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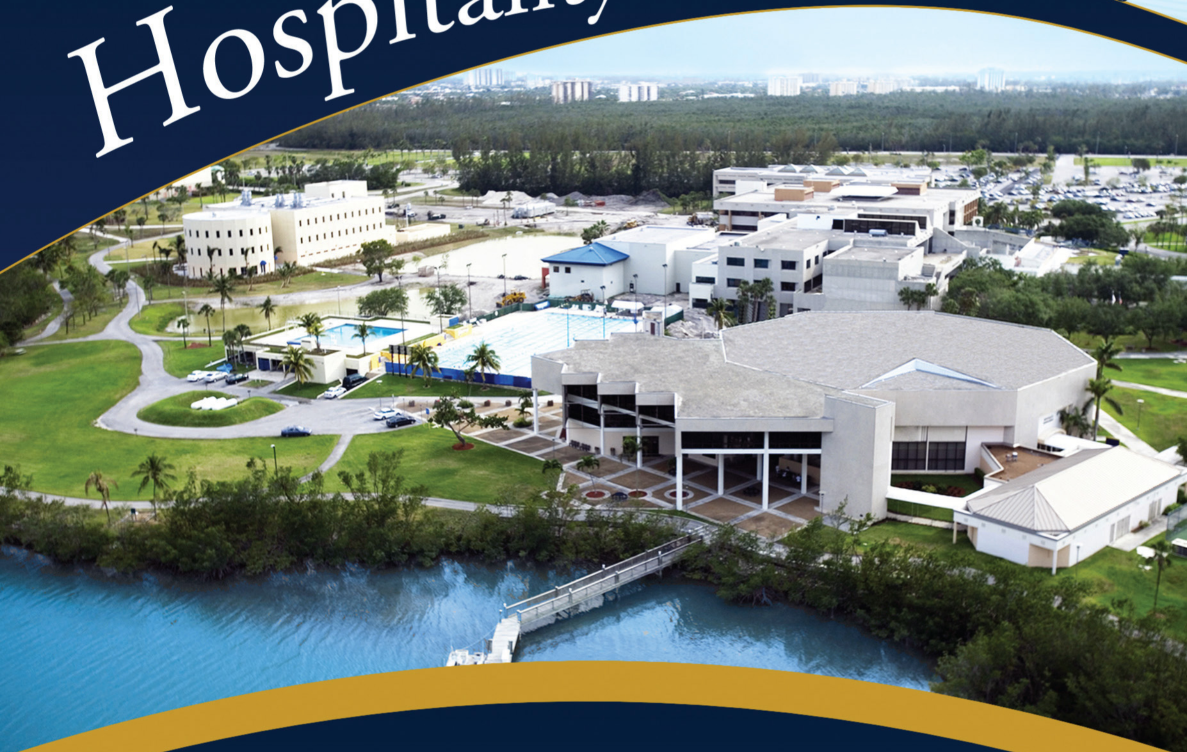

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Identifying Training Challenges in the Hospitality Industry: An Exploratory Approach

By Valentini Kalargyrou, Robert H. Woods

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine training professionals' insights and beliefs about the challenges they face in training and the corresponding coping mechanisms by analyzing the opinions of training experts. A qualitative implicit method, the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, which performs interviews using pictures, was conducted with ten training professionals. Metaphors were widely used, and links between concepts were identified. The training challenges that resulted from the current study included measurement, deadlines, frustration, and keeping current. The study took place in Las Vegas, Nevada, and the interviewees were employed by large hotel-casino corporations. Future studies need to research different sized hospitality institutions and different tourist destinations. Current and future training professionals can use the outcome of the study as a guide to better understanding training challenges and to acquiring the corresponding competencies to be more effective in training. Moreover, the outcome of the paper can be beneficial to industry employees and educators, since training and teaching are in many ways similar.

Introduction

Eric Hoffer, an American writer and philosopher, noted that "in a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned find themselves equipped to live only in a world that no longer exists" (Presidential Medal of Freedom, n.d.). Naisbitt (1985) apparently agreed, writing, "In a world that is constantly changing, there is no one subject or set of subjects that will serve you for the foreseeable future, let alone for the rest of your life . . . the most important skill to learn now is learning how to learn." In other words, in highly competitive environments, such as the hospitality industry, the ability to learn will offer the organization competitive advantage. In recent years, the workplace has become an important learning environment. It is not surprising that in 2007, companies spent $134.39 billion on employee learning and development. This amount reflects direct learning expenditures, such as the learning function's staff salaries, administrative learning costs, and non-salary delivery costs, including outsourced activities (American Society for Training and Development, 2009).

Training costs in the hospitality industry can be even more staggering since the highest turnover by far is still in the Accommodation and Food Services sector at 56.4% and the Leisure and Hospitality sector at 52.2%. In 2006, sectors that saw the highest increase in turnover were Accommodation and Food Services, up 7% from the previous year, and Leisure and Hospitality, up 5.4% (Nobscot Corporation, 2006).

Additionally, since high turnover is significantly related to decreased hotel profits (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008), reducing turnover can also be a method for improving profitability (Simons & Hinkin, 2001; Woods & Macaulay, 1989). In addition, others have contended that the amount and quality of training is also directly related to turnover (Berta, 2006). In fact, Mullen (2004) noted that 70% of exiting employees would stay if they were developed and nurtured by their companies. From these studies we can assume that better training may result in lower turnover rates and more profits.

In the hospitality industry the human resources training and development department and the Division Training Managers (DTM) of the departments are responsible for providing and facilitating the learning necessary for employees to meet professional needs. These are the people responsible for teaching organizations how to learn. Therefore, it is necessary to study the training professionals who undertake such a major responsibility within a hospitality organization. The purpose of the study was to examine the insights and beliefs of training professionals about the challenges they face and the corresponding coping mechanisms by analyzing the opinions of training experts.

The facts presented above indicate the importance of training in the hospitality industry, and the main focus is on determining the current challenges of hospitality training professionals by utilizing an implicit qualitative method of data collection called the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET).

ZMET is based, in part, on the fact that most human communication is visual and non-verbal. The ZMET method assumes that people think in pictures that evoke emotions. ZMET findings are also consistent with research showing that people use sensory experience to make decisions and to express abstract ideas. This indicates that sensory images are important media of communication (Olson Zaltman

Associates, 2008). The ZMET technique has been extensively used in marketing. By inviting consumers to use metaphors as they talk about a product or service, ZMET researchers bring consumers' unconscious thoughts and feelings to a level of awareness that allows both parties to explore them more openly together. Metaphors can hide as well as reveal thoughts and feelings (Zaltman, 2003). This attempt is novel in the field of human resources, where the product of training is intangible.

Literature Review

Trends in Training

Good training begins with good selection and recruitment. Recruiters must seek employees who are eager to learn since they will be trained in a new set of competencies, and developed by putting those skills, knowledge, and abilities into practice (O'Halloran, 1991; Sullivan, 2009).

Training is the second biggest line item after marketing on the company's profit-and-loss statement, but it should be viewed as an investment and not an expense. According to Goronkin, "the surefire way to bankruptcy in rough times is to reduce training budgets." Proponents of maintaining training budgets in economic turmoil argue that if the company cuts everything when the economy is bad, it is not prepared when the economy and business improve (Berta, 2001; Berta, 2008).

However, reduced consumer spending has led to training-budget freezes, according to the Council of Hotel and Restaurant Trainers (CHART), a non-profit association of trainers. Seventy-seven percent of CHART members noted that their companies were undergoing budget cutbacks and increased scrutiny about training spending. In addition, 60% said that their training programs have seen cutbacks. For instance, many restaurants are canceling memberships in professional organizations and participation in conferences, and others have not filled empty positions or have eliminated them completely. Hospitality companies are using less expensive training methods, such as Web-based seminars and regional training sessions. The impact of the economic crisis has also made trainers feel more pressure to show results and to link training to increased performance and profitability (Berta, 2008).

The Impact of Diversity

The increase in business globalization is having a strong effect on training and development, in particular on the need for understanding novel training challenges and forging new sets of training competencies. Culture is very important in the design and implementation of training. Many European and Asian countries place less emphasis on individualism and more on families and social groups. Different cultures also perceive differently the roles of training and training professionals and the appropriate or effective degrees of interaction between trainers and trainees. Trainers must understand the nature of the participants' culture and previous education and training, and adjust their training content, communication, and presentation skills accordingly (Thornhill, 1993).

Fifty years ago, most trainees were male Americans, but today's workplace is much more diverse, with more women and minorities integrated into the workforce. That has resulted in the need to improve communication with employees, support English as a second language (ESL) programs, and translate materials into Spanish (Berta, 2001).

Some challenges arising from the growing diversity have included the power erosion of traditional white male constituents, the diversity of opinions, and a problem stemming from current employees' resentment over the perception that women and minorities lacked necessary qualifications (Joplin & Daus, 1997).

Trainers are now training employees who have different values and customs and who view training techniques differently because of their diverse behaviors, beliefs, customs, traditions, languages, and expressions characteristic to their particular race, ethnicity, or national origin (Society for Human Resource Management, 2011). The trainer starts the session with a "getting to know you" exercise, but workers from diverse ethnical backgrounds might feel uncomfortable asking questions or talking openly about themselves to people they do not know (Wilcox, 1988).

Globally, due to social and economic changes, the number of women participating in the workplace has soared, and gradually an increasing number of women have undertaken more leadership positions. This has created several workplace challenges. For example, sexual harassment training has become an important component in a company's management and, often, non-management training (Lam, 1990).

Nowadays, the increasing diversity in the workplace has created the need for diversity training that aims to increase awareness and understanding of workplace diversity, and to develop concrete skills among staff that will facilitate enhanced productivity and communication among all employees. Diversity training cannot be handled entirely by the human resources department but rather must be embraced and worked on by the entire organization and, in particular, top leadership (Rice et al., 2006).

Role of Training Professionals

Learning can be viewed as formal and informal. Formal learning is learning through structured classroom settings, and informal learning is learning from experience. Formal trainers are those who design and deliver training programs, and informal trainers are colleagues and supervisors who provide on-the-job training. Forms of informal training include buddy programs and interdepartmental mentoring, by which means employees can ask questions, have lunch with their mentors, and feel comfortable from their first day in the workplace (Higley, 2007; Poell et al., 2006; Terrion, 2006).

Training professionals are an important asset for hospitality operations because they are responsible for providing formal learning to new and existing employees, and oftentimes they become informal trainers by mentoring employees in their department. Training helps employees to be better prepared and more eligible for promotion opportunities. Training professionals are also responsible for the continued development of management, providing the necessary tools for them to grow and develop into leaders. The training professional's role is shifting from being a provider of training to that of a facilitator of learning. Promoting, guiding, enabling, and supporting learning must become the focus of their activities in order to achieve learning organizations that reinvent not just their organization, but also their industry (Hayes & Zaccarelli, 1996).

Trainers are often unique in the hospitality industry because they typically start at the bottom and work their way up to higher positions. They must be able to work with entry-level employees as well as senior management and must be adequately trained to handle the diversity of training needs. Trainers must be able to demonstrate the ability to motivate others through influence, not formal authority, utilizing active listening and effective negotiation techniques; they must be viewed as corporate experts when it comes to training matters and act as champions for the overall training needs (Davey, 2007). Other studies found that technological skills, people skills, creativity, the use of different ways of delivering training, enthusiasm, passion, humor, and self-confidence were important competencies for effective training (Kalargyrou & Woods, 2011; Lalaguna, 2007; Rae, 2002).

Training professionals need to be skilled in the four management functions:

(1) planning, from conducting a needs assessment, to designing a program, to measuring outcomes; (2) organizing the two main components of an organization, structure and people; (3) directing, which encompasses leading, communicating, supervising, and motivating; and (4) controlling, which ensures that the training plan is effectively performed (Cummings, 1984).

Training professionals should consider the different competency levels of different working groups in training. Trainers often deal with four groups of workers: people who do not know what skills are required to do the job, newly hired graduates who know what they need to know but do not know how to do it, experienced employees who are promoted and need to develop a new set of skills, and veterans who possess years of experience and seem to naturally know what to do in every situation (Tesone, 2004).

Training Challenges

There are several reported challenges in training. For example, because training overlaps daily operations, it is difficult for companies to measure how much they spend on training (Higley, 2004). Therefore, measuring return on investment (ROI, how effectively the company uses its capital for training and the profit from that investment), is also difficult to evaluate (Chapman, 2004).

Another challenge in training that can result in burnout is charging an already overtaxed workforce with the responsibility of acquiring more knowledge and skills. Eight hours per day is usually about the limit for intense training. The answer is not to overload the participants' daily schedule; rather it is to include fun elements in the sessions and build in frequent breaks in order to allow some downtime for attendees (Chapman, 2004). Especially for younger employees, making training fun and integrating training methods such role play and practicing problem-solving skills improve their customer service skills (Berta, 2007). Hence, traditional teaching methods, such as lecturing, might prove ineffective and would have to be altered, starting by allocating more resources, not only for training the employees, but also the trainers (Sullivan, 2009).

AchieveGlobal conducted a survey of 1,100 full-time workers from the U.S. and U.K. representing a range of industries, organization sizes, and positions, and found that employers who assimilate employees' opinions and preferences into their training programs can make measurable differences in key performance indicators, such as overall job satisfaction. ("Adding employee perspective," 2004). Findings from this study include: (1) employers must recognize that the method of training delivery significantly impacts employee satisfaction and buy-in; and (2) employers need to know which training programs are valuable to their employees. Surprisingly, the most widely offered training programs, such as new-employee orientation and workplace-issues training, ranked relatively low in value in this study. Instead survey respondents sought more technically oriented training offerings, ranking financial and marketing skills as top priorities. Moreover, managers, professionals, administrative personnel, and service line associates all desired basic leadership and teamwork skills training ("Adding employee perspective," 2004).

While extensive research has been conducted on the designing and conducting of training sessions, and on the importance of training for organizational advancement, little has been conducted on the actual facilitators and providers of training in the hospitality industry. This research attempts to fill that void by identifying the insights and beliefs of training professionals about the challenges they face in training. The review of related literature revealed limited information on the scope and the variety of challenges faced by hospitality training professionals. This exploratory study has attempted to further understand potential training challenges by using the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) research design.

Methodology

In-Depth Interviewing Using Pictures

Qualitative research uses inductive strategies. The researcher based this study on the ontological assumption that reality is both subjective and multiple. Since each person may perceive reality somewhat differently, analyzing the perspectives of participants (seen in the quotes and themes of discussion) can yield information useful in constructing an understanding of how each has perceived reality. ZMET was used in this study as a means of obtaining greater depth of information (Flick, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

Explicit measures allow participants to think about their evaluative response and respond in any way using their conscious mind. Implicit measures minimize controlled thought from participants. At least 95% of all cognition (thinking) occurs below the level of awareness, while only

5% occurs in consciousness (Zaltman, 2003). Thus, participants in an explicit research, such as a survey or focus group, cannot readily articulate many important thoughts, and they reveal only the information they want to reveal, especially on sensitive topics of inquiry (Zaltman & Zaltman, 2008). Furthermore, in many cases they will not consciously know the answers. A ZMET one-on-one interview of one hour can produce the same number of ideas as one focus group involving a total of eight people (Zaltman, 2003).

In explicit research, it is not unusual for a participant's attitude, recorded by the researcher, to be different from his/her behavior (Latour, 2004). For these reasons this study uses the qualitative, implicit method of data collection, the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, which involves metaphors. Metaphors populate every aspect of human life, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, language, or other differences (Zaltman & Zaltman, 2008). By inviting the participants to use metaphors as they talk about a product or service, ZMET researchers bring participants' unconscious thoughts and feelings to a level of awareness such that both parties can explore them more openly together (Zaltman, 2003).

Sample

ZMET was performed with 10 training professionals from two hotel casinos in Las Vegas, Nevada, averaging 2,600 rooms in each property. Both properties were members of two mega hotel-casino corporations. The sample included participants that occupied both management and non-management positions since, in some cases, training is delivered by both managers and training coordinators.

Five participants were selected to participate in the study: one human resources training manager, and four training and development coordinators from an on-the-Strip resort that was getting ready to open a few months after this study. The rest of the participants came from an off-the-Strip Las Vegas hotel casino. Among these participants were a hotel-division training manager, two food-and-beverage training managers, a housekeeping training manager, and a reservation training coordinator. Participants in this research were experts in their field, and they represented both genders, a variety of years of experience in the field of hospitality, and a range of different training responsibilities. A complete description of the participants' demographics is depicted in Table I.

Data Collection

The study attempted to identify the insights and beliefs of training professionals about the important challenges they face in training and possible coping mechanisms. For this purpose, ten days before the day of the interview, participants were notified to collect three to ten pictures that described their opinions and impressions about their challenges in training. To prepare for the interview, the participants had to spend a considerable amount of time thinking about the topic and locating the appropriate images from magazines, newspapers, books, the Internet, or other sources. As a result of the pre-planning stage, participants arrived for the in-depth interview at an advanced stage of thinking, ready to discuss their opinions and impressions. During the one-hour, one-on-one interview, training professionals talked through the pictures by using metaphors to describe the challenges they were facing in their job. Metaphors facilitated bringing unconscious feelings and thoughts to a level of awareness, where both parties—interviewee and interviewer—could examine them more openly together. Occasionally, the interviewer used probing techniques to explore in-depth key ideas.

Coding

There are two key skills in ZMET interviewing: (1) listening for relevant concepts and metaphors; and (2) probing to more fully understand the meaning of those concepts and metaphors. Thus, it is important to evoke as much from the first skill as possible and then try to bring more thoughts and feelings to the surface. The analogous skill in ZMET coding is seeing the concepts and metaphors, recognizing them in the transcript, and then coding them in a manner that can be efficiently retrieved and understood when making subsequent interpretations.

The data from the ZMET interviews were transcribed and then content analyzed looking for the identification of constructs and the recognition of links between constructs. Constructs needed to be linked together to more fully capture the meaning they represented; meaning was largely located in the links between concepts.

Researchers tried to capture two broad types of associations, or linkages. One important link was the causal connection between two concepts. The second link was a simple association between two concepts. Some concepts were associated with each other, but not necessarily in a causal manner. Thus, in order to understand the association among constructs that a particular group of training professionals held, consensus maps were developed (see Figures 1, 2, and

3). Atlas.ti version 5 software was used in creating the consensus maps for the training professionals' challenges. This software made it possible to display key concepts and the causal or association linkages between them in a better way—more comprehensively and visually.

Limitations

The study had limitations. Participants in this study came from two large properties averaging 2,600 rooms each; both properties are members of giant hotel-casino corporations. Hence, the sample did not include smaller lodging/casino organizations and different types of hospitality operations. Furthermore, Las Vegas is a unique tourist destination. In this market, room rates fluctuate on a daily and hourly basis, and over 35 million people visit Las Vegas every year. In a traditional tourist destination, room rates fluctuate based on seasonality, or weekdays versus weekends, and the size of the potential guest market is much smaller. Nevertheless, this exploratory study could provide valuable information that could be used to guide future related research.

Table 1

Professionals Demographics

Position	Department	Gender	Experience in Present Posit.	Experience in Training	Experience in Hospitality
Division Training Manager	Hotel Ops	F	6 years	7 years	15 years
Division Training Manager	Housekeeping	F	2 years	2 years	7 years
Training Coordinator	Reservations	F	5 years	5 years	12 years
Division Training Manager	F&B	F	2.5 years	2.5 years	9 years
Division Training Manager	F&B	M	2 months	8 years	32 years
Training Manager	HR	M	6 years	10 years	31 years
Training Coordinator	HR	M	3 months	3 months	7 years
Training Coordinator	HR	F	3 months	3 months	3 months
Training Coordinator	HR	F	3 months	3 years	2 years
Training Coordinator	HR	F	3 months	3 years	4 years

Analysis and Findings

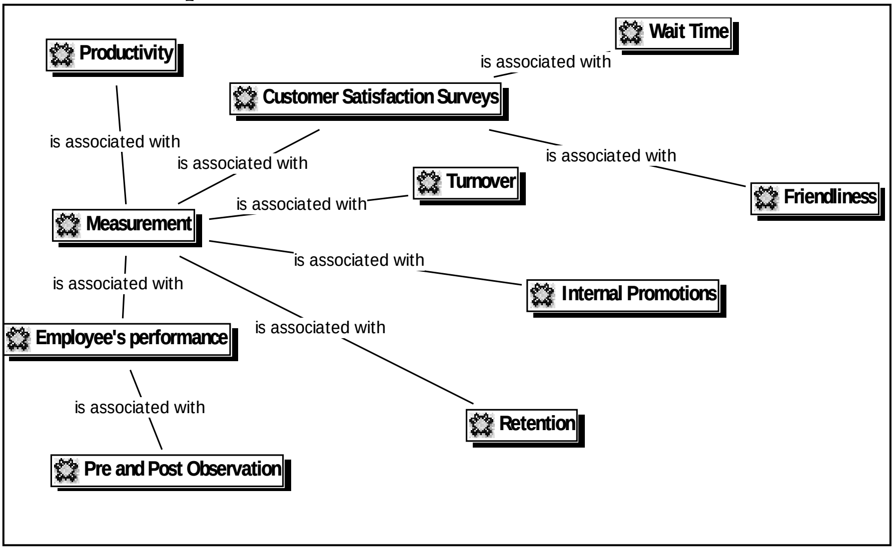
The analysis of the data collected revealed a set of challenges training professionals face in their occupation:

Measurement

One female training manager noted: "Inspect what you expect." It is important to measure the effectiveness of training in order to evaluate training practices. There are several ways to evaluate training, such as internal promotions, retention rate, employees turnover, productivity, and customer satisfaction surveys (CSS), particularly for employees that have direct contact with guests (see Figure 1). CSS can evaluate front-of-the-house positions, such as front desk agents and employees working at food and beverage outlets, where wait time and friendliness are measured. According to a male food and beverage division training manager, observation is a valuable tool; employees are observed during their shift before and after training (pre- and post-evaluation). Employee performance can also be measured before and after training in assessing training effectiveness, specifically when there is in place a formal system of performance appraisals. However, measuring the training outcome might prove challenging, since it is difficult to separate the effect of training from other internal and external factors.

Figure 1

Consensus Map of Measurement



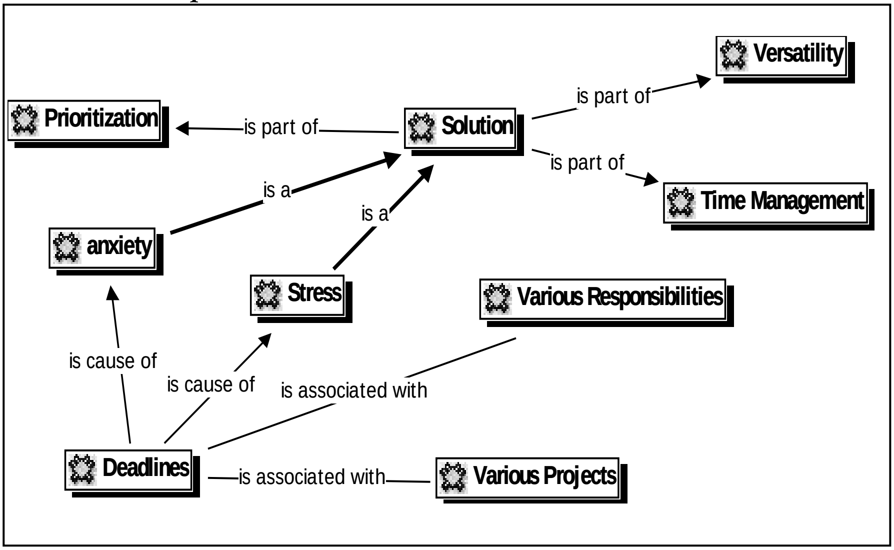
Deadlines

Deadlines can produce stress and anxiety, and time seems always in short supply when it comes to training. One of the two properties that participated in the study was preparing for the grand opening a month after the interviews. Notably, during orientation, management had distributed to each employee a clock that was counting down the days, hours, minutes, seconds, and milliseconds until the exact time of the property's opening. One of the participants noted, "this clock stares me in the face every second of the day that I am at my desk working. Believe it or not it has an immense effect on the way I function, because every time I look at it I see how fast the time goes by" (see Appendix I, "Time is Passing").

Deadlines are associated with various responsibilities and projects that can cause anxiety and stress (see Figure 2). One participant noted that her job was overwhelming because there were always a lot more assignments to be completed than expected. Another participant compared her work to a rollercoaster because each day was different than the previous and it could be full of surprises. Suggested solutions included project prioritization, versatility, and time management. Trainers must be competent to be able to prioritize (evaluate project importance), to be versatile (juggle different projects), and manage time efficiently (allocate time effectively in order to meet deadlines successfully).

Figure 2

Consensus Map of Deadlines



Frustration

"You are driven because you are frustrated by all this stuff (information, projects, people, and paperwork) and how do I organize all this stuff and fit it in my workday, and make that work for the organization." The overload of paperwork, information, projects, and people can frustrate training professionals in their attempt to perform effectively (see Figure 3). The longer they hold a position, the more their projects and responsibilities seem to accumulate. Often training managers are the liaison between their department and other departments in the organization; thus they have to deal with different kinds of people in different positions. Novices in training, such as new training coordinators, are often overloaded with information since they have to learn the required training material (e.g., policies and practices) to be able to transfer the information to trainees effectively.

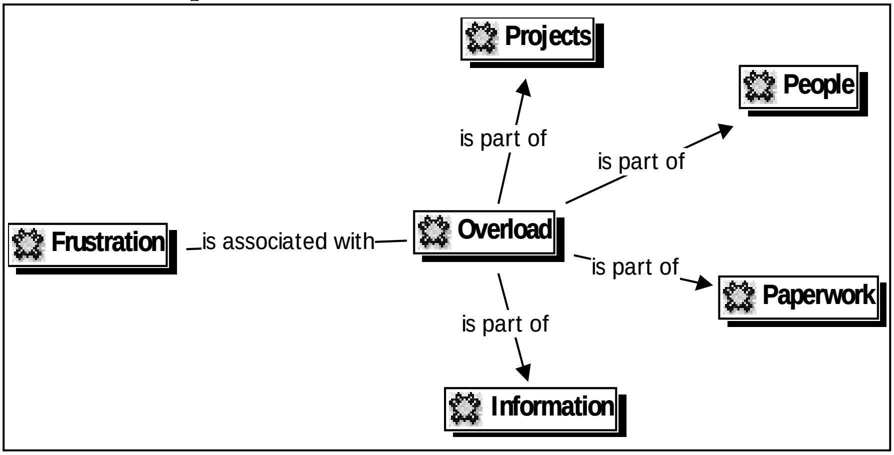
Frequently, trainees do not understand the purpose of training sessions. In particular, exempt employees, such as managers who are not paid over-time for attending a required training session,can feel trapped because they do not fully understanding the "so what?" of a training session and, consequently, its benefits. As a result these employees usually disrespect the trainers because they do not value the trainers' contribution to the process and blame them for their entrapment in a classroom.

Trainers can proactively respond to these issues. First, they have to make the participants understand the benefits of attending the seminar, "what is in it for them" (e.g., professional development that will lead to internal promotions). Second, training professionals have to find ways to make training more fun and interesting for the participants. Sharing personal stories with them can be entertaining, and can help trainees relate better to the material.

Being a training professional in Las Vegas can be particularly challenging because that city operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Training applies to all three shifts: day, swing, and graveyard. Trainers must be able to deliver training outside their normal shift hours. That can be challenging, especially if the trainers are working after hours. They have to make sure they stay awake and ensure that trainees are motivated and interested in the training session.

Figure 3

Consensus Map of Frustration



Keeping Current

Effective trainers must keep current with modern training and development methods and with the latest legislative and organizational changes. "In training and development you always have to keep up with the most current program, initiative, skills, and learning, and so content must be updated." Books and the Internet are tools that participants suggested can be useful in training professionals' development.

Discussion

The results of the study were **c**onsistent with other findings (Higley, 2004; Chapman, 2004): Measurement of the training effect is challenging for training professionals. A potential effective use of Kirkpatrick's scale could be a way to address the training measurement challenge. According to Kirkpatrick's scale there are four levels in measuring training effectiveness: (1) reaction and planned action, whereby trainees are asked to evaluate the training session; (2) learning, whereby trainees are asked to complete a pre- and post-test to identify whether new skills and knowledge are retained; (3) application, whereby participants are often observed on the job to assess whether they acquired the required competencies; and (4) business impact. The American Society of Training and Development has added a fifth level, which is the return on investment. The true challenge of measuring training comes with the fourth stage, whereby the only scientific way to isolate training as a variable would be to isolate a representative control group within the larger trainee population, and then roll out the training program, complete the evaluation, and compare it against a business evaluation of the non-trained group. Unfortunately, this is rarely done because of the difficulty of gathering the business data and the complexity of isolating the training intervention as a unique variable (Clemenz, 2003).

Objective and effective measurement can be a challenge if it is not performed professionally because its implementation requires technical knowledge that is often acquired in graduate-level studies. Hospitality companies must hire employees with adequate competencies to ensure proper measurement that will ensure appropriate follow-up actions.

New findings include the pressure of training professionals for having to deal with deadlines. Previous studies (Chapman, 2004; Saks, 2006) discuss stress and training from the trainees' point of view. Often, the longer training professionals hold a position with an organization, the more their responsibilities increase, resulting in amplified frustration and pressure. This can also be attributed to the unique nature of hospitality companies that often operate 24 hours a day and seven days a week, unlike the rest of the service sector. Training professionals are facing increasing deadlines and are expected to present better results with restricted resources, especially in difficult economic downturns, when satisfactory performance and profitability are crucial to the company's survival. More effective use of technology, efficient time management, prioritization of projects, and versatility can provide remedies to frustration. The use of technology can minimize paperwork and can also help diversify the training delivery inside and outside the classroom. To minimize the time spent in a classroom, online technical training can be offered such that trainees can complete the training session at their convenience.

Creating a fun and friendly environment in which trainees are informed about the benefits of training, without overburdening them with many hours of idle training, is the key to training effectiveness (Berta, 2007; Kalargyrou & Woods, 2010; Sullivan 2009). Adult learners can remain focused on a lecture for no more than 15 to 20 minutes at a time, and this at the beginning of the class (Middendorf & Kalish, 1996). The attention span seems to be getting shorter because of the sensory overload that young people are constantly exposed to in today's digital world. The child of the remote control might have a shorter attention range but also the ability to multitask and do many things at once (Puchta, 2007).

Often, training professionals and academics face similar challenges, such as frustration, creating an interesting learning environment, keeping current, and effectively measuring the training/teaching effect. It is demanding to keep a class interested in the material presented and to be able to effectively measure the outcome of teaching. A teacher's concerns include whether the students learn the material, and whether they can apply it in their work. Having a good sense of **humor**, keeping an open mind, and sharing personal stories in the classroom are useful tools, and must be integrated into a training/teaching session. To be able to deliver the desired outcome effectively in a dynamic environment, both academics and training professionals must keep current with new training and pedagogical methods and the changes in their field of expertise (Edwards, 1994; Kaupins, 1993).

In premier tourist destinations, such as Las Vegas, where the competition is fierce, operators need to differentiate by offering exceptional customer service and innovative products. To be competitive, training professionals must keep current with new technology and ensure consistent customer service quality. For this purpose, leadership must invest in train-the-trainer seminars, conferences, and new technology to facilitate the acquisition and transferability of knowledge.

Diversity and culture were not noted in the study as significant training challenges, as other studies suggested. A possible explanation can be that in Las Vegas and the wider West coast area, minority groups and women are fully integrated into the hospitality workforce. In particular, in some departments, such as housekeeping, environmental services (EVS), and food and beverage, Hispanics and African Americans compose a big part of the workforce.

The role of training professionals is important in the hospitality industry because effective training and development increase employee loyalty to the company and decrease employee turnover. This is achieved through developing the workforce and offering the employees career opportunities for internal promotions. Moreover, development is a powerful tool for fostering a good reputation for the organization; it results in attracting talented employees and increasing its pool of candidates.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to identify the challenges of hospitality training professionals and corresponding coping mechanisms. This was accomplished through interviewing ten experts in training and development in two mega resorts in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) , considered a methodological innovation in establishing training and development needs, was used for data collection. The ZMET is based on interpreting metaphors from pictures brought in by the interviewees (Zaltman, 2003). During the interpretation of pictures, study participants noted that hidden feelings and thoughts surfaced that they did not know existed before the interview. A set of challenges was identified: measuring training effectiveness, maintaining deadlines, keeping current, and encountering frustrations with being effective on the job.

Participants in this study came from two large properties averaging 2,600 rooms each. Both properties are members of very large hotel-casino corporations. Therefore, future studies should include the training and development departments of smaller-sized properties. Second, both properties are situated in Las Vegas, Nevada, a unique tourist destination. Hence, for a more complete image of the hospitality industry, future research should include more tourist destinations in the United States. Third, this study has focused on in-house training professionals. An extension of this study could investigate hotels that outsource human resources training and development to perform interview training. Fourth, in addition to the qualitative method that has been used, more objective quantitative methods, such as a survey, could be used in order to approach a larger number of training professionals. Finally, the researcher interviewed training professionals; for a more holistic approach future studies could examine training challenges from the trainees' point of view.

Appendix

Deadlines *"Time is passing"* 	"My first day of orientation at the hotel X, I was given a little "X" clock which counts down the days, hours, minutes, seconds and even milliseconds until the exact hour of the opening of the hotel. **This clock stares me in the face every second of the day that I am at my desk working. Believe it or not it has an immense effect on the way I function, because every time I look at it I see how fast the time goes by.** I also notice that it only goes backwards and never forward, which means that if I waste one minute, that is one minute of my life that I will never get back. I try to be very time-conscious at work and therefore efficient in the way that I meet deadlines."

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A Preliminary Evaluation of the Millennial Shopping Experience: Preferences and Plateaus

By Kimberly J. Harris, Jason Stiles and Joseph Durocher

Abstract

The purposes of this study were twofold. First, the study sought to better understand the Millennial Generation's (MG) shopping and service behaviors and preferences. Second, the study sought to identify service differences between the Baby Boomers, adults aged 18-24, and prior generations. In comparison, grandparents and parents of the MG are considered more influential in forming the attitudes and behaviors of their offspring; however, when shopping, this tradition does not hold true. The MG are less committed than generations before them to business relationships, legacy shopping, and the expectation of quality service delivery, yet are more concerned with environmentally conscientious retailers who offer a green approach to doing business, such as offering recyclable packaging, using energy-efficient lighting, and supporting non-profit community organizations that vow to protect the environment.

Introduction

The MG expect and accept fluctuations in service delivery; therefore, they have developed a tendency to "flash shop," or quickly make purchasing decisions without commitment to the brand or reputation of the service provider. They spend freely on technology and other gadgets that make purchasing more efficient, interactive, and intuitive. This study suggests that the MG communicate a nonchalant attitude toward service delivery and product quality and an acceptance of mediocrity of product performance. This generation's lack of interest in reporting flawed or low-performing products and services is of growing concern to companies seeking their business, complicating the ability to predict the impact of their purchasing desires or service-level expectations.

Literature Review

Shopping behaviors for services, products, and entertainment have been of interest to businesses, researchers, and marketing experts for generations. Observations, predictions and the profiling of shoppers representing markets segmented into age categories tell of changes in the economy, products of popularity, and products that have waned in the wake of evolving technology. Monikers for categories such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y are well known and imply keen differences in needs, wants, desires, and expectations.

The generation of current study is called the Millennial Generation (MG). Millennials are profiled as being the most savvy generation when it comes to the use of technology. Highly educated, they are more concerned about the environment than prior generations. They use technology to help them shop, learn, communicate, and socialize. They expect quick service, due in part to the immediate input received from interactions with interactive, hand-held, user-controlled equipment (Sweeney, 2006; Barone, 2007). The MG possess an ever-increasing dependency on various online technologies used to research a product or service before it is selected, and in many cases, use the same technology to make purchases.

The MG has come to expect immediacy in many aspects of life; whether dealing with humans or electronic equipment, they want instantaneous responses to questions, accuracy in the information delivered, and "right now" delivery speed (Sandfort & Haworth, 2007). Interestingly, their expectation of quality services and near flawless delivery is not as high compared to the Baby Boom generation (Barone, 2007; Howe, 2005). Research suggests that the MG are significantly different from prior generations in the traditional trade process in that they expect speed, average service interaction, and average or below average product quality without brand recognition, brand cultivation, or long-term product performance (Paul, 2001; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003).

Quick Decisions and Non-Linear Shopping; A Shift in Shopping Paradigm

Millennials tend to make quick purchasing decisions. Compared to Baby Boomers, the MG first shop for convenience and then for performance (Gronbach, 2000; Yi & Jeon, 2003). Competition, quality, and guarantees are not the staples of decision making; therefore, when MGs shop for goods and services, they tend to comparison shop on the Internet and discuss options with their peers (Gustafsson, Johnson, & Roos, 2005). Interestingly, if a shopping decision is made, and the first business fails to deliver to expectation, they shop the next most convenient business with no particular ill-feelings toward the first failed experience. Failure of the first experience has no effect on the later decision to repeat shopping with the first retailer, as the MG will return time and time again, hoping for a more fulfilling experience in subsequent visits (Scarborough, 2007).

Compared to the generation before, Baby Boom shoppers believed in creating relationships and identifying businesses in which they created permanency, such that certain stores or service deliverers were attached to ownership feelings. This "legacy shopping," or choosing products and services due to a familial commitment or tradition that was engrained in families or cultures, is not present in the MG (Barone, 2007; Sebor , 2006). For the prior generations of legacy shoppers, the local grocery became "The Grocery Store," a dentist became "My Dentist," and a particular restaurant or social club became "The Café" or "The Club." The circle of family or friends dedicated to the organizations or gathering places knew instantly of the place of business referred to and tended to attach themselves to the same business. With the MG, flexibility and wanting products when they want it drives the purchasing decision, despite the prior experience of others (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010). Service providers are selected based on speed of delivery and availability of products and services. The MG conduct shopping decisions based on the sequential list of providers showing up on an Internet search engine, with preference shown to the company appearing first or within the first page of a search engine list (Tsui & Hughes, 2001; Wood, 2004).

The shift in shopping culture presented by the MG is predicted to impact the economy with unprecedented influence. Consequently, this group is the focus of economic strategists interested in studying their preferences, behaviors, and expectations. Of keen interest to business owners is the growing reliance of the MG on digital media alone, with little or no interest in print media for shopping encounters. This is not to communicate that the MG do not have an interest in using print media as a secondary resource, but that digital shopping encounters are preferred (Mitchell, McLean, & Turner, 2005). Keeping pace with the technology in both delivering robust ads and product options is the challenge presented to retailers, who may have neither the financial means nor the technological savvy to meet the increasing demand (Smit, Meurs, & Neigens, 2006).

Yi and Jeon (2003) reported that advertising influences whether an audience will select a product; therefore, an ad must be designed to intrigue the viewer enough to watch it, connect to the content, and ultimately decide to engage with the context. Ads that offer the user control over the content, methods of interactive engagement with the context, and ultimately options for making decisions for purchasing from the retailer within the minutes or seconds committed to the spot, are those that will drive consumer interest. Consequently, this age group has retailers scrambling to meet and anticipate demand changes, offer technology that keeps pace with the user's imagination, and deliver both products and services in an affordable format (Textor, 2008).

Coomes and Debard (2004) and others (Erickson, 2007; Barone, 2007) studied the identifiers of speed in response to ads and the tendency of the MG to jump from competitor to competitor as they shop. These behavioral characteristics are not unlike those identified by Scarborough (2007), Lippe (2001), and Bakewell and Mitchell (2003), all of whom presented research suggesting that retailers will have to realize that young buyers take only seconds to make purchasing decisions and often do so as they are in motion and multitasking, accessing products and services through handheld devices, and giving only seconds to a retailer to convince them to make a purchasing decision.

The MG Demand Product and Service Shifts

The MG has begun to exert a challenging shift in product and service preferences compared to prior generations. Baby Boomers, born between 1943 and 1960, have dominated consumer markets over the past two decades; however, a shift in buying process, products of interest, and service expectations is on the rise (Trezesniewski & Donnellan, 2010). The youngest of the MG are currently in college. Not only do they have access to their own income, but possess a significant reach into the resources of their Boomer parents. Some older members of the MG have entered graduate school, and some are starting careers wherein they expect substantially higher starting salaries than their generational predecessors. Generation X students, a bit older than the MG, were characterized by more independence and self-reliance; however, the MG tend to cling to parents and depend on their advice in making many of life's key decisions (Howe & Strauss, 2004; Ma & Neihm, 2006). Learning from past buying behavior, impact of economic shift, and an interest in sustainability of products is of greater concern to the MG than GenXers or Baby Boomers (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010).

Harris Interactive (2001) expected that the MG will continue to have an unprecedented impact on the future of the economy due to their reliance on technology for both their professional and social lives. The use of interactive tools is preferred by the MG to socially connect and communicate, as opposed to linear forms of technology, such as television and tethered telephones, used by Boomers and GenXers. The MG have developed specific and highly efficient codes and languages to speed communication. According to Howe (2005), the MG surpass prior generations in the impact of their influence for technological advancement.

With speed as a priority, the MG rely on iPods, video games, cell phones, texting, instant messaging, and high-speed Internet access for day-to-day activities. Their non-perishable purchases are frequently begun, or occur exclusively, on the Internet, where human interaction is at a minimum. Each year the use of online interaction increases. Millennials use the Internet to surf, shop, conduct research, meet friends, blog information, and access news (Harris Interactive, 2004). It must be noted that the MG has most likely researched a business electronically as well as discussed it with friends before shopping with a particular retailer. If a purchase is made, the business has met selection criteria and the approval of their peers (Kleijnen, Lievens, Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2009).

Conglomerate Shopping and Shopping Preferences

The MG prefer conglomerate shopping, wherein the provider reveals competitive information for comparison purposes; offers products that are often purchased with the initial product sought; and offers discounts for purchasing one or more, or multi-item, selections within a specific time frame (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010; Tsui & Hughes, 2001) . Equipped with information on products and services, availability, and technical service, the consumer chooses sites that offer one-stop shopping. This shopping experience offers user control of information, open-ended time frames for making a shopping decision, and perceived rewards for buying all that is needed from one site. Smart shopping is the marketed result.

According to Mooring (2004), shopping behaviors and preferences are understood in the context of generational expectations and experiences. A generation forms a group identity expressed in commonalities that can drive service and product demands. Mooring further suggested that individuals born within a specific time frame have a tendency to develop a group identity in the way they socialize and conduct business. Others acknowledge controversy over generational boundaries, although they agree on the importance of commonality within generations (Harris Interactive, 2001; Howe & Strauss, 2007). In statistical terms, some stages of a generation's development demonstrate common traits so close in proximity that attributes are a standard deviation or two from the mean (Schlesinger, 1969; Jones, 1980; Strauss

& Howe, 1997). In almost all stages, a generation forged by common experience and influences is usually within an inter-quartile range of preferences (Wilgoren, 2000; Zoba, 1999).

Howe (2005) used the term *generational theory* to describe the commonalities exhibited by generations. Generational theory seeks to explain the commonalities among members of the same generation, as well as how current generations diverge from prior generations. Table 1 shows the various generations and the time frames that define them, as described by Strauss and Howe (1992).

Table 1

American's Generations - 1584-1995

Generation	Years Born	Generational Type
Puritan	1584-1614	Idealist
Cavalier	1615-1647	Reactive
Glorious	1648-1673	Civic
Enlightenment	1674-1700	Adaptive
Awakening	1701-1723	Idealist
Liberty	1724-1741	Reactive
Republican	1742-1766	Civic
Compromise	1767-1791	Adaptive
Transcendental	1792-1821	Idealist
Gilded	1822-1842	Reactive
Progressive	1843-1859	Adaptive
Missionary	1860-1882	Idealist
Lost	1883-1900	Reactive
G.I.	1901-1924	Civic
Silent	1925-1942	Adaptive
Boom	1943-1960	Idealist
Thirteenth Generation	1961-1981	Reactive
Millennial	1982-?	Civic

The MG has begun to exert a challenging shift in this traditional commonality of generations. Baby Boomers, born 1943-1960 (Strauss & Howe, 1997), have dominated consumer markets over the past two decades; however , with the onset of the MG, this domination is fading. The MG was estimated by Neuborne (1999) "to be 60 million strong, more than three times the size of Generation X, they're the biggest thing to hit the American scene since the 72 million baby boomers" (p. 1). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's *Summary Report* (2002), this is the largest American generation since the Baby Boomers, and therefore has the potential to exert unprecedented influence on the market. For example, Harris Interactive (2004) estimated that college students returned to their campuses with $122 billion in spending power and $24 billion in discretionary spending.

Table 2 depicts documented traits of the MG and how these traits can affect market preferences (Thatch & Olsen, 2006). These traits and their influence on business are displayed below:

Table 2

Millennial Traits and Corresponding Marketing Implications

Five Major MG Traits	Corresponding Marketing Implications
Internet Proficient	Use integrated media approach with emphasis on Internet
Diversity Conscious	Show diversity in all advertisement; emphasize universal values
Positive and Practical	Use marketing messages that focus on value and quality with no slick advertising; unvarnished truth voiced by everyday people
Belief in Fun and Responsibility	Conduct market research to tap into what is perceived as fun, quirky, and outrageous
Environmentally and Socially Aware	Emphasis on business practices that are socially and environmentally responsible

Howe and Strauss (2004) also discussed common traits and described the MG as tending to trust authority, be more likely to involve parents in key life decisions, and be closely involved with parents (who see these children as their primary life interests). This group reports feelings of being special. In school they demonstrate a high degree of concern for grades and academic status. As they enter the work world, they have high expectations of early work experiences that are intellectually rewarding. They are the most educated of any group to date and understand that the future for them holds no security. The financial future is uncertain and unstable; therefore, expenditures must satisfy current needs. Investing is somewhat of an anomaly, with some MGs showing interest in products and services that are considered sustainable, and other MGs uncommitted to long-term investments of any kind (Mitchell, McLean, & Turner, 2005).

Service Plateaus…a Leveling of Expectation

The MG has complex expectations of service that are unique. Of interest to retailers are discovering the point at which service options, interactions, and support services plateau for this generation. Do service levels matter? If so, to what extent does the effort plateau (Megehee, Dobie, & Grant, 2003)?

Time management, connectivity, detailed access to product information through the Internet, and close connection to the purchases of MG parents have been among the trends responsible for this high consumption-oriented culture. It appears that the MG have been exposed to high service quality through the experiences and expectations of their affluent parents, but whether the MG buying behavior can be based on this parental influence is unclear (Sweeny, 2006).

Further study is needed to understand service deviation and thresholds of this *über*-group. It appears that the shopping experience for this group is as much for social interaction as for product or service need. Millennials often browse the Internet's various websites to research and compare products, cost differences, performance ratings of both products and services, and locations of businesses by peer influence, peer perception, and peer acceptance.

Coomes and Debard (2004) researched the specific service expectations of the MG as related to the behavior of the service provider. According to their research, Millennials expect service to be delivered at the quick speeds they encounter when using technology. Whether the service is human or electronic, their patience as related to response time is short (Barone, 2007; Howe, 2005).

Levels of service, such as services given to Platinum-, Gold-, Silver-, or Bronze-level customers popular with airlines, frequent guest programs with hotels, etc., need not be offered to meet the expectation of the MG. This finding would imply that with sufficient research, service providers need not overspend on the quality of the service or product, as such expenditures will not significantly impact the MG purchase decision (Fleischner, 2006). The leveling off of the amount of service or amenities offered to attract and keep the MG shopper is in need of further study.

Armed with information on the MG, companies may improve the efficiency of their service quality strategies. In some cases, this study is designed to provide some insights into how businesses with the "right approach" can appeal to the MG. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1993, 1994) presented several studies showing that companies should improve service in a cost-effective manner. This leads the reader to consider the idea of service plateaus, which would permit a company to establish cost-effective limits to service as well as provide expected service to its greatest quality level. The link of service to profitability was further refined to focus on the factor that has the greatest impact on strategy: lowering customer-defection rates. Development of industry-specific measures to address the MG promises to provide management with a knowledge lever to profitability. To the extent that the MG is larger and emerging as an unknown purchasing force, advanced study of this generation has dramatic implications for business (Rundle-Thiele, & Bennett, 2001).

Assumptions, Investigative Project, and Online Survey

Due to the preliminary nature of this work, this study investigated assumptions rather than hypotheses. This pilot study lacks models of shopping preferences and behaviors of the MG, studies in multitude by academicians as to business behaviors as opposed to psychological characteristics and demographics of this generation. The goal of identifying buying behavior and service expectations was the focus of this preliminary investigation. The findings of this study provide data upon which hypotheses can be established for follow-up studies. The following three assumptions were applied:

<u>Assumption 1</u>: Millennials prefer speed of service over quality of product in the purchase exchange.

<u>Assumption 2</u>: Millennials prefer less human interaction rather than more or the same level of human interaction from a customer-service provider in the purchase exchange.

<u>Assumption 3</u>: Millennials are more forgiving of a poor service exchange between themselves and the customer-service provider than those of previous generations.

Methodology

The statistical tests planned for this study were both quantitative and qualitative. To compare the differences of the approach to service based on types of retail outlets, the use of ANOVA was planned using opinions of the shopping experience as dependent variables, and types of businesses as the independent variables. For the reasons stated from the MG conducting the inspections, qualitative analysis would be used to group responses with regard to emotion, age, knowledge of the products of focus, and overall evaluation experience. Emotion, knowledge, and overall evaluation of the shopping experience are psycho-behavioral variables beyond the focus of this study; however, in subsequent studies on MG shopping behavior, these variables should be considered. Age was used to identify the MG and eliminate GenXers or those younger than the MG.

Recruitment of the Sample

Recruitment procedures for the sample included asking students taking a class in services management within the College of Business to participate in a covert shopping project. This project was required of all students taking the course, but using student projects for this research study was voluntary. Those volunteering their project to be used were juniors and seniors aged 18-24, majoring in a variety of disciplines within the College. To ensure that the sample met MG criteria, the students volunteering for this study had to meet the following MG criteria:

- Student had to be nearing the completion of a 4-year degree at an accredited university
- Student had to have a discretionary budget per month, beyond the basics for food, clothing, and housing, to purchase luxury items (e.g. travel, electronic, entertainment)
- Student had to have a parent or guardian with household income level of $40,000 or above

Obtaining student permission to use their shopping project for the purposes of this study was required by the Florida State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for educational research. This board reviewed the details of the study as presented for support and found the study to be of quality and to be ethically designed.

The covert shopping experiences were conducted by two-person teams. Projects were gathered from this service class over a four-year period and included a variety of businesses located in the Panama City, Tallahassee, and Southern Georgia, areas. Each team was required to produce reports based on controlled criteria as well as to complete an online survey at the conclusion of the project. A pretest of the shopping experience was conducted by 18 teams meeting the sample criteria for participants.

The final guidelines and control criteria used to shop businesses were established and evaluated using the results of the feedback provided by the pre-test group and then applied to the pilot study. The purpose of the study that followed was to determine the relevance of certain human-interaction business factors and practices upon the purchasing-satisfaction level of the MG.

Gathering of Data for the Pilot Study: The MG Shopping Experience

For the purposes of this study there were 75 two-person teams conducting covert shopping experiences using the evaluation criteria established in the pre-test. The process for shopping directed all participants to follow a specific model for their shopping experience. The experience required each team to:

1) Select a local business of their choice and conduct a pre-purchase personal call to obtain directions to the store

2) Visit the business to study the presentation of lighting, parking, signage, ease of access, and first impression of the physical plant

3) Return to the business and select a product of interest to possibly purchase

4) Interact with store personnel to learn about a product of interest but make no purchase

4) Return to the store for a third time to make the purchase

5) Return to the store within the time required to make a return of the product purchased

6) Log the experience of the shopping experience, including the final return of the product

During the shopping project, students were asked to evaluate all aspects of the shopping experience, using criteria for each stage of the experience. Students were required to write a detailed report of the experience as a whole. To summarize the interactions with the chosen business's staff, shopping encounter, and ease of return of the product, the report had to include responses to all criteria, photos, business cards of management, examples of advertisements and coupons, receipts proving purchases and returns, and an overall evaluation of the experience. The report had to be at least five pages but no more than ten.

Students then completed an online survey at the end of the written portion of the project to test their individual responses to the criteria established for the shopping project as compared to the response they submitted with their partner. The 75 project narratives were coded over a three-month period by two research assistants into quantitative data. The results of the online survey were compared to the narrative responses.

The coding of narrative data has the limitation of human error in translation. To control for this error, coding guidelines were established and uninvolved graduate students were hired to follow the criteria when inputting the data. An additional measure which could have improved inter-rater reliability would have been to have additional researchers code the same 75 narratives and then determine inter-rater reliability. This measure was deemed unwarranted at this phase, as the results of the study were intended to be more expository than conclusive in nature.

The survey was deployed using Survey Monkey and included 36 questions in addition to demographic data as to gender, race, selected major, age, and year of college; and whether or not the survey results could be used in a written report by the researcher. The surveys were anonymous and participation in the survey portion voluntary, as was the participation in the narrative portion of the study.

Results of the Pilot Study

The findings of this pilot study identified a more focused set of questions that will be used in a follow-up investigation. Criteria that will be deleted in future studies were those that had the least number of responses. The research exposed clusters of interest which are being used to develop refined measurement instruments. As a pilot study, students rank ordered their responses using a seven-point Likert scale for each of the criteria established for the shopping evaluation.

The results reported in this study clustered responses into percentages for each category. This simple response reporting was preferred to running regression analysis or other more robust statistical tests since the data set was small and the results yielded variables to be used for further investigation. It was decided to avoid running tests that would yield results but would have the same or less information as the frequency tests produced.

Pre-test Results Truncated and Summarized

The pre-test included 36 respondents (18 two-person groups), 63% female and 37% male. Most were white (83%), in their last year of college (66%), and all had met the previously mentioned qualifying criteria.

The pre-test evaluation categories were given to participants, each with a corresponding list of expected service deliverables. Participants ranked each deliverable using a 5-point Likert scale that included the options of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree as evaluative responses. Table 3 depicts the 11 anecdotal summaries that capture the responses of the students in this pretest set.

Table 3

Criteria Used for Shopping Evaluations

- *Service Provider Answering the Phone*: Less than half (30%) gave clear instructions as to directions to the business, most were courteous in conversation, more than half (48%) did not introduce themselves, less than half (35%) offered a greeting other than to answer the phone, half (50%) focused on the caller and avoided distractions while on the phone, and less than half (48%) seemed knowledgeable of the store and its products, services, and name of management.
- *Marketing & Signage*: More than half (67%) said signs were well lighted; however, it was also reported that the signs were too small, more than half (58%) said that font size and shape was difficult to read, more than half (72%) said signage was obstructed, more than half (55%) said that signs were in poor condition, and an even response (50%) overall said that signage was difficult to see from the facing street.
- *Parking Lots*: More than half (98%) reported that lots were acceptably clean, more than half (95%) said that the construction of the lots was acceptable and clearly marked, they were acceptably landscaped, and provided enough space for parking. Respondents were evenly split on whether the parking lots were convenient to the entrance of the business and posed a safety threat to shoppers.
- *Condition of Entrance*: More than half (80%) reported the entrance to be clean and uncluttered, lighting adequate, trash can located close to entrance, and 99% believed the interior of the store would be clean.

- *Organization of Interior Space*: More than half (59%) reported the interior of the business was easy to navigate, isles clear, items easy to access and arranged in a logical manner and all businesses were said to have handicap access.
- *Cleanliness of Restroom Facilities*: More than half (77%) reported restrooms to be of concern with regard to cleanliness and stocking of soap, toilet tissue, and hand-drying supplies. Less than half (22%) reported that doors or fixtures needed repair; however, more than half (57%) reported that trash was over-flowing, commodes/urinals dirty, sinks dirty, the floors and countertops were soiled. Most reported (52%) that handrails and other contact surfaces were soiled. Over 85% reported that the cleaning schedule, if present, posted in the restroom was not updated.
- *Service Received During Interaction*: Over half (56%) said that employees were wearing clean uniforms and had general knowledge of the product or service requested. Over half (90%) of the employees showed a concern for the customer and refrained from engaging in personal or other conversation with co-workers while serving the participants; however, over half (96%) reported that customer service providers did not remember them from previous visits and after the initial greeting, did not give service within 15 minutes of initial contact. Participants also reported (89%) that employees did not know the name of the manager of the store or the one currently on duty.
- *Service Detail*: Most participants (76%) noted that general acknowledgement of a customer was made within a few seconds after entering the business. However, less than half (42%) reported that the time delay in waiting for the assigned service representative was unacceptable.
- *Overall Quality of Product*: Over half (99%) reported that product quality was 'good' to 'very good', items were in stock, and that they would purchase the item again. Over half (91%) reported that items were not displayed effectively and were not available to test before the purchase.
- *Presence of Management:* Over half (80%) reported that management was not visible and when requested, management did not respond. Over half (96%) were neutral when asked if management appeared to be professional.

NOTE. Overall Quality of Service: Interestingly, when asked to rate their overall experience from 1-10, with 10 being the highest rate, the average response was a 2.63.

These findings were, in turn, used to refine the design of the shopping, project requirements, and follow-up survey that would be used in the pilot study phase of this project.

Pilot Study Results

Assumptions, Investigative Project, and Online Survey

The pilot study embraced the findings from the pre-test. The number of categories, each with a detailed list of interactions and deliverables, was refined from the instrument used in the pre-test. Due to the preliminary nature of research in this demographic group, investigative assumptions rather than hypotheses were developed. The goals of identifying buying behavior and service expectations were the guiding purpose of the pilot investigation. The findings of this study provide data upon which hypotheses can be established for follow-up studies. The following assumptions were applied:

Assumption 1: Millennials prefer speed of service over quality of product in the purchase exchange.

Assumption 2: Millennials prefer less human interaction rather than more or the same level of human interaction from a customer service provider in the purchase exchange

Assumption 3: Millennials are more forgiving of a poor service exchange between themselves and customer service provider than those of previous generations

The project that was designed according to details learned from the pre-test study addressed a myriad of categories, each with a detailed list of interactions and deliverables that required attention. This pilot investigation was established following guidelines of initial study work as described by Howell (1987). Howell further suggested that the establishment of hypotheses is not possible when conducting pilot testing. Only variables considered to have significant impact are discovered if the sample is accurate. With initial studies, it is difficult to derive hypotheses that can be tested based on the reliability and validity of the data; therefore, trying a variety of instruments and approaches to gathering the data with the probable sample is empirical until errors have been controlled with validity. It is then that hypotheses and appropriate tests can be selected, which situation is applicable in this study.

The overall results of the shopping experiences are summarized below using the 7-point Likert Scale rating, wherein 1=Unacceptable, 2= Very Bad, 3=Bad, 4=Neutral, 5=Good, 6=Very Good, and 7=Excellent; or, depending on verbiage of the statement, 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Disagree, 4=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 5=Somewhat Agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly Agree.

Evaluation	Average Rate
Overall Store Purchase Experience	4 (neutral, neither agree nor disagree)
Overall Customer Concern Offered	4 (neutral, neither agree nor disagree)
Overall Rating of Customer Service	4 (neutral, neither agree nor disagree)

Results of the participant's formal written reports and surveys yielded information on service and presentation of both the facilities and products. An ANOVA with a .05 significance level was established and run using appropriate dependent and independent variables after reliability tests were confirmed. The ANOVA was run to investigate significant differences among types of businesses shopped; however, no significant differences were found. The use of post-hoc studies was considered moot as no differences resulted to then gauge the strength of the differences in the means. Table 4 depicts the business categories visited in the study.

Table 4

Business Categories Shopped and Percentage of Stores Represented

Department Stores (11%)	Gardening/ Landscaping (4%)	Grocery Store (1%)
Pet Stores (4%)	Craft Store (3%)	Gasoline Service Station (1%)
Sporting Goods Stores (16%)	Bicycle Shop (4%)	Costume Shop (1%)
Automotive Supply Stores (3%)	Electronics Store (9%)	Music Store (1%)
Home Improvement (1%)	Drug Store (4%)	Scrap Booking Store (1%)
Bookstore (4%)	Home Décor (12%)	Marine/Scuba Shop (1%)
Office Supply (7%)	Restaurant Supply (3%)	Tire Shop (1%)
Coffee Shop (7%)	Photo Shop (1%)	Toy Store (1%)

Written feedback from the pilot phase of this study helped to provide invaluable insights vis-à-vis each of the evaluation categories that had been developed from the pre-test. While they used the criteria given to them, they added numerous other factors. Those factors that were reported frequently will be used to refine the shopping, write-up, and survey instruments in follow-up studies.

Participants evaluated each business based on information considered to be components of quality services, such as Web site features that included a map, product, and other information; TV advertisements; posted hours of operation; availability of the business card of management or the owner; clear directions given over the phone for locating the business; courteous staff; pleasant greetings; staff focused on the customer and knowledgeable about products and services; signage well lighted, displayed, and easily visible from cross roads; outside presentation of business well manicured, clean; parking lot well marked, well lighted, free of potholes and obstructions, and safe/secure; and adequate handicapped parking, spaces of adequate dimensions, close to the entrance and easy to enter/exit.

Participants also evaluated the entrance of the business for cleanliness; doors that were easy to operate and of adequate size to enter/exit with items; easy to enter/exit if in a wheelchair; lighting adequate in day and night conditions; trash can located near the entrance/exit; employee close to the entrance; and non-cluttered entrance/exit area. Once inside the business, participants evaluated the location of products for ease of access and marketability; racks or display shelves adequately stocked and spaced; packing materials or other obstructions clear of isles; cleanliness; adequate lighting; visible pricing; staff available for quick assistance; name tags and uniforms of staff clean, clear, and reflecting the image of the business; products and services easily accessible for the handicapped; maintenance of checkout areas (belts clean, in good working order, cash registers working), speed of checkout; availability of management; security in the store; bathroom facilities that were conveniently located, regularly monitored for cleanliness; floor and counters free of standing water or debris, soaps and tissue adequately stocked, safe entrance/exit, trash emptied, and facilities operable.

Employees were also observed for professional behavior, etiquette, willingness to assist customers and adhere to business policies, interaction with peer employees, and obvious interest or disinterest in their job. Participants also evaluated a purchase experience for knowledge of staff, education about the product of interest, and ease of purchase as well as ease of returning an item. Participants were asked to return the item, pretending first to have forgotten their receipt to track the response from the business regarding returns (money returned, credit given to credit card, in-store credit issued, or no assistance), and then to produce the receipt either by finding it or returning to the store later with the product and the receipt. Finally, the participants evaluated the fond farewell--the follow-up, if given--by store employees and the overall experience of their shopping project.

It was discovered that the Millennials participating in this study evaluated 73% of the businesses shopped as being "good" in all areas of evaluation with one exception, that of focused customer service. Participants further reported that employees treated their age group with less focus than they treated older customers. Overall, they believe customer service providers are "suspicious" (as several participants reported) of their presence in the store or shop.

According to this sample, this age group believes that the customer-service provider does not consider their ability to purchase as an indicator of a definable target market in home improvement stores, department stores, and similar businesses where the product line is deep and wide. In essence, Millennials participating believed that customer service was adequate but not very good or excellent in stores that did not focus on them as a primary target market. Businesses such as electronics stores, bike stores, and music stores were those that obtained these ratings; however, it should be noted that these businesses are not those that were most frequented. The most frequented businesses were sporting goods, department stores, and home décor businesses, all of which obtained the rating of "good" or neither "good" nor "bad."

In the reports generated, most found the businesses to be "good" to "very good" in all areas except cleanliness, availability of staff for quick assistance, and staff knowledge of products and services. In these service areas, participants reported cleanliness as the most important variable for considering shopping in a particular store, and knowledge of staff and product availability to be second and third most important, respectively. Treatment of participants by staff was reported to be lackluster; however, this treatment did not rank as important as cleanliness, knowledge of staff, and product availability.

When participants were asked if they would return to shop at their selected place of business for this project, 38% agreed. It was reported that for those stores that were part of chains, they would select a different location (other than the area designated for the shopping projects) but would continue to shop at the chain. It is their belief that customer-service personnel are not as important to the shopping decision as ease of finding the product, cleanliness of the store, and availability of staff to assist in obtaining the product or finalizing the purchase decision in an efficient manner.

Conclusions

The Millennial Generation investigated in this study is predicted to have a significant impact on the future of businesses in terms of how much and what type of service is demanded. The findings of this pilot study hint at characteristics that unquestionably are different from those of previous generations, and, without question, characteristics that need to be researched further. Availability will be a key factor that drives the purchase decision.

The MG researches and compares products and services electronically and gains further knowledge by e-chatting with both friends and other users. Purchases are often made without personally experiencing the product. A focused interaction with a customer service provider is not as important as the capacity to make a quick purchase.

When in-store purchases are made, this sub-set of Millennials expects cleanliness, quick access to store personnel if needed, and availability of product. While most purchases are made via the Internet, when an in-store purchase is made, Millennials want quick-in, quick-out flash experiences, with little attention by store personnel.

Assumptions established for this study were confirmed; however, more study is needed and generalizing based on the presented results can be considered only an indicator of those meeting the demographic criteria. Millennials coming from a higher income bracket, college educated or not, may have a discretionary income well above that mentioned and service expectations that are more like those of their parents or those within their social group.

While preliminary in nature, this study offers insight into the differences and demands of the subset of the Millennial Generation that was investigated. It is recommended that businesses of all types, including those that are hospitality oriented, take heed of the information shared by those researching the MG to ensure that their future marketing plans and investments in cutting edge electronic communications attract and cater to the MG's buying habits. It is critical to offer websites that are first-in-line when using search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Netscape and once accessed, ensure users sites that are fully functional, easy to use, complete with product information and offering comparisons to like products, and secure purchases opportunities. Millennials are savvy in their use of electronics and off-site shopping venues; therefore, to keep MGs on a business site as long as possible increases the likelihood of a purchase and decreases the likelihood that they will surf elsewhere to find information related to the product on competitive sites.

The MG prefers a shopping experience that is complete, rich in visuals that offer current, dependable information. Businesses should consider partnering or investing in technical teams to serve as assistants to purchasers and to maintain the electronic interaction venues current and in excellent working order. Face-to-face interactions with the MG is not of prime importance; therefore, offering sites and quick access, and online personnel who are knowledgeable about products and services, are key to earning and developing a return MG customer. With the most robust buying power for the next two decades, researching this generation and catering to their buying behaviors will continue to be of growing importance.

Due to the lack of significant differences found in the ANOVA results, no associated tables appear. This study contributes to the body of information about services and service delivery in that a segment of the population, one predicted to be significantly powerful over the next 20 years, is not impressed with the quality of service given by any retail outlet visited. The approach to satisfaction mirrors the American Customer Satisfaction Index (www.acsi.com), which presents data communicating that Americans, like most Europeans, are dissatisfied with service. While they are interested in product quality, they believe it is service that wins their patronage. Unfortunately, no company in particular is working hard enough, making enough effort, or concerned enough to offer the expected level of service to create "service legacies" or customers who will buy from them for generations.

Unlike the generations before who were committed to products that are well known by their brand, not the product, this tradition may not survive. Craftsman tools, Clorox, Kleenex, and Xerox are examples of "legacy products" that certain customers prefer exclusively. However, the MG "hop shops" as it searches for price and convenience. Unlike their parents, they are not attached to relationships, brands, or the reputation of a business. They recognize well-known products as historical, not futuristic.

Limitations

As noted, continued research of the MG is needed. This study is limited geographically as well as demographically, and while the results reflect the findings of studies produced on the MG, they are incomplete. A larger population with characteristics of a broader spectrum than those controlled for this study will give improved insight into the MG as a whole.

This study yields information that may be somewhat generalizable to the MG who are college educated, from a higher-than-average income household, and have consistent and reliable access to electronic communication venues. This demographic sample may be of key importance due to their current and predicted buying power; however, not all MGs meet the criteria established for this study. Further research is needed on the same demographic; however, more detailed and controlled variables need to be studied to identify the strength of influencing variables that sequentially impact choices of this generation.

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A Longitudinal Study of Consumer Perceptions of Travel Websites: The Case of Hong Kong

By ShanShan Qi, Rosanna Leung, Rob Law and Dimitrios Buhalis

Abstract

Knowing how consumers perceive travel websites can help practitioners better understand consumers' online requirements. This paper reports the findings of a longitudinal study that investigated the changes and trends in the profile and behavior of online travel-website users in Hong Kong. The profiles of e-buyers and e-browsers in 2009, when compared with those established by prior studies conducted in 2000 and 2007, point in a new direction for practitioners and researchers investigating online travel-website user behavior. The results indicated that more middle-aged consumers have become online travel-website users, and that website security and price are perceived to be the most important factors for travel-website use by both e-browsers and e-buyers.

Keywords: Internet, travel websites, consumer perceptions, Hong Kong

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented 362.3% growth in Internet use (*Internet World Stats*, 2009). It has now been more than 10 years since online retailing became popular in the late 1990s (Lohse, Bellman, & Johnson, 2000). It still remains largely unknown whether online users have changed. Mills and Law (2004) stated that consumer buying and information-searching behavior have changed dramatically in the Internet era. Apparently, that statement holds true for the e-tourism industry. This paper reports the results of a longitudinal study that examined the profiles and perceptions of e-browsers and e-buyers of travel websites in Hong Kong, a well-developed outbound and inbound tourism region (Zhang, Qu, & Tang, 2004; Qu & Sit, 2007). Significantly, its historical background as a former British colony allows Hong Kong to integrate both Western lifestyles and Chinese traditions (Song, Wong, & Chon, 2003). Thus, the online perceptions of Hong Kong consumers represent both Chinese sensitivities, and consumer characteristics from developed tourism regions.

The Internet connects tourists and suppliers directly and provides tourists a convenient medium without limits on time and location. Ahuja, Gupta, and Raman (2003) stated that online consumers are looking for convenience, selection, lower price, original services, personal attention, easy and abundant information access, and privacy. O'Cass and Fenech (2003) emphasized that even though the numbers of online consumers do not increase as rapidly as many predictions hold, online business investment will still increase. Most tourism practitioners have certainly established websites to promote and sell products, with the online travel market showing enormous potential for growth. However, much more work needs to be done to further understand and develop this medium (O'Cass & Fenech, 2003). The objectives of this study were: a) to examine whether consumers have changed their travel- searching behavior during the past ten years, b) to compare the demographics of offline users, e-buyers, and e-browsers in the past ten years, and c) to indicate the differences in perception of travel websites between e-buyers and e-browsers.

Literature Review

Prior studies have focused on investigating online consumers' perceptions so that practitioners can increase their sales volume and attract new consumers. Buahlis and Law (2008) stated that the key to attracting consumers is satisfying their needs. Law and Wong (2003) as well as Cheung and Law (2009) investigated the perceptions of travel-website success factors among Hong Kong users. Of 952 respondents in 2000, 214 (22.4%) had visited at least one travel website, but only 14 of them (6.5%) had made online purchases (Law & Wong, 2003). The corresponding numbers among the 2,012 respondents in 2007 were 641 (31.9%) and 113 (17.6%), respectively. In addition, Hong Kong users had changed their perceptions of the importance of factors that contribute to the success of travel websites. In 2000, users generally perceived a secure payment method and price as the most important factors (Law & Wong, 2003), but rapid information searching and user-friendly systems were considered to be the most important in 2007 (Cheung & Law, 2009). In other words, over a seven-year period, travel-website users in Hong Kong had shifted their preference from online security and price, to efficiency. Thus, trends in online traveler perceptions can be understood as a valuable indicator of consumers' online purchase ability, requirements, and attention. Although Cheung and Law (2009) compared the differences in Hong Kong online consumers' perceptions over the past seven years, they did not highlight perception trends. What follows is a detailed description of those aspects of consumer perceptions that changed.

As early as 1997, Peterson, Balasubramanian, and Bronnenberg (1997) predicted that transaction security and privacy would become two major barriers to online shopping. Nowadays, many online consumers stop at the online transaction stage because of security and privacy concerns (Lian & Lin, 2008). Similarly, Koo (2006) stated that customers perceive product assortment, information quality, and security as the most important factors when planning to make online purchases. Salisbury, Pearson, and Harrison (1998) found that perceived usefulness and perceived security have a significant relationship. Lu and Yeung (1998) defined website usefulness as comprising website functionality and usability. While functionality refers to website content, usability involves website design or ease of use (Nielsen, 1993). Website content has a direct impact on consumer satisfaction, and the establishment of consumers' trust depends on whether a website has good usability (Roy, Dewit, & Aubert, 200; Law & Hsu, 2005). Lang (2000) found the three most important factors for online booking are Internet security, price range, and user-friendliness. Likewise, Wong and Law (2005) argued that e-consumer purchase decision-making is influenced by website information quality, time, and sensitivity of content.

During the purchase stage, price is one of the major reasons that people buy online (Starkov & Price, 2003). The Internet provides a new shopping environment that offers various product choices from different websites at different prices. Consumers can easily find low prices online in a relatively short time. Many consumers, however, use websites only for information searches and still purchase products offline (Buhalis & Law, 2008). To increase online trust, practitioners should thus consider establishing a secure and reliable environment for their customers. For instance, if a business has a good brand reputation, consumers are more likely to search online for information based on its brand name (Degeratu, Rangaswamy, & Wu, 2000). Beatty and Ferrell (1998) found that familiarity can increase trust. Therefore, brand name (or reputation) can be a factor that affects consumers' online decision-making.

Previous studies have investigated the online purchase decision-making process of consumers, and found that purchase intention can be influenced by website security, privacy, functionality, usability, price of products, and website reputation (Wong & Law, 2005; Reay & Miller, 2009; Hernández, Jiménez, & Martín, 2009; Lian & Lin, 2008). However, most of those studies were cross-sectional and focused on analyzing the attention and behavior of current consumers. Only a few studies have investigated changes in travel-website users and their perceptions. The aims of this study are thus to analyze the changes in the profiles of Hong

Kong travel-website users, compare online travel-browsers and -buyers, and identify the trend in changes of online consumer perceptions from 2000 to 2009. Following the prior studies, *e-browsers* are defined as Internet users who have visited at least one travel website in the past two years, and *e-buyers* are Internet users who have purchased from at least one travel website in the past two years. The findings will shed light on the changes in the profile and behavior of travel-website users.

Methodology

In late-March 2009, a large-scale domestic survey of Hong Kong outbound tourism was conducted by telephone interviews. All sampled telephone numbers were generated by a random-digit dialing method. Each potential respondent was contacted three times until the survey could be successfully completed or could not be further answered. A total of 17,837 numbers were dialed for a contact rate of 82.55%, and 1,478 questionnaires were successfully completed, representing a response rate of 8.29%. The questionnaire used in the survey was originally designed in English, and then translated into traditional Chinese using a back-translation process to ensure the accuracy of translation. Due to the limited number of questions in the survey, only three main questions of relevance to this study, drawn from Law and Wong (2003) as well as Cheung and Law's (2009) studies, were included. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a qualifying question asked whether the respondent had visited any websites for travel-related products/services in the past 24 months. Respondents who answered positively were then asked to reply to two questions about whether they had purchased any travel-related products/services from the Internet in the past 24 months. The same respondents were then asked to indicate which three of the five factors had the most effect on their online purchase decisions. These five factors included: 1) payment security, referring to the perceived trustfulness of online transactions, 2) price, referring to the price of online travel-related products, 3) website's reputation, determining how much a brand name may have affected the consumer's purchase, 4) website's usability, referring to the website design and ease of use, and 5) website's functionality, referring to the website content. The respondents could also choose "don't know/not sure" or "refuse to answer." Prior to the survey, the questionnaire was pilot-tested by several Hong Kong residents who were unrelated to the study.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents who had, and had not, visited any travel websites.

Table1

Profile of the Respondents in 2009

Variables	Have you visited any travel websites in the past two years?						
	Yes		No				
	Number	%	Number	%	χ^2	df	p
Gender (N=1,455)							
Male	313	54.9%	257	45.1%	5.245	2	0.073
Female	442	49.9%	443	50.1%			
Age (N=1,439)					287.911	10	0.000*
25 or less	130	67.7%	62	32.3%			
26 to 35	184	76.7%	56	23.3%			
36 to 45	219	67.4%	106	32.5%			
46 to 55	141	58.0%	203	83.5%			
56 to 65	55	27.5%	145	72.5%			
66 or above	10	7.6%	121	92.4%			
Education (N=1,455)					188.614	14	0.000*
Less than secondary/high school	165	29.2%	401	70.8%			
Completed secondary/high school	201	53.5%	175	46.5%			
Some college or University	55	63.2%	32	36.8%			
Completed college/University degree/diploma	280	77.1%	83	22.9%			
Completed postgraduate degree	52	91.2%	5	8.8%			
Income (N=1,201)					255.141	8	0.000*
HK$9,999 or less	32	17.3%	153	82.7%			
HK$10,000-HK$19,999	130	45.8%	154	54.2%			
HK$20,000-HK$29,999	128	55.9%	101	44.1%			
HK$30,000-HK$39,999	118	65.9%	61	34.1%			
HK$40,000-HK$49,999	72	67.9%	34	32.1%			
HK$50,000-HK$59,999	43	64.1%	24	35.8%			
HK$60,000-HK$69,999	30	81.0%	7	18.9%			
HK$70,000 or above	90	83.3%	18	16.7%			

Note: * Significant at $p<0.05$

Among the 1,478 successfully interviewed respondents, 1,455 provided useful responses. Table 1 shows that 755 (51.9%) of them had visited at least one travel website in the past two years; whereas 700 (48.1%) had not. There were more female than male respondents, and most respondents were from 26 to 55 years of age. The majority of them had received education at the degree level or below, and had monthly household incomes of HK$10,000 to HK$39,999 (HK$7.8 = US$1). Chi-square tests showed significant differences between the respondents who had, and had not, visited any travel websites in terms of age, education, and income. In particular, the propensity to become travel-website users increases with decreasing age (younger people are more likely to become users), increasing education level and household income. Such findings are in accordance with those of Christou and Kassianidis (2002).

The demographic data of travel website users in 2000, 2007, and 2009 are displayed in Table 2. Over the whole period there were more female than male users. Although Bonn, Furr, and Susskind (1998) found no gender difference in online travel-information searching, Richard, Chebat, Yang, and Putrevu (2009) discovered that women enjoy information gathering and exploring online more than men. This could explain our findings. In terms of age in 2000, 36% of travel-website users were 26 to 35 years old, which was followed by 28.77% aged from 36 to 45, and 25% aged 25 or less. In 2007 and 2009, the majority of them were 36 to 45 years old, closely followed by 26 to 35. The percentage of travel-website users aged 25 or less decreased by 7.41%, and the corresponding number for 46 to 55 year-old users increased by 12.68% from 2000 and 2009, which indicates that more middle-aged consumers are now attracted to travel websites. At the same time, there has been a fluctuation in education levels: most travel-website users were college educated in 2000 and 2009; but in 2007, the majority had completed only secondary education. The overall results of these three studies indicated that most travel-website users had household incomes between HK$10,000 and HK$49,999 per month. The number of travel-website users slowly decreased as income increased, but the major income level also decreased from HK$20,000 to HK$29,999 in 2000, to HK$10,000 to HK$19,999 in 2009. This could be due to the financial crisis in 2008-2009, which made people more likely to search for and compare information online before booking. In 2009 the profile of travel-website users had stabilized at 26 to 45 years old, with a university degree, and a medium-level of monthly income.

Table 2

Comparison of Travel Websites among Different Years

Study	This study	Cheung & Law (2009)	Law & Wong (2003)
Year of data collection / Total respondents	2009 / n=1,455	2007 / n=2,012	2000 / n=952
	Have you visited any travel websites in the past two years?		
	Yes (51.9%)	Yes (31.9%)	Yes (22.5%)
Gender	**n=755**	**n=641**	**n=214**
Male	313 (41.46%)	263 (41.03%)	102 (47.66%)
Female	442 (58.54%)	378 (58.97%)	112 (52.34%)
Age	**n=739**	**n=633**	**n=212**
25 or less	130 (17.59%)	147 (23.22%)	53 (25.00%)
26 to 35	184 (24.90%)	159 (25.12%)	77 (36.32%)
36 to 45	219 (29.63%)	198 (31.28%)	61 (28.77%)
46 to 55	141 (19.08%)	102 (16.11%)	14 (6.60%)
56 to 65	55 (7.44%)	22 (3.48%)	4 (1.89%)
66 or above	10 (1.35%)	5 (0.79%)	3 (1.42%)
Education	**n=753**	**n=634**	**n=211**
Less than secondary/high school	165 (21.91%)	48 (7.57%)	27 (12.80%)
Completed secondary/high school	201 (26.69%)	248 (39.12%)	75 (35.55%)
(Attended) Some college or University	55 (7.30%)	81 (12.78%)	10 (4.74%)
Completed college/university degree/diploma	280 (37.18%)	220 (34.70%)	89 (42.18%)
Completed postgraduate degree	52 (6.91%)	37 (5.84%)	10 (4.74%)
Income (HK$7.8 = US$1)	**n=643**	**n=523**	**n=172**
HK$9,999 or less	32 (4.98%)	21 (4.02%)	4 (2.33%)
HK$10,000-HK$19,999	130 (20.22%)	106 (20.27%)	18 (10.47%)
HK$20,000-HK$29,999	128 (19.91%)	128 (24.47%)	39 (22.67%)
HK$30,000-HK$39,999	118 (18.35%)	87 (16.63%)	33 (19.19%)
HK$40,000-HK$49,999	72 (11.20%)	64 (12.24%)	27 (15.70%)
HK$50,000-HK$59,999	43 (6.69%)	46 (8.80%)	13 (7.56%)
HK$60,000-HK$69,999	30 (4.67%)	20 (3.82%)	6 (3.49%)
HK$70,000 or above	90 (14.00%)	51 (9.75%)	32 (18.60%)

The demographic profile of this study about e-browsers and e-buyers is presented in the second column in Table 3. Among the 755 travel-website users, 25.3% had previously purchased travel service/products online, and 74.3% were e-browsers. The percentages of male and female e-buyers were approximately the same. Most of these respondents were aged between 26 and 45, had completed tertiary education, and had monthly incomes that ranged from HK$10,000 to HK$39,999. Chi-square results showed that e-browsers and e-buyers differed significantly in terms of educational level and monthly household income. Specifically, the tendency to purchase on travel websites increased with increasing education and income levels. This finding is similar to those obtained in prior studies (Cheung & Law, 2009; Law & Bai, 2008).

Table 3

A Comparison of e-Buyers and e-Browsers among Different Years

Study	This study	Cheung & Law (2009)	Law & Wong (2003)
Year of data collection / Total respondents	2009 / n=1,455	2007 / n=2,012	2000 / n=952
	Have you visited any travel websites in the past two years?		
	Yes (51.9%)	Yes (31.9%)	Yes (22.5%)
Gender	**n=755**	**n=641**	**n=214**
Male	313 (41.46%)	263 (41.03%)	102 (47.66%)
Female	442 (58.54%)	378 (58.97%)	112 (52.34%)
Age	**n=739**	**n=633**	**n=212**
25 or less	130 (17.59%)	147 (23.22%)	53 (25.00%)
26 to 35	184 (24.90%)	159 (25.12%)	77 (36.32%)
36 to 45	219 (29.63%)	198 (31.28%)	61 (28.77%)
46 to 55	141 (19.08%)	102 (16.11%)	14 (6.60%)
56 to 65	55 (7.44%)	22 (3.48%)	4 (1.89%)
66 or above	10 (1.35%)	5 (0.79%)	3 (1.42%)
Education	**n=753**	**n=634**	**n=211**
Less than secondary/high school	165 (21.91%)	48 (7.57%)	27 (12.80%)
Completed secondary/high school	201 (26.69%)	248 (39.12%)	75 (35.55%)
(Attended) Some college or University	55 (7.30%)	81 (12.78%)	10 (4.74%)
Completed college/university degree/diploma	280 (37.18%)	220 (34.70%)	89 (42.18%)
Completed postgraduate degree	52 (6.91%)	37 (5.84%)	10 (4.74%)
Income (HK$7.8 = US$1)	**n=643**	**n=523**	**n=172**
HK$9,999 or less	32 (4.98%)	21 (4.02%)	4 (2.33%)
HK$10,000-HK$19,999	130 (20.22%)	106 (20.27%)	18 (10.47%)
HK$20,000-HK$29,999	128 (19.91%)	128 (24.47%)	39 (22.67%)
HK$30,000-HK$39,999	118 (18.35%)	87 (16.63%)	33 (19.19%)
HK$40,000-HK$49,999	72 (11.20%)	64 (12.24%)	27 (15.70%)
HK$50,000-HK$59,999	43 (6.69%)	46 (8.80%)	13 (7.56%)
HK$60,000-HK$69,999	30 (4.67%)	20 (3.82%)	6 (3.49%)
HK$70,000 or above	90 (14.00%)	51 (9.75%)	32 (18.60%)

Table 3 also summarizes the profile of e-buyers and e-browsers in 2000 and 2007:There were more female than male e-buyers and e-browsers. In terms of age, the majority of e-buyers were 26 to 45 years old. From 2007 to 2009, the percentage in the 26 to 35 year-old age group increased by 5.24%, and the percentatage for those aged 25 or less decreased by 6.38%. It appeared that more middle-aged consumers become online buyers. Graeff and Harmon (2002) found that during online purchasing, older Internet users are more aware of privacy issues than younger consumers. Hence, to attract more mature e-buyers, practitioners should consider improving the privacy of information submitted to their websites.

According to the findings of the three studies, most e-buyers had tertiary education, followed by those with secondary education. However, the percentage of e-buyers with secondary education dropped by 5.37% from 2007 to 2009. Additionally, the percentage of e-buyers with postgraduate degrees was quite stable from 2000 to 2009. Another change was that in 2000, the majority of e-buyers had monthly household incomes of HK$70,000 or above, but in 2007 that level had dropped to between HK$20,000 and HK$29,999, which was followed by the group of HK$70,000 or above. In 2009, the majority of respondents was from the income group of between HK$20,000 and HK$39,999, followed by HK$70,000 or above. Koyuncu and Lien (2003) claimed that people with high incomes are more likely to shop online. The findings of this study, however, indicated that e-buyers are changing, and that a medium-income group of purchasers is emerging.

Among e-browsers, the percentage of those aged 25 or less and in the age group of 26 to 35 slowly declined from 2000 to 2009. In 2009, the number of respondents in the age groups of 46 to 55 and 56 to 65 increased by 4.17% and 5.16%, respectively. Similarly to the changes among e-buyers, more middle-aged people are now searching online for travel information. In 2000 and 2009, most e-browsers were tertiary educated, but in 2007 the majority were only secondary educated. Furthermore, the percentage of e-browsers with low and medium incomes has increased. However, the percentage of e-browsers with a monthly income of HK$70,000 or above also increased by 7.05% from 2007 to 2009, returning the group to approximately its level in 2000 (13.0%).

Figure 1 shows the comparison among offline users, e-buyers, and e-browsers in the years 2000, 2007, and 2009. The percentage of online travel-website users had increased by a large amount, from 22.5% in 2000 to 51.6% in 2009. This finding suggests that browsing for travel information has become more popular for Internet users. More importantly, the percentage of e-buyers increased rapidly from 1.47% in 2000 to 13.05% in 2009. This encouraging finding shows the increasing use of travel websites by people who actually make purchases.

Figure 1

Comparison of Offline Users, e-Buyers and e-Browsers among Different Years

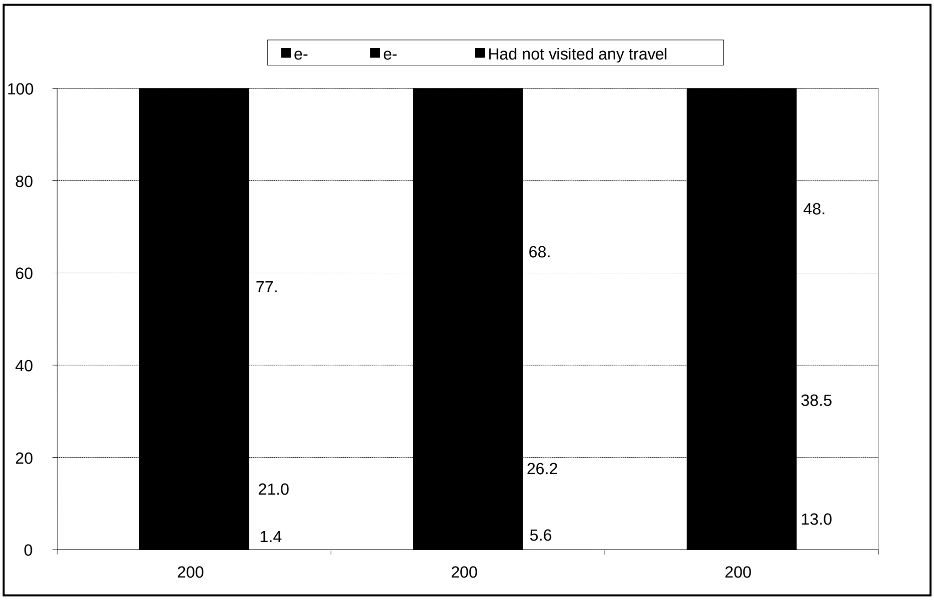

Table 4 shows the result of the five factors that travel-website users considered most important in affecting their online purchases.

Table 4

Ranking of Success Factors in 2009

	e-buyer		e-browser		Overall
Success Factor	Number	%	Number	%	
Payment security	163	85.8%	490	87.5%	653
Price	159	83.7%	399	71.3%	558
Website's reputation	132	69.5%	403	72.0%	535
Website's usability (design or ease of use)	46	24.2%	130	23.2%	176
Website's functionality (content)	45	23.7%	93	16.6%	138

Most of the respondents perceived payment security to be the most important factor (n=653), followed by price (n=558) and website reputation (n=535). Website usability (n=176) and functionality (n=138), in contrast, were not as popular. Other than price and website reputation, e-buyers and e-browsers had the same preferences. As e-browsers were mainly information searchers, it is likely that they considered website reputation more important than price.

In the study conducted in 2000, there were 12 website success factors but only e-buyers were asked about them. Secure payment methods, different price ranges, and a user-friendly system were considered to be the most important factors (Law & Wong, 2003). Cheung and Law (2009) listed five website success factors, with rapid information search, a user-friendly system, and secure payment methods perceived as the most important. Different price ranges for products/services and online booking and confirmation were considered of only average importance. The findings from 2007 also showed that e-buyers considered secure payment methods and online booking and confirmation more important than e-browsers did. After the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009, the perceptions of e-consumers reverted to those found in the 2000 study.

Additionally, payment security was considered an important factor across all three studies, joined by website reputation as one of the three most important factors in 2009. Consumers need confidence to shop online; a website that offers a safe environment and has a good record may be highly attractive to e-buyers of travel websites. Although website usability and functionality were perceived to be less important, they are not unimportant. Prior studies have proven that website design and content have direct impacts on consumer satisfaction and trust (Au Yeung & Law, 2006; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2006; Law & Hsu, 2006).

Conclusions

This study investigated the profile of Hong Kong residents' perceptions of travel-related websites based on their experience and preferences. Findings collected in 2009 were compared to those from two previous surveys, conducted in 2007 and 2000.

As indicated earlier, there were increasing percentages of travel-website users and e-buyers from 2000 to 2009. Moreover, a majority of respondents were travel- website users. These findings indicate the investments that tourism practitioners will have to make on their websites in order to render positive returns. The majority of e-browsers have stabilized at 26 to 45 years of age, with tertiary education and a medium monthly income. Hence, tourism practitioners and researchers should focus on finding ways to attract more middle-aged e-buyers. These website users have relatively less online experience compared with their younger counterparts. Thus, practitioners should consider improving the usefulness of their websites to attract more middle-aged users.

In addition, web security and pricing were more significant to users in 2009 than they were in 2007 and 2000. Tourism practitioners should thus provide stable prices and a secure web environment for their customers. Moreover, website reputation was found to be important when deciding to purchase travel-related products online. Degeratu et al. (2000) stated that many online browsers search for information based on brand names. Hence, the enhancement of online reputations will lead to more potential consumers of travel websites.

The major constraints of this study are the limited number of questions and the involvement of respondents from one geographical region. Future studies should increase the number of questions and interview travel-website users in other tourist- generating regions. Findings of the study are also limited in that the questions ranking the importance of travel-website success factors were not entirely consistent with those of the two previous studies. Further research should consider the implications of the differences in questions and of using scale-type questions to better reflect consumer perceptions.

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A Case Study of Health Tourism in the Jeju Province, South Korea

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Abstract

The United States Census Bureau (2006) reported that in 2005 more than 46 million Americans lacked health insurance, and that by 2019 national spending for health care would exceed $4.5 trillion (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2010). Because those numbers are expected to increase, health tourists are seeking better opportunities for low-cost, high-quality treatment in other countries, plus the added benefit of experiencing foreign cultures. Health tourism is a rapidly growing market in both advanced and developing countries. The purpose of this study was to develop an applicable model of health tourism, the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model, for Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and to provide other cities and countries with its implications. This study employed a focus group, in-depth interviews, and content analysis to discover important factors in developing the model. The results suggested that four major sources must be executed together to maximize the benefits of health tourism development. On a foundation of natural resources, knowledge-based resources were most important (54.5%), followed by artificial resources (25.7%), and expenses-based resources (19.8%).

Keywords: health tourism, content analysis, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province

Introduction

As healthcare costs increase rapidly, many patients in advanced countries are seeking alternative destinations with lower costs and competitive healthcare service. The U.S. Census Bureau (2006) reported that in 2005 more than 46 million Americans lacked health insurance, and that by 2019 spending for healthcare will exceed $4.5 trillion (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2010). It was also reported that more than 55,000 Americans visited the Bumrungrad Hospital, in Thailand, for cosmetic or non-cosmetic treatment in 2005 (Kher, 2006). Those numbers are predicted to continue to increase, and other destinations focusing on health tourism will be more competitive than ever before. Health tourists not only seek low-cost, high-quality services in other countries, but also want to experience other cultures and life.

Health tourism is referred to as "staying away from home, health as the most important motive and done in a leisure setting" (Hall, 1992, p. 151). Countries such as Thailand and India have developed and promoted the healthcare industry in conjunction with tourism (Connell, 2006). Many Asian countries especially are becoming more popular for health tourists because of their natural practices, high-quality medical services, and low costs (Laing & Weiler, 2007).

Considered one of the hot destinations for medical tourism (CNN.com, 2009), the Republic of Korea (ROK) is launching a new project to establish itself as one of Asia's major centers of health tourism. Recently, the ROK and regional governments have actively planned to link the medical industry with tourism and to develop the medical industry by utilizing the natural resources of local areas.

As one of the Provinces in the ROK, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province has planned to develop itself as the Northeast Asian center of health tourism through a project called "The Development of Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model." This project focuses on converging the medical and tourism industries, and it could result in encouraging foreign countries and companies to invest in the medical establishments of Jeju Province. However, initiating the project has been a challenge because of a lack of studies and expertise for differentiating Jeju Province from the other destinations--that is, to market Jeju Province as a unique destination for health tourism. Thus, the current study was designed to explore how to develop a destination for health tourism using the case of Jeju Province. The following is the process for developing the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model in the current study:

1. Situation (SWOT) Analysis
2. Resource Analysis
3. Positioning
4. Marketing Plan and Implementation
5. Feedback/Evaluation

Before proceeding with any marketing plan (Pearce & Robinson, 2000), the destination's internal and external situations must be analyzed (i.e., SWOT analysis). A SWOT analysis provides an overview of a business's strategic positions. Second, specific resources must be be found and used. By thus weighing certain resources over others, the process helps build a unique style. Third, competitiveness must be strengthened through classifying and investigating the "A" product internally and externally (Shostack, 1987), and positioning the "A" product, which is a destination in this case. Finally, the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model can be provided.

The aims of the present study were to develop a systematic and efficient Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model that is applicable to the Jeju Province and to suggest its implications to health-tourism stakeholders of other destinations. The current study's model was intended to assist in the formulation of a management strategy for Jeju Province as well as other destinations.

This study was conducted in two phases. First, the categories of health tourism were segmented, and available resources were introduced after the situation of Jeju Province was analyzed. Second, the key components of a proposal using the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model were outlined, and the supportive factors were provided which have been developed and tested through a literature review and interviews with stakeholders of health tourism. Third, suggestions and recommendations for the development and marketing plans for health tourism were provided.

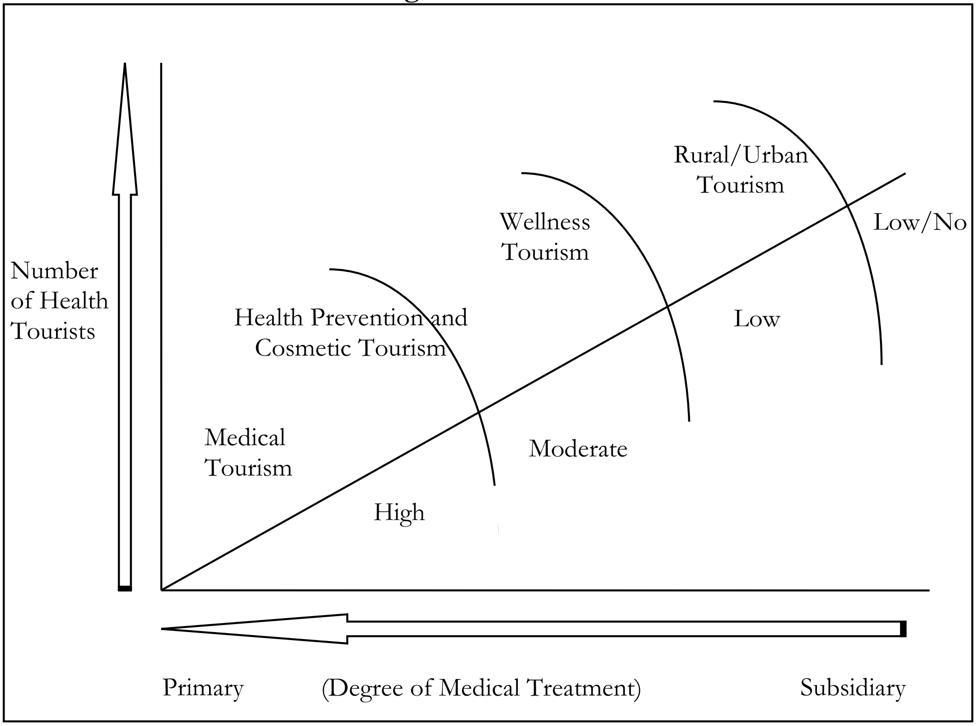
Literature Review

Definitions of Health Tourism and its Segmentation

The term *health tourism* has been defined in various ways (Smith & Puczko, 2008). Possibly this can be attributed to the fact that it has been used by two different industries: medicine and tourism. Goodrich and Goodrich (1987) defined *health tourism* as tourism facilities or destinations attracting tourists by planned promotion with health-related services or facilities. This definition seems to be incomplete because it focuses only on tourism rather than on health and tourism together. Later, the term was defined as a category of special interest tourism (SIT): traveling with a health-related motivation (Hall, 1992). Laws (1996) defined *health tourism* as travel from home to another destination to improve one's health condition as one type of leisure. Finally, Carrera and Bridges (2006) defined *health tourism* as travel that is systematically planned to maintain one's physical and mental health condition. Summarizing a number of definitions, *health tourism* can be defined as visitation from place of residence to another place for health care along with tourism aspects. Even with this umbrella definition, health tourism has many segments and categories. Figure 1 explains the segmentation of health tourists by the degree of medical treatment and number of tourists. In this figure health tourists can be categorized into four sections: medical, cure and prevention, wellness, and rural/urban tourism.

Figure 1

Health Tourism and Its Segmentation



Medical tourism is the "pure" or "peak" experience of medical treatment (e.g., heart transplant). The goal of tourists in this category is traveling to a destination with the primary motivation of being cured by well trained physicians. Second, if tourists travel to be cured and to have cosmetic surgery at a better price, it can be defined as *health prevention and cosmetic tourism*. The latter tourists are more interested in the cost than are the former. Third, *wellness tourism* can be defined as traveling to a destination for wellness rather than medical surgery or treatment. Fourth, *rural/urban tourism* can be defined as visiting a destination to acquire special health tourism products.

Overview of Health Tourism and Its Cases in Other Countries

Health tourism began when people travelled from one place to another to cure the body mentally and physically. Traveling to the Nile, the Ganges, the Yangtze, and the River Jordan, which were famous travel destinations, was one of the most common types of health tourism

(Goodrich, 1993). Meanwhile, although the superstitious belief of being cleaned spiritually has decreased, the desire to cure physical disease through bathing and dipping in the river or spring has increased even faster after several scientific studies proved its effectiveness. With many advantages (e.g., economic impact, green industry, and synergistic effects), health tourism has received special attention in a number of countries, especially in Asia (Henderson, 2003).

The growth of health tourism has been accelerated by the increased cost of healthcare in developed countries, along with the increased number of highly equipped and specialized hospitals in countries such as Thailand, Singapore, and India (Galloway, 2008). These countries have promoted their medical industry as a national strategy for establishing their country as a medical hub. The projects are being implemented with huge budget allocations, along with governmental policy and active support. These countries have been able to offer high-quality medical service by experienced medical doctors in well-equipped medical facilities. Finally, these strengths have been combined with tourism activities, such as recreation, culture, and leisure, in order to establish health tourism as a national strategic industry.

Thailand is one of the best examples among those countries. Its medical industry has been developed and promoted in combination with tourism since the 1980s. The goal of the Thai government was to maximize the use of its facilities and labors right after the late 1990s monetary crisis in Southeast Asia (Swain & Sahu, 2008). More than 100 spas and 1,000 massage clinics have been operating in Thailand since then. The main reason for successful health tourism in Thailand is the development of health tourism markets with differentiated strategies supported by the government and the national tourism board. Those entities have added tourism to the formula and developed the industry for superior competitiveness. In addition, costs for food and lodging are less expensive in Thailand than in other countries, and this had made Thailand all the more more competitive (Swain & Sahu, 2008). However, some segments are less competitive in Thailand than in other countries, e.g., healthcare costs are usually not as low as in other countries. Also, medical costs in Thailand are not fixed, and this factor can generate distrust (National Center for Policy Analysis, 2007).

Another successful case, Singapore, established Singapore Medicine as a complex agency to promote advanced medical systems and services. It was established by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), the Economic Development Committee (EDC), and the Trade Development

Association (TDA), for foreign investors (Galloway, 2008; "Medical Tourism," 2008). The STB's operation is unique: it has a separate healthcare department and has developed a number of health and tourism products, such as health-travel packages linked with medical systems and travel agencies. It is also providing special medical products, such as special rooms for royal families from the Middle East and Europe. To promote medical tourism and provide convenient services to foreign patients, Singapore Medicine is planning to provide one-stop service, including a consulting process, the introduction of medical service, international medical service by public and private medical institutions in Singapore, an information service in multiple languages, and an online-network service system to link all hospitals in Singapore. One of the great strengths for health tourism in Singapore is that English is widely spoken.

India is one of the leading destinations well known for health tourism. It offers the lowest cost and highest quality services among medical tourism destinations, and English is widely spoken (National Center for Policy Analysis, 2007). In addition, hospital staff are composed of highly trained physicians, and many hospitals are accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI, 2002).In particular, the Indian government has made great efforts to promote its health tourism to the world, cooperating with public and private organizations. The Ayurveda Yoga travel package, which is very popular as a health tourism product, combines Ayurveda Yoga and Tajmahal visiting. The India Tourism Board encourages tourists to participate directly in selecting a desired medical treatment/meditation program and tourism products via the Web site of Ayurveda Yoga Center. Additionally, the Indian government has organized a medical tourism promotion team in charge of the tourism, transportation, and visa processes for foreign patients.

For every success in medical tourism there have been many failures because of a lack of critical investigation and research in the earlier strage (Henderson, 2003). Understanding and segmenting health tourism and its tourists must be considered before deciding on a plan and considering its feasibility. There are also other factors that contribute to failure in developing health tourism: investment, facility, language, and location. A careful investigation and analysis will help to decide which model or type of health tourism would fit a destination. It is also obvious that health tourism is a high value-added tourism industry generating revenue for a destination, as well as a high-risk industry because of its scale in both finance and operation. Therefore, it is most essential to differentiate between potential resources and to decide how to combine them for maximum unique competitiveness (Crick, 2002).

The Situation Analysis of Jeju Province (Island)

Healthcare service in the ROK is well known for its high quality and low cost ("Medical Tourism," 2008). Jeju Province is considered one of the most popular destinations for tourism and potentially for health tourism in the ROK ("Medical Tourism," 2008). With abundant natural resources, Jeju Province and the ROK government have attempted to promote health tourism by providing new medical products, and environments with a well-developed policy to attract national and international health tourists. For example, the ROK has extended a foreigner's visit period from one year to four years for long-term disease treatment or medical care even if the foreign patient and family do not have a long-term visa (Jeju Free International City Development Center, 2006). In addition, the government of Jeju Province is constructing a health resort funded by national and international investments led by the Health Tourism Development Committee (Jeju Free International City Development Center, 2006). This committee is composed of medical doctors and agencies, health-tourism experts, and public-service workers. For the convenience of health tourists, translators and coordinators for health tourism were assigned to assist tourists in selecting their schedules, services, and products. Table 1 lists the suggested categories for the development of health tourism for the Jeju Free International City Development Center (JDC).

Table 1

Categories Retrieved from Newspapers for the Health Tourism Development in Jeju Province

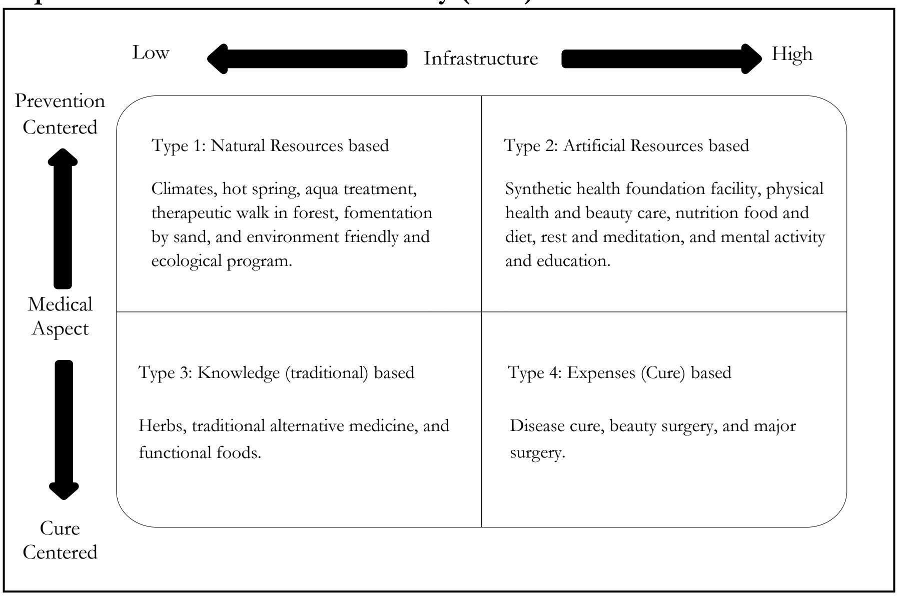
Categories	Contents
Marketing Strategy (4)	• Use high-tech medical equipment • Establish a target market • Provide new programs and facilities with special marketing • Develop unique health tourism products
System Reformation (13)	• New strategy to develop Jeju-Style health tourism • Profit generation to secure high quality • Develop Jeju-Style health tourism with systematic supports using natural resources (e.g., travel and recreation infrastructure) • Reform the current system partially to provide a competitive market • Complement various systems to connect medical tour and treatment • Offer a priority to develop Jeju-Style health tourism • Complement systems for long-term health tourists (e.g., Visa) • Provide a systematic program for administration and human resource management • Be oriented by Jeju National University Hospital • Develop the current financial system for investors domestically and internationally • Ease restrictions • Provide a master plan with a blueprint to execute • Develop systems to use natural resources
Infrastructure Construction (3)	• Improve and change the generic function (Core benefit: e.g., high quality medical service) • A systematic and administrative reconstruction (Facilitating service) • Improve service quality (Supporting services)
Total (20)	

Note. Sources from Halla-Ilbo, 2008; Jeju-Ilbo, 2008; Jemin-Ilbo, 2008; *The Jeju Times*, 2008.

Twenty categories were suggested for building Jeju-Style Health Tourism: thirteen sub-categories for system reformation; four sub-categories for constructing the marketing plan; and three sub-categories for establishing the infrastructure of Jeju Province. However, these suggestions might not have fully satisfied the needs of tourists, and health tourism development in Jeju Province might have failed because a lack of content validity in the current information (Table 1). It was therefore necessary to find critical factors to develop the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model: A structural model had to be constructed based on empirical and conceptual research. .As the first step, types of health tourism were segmented in terms of resources and medical treatments. Figure 2 illustrates different types of health tourism resources based on infrastructure and medical aspects.

Figure 2

Types of Health Tourism based on Infrastructure and Medical Aspect: Modified from Crick's study (2002)



Methodology

The Instrument Development

A number of studies have been conducted in health tourism (e.g. Connell, 2006; Johanson, 2004; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001) but not many have investigated health tourists and their destinations. Little research was available for helping develop the fundamental framework for the current study. The development process included both qualitative and quantitative methods. After a literature review, the questionnaire's format was constructed. Once an initial list of items was completed, a panel of experts used a focus group to review and refine the instrument. This process was recommended in several studies (Peterson, 2000; Schmenner, 1986). After the instrument was revised by experts, a pretest was conducted. Graduate students majoring in tourism management and health administration participated in the pretest. The questionnaire was refined again to ensure that the modification of items was satisfactorily addressed.

Sample Selection

To increase the validity of the instrument and objectivity of the results, the triangulation method was employed to select samples. To satisfy both sides--supply and demand--stakeholders in health tourism were selected along with experts in health and medical areas, experts in charge of health care, and experts in tourism and the environment. It is also likely true that all participants in this study were consumers who represented demand. For experts in health and medical areas, eight medical doctors and four Korean traditional medicine doctors were selected. Seven experts in the health care system were contacted, and five experts participated in the research interview process: one was from Jeju self-government and four were from Jeju Free International City Development Center. Eleven experts in tourism and the environment were willing to participate in the interview: four experts were scholars,who specialized in health and tourism, from the universities and colleges in Jeju Province; four were researchers in beauty and cosmetic-product development at Jeju Hi-tech Development Institute; and three were researchers in environment at the Jeju Institute of Environmental Resource Research.

Data Analysis

There were about ten representatives from health, tourism, and education. After a pre-interview with forty-five representatives, thirty consent forms were obtained. After thirty questionnaires were distributed to stakeholders, a total of twenty-eight questionnaires were collected through the in-depth interview process and used for further analysis. The overall contents were measured by a quantitative method for numerical comparison, and additional narrative descriptions through the standardized interview were added as a qualitative method perspective. In order to reduce bias in the evaluation process, two researchers with expertise in health and tourism examined the results of the questionnaires together. Data were analyzed based on four major types of resources: natural-resources based, artificial-resources based, knowledge (traditional)- resources based, and expense (cure)-resources based health tourism; and the three required resources: physical, human, and organizational thorough descriptive and illustrative methods. The questionnaire was developed after a modification of Crick's study (2002). The results of an in-depth interview were decoded by qualitative (descriptive and illustrative) and quantitative (frequency) methods. The importance of each sub-category in four types were weighted and ranked by experts. For the last step, three resources were weighted and compared without natural resources (natural resources being an absolutely necessary precondition for success). In previous studies natural resources were regarded as the most important resource for developing health tourism (Laws, 1996; "Medical Tourism," 2008; Smith & Puczko, 2008) as well as destination brand (Buhalis, 2000; Kim, Goh, & Yuan, 2010).

Results

Types by Resources

It was found that natural-based resources, as one of the four resources for health tourism, can maximize competitiveness in combination with other health-tourism resources in Jeju Province. The natural factors included pure water, plants for medicine, therapeutic walks in the natural forest, long-term rehabilitation cure, and black-sand bath. The pure water called *Samdasoo* was weighted highest (31%), followed by medicinal plants (28.6%), the natural forest (19%), long-term rehabilitation cure (14.3%), and black-sand bath (7.1%), respectively.

Artificial resources, which can create and develop superior competitiveness in health tourism, were also selected as one of the most important resources by experts. Artificial resources include the recreation resort, the spa and theme park, local foods and exercise programs, and beauty care facilities. The recreation resort facilities were ranked at the top (41.2%) of artificial-resources-based health tourism. Korean traditional medicine treatment using natural medicinal ingredients (50%)

was more important than these: functional cosmetics using special products in Jeju Province (22.2%), functional health food using ocean plant resources (16.7%), and conventional local food (11.1%).

Knowledge was also considered one of the most important resources for developing health tourism in Jeju Province. The knowledge of Korean traditional medicine and its unique treatment (50%) was found to be the most important area: functional cosmetics using special Korean products (22.2%) and functional health food using ocean plant resources (16.7%) were particularly emphasized to develop the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model. A knowledge of traditional local food was also highly weighted (11.1%).

It was found that expenses (cure)-based resources have a superior competitiveness in health tourism. These include the health examination (63.6%), rehabilitation physical treatment (18.2%), long-term medical care (9.1%), and dermal treatment (9.1%), respectively. Since they are expense-based resources, all resources are more focused on developing a pure medical tourism than comprehensive health tourism.

Resources Required for Health Tourism in Jeju Province

To find out what kinds of resources are required for health tourism in Jeju Province, four categories of health tourism with three major criteria were studied. Representatives of each category--physical, human, and organizational--were interviewed. The contents of Table 2 was moderately modified from Crick's study (Crick, 2002) and improved after the information was collected from newspapers (Table 1). Finally, the resources of Jeju Province were categorized by four types and three criteria. The primary concern was how to maximize the use of existing natural resources by building medical facilities (physical), training and generating specialized agents through college (human), and preparing health tourism (organizational) policy. For the artificial-resources-based category, it is required that service facilities (e.g., Wellness Park) be built and services extended. Additionally, constructing a network of medical experts and integrating medical services were emphasized. Having experts, a Research and Development (R&D) center, and an institution for specialized human resources are primarily required for knowledge-based resources. For expenses (cure)-based resources, constructing medical centers with special medical treatment, having eminent medical experts, and establishing internationally known hospitals were emphasized. All contents were ranked by the frequency of experts' comments.

Table 2

Resources Required for Health Tourism in Jeju Province

	Physical	Human	Organizational
Type 1. Natural Resources Based	1. Build specialized medical treatment center by utilizing natural resources (e.g., therapeutic walk in forest, underground water, hot spring, and sea water). 2. Provide ecological experiences (e.g., roads and forests). 3. Enlarge lodging facilities and other additional facilities. 4. Increase accessibility (e.g., international airport).	1. Train and generate specialized agents for tourism services (e.g., hospitality programs in college). 2. Train and generate specialized agents in natural resources (e.g., geology and environmental biology programs in colleges). 3. Provide special education for cure and medical care (e.g., body and skin massager).	1. Prepare the environmental policy to maximize the use of natural resources. 2. Provide organizational marketing. 3. Positive and active support from private or local communities. 4. Develop rehabilitation medical treatment.
Type 2. Artificial Resources Based	1. Wellness Parks. 2. Comprehensive medical examination center. 3. Enlarge accesses of transportation (e.g., more routes of airline).	1. Construct network for medical experts. 2. Develop unique services. 3. Provide efficient and specialized human resources management.	1. Integrate organization for medical services. 2. Provide departmental marketing for health tourism. 3. Prepare policy and system for private facilities and licensed experts.
Type 3. Traditional Based	1. Construct Research and Development (R&D) Centers. 2. Construct high quality Education facilities. 3. Construct Korean traditional treatment hospitals with systematic facilities.	1. Prepare human resources for medical research. 2. Generate more human resources in medicine. 3. Generate more human resources and programs with knowledge in natural resources of Jeju Province.	1. Develop institutions for specialized human resources in health and tourism. 2. Develop research institute for natural resources from Jeju Province within R&D center. 3. Provide education systems for medical human

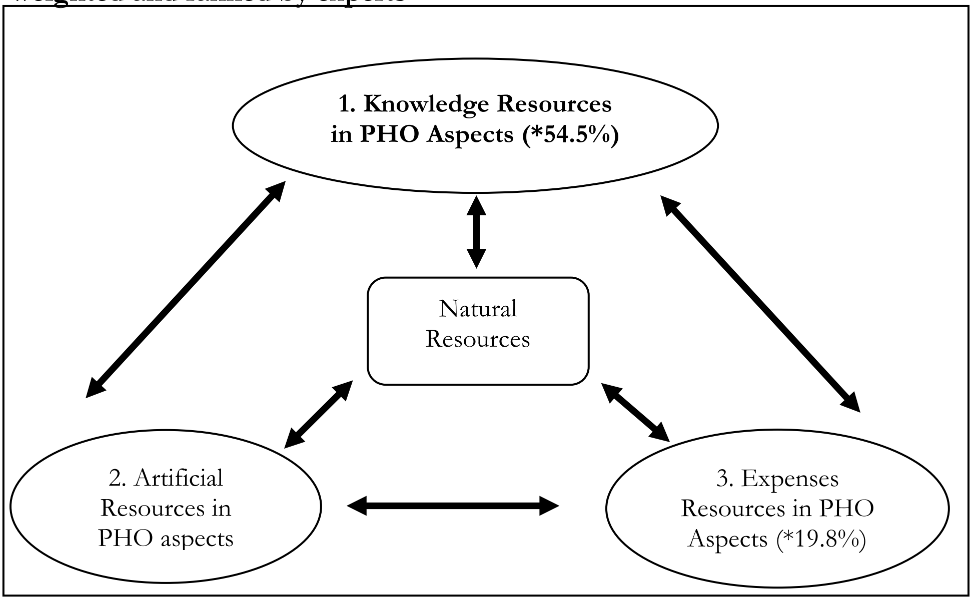
			resources. 4. Provide food safety of functional foods by certified research institution.
Type 4. Expenses (Cure) Based	1. Construct specialized medical centers with specialty medical technologies. 2. Provide special medical examination package within medical examination center.	1. Need for highly trained and well-known medical human resources[1]. 2. Provide translators and coordinators for health tourism.	1. Establish international brand hospitals. 2. Provide reasonable environment for medical experts. 3. Prepare systematic policies and laws for medical accidents. 4. Provide networks with travel agents internationally.

Note. *contents are ranked by the importance in each section.
[1]. A number of medical experts (doctors) are reluctant to go to Jeju Province because of its geological disadvantages (e.g., limited education systems and inaccessibility to capital city).

All three resources to be associated with natural resources were weighted. In the previous studies, natural resources were considered essential for the development of health tourism (Laws, 1996; "Medical Tourism," 2008; Smith & Puczko, 2008). The results indicated that knowledge resources had the highest weight (54.5%), followed by artificial resources (25.7%) and expenses resources (19.8%).

Figure 3

The *Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model*: weighted and ranked by experts



**Note*. PHO aspects: physical, human, and organizational aspects

Conclusions and Discussions

The Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model

Thanks to the potential synergy created by natural resources, the three different types of health tourism offered in Jeju Province may be guaranteed superior competitiveness over those of other cities and countries. The model would impact the primary industry and create more employment. As stakeholders strongly recommended, it is very important that health tourism be based on natural resources. For destination marketing (e.g., food and experience tourism), natural resources should be a foundation (Buhalis, 2000; Kim et al., 2010). For developing destination brand, local and natural resources are essential. Abundant natural resources (e.g., Halla Mountain National Park, Samdasoo, and black sand bath) in Jeju Province are enough to attract tourists; no new products or concepts need to be developed. Health tourism based on natural resources such as vanadium, lava sea water, a natural forest, and natural medicinal ingredients will provide other natural products and opportunities for health tourists to see, enjoy, and experience.

Second, health tourism based on knowledge (tradition) should be considered one of most important resources for Jeju Province. Korean traditional medicine treatment is based on the world-famous medical book *Donguiboga*, which was registered at UNESCO's Memory of the World in 2009 (UNESCO, 2009). The excellence of Korean medical technology and its skills in many areas (e.g., heart transplant) have become known to the world and can be an attractive asset for health tourism in Jeju Province. In addition, the local food in Jeju Province is one of the best ways to market Jeju Province as a health tourism destination because the food is likely regarded as medicinal.

Third, thanks to artificial resources, tourists can experience golf, hiking, or horseback riding, along with a health examination or rehabilitation cure. In addition to those valued services to tourists, more attention can be drawn by the various beauty care services. Especially, spa and beauty care facilities can be designed to attract more health tourists. It is indicated that those values and services may play more important roles in the near future. Although spa and beauty care is secondary or optional for health tourists now, it can be the major resource or market to attract health tourists later.

Fourth, based on expenses (cure) resources, hospitals must demonstrate their high-quality medical service, which is the most critical factor for primary health tourists. Although many factors go into building an ideal health tourism model, these resources should be regarded as indispensible requisites. Hotels and resorts also can be developed with unique functions for disease prevention or recreation (e.g., health rehabilitation center and fitness center). It is also critically necessary for Jeju Province to have highly trained and well-known medical staff, who, in the long-term, can satisfy and maintain the ultimate goal of health and medical tourism.

The final product and service is the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model (see Figure 3). It implies that all four resources--natural, knowledge, artificial, and expense--are major and necessary components for constructing the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model. The results indicated that the knowledge resources based on natural resources, such as Korean traditional medicine and functional foods and products, would maximize the synergistic effect through promoting the primary industry, creating more employment, and informing and advertising Jeju Province. That last effect eventually will increase national brand image of the ROK.

Although expense resources were ranked the lowest (19.8%), they are still important resources for developing the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model: experts may believe that the current facilities for health examination and physical cure for rehabilitation in Jeju Province are enough to meet the expected numbers of health tourists in the future; recently a general hospital and other additional facilities have been built.

On the other hand, the results of this study were similar to those of previous studies in special interest tourism (Buhalis, 2000; Kim et al., 2010). Those studies suggested that destinations should produce innovative and specialized tourism products that can attract intentional demand and differentiate their products from other competitive cities and countries. Also, partnerships between government and communities and new technology services (e.g., mobile and convenient technology services) will enhance competitiveness.

Future Study

A few limitations may have affected the results of this study. As a case study, the selection of experts and sites for this study was limited to one geographical area; therefore, the results of this study may be different in other regions. Although various qualitative methods were used to create the objective measurement, the results of this study still limit the generalization of the findings. Thus, more extended data collection is required to generate better results as an aspect of health tourism development. However, the results of this study are are of value to the original objective: to develop the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model.

Additionally, there were many limitations in interpreting and comparing the results of this study numerically because the data were collected and analyzed mostly by qualitative methods. Although the results of this study are priceless as an initial study to develop a health tourism model, a future study can be conducted based on the results of the current study using metrics or a survey questionnaire. More insight may be gained by comparing two or more destinations and to discovering critical components for a specific destination. For example, it was suggested that knowledge-based resources are more important than other resources, but it is not clear to what degree (or by what factor) they are more important.

Finally, it is also strongly recommended that the priority for each type should be carefully considered and segmented at every step in the development of the Jeju-Style Health Tourism Model. Natural resources must take priority over the other three resources. Otherwise, the model may not fit Jeju Province. It is believed that this study will initiate the development of a health tourism model. Also, the results of the current study will assist future researchers and stakeholders in health tourism to make use of and apply the processes and results in other destinations.

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Florida International University School of Hospitality and Tourism Management Announces another successful Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival

The School of Hospitality and Tourism Management is proud to announce the success of the 2011 Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival. The Festival has become one of the three major wine and food events in the United States. The school worked closely with Southern Wine and Spirits to stage the event. An enthusiastic crowd of more than 50,000 people attended. The culinary skills of over 80 celebrity chefs were telecast throughout the world. More than 200 wineries and other suppliers also presented their products.

Over 950 of our students participated in this event, gaining experience in the operations of large special events. Through their participation they become eligible for scholarships.

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