an adult returns to work and/or a child returns to their daily routine. De Bloom et al. (2010) concluded that vacationers' health and well-being, ranging from tension to energy levels and life satisfaction, significantly improved during and directly following a vacation. However, the effects faded quickly once the respondent returned to work after a vacation. Similarly, Kühnel and Sonnentag (2011) researched the effects of fade-out on 131 teachers after a vacation and concluded that participation in leisure-time activities directly following vacation delayed the fade-out of the vacation benefits.

Nawijn (2011) studied 3,650 adult travelers in the Netherlands over a two-year period to track vacation satisfaction. He offered the implication that "if one wants to boost their happiness by means of vacationing, one has to take many holidays in order to enjoy many short-lived periods of increased happiness. This is not necessarily bad news for the tourism industry; in fact, it is good news, as this means that people are best off by booking many trips" (Nawijn 2011, p. 661).

Additionally, Strauss-Blasche et al. (2004) studied 298 Austrian adults to determine if increases in well-being and life satisfaction following a vacation were correlated and could last several weeks after the vacation had ended. They suggested that a weekend at home immediately following a vacation could prolong the positive effects of a vacation. Further research is this area could seek to discover if vacation length, distance from home, or vacation type have an effect on the lasting effects of happiness and satisfaction. Thus, it is suggested for future research to examine the lasting effects that taking trips has on families and their relationships and how long these effects might last.

As research focuses on family bonds built through vacation time, several studies have begun to research the opposite effect: when vacations create stress and tension. During a vacation, people spend considerably more time together than in their daily lives. Too much time together has the potential to lead to negative outcomes and lackluster memories of taking a vacation. To combat negative perceptions of family travel, research focusing on the

differences between what children and parents seek most from a family vacation and how this affects vacation decision making is emerging, but suggests a need for further research on travel motives and how motives effect vacation satisfaction levels (Kozak and Duman 2012; Kozak 2010; Lehto et al. 2009; Agate et al. 2009; Blichfeldt 2006; Gram 2005).

Sound research explaining the benefits travel may have on health, emotions, relationships, work productivity and education for children, adult couples, and seniors could persuade families and adults to travel more frequently. More importantly, research in this area could increase family and relationship satisfaction through travel. Research on the benefits travel may provide adults could also be beneficial to businesses, and may persuade a more liberal vacation policy in the work environment while easing apprehension to use vacation days.

In conclusion, the scant research that exists suggests that traveling has the power to strengthen relationships between couples, and between parents, grandparents, and children. This research also reveals that travel has the ability to increase life satisfaction. Based on the findings of the current, extensive literature review, it is believed that travel has extraordinary potential, but much work is necessary in order to better understand how travel affects relationships and how to best utilize this information.

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