

*Research Proceedings of the Southeast Council on
Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education*

*Tuskegee, AL
October 14, 2011*



Hosted by:

Dr. Steven R. Lonis-Shumate, Assistant Professor, Coordinator of Hospitality
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Tuskegee University

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in Southeast CHRIE Hospitality and Tourism Research

Volume 15, No. 2

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 Volume 15, Number 2

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A Pilot Study of American Muslims' Buying Preferences in Chain Quick Service Restaurants

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Introduction

The Muslim population in the United States is growing, with estimates of the number of Muslims in the country ranging from 2 million to 7 million (Muslims, 2008). This segment of the American population represents a large market for restaurants and other foodservice operations and while the number of American Muslims continues to increase, the foodservice industry may not reflect the needs of Muslim customers. In this proposed study, the researchers seek to identify buying preferences among American Muslims as they pertain to eating at restaurants. The desired outcome of this research is to determine the criteria used by American Muslims in restaurant selection through qualitative research in the form of focus groups and personal interviews.

Due to dietary restrictions, Muslims are prohibited from eating pork or pork by-products. This can make eating at mainstream chain, franchise, and fast food restaurants a challenge. How, then, do Muslims decide which restaurants are viable options for dining and within the pool of restaurant options, how do Muslims choose their food? Specifically, the research questions to be addressed in this study are the following:

1. What information do American Muslims use to select a chain, franchise, or fast food restaurant?
2. What information do American Muslims use to make their purchasing decisions in a chain, franchise, or fast food restaurant?
3. What new or additional information can facilitate these selection and purchasing decisions?
4. What factors are most important to American Muslims when deciding on a restaurant and selecting food?

Background

The U.S. Census Bureau does not track religious affiliation and therefore, the number of American Muslims is hard to determine; however, the number is growing due to immigration, a high birth rate, and conversions (Muslims, 2008). The Muslim

community is composed of many ethnic groups including African Americans, Arabs, South Asians, and Africans. Of these, African Americans comprise between one-fifth to one-third of the community, with South Asians as the fastest-growing sector, accounting for around one-fourth of the Muslim population (Muslims, 2008). These two groups together account for more than 50% of the members of mosques in the United States. A 2007 study by the Pew Research Center found that the education and income levels of American Muslims are very similar to those of non-Muslims with immigrant Muslims falling a little above American born Muslims in both categories (Muslims, 2008).

Dietary restrictions of the faith prohibit Muslims from eating pork or pork by-products like gelatin. The Quran further specifies that Muslims may not eat blood, swine, foods upon which the name of another God has been pronounced, animals that die as a result of beating, falling, gorging by horns, or by being devoured by beasts or placed as a sacrifice for idols. Like Kosher-certified foods, Halal foods can be certified by many organizations worldwide, but one of the most noted domestic organizations is the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA, 2010). *Zabihah* is the Islamic process by which animals are slaughtered. Some Muslims eat zabihah meats exclusively, but many follow the rule of thumb that all foods that do not contain pork or their by-products are permissible. The consumption of alcohol is also prohibited in Islam, so alcoholic beverages as well as food prepared with alcohol are avoided by those who follow the dietary restrictions (IFANCA, 2010).

Studies that specifically deal with the preferences or buying habits of Muslims as they pertain to food and restaurants have not been the focus of previous research. In addition, studies related to Muslims' leisure behavior in general are very limited (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006). However, there are studies related to this research on the topics of menu planning and engineering, American patterns of eating outside the home, and truth-in-menu legislation.

Menu Planning, Engineering, and Analysis: A study by Kivela (2003) provides background into the methodology behind menu planning and quantitative menu engineering as it is often practiced in the restaurant industry. Traditional methods of menu planning and engineering based on the knowledge and tastes of a head chef often ignore pertinent market information about their potential market. Additionally, these systems are designed to determine the success or failure of a menu or its components after the menu has already been put into place. Many chain and franchise organizations prefer not to design a short term menu to allow for development and adjustment, and do not often deviate from a menu once it is in place. Kivela (2003) suggested that factors like menu price, menu item mix, menu item variety, style of cuisine, menu typology, and menu art work may have just as much impact on purchase choices as food quality, food type, and service quality, which have been thought to be the more important characteristics.

Mifli (2000) reiterated the method of periodical review for market research and analysis of dishes for further assessment without looking to the market for guidance. Many methods of menu engineering have emerged, all aiming to “improve (or to provide

a solution for the current menu items' performance" (Mifli, 2000). Mifli (2000) found that menu analysis was commonly conducted through a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative data are monitored through Electronic Point-of-Sale systems (EPOS) commonly used in restaurants to track sales, volume, and additional information through computer systems used by wait staff for placing orders and closing covers. Qualitative research through secret shoppers and inspections were also identified as techniques used by chain restaurants with EPOS reports as the dominant method. The use of secret shoppers and inspections by upper level management was not representative of the market, and especially not of a specialized sector such as Muslims (Mifli, 2000).

Eating Away from Home: Restaurant dining is no longer reserved for special occasions or celebrations years, as 78% of adults feel that eating out is a better way to spend time with family and friends than cooking and provides an opportunity for socializing (National Restaurant Association, 2010). In 1970, 25% of household food budgets was spent on eating away from the home, in 1996 it was up to 40% (Biing-Hwan, L., Guthrie, J., & Frazao, E., 1999), and a 2004 report on consumer spending on food away from home by the United States Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.) reported that "Americans now spend nearly half of their food dollars on meals and snacks at foodservice facilities, such as restaurants" (Stewart, Blisard, Bhuyan, & Nayga, 2004). In another study, Mills and Clay (2001) added that almost half of each dollar spent on food was outside the home and that on a normal day nearly half of all American adults eat at a restaurant. Although these statistics are not exclusive to Muslims, a representative sample of restaurant goers was sued and may therefore, include American Muslims.

Truth-in-Menu Legislation: Truth in menu laws are vital in the examination of the preferences of Muslims when eating outside the home. Legislation requires restaurant operators to accurately "describe food attributes including preparation style, ingredients, origin, portion sizes and health benefits" (National Specialty Underwriters, Inc. n.d.). Mills and Clay (2001) addressed the influence of truth in menu laws on item selection among consumers. Server knowledge was found to be the most important fact in determining dining choice and visual presentation was "very important" in menu choice for participants; cooking methods and ingredients present in menu items were somewhat important. Servers are increasingly responsible for accurately representing menu items to customers and have been at the forefront of litigation regarding food liability (Mills & Clay, 2001).

Back in 1994, a Muslim family sued *On the Border Cafes* for misrepresentation of their beef tacos on the menu (National Restaurant Association, 1994). The family was eating tacos at an *On the Border* location in Houston, Texas when the head cook, who was also Muslim, informed the family that the beef tacos contained pork. Representatives for *On the Border* responded by saying that the meat used in beef tacos had included ground pork to add flavor and that they would cease adding the pork (National Restaurant Association (1994). This is just one example of how the availability of information is pertinent to menu choices and how an establishment's knowledge and representation of food choices affects the Muslim community.

A respondent who was interviewed by Stodolska and Livengood (2006) to determine the leisure behaviors of Muslim immigrants to the United States noted that she selected a filet of fish sandwich when dining out at a fast food restaurant. However, what other menu items are chosen and what types of restaurants are selected by American Muslims?

Methodology

For this study a focus group will be conducted along with in-depth interviews. Based on the work of Stodolska and Givens (2006), the researchers believe that these methods will result in more truthful answers and will allow the researchers to gain information from the perspectives of the informants. The participants in this study will be identified via self identification as Muslim, with the minimum age of 18, and as patrons of restaurants at least 3 times per month (to ensure that they actually have significant experiences eating out). Twenty to twenty-five interviews are planned to determine the demographics, food preferences, and experiences of American Muslims to provide pilot study information and to guide further research, including a survey of a larger pool of participants that will include both quantitative and qualitative items.

Expected Results

It is expected that the results of this pilot study will provide a beginning point for understanding the dietary preferences, needs, and experiences of Muslim Americans in chain, franchise, and fast food restaurants.

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Sustainability Training and Practices in Lodging Operations: A Pilot Study

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Introduction

Sustainability is central to the world today and is of significant interest to the hospitality and tourism industry. “Green” tourism, eco-tourism, sustainable tourism development, and other environmentally friendly forms of tourism are increasing in popularity as the world faces increased environmental challenges in the twenty-first century and as global climate change is the focus of debates and concerns among scientists, politicians, and people in general. Sustainability is frequently defined in terms of the triple bottom line of equity, economics, and environment, or people, products, and planet (Dhiman, 2008) or education, environment, and economics (personal communication with Carrie Blaskowski, Jackson County Green Energy Park, January 12, 2010); these all connect to sustainable tourism, defined by several scholars as “an alternative form of tourism that improves or, at the minimum, maintains the quality of experiences for the visitors, life of host communities, and the environment [indefinitely] on which both the host community and the visitor depend.” (McIntyre, 1993, p. 11; Sirakaya-Turk, Ekinici, & Kaya, 2008, p. 414; Tosun, 1998, p. 596) This type of tourism extends to the hospitality industry, including lodging operations.

Background

While managers of hospitality and tourism properties have not always seen their operations as primary contributors to environmental destruction or decline, the industry’s activities can influence the environment of destination areas negatively in numerous ways and operators express increasing awareness of and attention to diminishing the harmful impacts of their business practices on the natural environment (Kazim, 2007). A number of hotel companies have adopted “green” hospitality practices such as the use of local, organic foods and ecologically safe cleaning agents, recycling, waste reduction, and habitat protection (Fien, 2002); written their own informational materials to detail their philosophies, policies, and practices with regard to sustainability in their development processes and daily operations (Fairmont Hotels, 2007); and created methods for evaluation of their environmentally friendly business practices (CERES, 2007).

Sustainable or “green” practices in tourism, lodging, and foodservice include: the use of “green” design and construction principles and materials; the use of locally produced organic foods; minimal use of animal protein sources; minimal use of highly processed foods; cultural diversity and sensitivity in food choices; cultural diversity and sensitivity and non-exploitation in human resources practices; the use of reusable cutlery, cooking, serving, storage, and table linen items; reduction in the use of water and electrical energy resources; the use of ecologically safe cleaning agents; recycling and waste reduction; habitat protection; “green” purchasing; working with “green” vendors and external partners; and employee and guest education (Fairmont Hotels, 2007; Fien, 2002). In addition to altruistic motivations, there are practical benefits to following environmentally sound policies. Many of the practices can result in significant cost savings (Butler, 2008) and “green” certifications can give a hotel a marketing advantage over its less sensitive competitors (Dicum, 2007).

Therefore, it is important to explore how existing hospitality and tourism businesses educate and train employees in “green” practices that benefit the triple bottom line and support the daily practice of continuously measuring inputs and outputs in the sustainability process (Kazim, 2007). For as noted author Peter Senge (2008) writes in his book titled, *The Necessary Revolution*, concerning sustainability in business, “Sustainability innovators can ill afford to be unprepared or unskilled when it comes to engaging conversations that build mutual understanding and the ability to work together.” Senge (2008) stresses that organizational leaders must “bring to life” new ways of thinking, seeing, or interacting that create focus and energy. Starting with the sustainability issues that are most central to the organization, employees or the community may help accelerate and support this process.

As mentioned previously, “green” certification can be of value to hotels. The two major certification programs are LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and Green Seal. LEED certification is primarily concerned with the physical structure of a hotel, not its operation (Butler, 2008). Green Seal’s main focus is the environmentally sound operation of the property. The requirements, as outlined in Green Seal’s GS 33 standards, emphasize waste and water management, energy efficiency and responsible purchasing policies (Green Seal, 2011).

The Pilot Project

Based on the previous discussion, this pilot study was developed to investigate ways hotel administrators educate and train their staff in sustainability so as to provide a “best practices” approach in existing lodging operations. Specifically, the research questions guiding the pilot study were:

1. What methods are used in the hospitality and tourism industry to teach and/or train employees in sustainability concepts and practices? What sustainability topics are most commonly addressed?

2. What type of person, in terms of position, is responsible for monitoring the sustainability effort in hotels and are these policies enforceable under the organization's progressive discipline system?
3. Are hotels providing a foundation of information on the environment for employees that supports sustainable operations and enhances the likelihood of employee involvement and how is this accomplished?
4. Are hotels empowering employees by getting their ideas on sustainable priorities as well as their input on implementation approaches and if so, how?
5. Are employees active in the measurement of progress involving sustainable practices and if so, how?
6. How are organizations working with employees who are resistant to the implementation of sustainable practices?
7. What are the best practices to use in training and teaching hospitality and tourism industry employees in sustainability concepts and practices?

Methodology

Green Seal was selected as a sampling frame for this study because the authors believe that hotels that have sought the certification have shown a propensity for leadership in sustainability. The pilot study used a survey that contained a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions hosted on the surveymonkey.com website. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, this is the most appropriate technique. The survey items were initially developed by the researchers, then examined and amended by the executive director of the Green Seal certification organization. The resulting survey was then pre-tested and no significant changes were made. Green Seal sent an electronic mail message to all certified lodging properties with electronic survey contact information and requested their participation in the online survey.

Results

The pilot study resulted in 36 usable surveys out of a population of 119 certified hotels for a response rate of 30.3%. Given that the Green Seal organization certifies hotels for engaging in green practices, it was not surprising that 100% of the respondents train existing employees in sustainability practices, while 88% train new employees. In terms of delivery for new employees, most favored the classroom style (77%), while the balance favored the utilization of a hands-on laboratory (12%), or computer based (3%), or self instructional video (7%). The most popular topics addressed in the training sessions were waste minimization, hazardous substances, and energy conservation and management followed by environmentally and socially sensitive purchasing policy, waste water management, and management of fresh water resources. Eighty four percent of the respondents noted that training for new employees was oriented toward both the "task of doing" and "attitude about doing", and 70% utilized both when training existing

employees. It was interesting to note that a variety of people, in terms of position in the company, were responsible for the training, from department heads to Human Resource Officers to the Director of Housekeeping. Also of interest was the finding that nearly 46% stated sustainability and environmental procedures were enforceable under the hotel's progressive discipline system. Moreover, 16% of the respondents have used the progressive discipline system for a case where the employee was not following environmental procedures. Respondents noted a variety of benefits to having training about sustainable practices, commenting on a range of benefits, including return on investment, waste reduction, and the creation of a positive culture.

Expected Contributions

This project is still in progress and through completion of this project, the authors hope to distill the current practices in sustainability into a useful format to share with practitioners and academics in hospitality and tourism. The information gathered can also act as a catalyst to generate suggestions for further training and educational efforts that can be implemented effectively within existing operations so as to promote sustainability with its triple bottom line through the industry and educational components of the field of hospitality and tourism.

The next stage of the research will concentrate on in depth follow-up interviews. Eleven of the initial participants have indicated that they would be willing to participate in future research and will be contacted.

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Perceptions of Green Practices in a University Foodservice Operation

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Introduction

As many industries are realizing the ecological, financial and social benefits to implementing green practices in business, the literature shows that restaurants are slowly following suit (DiPietro, et al., in press; Dutta, et al., 2008). Some restaurants are implementing environmental friendlier practices by: purchasing equipment that produces less waste and uses less energy, using more local foods, banning disposable cups, selling biodynamic and sustainable wines, training employees more thoroughly on green practices, and converting vehicles to use recycled cooking oil instead of gasoline (Gise, 2009). These green efforts can help restaurants increase their bottom line while improving guest satisfaction.

Background Literature

A limited number of research studies have focused on green restaurant practices and customer perceptions. In a study comparing guests' and employees' perceptions of green hotel foodservice operations in China, Heung, Fei, and Hu (2006) found that hotel employees rated "safe and clean food" as the most important factor in a green restaurant, while guests rated "fresh air and ventilation" as the most important factor. Despite the fact that employees and guests had different perceptions about the most important factor, being green was important to them.

A recent study by Hu, Parsa, and Self (2010) done in Taiwan analyzed the relationships among consumers' knowledge of green practices, ecological behavior in restaurants and the consumers' intention to patronize a restaurant. The study found that knowledge of these practices was an important determinant of whether consumers would patronize the restaurant. It was also found that consumers with higher income levels and with higher educational levels would be more likely to patronize a green restaurant.

Quick service restaurant customers in the Midwest U.S. were surveyed regarding their perceptions of green practices in restaurants in order to determine the impact that these practices had on customer satisfaction and the restaurants' bottom line (DiPietro, et al., in press). The findings showed that although customers believe that restaurants should utilize green practices, most people were not willing to pay higher prices for those green practices. Also, people who implement green practices at home tend to have the intention to visit green restaurants more often.

The restaurant industry generates significant revenue for the economy, but also a tremendous amount of waste for the environment. Implementing green initiatives can add value to the consumers of the restaurant industry (Lee & Heo, 2009), thus giving restaurants that are environmentally responsible a distinct competitive advantage (Mohr & Webb, 2005). It is important to further study customers' perceptions, attitudes, and willingness to pay more for green restaurant practices in order to determine what next steps the restaurant industry needs to take in order to capitalize on the green initiatives currently being implemented. For the current study, the researchers chose to analyze customer perceptions, attitudes, and willingness to pay more for green practices in an on-campus restaurant operated by faculty and students in a hospitality management program at a major Southeastern university in the United States.

The current study was done in order to address the following research questions:

1. What are customer perceptions regarding the level of importance of various attributes related to green practices in an on-campus restaurant?
2. Are customers willing to pay more for green practices that are utilized by a restaurant?
3. Is there a relationship between customers' green practices used at home and the perception of whether they would visit a restaurant more often based on green practices?

Methodology

The following study analyzed guest perceptions of green practices in a university foodservice operation. The operation is an upscale buffet restaurant that is student and faculty run at a large university in the Southeastern U.S. The restaurant recently received certification as a green restaurant by that state's hospitality association. The survey was developed from a previous survey conducted by DiPietro, et al., in press. The current study used a convenience sample of 2500 past customers of the restaurant. The surveys were sent out via email with two reminder emails from a listserv created by the on campus restaurant. A total of 600 surveys were completed and useable for a 24% response rate. The data was analyzed with SPSS version 18 using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis in order to respond to the research questions.

Results

Of the 600 respondents to the survey, the majority were females (68.8%). Several age groups were represented by the respondents, with the largest age groups being 65 years and over (22.2%) and 50-57 years old (19.8%). Only 10.8% of the respondents were younger than 34 years old. The respondents also comprised a very educated group of people, with 34.1% who had a four-year college degree, 27.8% with a master's degree, and 12.4% with a doctoral or other terminal degree. Less than 5% of the respondents had high school or GED as their highest level of education completed.

Respondents were asked to select their level of agreement with various statements regarding green practices in restaurants using a 5-point Likert type scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. In general, the responses showed that customers were aware of environmental issues and that they preferred to purchase products and patronize businesses that are environmentally safe and friendly. An interesting note is that an overwhelming majority of customers (93.6%) did not know that the on-campus restaurant has a green certification and what that certification means. The level of agreement dropped when asked about willingness to pay more for environmentally safe products. The respondents were willing to pay up to 1% more for those products (M=3.58), but that dropped when asked about paying 5% more (M=2.92), paying up to 10% more (M=2.35), and paying more than 10% more (M=2.10). See Table 1 below for more details.

Table 1: Customer Perceptions of Green Practices

Green Practices	N	M	SD
I am well informed about environmental issues	549	3.72	.766
I feel I could be more informed about green activities	549	3.68	.793
I prefer to purchase products that are environmentally friendly (safe)	549	3.79	.780
Being environmentally conscious is part of my daily life	549	3.67	.856
I prefer to patronize businesses that are environmentally friendly	549	3.59	.862
I prefer to purchase an environmentally safe product even if it is somewhat more expensive	549	3.38	.925
I prefer to purchase an environmentally safe product even if it is somewhat lower in quality	549	2.36	.920
I believe that an organization should not charge customers extra for the costs of environmentally safe products	549	3.50	.943
I believe that the organization and customers should share the cost of environmentally safe products	549	3.26	.954
I am willing to pay up to 1% more for environmentally safe products	549	3.58	1.032
I am willing to pay up to 5% more for environmentally safe products	549	2.92	1.139
I am willing to pay up to 10% more for environmentally safe products	549	2.35	1.035

I am willing to pay more than 10% more for environmentally safe products	549	2.10	.943
I prefer to purchase services from organizations that practice “green initiatives”	549	3.49	.889
I am confident that when an organization says they are practicing “green initiatives” they are helping to protect the environment	549	3.31	.940
I believe that restaurant companies should use local products whenever possible	549	4.28	.775
I am willing to pay more for a restaurant that uses local products on their menu	549	3.68	.972
I believe that restaurant companies should use organic products whenever possible	549	3.42	.965
I am willing to pay more for a restaurant that uses organic products on their menu	549	3.16	1.049
I believe that it is important that restaurants have a “green certification”	549	3.12	.942
I believe that I would visit a restaurant more often because of my perceptions of the green activities of that restaurant	549	3.12	1.000

Table 2 below shows the correlation analysis for customers’ personal green practices and their intention to visit a green restaurant. This analysis shows that there is a relationship between the personal green practices used at home and the intention of customers to visit a restaurant that utilizes green practices. The strongest relationship was between the use of energy efficient products at home and respondents intention to visit a restaurant with green practices with a moderate positive correlation ($r=.362$, $p=.05$).

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Personal Green Practices and Intention to Visit a Green Restaurant More Often

	I would visit a restaurant more often because of my perceptions of the green activities of that restaurant	How often do you recycle products?	How often do you purchase energy efficient products?	How often do you buy items in bulk?
I would visit a restaurant more often because of my perceptions of the green activities of that restaurant	1.0	.292**	.362**	.149**
How often do you recycle?		1.0	.367**	.176**
How often do you purchase energy efficient products?			1.0	.340**
How often do you buy items in bulk?				1.0

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Discussion and Implications

Although education level and income has been found to be a factor in choosing to go to a green restaurant in past studies (Hu, et al., 2010), this study shows that there is

more research that can be done to identify other demographic variables (e.g., age) that may impact consumers' choice to visit a green restaurant. The respondents to this study were older, which could have been due to the email list that was comprised by the on-campus restaurant and the demographics of the restaurant that is only open for lunch and serves an upscale buffet format. Because the respondents were older and more highly educated, the study could have shown a more aware customer base, but the current study shows similar results to other studies in that customers know about environmental issues and believe that they could know more about them, but they are not as willing to pay very much more for these initiatives, and they are not necessarily intending to go to restaurants simply because of their green initiatives.

The practical implications for this research are that business owners can determine the amount of money that they want to spend on green practices based on the guest perceptions of those practices. From the current research, it can be seen that there is a correlation between green practices used at home and intention to visit a green restaurant, but only at a small to moderate level. This could help restaurants in knowing that there might be a benefit to targeting and marketing to people who already use green practices such as recycling, buying energy efficient products, and buying in bulk. These types of customers are more likely to choose a restaurant based on its use of green or environmentally safe practices.

The fact that almost all of the customers did not know that the restaurant was green certified and what that certification means, creates an interesting dilemma- are the certification costs really worth it? Since the early 2000's, it has become more common to have businesses talk about being green and green certified, but the current study shows that this might not have the appeal to the customer as originally thought. It also may show that businesses just need to communicate more to their customers about their green certification. Maybe the key to business success in 2011 is not location, location, location, but communication, communication, communication.

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Membership Levels in U.S. Private Clubs: The Impact and Comparison of Two Periods of Economic Decline

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Introduction

A private clubs' operation is always centered on its membership; it provides the legal-basis upon which a club is founded as well as its continual existence. Specifically, a private club can only engage in business with its members or their guests creating, in essence, a finite customer base. For this reason a club's membership is often referred to as its "lifeline" or the "lifeblood of a club" (Fornaro, 2003, p. 10). Many of the services, amenities, and facilities that private clubs offer to its membership can be obtained within the public sector. However members often join private clubs for several intangible factors, in addition to tangible; these factors include such items as exclusivity, tradition, and the opportunity to build relationships with people who have similar interests and lifestyles. Membership in a private club has many expenses associated with it. Upon joining a private club the membership candidate must pay a onetime initiation or joining fee. Additionally, each member agrees to pay dues, usually monthly, as well as pay for all usage related fees. Similar to most purchases made within the luxury marketplace, these expenses are generally paid from an individual's personal discretionary income (PKF, 2011).

Literature Review

The private club industry has continuously adapted to the changing needs of its membership just as every business must meet the needs of its customers. Historically private clubs focused on meeting the needs of adults, primarily males interested in playing golf. Most successful private clubs today offer a wide variety of services, facilities, and offer specific programming that caters to the varying ages, needs, and desires of the whole family. As society has evolved, several lifestyle trends have influenced private club operations such as changing recreational habits because time has become more limited for most, and the changing role of women in society has created a

greater focus on the family unit during non-work hours. Private clubs are well positioned to appeal to these ongoing changes in society and the nationwide growing interest in health and wellness.

Natural attrition occurs in any membership based organization. Finan (2007) reported that “annual membership attrition in the club industry ranges between 5-10 percent, and the majority is due to such uncontrollable factors as relocation, health problems, and death” (p. 2). Coyne (2007) summarized his findings stating that attrition in clubs is influenced by economic conditions and those members who elect to remain during periods of decline will be more price sensitive. Since dues revenue is so critical to the day to day operation of every private club, leaders must maintain a critical mass or level of club membership to simply stay in business. “One of every three dollars of revenue at a city club and nearly one of every two dollars at a country club is generated by dues...there simply aren’t many options for increasing revenue or for controlling costs that can approximate the value of a dues paying member” (Vain, 2007, p. 3).

The two professional associations focused on the private club industry in the United States, Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) and National Club Association (NCA), both report annual industry data that include the average number of members per club fluctuates (CMAA, 2008; NCA, 2004; CMAA, 2003; CMAA, 2000; NCA, 2000). Additionally research has shown the number of clubs that have waiting lists is declining, and at those clubs with waiting lists there are fewer member candidates on the list. Lastly candidates on such waiting lists are typically waiting a shorter period of time (CMAA, 2008; CMAA, 2007; Coyne, 2007; Clemenz, Kim, & Weaver, 2006).

One of the most commonly watched statistics of the U. S. economy is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The largest portion of the GDP represents the personal consumption of goods and services nationwide, and these expenses are primarily paid for by one’s personal income (McCulla & Smith, 2007). Economic conditions affect the spending habits of most, especially concerning items such as a club membership, considered by many to be a lifestyle reward.

Purpose of Research

This study examined membership levels of the same private clubs during two different periods of economic decline. Economic data indicate there were two significant economic downturns, 2000-2003 and 2007-2010, in the U.S. economy during the past decade. Within other hospitality sectors, there have been numerous research studies on the impact of these two periods on different industry segments, such as the lodging and restaurants. However there has been limited research conducted in the private club industry and the impacts of those economic events on clubs and its membership levels. Specifically, this study explored the changes clubs experienced with its number of members, waiting lists, and attrition rates between these two economic downturns, each culminating in years’ 2003 and 2010, respectively.

Methodology

An online survey was created and developed through several stages to increase its reliability and validity. The initial survey was sent to outside reviewers to gain their insight and then revised to reflect the feedback received. Next it was piloted tested by new reviewers, as well as the original reviewers, and final revisions were made prior to its usage. The survey was first used in 2005 seeking information about the club's 2003 membership levels. The same questions on the original online survey were used again in the 2010 survey.

A letter was sent via e-mail to the club managers of the same 1,000 private clubs, representative of CMAA, that were sent a letter in the 2003 study conducted by Ferreira and Gustafson (2006). Actual answers, numerical values, and mean scores for both 2003 and 2010 were compared among the clubs. T-test statistics were used to determine if there were any statistically significant similarities or differences between the two time periods.

Results

An overall response rate of 50% was achieved. Managers at 1,000 clubs were sent the survey each year and four-hundred ninety nine (499) responses were received from clubs that answered both surveys regarding membership levels in 2003 and in 2010. The clubs represented diverse geographical locations; an analysis was completed and showed no differences on any of the variables because of its location. Additionally the club types were varied, including country clubs, golf clubs, yacht clubs, city-athletic clubs, and city clubs; the sample is representative of the club industry mix.

Results revealed that all clubs had fewer memberships in 2010 than in 2003. The average difference in number of memberships was 65 memberships when considering all clubs or 8% fewer in 2010 than in 2003. Specifically, at country/golf clubs there were 56 fewer members (7.6%) in 2010 as compared to 2003; and a similar occurrence was seen in city/athletic clubs, experiencing 57 fewer members in 2010 or 5.6% net loss.

The number of clubs reporting they had a waiting list for at least one membership category was significantly lower in 2010 compared to 2003. Thirteen percent of country/golf clubs reported having a waiting list in 2010, which was significantly less than the 32% reported in 2003. Within the category of city/athletic clubs, 6% reported having a waiting list for membership in 2010 compared to 15% in 2003. Additionally, clubs that did not have a waiting list for membership reported a larger number of openings available at their club in 2010 versus in 2003. This trend of more openings is consistent with attrition trends during previous economic downturns (Ferreira, 2003).

Conclusion and Implications for Practitioners

Private club managers and boards of directors must implement standards and benchmarks to insure, at an operational level, the club excels at its core mission, that of providing superior facilities and services to its existing membership. Only top tier operations will be able to continuously attract new members at a rate that is equal to or higher than natural attrition. The downturns in economy, though challenging, have provided an impetus for management to seek member and prospective member feedback, and wherever possible, provide the services, facilities, and amenities they desire. In order to remain fiscally sound, private clubs must adapt to the changing needs, demands, and desires of its customer-base, the members.

During economic downturns, especially the severe 2008-2010 downturn, both country/golf and city/athletic clubs had fewer members, fewer clubs with a waitlist, more members needed to reach a waitlist, and a higher attrition rate. Decisions to join or maintain a club membership are economically driven and usually predicated on a candidate's or member's disposable income level. Therefore, during economic downturns, there are fewer members with the wealth required to be a member at the club. The more severe the downturn, the more clubs are impacted because of decline in disposable income (Ferreira, 1997).

It is expected that clubs will incorporate more assertive membership marketing strategies. Additionally clubs need to create and establish ongoing membership retention strategies to better protect themselves from future fluctuations in the economy. Finally, the leadership of private clubs needs to take a more active role in identifying good candidates for membership and gradually move away from the expectations that current members will be responsible for maintaining a healthy and fiscally secure membership roster.

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Confirming the Game-day Satisfaction Construct A Study of NCAA Game Day Patrons

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Introduction: Statement of the problem

The current project is an effort to expand researchers' knowledge about the overall game day experience at college football games. Namely, it is intended to confirm the results of an earlier study in which a new instrument was developed and tested on tailgaters at a mid-sized school located in the southeastern United States. The previous study indicated that a fans' satisfaction with tailgating also had a statistically significant impact on the same fans' overall game day satisfaction and their future behavioral intentions. However, the previous study had several limitations in regards to the sample used and the nature of the analysis, which was exploratory in nature. The current study addresses both these issues by expanding the sample and making use of confirmatory factor analysis.

Literature Review

Previous researchers have conducted numerous studies focusing on the activities associated with attending a live sporting event in order to measure how the fans' experience affects their overall satisfaction and future behavioral intentions (Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Martin, Howell & O'Neill, 2010; McDonald, Sutton & Milne, 1995). This research has demonstrated several important findings, including (a) that the outcome of the game is not the sole determinant of fan satisfaction (Brady, Voorhess, Cronin & Bourdeau, 2006; Pons, Murali & Nyeck, 2006), (b) that a fan's experience is complex and multi-dimensional (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Martin, Howell & O'Neill, 2010, Theodorakis, et al, 2001) and (c) that the overall fan satisfaction with a sporting event depends on the degree to which it satisfies consumers with quality service (Ko,

Kim, Kim & Lee, 2009). That said, little, if any research has been undertaken to date on the satisfaction construct as it relates to the tailgating experience and its impact on the “game-day” experience and future behavioral intentions.

One previous study, (Townsend, Nemas & O’Neill, 2010) addressed the issue of tailgating, and found a positive and significant relationship between a fans satisfaction with the tailgating experience and their overall game day experience, as well as their future behavioral intentions. In order to measure a fans satisfaction with tailgating, a new measure was developed, with the resulting factor analysis revealing 4 factors that contributed to a consumers’ satisfaction with the tailgating experience. However, their project had several limitations. First and foremost of these was the fact that the sample used consisted of tailgaters from only a single University. This brought into question the application of the results to other venues and Universities where tailgating is a common practice. Additionally, the study itself was exploratory in nature and while statistically significant, lacked further testing beyond a simple factor analysis. The current study seeks to build off the findings of Townsend, Nemas and O’Neill, (2010) by testing their findings in a confirmatory way across more than one University where fans regularly engage in tailgating activities.

Methods and sampling

In order to investigate this issue a replication study was conducted during the 2010 Football season. A twenty-item questionnaire addressing various elements of the typical “game-day experience” was distributed electronically to the fan base of four NCAA schools. The actual survey was distributed via a link that was posted on a popular website where fans of each team congregate. The links led the user to the online survey which was hosted on Survey Monkey. The questionnaire took the form of a direct disconfirmation measure where respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction across all variables on a five point Likert type scale anchored at (1) Highly Dissatisfied through to (5) Highly Satisfied. Additionally, respondents were also asked to rate the extent to which they would return to another home football game and the extent to which they would recommend visitation to others based upon their game day experience. Using the same scale, respondents were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the typical home game day experience. A series of demographic questions were also asked. A total of 1246 usable returns were collected over a three month period.

Analysis

Of the 1246 responses collected, the typical respondent was a Caucasian (97.5%), male (93%), who was employed (86%) and predominantly attended home games (87.7%). Just over 76% of respondents held at least a four year degree and 60% of respondents earned at least \$80K per year. Some 92% of respondents indicated that they tailgated before each game and just over 47% of respondents indicated that they tailgated post game. Almost 92% of respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or highly satisfied with their typical overall home game day experience.

The analysis next turned to the reliability of the scale and to the central research question, namely: would the four factor structure uncovered in the earlier 2010 exploratory study stand up in the present study given the change in respondent and site profile? Looking first at the reliability of the scale, the twenty item scale performed well at $\alpha = .89$. The confirmatory analysis examined the 20 satisfaction variables and four factors revealed in the previous Exploratory Factor Analysis. The proposed four factor model was assessed through the AMOS 18 software package and evaluated using four fit measures: (1) the chi square, (2) the normal fit index (NFI), (3) the comparative fit index (CFI) and (4) the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The results generally supported the proposed model. While the chi-square had a value of 706.87, (df 113, n=1246) $p = <.001$, pointing to the fact that the model did not fit the data, other fit measures were reasonably good. The NFI and CFI are measures of relative fit comparing the theoretical model with the null model. The optimum value of .95 for these indexes, though very close, was not reached; with the NFI value of .90 and the CFI value being .91, indicating moderate goodness of fit across both categories. The RMSEA measures the discrepancy between the sample and population coefficients with a value $<.8$ indicative of a well-fitting model. The RMSEA was .065. The closer to zero the RMSEA the better the model fit, the obtained .065 score indicates a very strong goodness of fit to the model (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). The corresponding reliabilities across all four factors were $\alpha = .81$ for Security (F1), $\alpha = .75$ for Support Services (F2), $\alpha = .73$ for Amenities and $\alpha = .66$ for Comfort. Together these factors accounted for approximately 57% of the total explained variance.

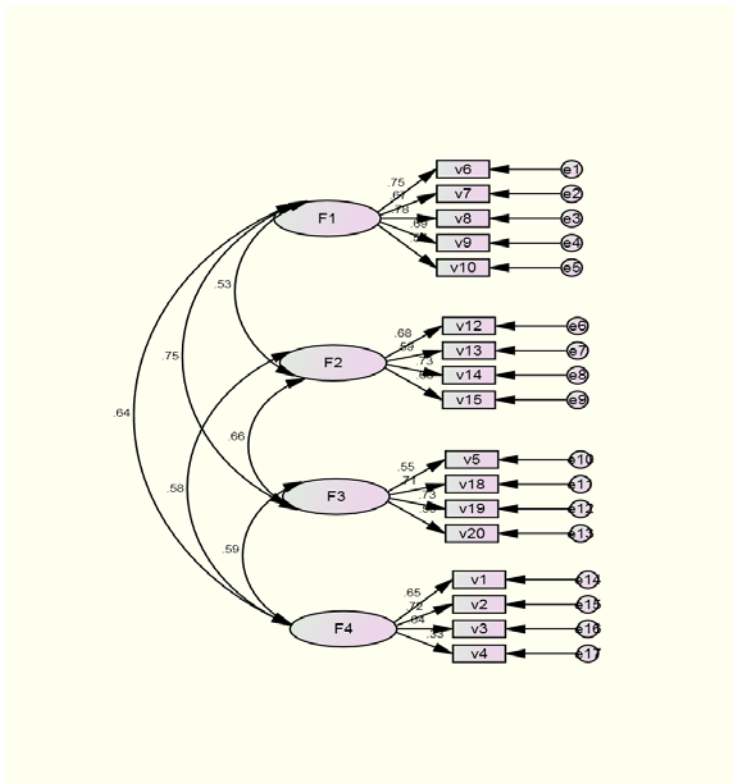
Discussion and conclusions

The current study has addressed the two major limitations of the Townsend, O'Neill and Nemas (2010) study. That is the sample has been increased and diversified to include four different Universities in which tailgating is a common practice and the instrument developed to measure a fans satisfaction with the tailgating experience has been tested utilizing a confirmatory factor analysis (Structured Equation Modeling). While the results of statistical testing were not overwhelming, with only one of the four fit measures achieving the recommend levels, the results do however indicate that further development and testing is necessary in order to a better job of capturing a consumers satisfaction with the tailgating phenomenon. While refinement of scale is needed, the current project presents a solid base upon which changes and adjustments to the measure can be made.

Tailgating has been found to play an important role in a consumers overall game day experience and their future behavioural intentions (Townsend, O'Neill & Nemas, 2010) and despite this finding, little to no research has addressed this issue, especially in regards to the development and testing of a measure that can be effectively used evaluate the tailgating experience. This of concern to Universities and Football programs where tailgating is a major part of their game day atmosphere, especially when one considers the major changes that some Universities have begun to put into place in regards to the rules and regulations surrounding tailgating. In the last 3 years alone, Universities have increasingly begun to regulate the amount of time tailgaters are allowed on campus, the

locations tailgaters are allowed to use for their activities and the prices charged by Universities too tailgaters. This study has continued the process of developing a measure that can be used to measure and better understand the factors that contribute to a fans satisfaction with tailgating and thus their overall satisfaction with the game day experience.

Based on the results of the current study, the authors would recommend that the measure tested here under go further refinement and testing before being used in a wide scale application. Issues with the initial development of the measure may be affecting the overall applicability of the results. In essence, when under development initially, a convenience sample of tailgaters from a single University were used by the researchers, which may explain why the scale did not perform as expected when applied to other settings. The researchers would be well served to evaluate the measure on a question by question basis, as well as conducting more focus group work with a broader, and more diverse audience.



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Commercial Accommodations: Examining the Sources of Lodging Demand

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Introduction

Over a decade ago, Rompf (1998) revealed concerns about the representativeness of aggregated hotel operating indices such as occupancy (OCC), average daily rate (ADR), and revenue per available room (RevPar). Perhaps one of the best-known aggregators of hotel operating statistics today is Smith Travel Research (STR). Their reports are commonplace across the lodging industry; they are purchased and consumed by destination marketing organizations (DMO), management companies, consultants, hotel chains, lenders, and various organizations seeking details on the hotel business. STR has become the primary source of lodging data for DMOs and hotel operators with their product offerings such as trend reports, destination reports, STAR reports, and customizable ad-hoc reports. DMOs are major consumers of these customized reports for their destination. A DMO will typically provide a destination specific report on lodging operating statistics, especially as a benefit of membership. These reports on lodging supply and demand typically come in the form of weekly email blasts, monthly and quarterly reports, and annual reviews to members of the destination's convention and visitor's bureau (CVB) or chamber of commerce.

The specific concerns addressed by Rompf (1998) related to the inclusion and omission of specific types of lodging inventory such as timeshare, vacation rentals, and inns of 20 rooms or less. His time as the former Director of Research for the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, & Tourism revealed differences in lodging inventory censuses prepared by his agency and that prepared by STR. He found discrepancies most prominent in resort destinations that offered a more "diverse composite of physical lodging products" (Rompf, 1998, p. 21). He found that resorts were particularly prone to inventory differences in the two censuses because of the mixed-use lodging developments that comprise resorts include hotel, condo-hotel, vacation rentals, condominiums, and interval ownership (timeshare and fractional). Several years earlier, Rompf (1994) examined efforts to improve classification and

descriptions of lodging facilities as the Director of the Institute for Tourism Research at the University of South Carolina. His cross-tabulations with more descriptive hotel classifications revealed large differences in the operating statistics of properties with more rooms (Rompf, 1994, p. 25). Today, alternatives to the hotel inventory provided by STR are limited.

The DMO understudy for this project currently utilizes a series of customized destination reports supplied by STR to understand lodging supply and demand in the market. The data are customized into meaningful submarkets, developed with a narrative, and shared with DMO member constituents. Media outlets typically quote and cite components of these reports to the public. These reports represent the primary source of information for understanding commercial accommodation supply and demand in the market. Noting the challenges identified by Rompf (1998, 1994), tourism planners and researchers wanted to examine the data sources for the destination of interest. Are these gaps prevalent today and if so, how relevant are these differences?

Review of Literature

A review of commercial accommodation operating statistics' sources is somewhat limited in the literature. The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly published two articles by Paul D. Rompf in 1994 and 1998 related to the subject. As Research Director of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, he identified inconsistencies and concerns regarding the property census maintained by his agency and the one maintained by Smith Travel Research.

More importantly, researchers believe that commercial accommodation types might help travel related organizations understand consumer behavior differences (Aleegre & Juaneda, 2006; Li, Cheng, Kim, & Petrick, 2008). For instance, tourists staying in vacation rentals have a longer length of stay, a larger travel party, and a different motivation for travel than those in traditional hotel rooms (Lau & McKercher, 2004; Lehto, Morrison, & O'Leary, 2001).

Today, industry experts are still frustrated by the shortcomings of the data provided. Not all properties participate with STR and some properties are knowingly excluded such as those properties under 20 rooms. Therefore, tourism planners and researchers must validate their reliance on these reports and search for ways to gain a better understanding of the destination and consumer. According to Anderson (2006), accommodation tax collections, property tax records, STR census data, and STR hotel statistics tell varying stories.

The purpose of this study was to overlay existing sources of accommodation inventory and operating statistics relied upon by tourism planners and accommodation operators to identify and address potential shortcomings and discrepancies related to inventory, demand, and operating statistics. Closing these gaps will improve understanding about consumers, market demand and inventory, and ultimately lead to improved planning.

Methodology

Secondary data were used to investigate; the sources of data included in this study were the monthly accommodation tax receipts from the county of interest, the STR census database for the county, the STR destination reports for the county, and the destination reports generated by the DMO. The researchers believed that the current destination report by the county would not explain the accommodation tax revenue collections for the county of interest. Each report was individually scrutinized and then overlaid on the other source to identify discrepancies. The new STR SHARE Center provided access to most of the required STR data for conducting this study.

Results

The initial source of data used to estimate the commercial accommodation market for the destination of interest was the tax receipts from the county accommodation taxes. The county requires a 2-percent tax be collected on overnight accommodations of less than 90 days. These numbers were provided after making a written request to the county Controller. The dollar amounts were also verified with representatives of the DMO; they have a vested interest in the accommodation tax collections because they provide a significant source of their operating budget. The numbers were aggregated by month and year for a decade. These numbers allowed for an estimate of monthly room revenue by dividing the total accommodation tax revenue collected per month by the 2-percent accommodation tax. Researchers utilized the dollar amounts as a proxy for the value of the commercial accommodation market. Although this number is an accurate number of accommodation tax revenues, it does not address the specific organizations that paid these accommodation taxes. Figure 1 provides the total estimated room revenue for the county in 2010 based upon the accommodation taxes paid to the county of interest (See Figure 1, Tax Receipts).

The second source of data used a customized report from STR that included the operating numbers related to the destination of interest, specifically the county. This report provided supply, demand, and operating statistics such as occupancy, average daily rate, and revenue per available room on a monthly basis for the same period of time. The STR estimate of room revenue for the commercial accommodation market is determined by taking the occupancy and average daily rate of the reporting hotels and multiplying that number times the hotel census data. Thus, those non-reporting properties are assumed to operate at similar occupancy and rates. This overlay showed an underestimation of the total market. Figure 1 provides an estimate of the room revenue as determined by STR (See Figure 1, STR Inferred). This particular overlay attributed the revenue to lodging accommodations on the STR hotel census database. This is an area that Rompf (1998) revealed as problematic in resort locations, and therefore, led to the examination of the STR hotel census itself.

An initial review of the STR hotel census list revealed reporting discrepancies for two of the major resorts in the area. One resort had combined their traditional hotel, condominium hotel, and collection of vacation rentals comprised of condominiums and homes into one reporting property unit for the resort. The other resort was listed as two unique properties: the traditional hotel and a resort encompassing all of the vacation rentals comprised of condominiums and homes. These two elements were problematic because the STR hotel census database was not intended to count homes and condominiums as hotel rooms with the exception of condo-hotels. In addition, the hundreds and perhaps thousands of vacation rental units in the market are excluded for those units not affiliated with the property management group of the two resorts. And finally, the nightly rate on vacation rentals is much higher than most hotel room nights. For example, an 80-room economy hotel generates as much room revenue as a luxury 11-bedroom ocean front house on the beach.

The third set of data used in the analysis removed the inventory in the resort areas. This customized STR report provided supply, demand, and operating statistics such as occupancy, average daily rate, and revenue per available room on a monthly basis for the same period of time but without the problematic inventory numbers from the resort properties. The removal of this inventory certainly lowered the amount of revenue explained by the adjusted hotel census inventory, but it represented the intent of the hotel census—to inventory hotels with twenty or more rooms. However, it went one step further by removing the traditional hotel element of the resort from inventory. Figure 1 provides an estimate of the room revenue without the inventory in question (See Figure 1, STR Adjusted).

The final set of data used in the analysis was a customized STR report created by researchers at the DMO. This report is primarily used to share lodging information with tourism planners, operators, and media. The report also provides benchmark parameters for week-over-week, month-over-month, and year-over-year comparisons. This report was most similar to the county STR report. Interestingly, this was the only report of the four that did not represent the exact geographical area. There were two reasons for this difference. The DMO had already recognized the inability to measure the submarket known as “the beach communities” and therefore excluded properties in this region. The second reason for the geographical area differences is that properties that represent the market lay in neighboring counties and municipalities. Figure 1 provides an estimate of the room revenue with a combined selected area of hotels that report to STR and then infers across the remaining hotel population in the market (See Figure 1, DMO).

Discussion

A monthly comparison of the third set of data (STR Adjusted) and the first set of data (Tax Receipts) from 2001-2010 revealed that relying purely on STR Adjusted data explained up to 88.7% of county Tax Receipt revenue in a slow month such as January (See Figure 2). However, in a busy month such as July, STR Adjusted data only explained 48.7% of the county Tax Receipt revenues. More importantly, there are two distinct patterns. The STR and DMO data show revenue peaks in April and October.

These two months were considered the peak seasons within the community. However, the accommodation tax revenue reveals a peak season that occurs in July. This collection of graphs reveals a major period of demand that is not explained by the STR data or the DMO data. Although presented as an average, the patterns were consistent every year across the entire decade. Several tourism planners and researchers believe that this peak of unexplained revenue is the vacation rental market. This research provides a technique for validating existing reports on hotel operating statistics and identifying any missing markets. Tourism planners should seek to understand the sources of this revenue, particularly those with distinct seasonal patterns. Interestingly, not all destinations reveal an underestimation of tax revenues when utilizing STR data. STR data revealed revenue projections that were higher than those collected in accommodation taxes for other counties not considered resort destinations. Destinations should examine the relationship between overall lodging measures and accommodation tax collections.

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Figure 1. Estimated Room Revenue: 2010

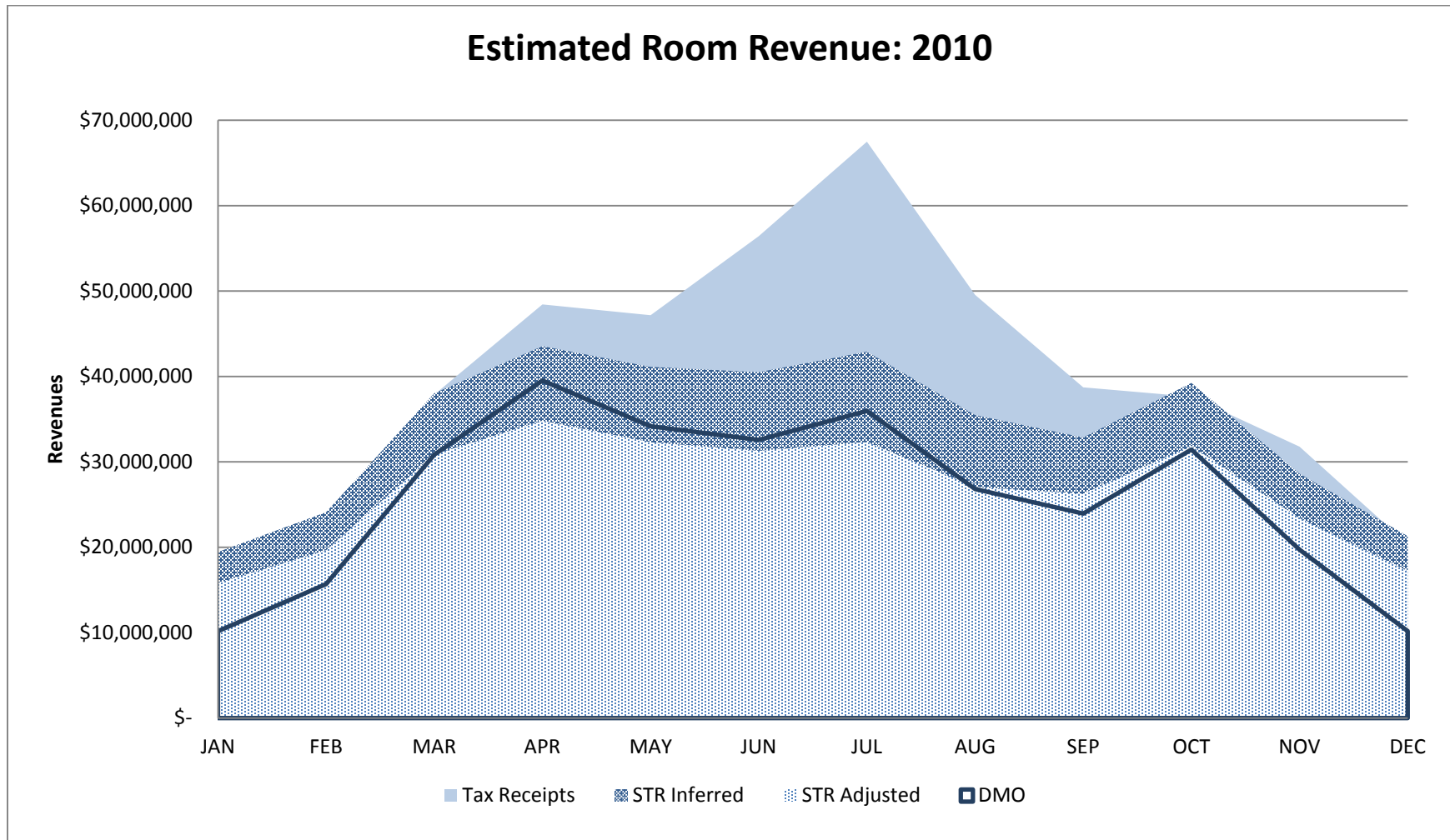
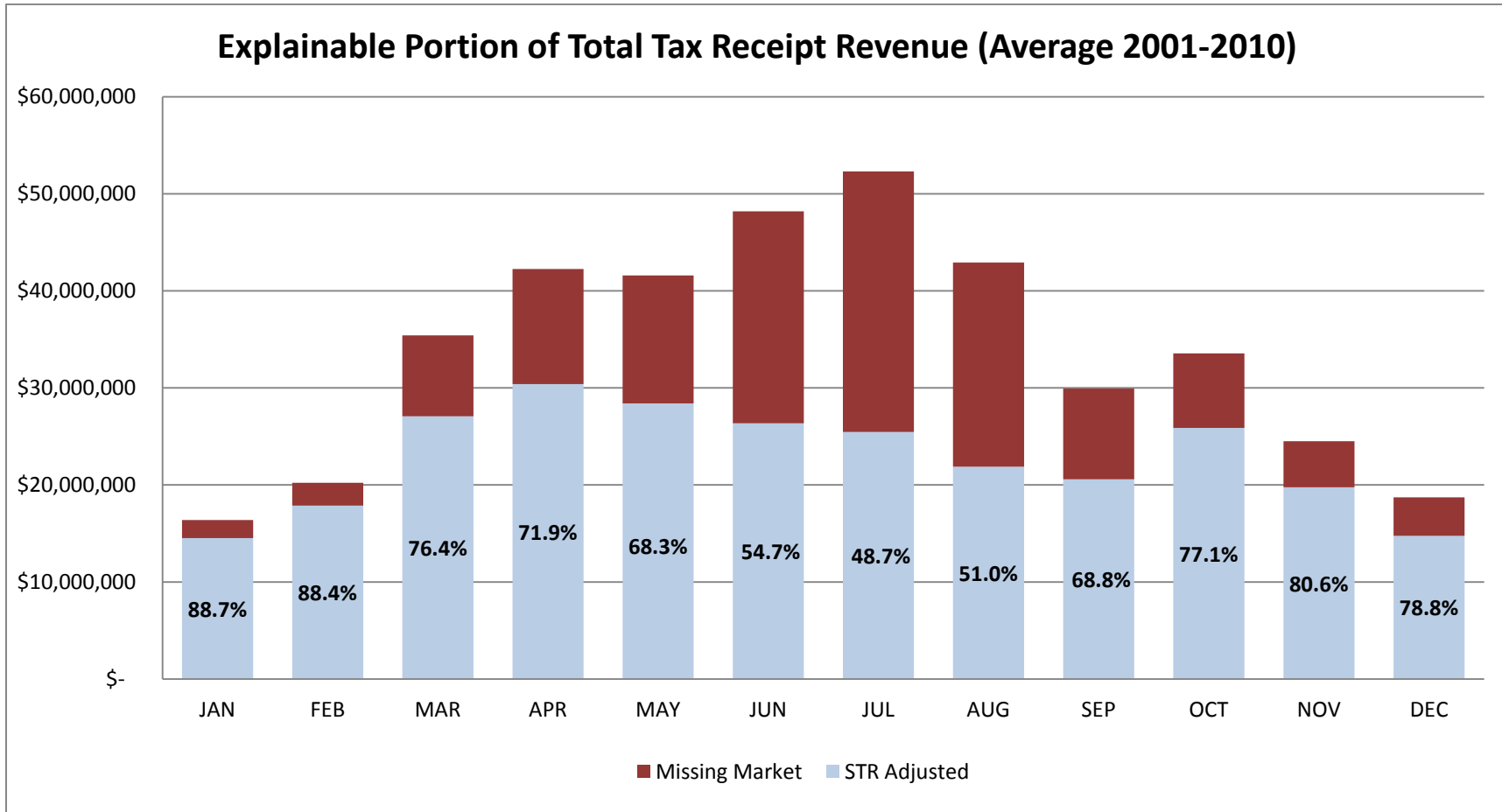


Figure 2. Explainable Portion of Total Tax Receipt Revenue (Average 2001-2010)



The Perceptions of Appearances by Career Fair Recruiters

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Introduction

A primary role for hospitality educators is to teach, mentor, guide, and prepare graduates to enter the workforce. Undeniably one variable that is considered when evaluating a hospitality program's success is the job placement rate of its graduates. Therefore it seems natural that hospitality programs emphasize the importance of the job interview that ultimately leads to the job offer. Being prepared is an important part of the interview process. For example, hospitality students may be encouraged by faculty to research the potential company in which they are interviewing with, prior to the interview. Additionally, mock interviews can be used to help boost confidence and overall interviewing skills. However, no matter the level of preparation on a "cerebral" level, physical appearances, especially initial impressions, will likely influence the way an interviewer perceives a candidate.

Personal presentation attributes such as physical attractiveness and physical appearance, including clothing, have been found to affect perceptions of competence, expertise, trustworthiness, personality, and intellectual capabilities of individuals (Barrick, Swider, & Barrick, 2010; Berry & McArthur, 1986; Johnson & Roach-Higgins, 1987; Lennon & Miller, 1984; Paek, 1986; Peluchette & Karl, 2007; Reed & Blunk, 1990; Sebastian & Bristow, 2008; Stegeman, 2007). An important consideration is that some of these attributes have been found to have significant impact on interviewing and selection of job candidates (Boor, Wartman, & Reuben, 1983; Damhorst & Reed, 1986; Ehlers, 2005; Rucker, Taber, & Harrison, 1981; Forsythe, Drake, & Cox, 1988; Pingitore, Dugoni, Tindale, & Spring, 1994; Ruetzler, Taylor, Reynolds, & Baker, 2011; Snyder, Berscheid, & Matwychuk, 1988). In fact, research has indicated that the first impression a candidate conveys is even more important in the selection process than the resume (Ehlers, 2005).

More recently, the trend of purposeful body modification (tattoos and piercings) have been linked to negative perceptions of individuals (Forbes, 2001; Resenhoft, Villa, & Wiseman, 2008; Swami and Furnham, 2007). In their review of interview trends since the 1970's, Posthuma, Morgeson & Campion (2002) concluded that appearance factors

that are positively controlled by the applicant such as “grooming, clothing, adornments, eyeglasses, and weight” (p. 23) will lead to a more favorable impression of the candidate. Therefore, one thing for hospitality students to consider is how their appearance in the interview will impact their ability to secure a job offer.

Over the years it seems that trends in clothing, body art, and various other physical attributes seem to have changed considerably. While some of these trends may be more readily acceptable in society, the question we are seeking to answer is how these may influence the interviewer who ultimately determines what candidates will receive a job offer? With the continued economic crises and the recent unemployment rate at a high 9.8% (United States Department of Labor, 2010), this is a key issue for consideration by students and the faculty that mentor them. A related concern is determining exactly what physical attributes are the most influential. That is exactly what this study aimed to begin clarifying.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to begin exploring how influential certain physical attributes were when determining whether or not a career fair recruiter would call a candidate for a job interview. Career fairs provide a “safe place” for employment seekers and company recruiters to exchange information before committing to the “next step” of the process. The complete study also looked at the influential nature of personality traits and the resume and its contents; however, the results of those sections are still being analyzed.

Methodology

Subjects

The study took place during a specialized school career fair that is dedicated to programs in applied sciences including hospitality management. The participants for the study were all the career fair recruiters present at the event. All participants in the study were over the age of 18 years. Some companies had more than one representative and if that was the case, each representative was asked to complete the survey.

Instrument

The survey included three sections: Appearances, Personal Skills, and Resume; however for the purpose of this abstract, only the results of the Appearances section are being discussed. In Appearances, there were 10 statements developed from the review of the literature. Recruiters were asked to rate on a Likert scale of 1-7 with how “influential” each item was with “1” being non-influential and “7” being highly influential. This section included items based on tattoos, piercings, overall grooming, facial hair, physical attractiveness, make-up, professional dress, conservative dress, and attire colors. Specific statements asked of the participants can be reviewed in Table 1 in the results section. Items are listed in the table below. Additionally, demographic information was collected

including official title and specific area of industry, years of industry experience, age, gender, and educational level.

Data Collection Process

The survey was created on Survey Monkey so that it could also be sent out to the recruiters of companies who were not able to attend the career fair on this date (the data in this study does not include their responses). The survey was then printed and hard-copied so that it could be handed out during the career fair to recruiters. A faculty researcher and graduate research assistant distributed the surveys during the morning set-up period. Recruiters were asked to complete the survey during the “down” periods of the career fair and then turn them in to a drop box that was left on the registration/refreshment table. Throughout the 4 hours of the fair, the researchers gently reminded the recruiters that their feedback would be invaluable to the development of the students and the professors who mentor them. The surveys were very well received.

Results and Discussion

Out of 50 recruiters that were asked to participate, a total of 46 responded. Of the participants, 44 completed the gender question with a fairly even split of 24 females and 20 males. All but one of the participants disclosed their age range. The most common age range was 38-42 represented by 11 participants. Additionally there were 7 individuals in both the 23-27 and the 28-32 age groups. The remaining age groups were as follows: 18-22(1), 33-37(4) 43-47(4), 48-52(4), 53-57(2) and 58-56(3). An overview of the overall survey results by sample size, mean, and standard deviation can be found in the table below.

Table 1.

Appearance Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
They have no visible tattoos	46	5.54	1.77
They have no visible facial/tongue piercings	45	6.26	1.59
Males have no visible earrings	44	4.94	2.23
Hair is neatly groomed	45	6.13	1.52
Males are clean shaven	45	5.48	1.95
Women are wearing conservative make-up	45	4.76	1.86
Their overall attractiveness	45	3.49	1.80
They are dressed professionally	45	4.71	1.91
They are dressed conservatively	45	4.44	1.80
They are wearing traditional colors	45	3.80	1.88

To begin examining any differences that existed in recruiters’ perceptions of the influence of appearance characteristics, SPSS 17 was used to perform ANOVA testing on demographic variables. The first significant result was that males and females viewed

“Women are wearing conservative make-up” differently, $F(1, 42) = 5.02, p < .03$ at $\alpha = .05$. Men were less influenced by make-up when considering the professional appearance of applicants than females. This result was not overly surprising as men may not be as knowledgeable on levels of conservativeness when it comes to make-up application as their female counterparts. The age of the recruiter affected the perceptions of the statement “Males have no visible ear piercings”, $F(8, 36) = 5.03, p < .001$ at $\alpha = .05$. The age group from 48 - 52 were significantly less than all of the other groups on this factor. Based on the results the 48-52 age group was more conservative on males having ear piercings than those both older and younger.

Clearly this is a limited study as there is a small sample size and results are just beginning to be analyzed in all areas of the survey. Ideally the results of this pilot will be used to improve the instrument and then be applied to a larger sample, possibly during the spring SECHRIE in Atlanta in conjunction with the career fair hosted by Georgia State. The importance of such a study is to understand how recruiters are influenced by appearance and also the resume and personality traits, which still need to be analyzed.

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The Impact of Restaurant Nutrition Labeling Providing Calorie Information On Consumer Behaviors

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Background

Obesity has increased greatly in the last 25 years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), while studies have shown that Americans are spending almost twice the amount of money on food outside the home than they did forty years ago (National Restaurant Association, 2009). In recent years, restaurant nutrition labeling has received considerable media and industry attention. In December 2006, New York City became the first city in the United States to pass a law requiring chain restaurants to post calorie information on their menus (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2009). Then in March 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which contains in Section 403(q)(5) the clause that restaurant chains operating under the same name with 20 or more locations have to disclose calorie information at the restaurant's point of purchase (Grossman, 2010).

Some individuals in science and policy-making communities believe that consumers select unhealthy food options when nutritional information is not provided on restaurant menus due to a lack of awareness of the caloric content of the menu items. To further complicate the issue, today there are differences in opinions and policies at state and federal level regarding the amount of nutritional information needed on restaurant menus.

Review of Literature

In general, the main objective regarding discussion of restaurant nutrition labeling policies is to encourage individuals to make healthier choices when eating out. However, research is lacking and findings vary regarding whether nutrition labeling results in accomplishing this objective. One of the early studies on nutrition labeling tested to see if patrons were influenced by healthy claims posted on menu items that were low in fat or cholesterol. This study found a significant increase in sales of entrees (18-40%) that contained a heart symbol compared to the pre-test period (Albright, Flora, & Fortmann, 1990). However, much of the research on restaurant nutrition labeling has occurred after 2006 when debate and action regarding restaurant nutrition labeling escalated. A study conducted after nutritional information had been required in New York City restaurants

found that 51% of respondents claimed they would no longer purchase certain items because they were shocked by the calorie content of the menu items. Eighty-nine percent of respondents said they were surprised by how much they underestimated the calorie content of menu items, while 82% who ordered at restaurants where calorie information was posted said it influenced their decision and impacted what they ordered (Technomic, 2009). A study by Burton, Howlett, and Tangari (2009) of 155 college undergraduates at New York University found they underestimated what they thought the calorie, fat, and sodium content would be in restaurant menu purchases. Further analysis of the data showed that meals containing over 1,000 calories had the largest underestimation of caloric content. After participants saw the nutritional information, their intention to purchase higher calorie meals fell more than their intention to purchase lower calorie meals (Burton, Howlett, & Tangari, 2009).

Bleich and Pollack's study (2010) discovered that the majority of participants knew how many calories active adults should get a day but fewer knew how many calories inactive adults should get. Half of the participants responded that they would be more likely to eat at restaurants with calorie information posted. Similarly, a focus group study examined consumer reaction to restaurant menus that contained health icons or nutritional information (Jones, 2009). Participants were asked to pick their top three menu options, resulting in participants choosing healthier options when they saw the amount of calories, fat grams, grams of fiber, and sodium present in each menu item. Chu, Frongillo, Jones, and Kaye (2009) focused their research on food sales from a university cafeteria before, during, and after nutritional information was posted for a two week period to determine if consumers purchased meals with lower calorie content when nutrition labels were posted and if consumers continued to buy lower calorie meals after the nutritional information was removed. Entrees that had the highest calorie content were purchased less during the treatment phase compared to pre- and post-treatment, while revenue per entree during all three phases turned out to be the same. Pulos and Leng (2010) conducted research after nutritional information was posted in Pierce County, Washington; about 71% of patrons noticed the calorie information, 80% looked at the information, and 96% believed they understood the information when identifying healthy menu entrees. However, only 59% of the participants reported using the information to influence their purchasing behavior.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine questions often debated regarding nutrition labeling policies for restaurant menus. While there are a multitude of questions on this issue, for the purpose of this study, the following three questions were analyzed:

1. Is there a difference in choice of menu items by participants who view a restaurant menu with calories listed and those who view a restaurant menu without calories provided?
2. Does age of participants affect respondents menu choice when selecting from a caloric or non caloric menu?

3. Is there a difference in the calorie level of menu items chosen by participants from a caloric or non caloric menu when compared to their response regarding whether they would choose healthier menu items when provided calories on the menu?

Methods

This study utilized a simulated real-world approach not found in previous literature for determining if restaurant nutritional information affects purchase behavior. The study included two experimental groups with each participant receiving a six-question survey utilizing Likert-type questions or questions requesting yes and no answers, along with one of two menus. One menu displayed nutritional information in the form of calories beside the item; whereas, the other contained the menu without calories. Prior to the study, the calorie content for each entree was determined using Diet Analysis plus 9 (9th edition). The menus contained identical entrees: chef salad, crispy chicken salad, fried fish sandwich, grilled chicken sandwich, crispy chicken sandwich, hamburger, and bacon cheeseburger. For sandwich entrees, the menu included a choice of small fries, medium fries, or no side item; for salad entrees, a choice of fat free ranch dressing, ranch dressing, or no dressing. The combinations of entrees and choice of sides or dressings resulted in a total of 21 different menu choices. After completing the survey, each participant was provided either the caloric or non caloric menu and asked to select their first and second choice of entree they would select if that specific menu was presented to them at a restaurant. Menu prices were not included since it was not a variable for this study and the researchers did not want price to influence participant's purchase behavior.

The subjects that participated in this study were a representative sample of a major city with a population of 295,000 people. The collection of data began in June 2010 and ended in August 2011 after a sample size of around 300 was reached; approximately 150 participants per menu. A high pedestrian street corner in the downtown area of the city was chosen that did not favor any race, ethnicity, age, or gender. To randomize the participants, the researcher continually rotated clockwise beginning east and asking the first person coming toward him to participate in the study and if they did, he rotated to the south seeking the next participant, then to the west, and then to the north. The researcher informed the participants he was a graduate student from the University and was collecting data for his thesis. They received a consent form to sign, then the survey questions and menu. As individuals agreed to participate in the study, the two menus were rotated to every other person.

Results

A total of 302 individuals 18 years of age or older were recruited for this study. One hundred fifty four participants responded to the caloric menu and 148 participants viewed the menu without calories. A request for participants' age was optional in order

to meet the University's IRB. However, about one-third of the participants provided their age: 56 were 29 years old or younger, 22 were 30-49 years old, and 25 were 50 years of age or older. Chi-square tests were run to answer this study's three research questions. The analysis included dividing the 21 menu items into four categories based on calorie content: 1) 500 calories or less, 2) 501-700 calories, 3) 701-900 calories, and 4) 901 calories or greater. Chi-square test found no significant difference in the caloric level of the menus between participants who viewed the menu with calories listed compared to those who viewed the menu without calories listed (n=302; p=0.5711). When age was factored in using the three age categories listed above, no significant difference was indicated by those who viewed the caloric menu (n=154; p=.9873), but a significant difference in the respondent's menu choice by caloric level was found by age when no calories were listed (n=148; p=0.0093). Lastly, when comparing participants who had stated in the survey that they would make healthier selections when nutritional information (i.e., calories) is provided on menus, no significant difference was found in the caloric level of the menus chosen by the two groups (n=239; p=0.1233).

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that providing calorie content for menu items did not result in individuals choosing lower calorie menu items when compared to individuals offered the same menu without calorie information. Yet, when age was factored and there were no calories listed on the menu, the youngest age group (29 years old or younger) chose higher caloric meals than the two older age groups. This is in contrast to Roberto, Larsen, Agnew, Baik, and Brownell's study (2010) of 295 individuals that found a significant difference in total calories between no calorie menus and calorie menus. However, when Roberto et al.'s study compared calories consumed at or after the meal with the "test" meal, they found no significance difference between the two groups. However, a recent study by Finkelstein, Strombotne, Chan, and Krieger (2011) that examined consumer's purchasing behavior at a Mexican fast food restaurant in King County, WA before and after nutrition labeling was implemented showed that consumers made no changes after the law was passed and nutritional information had been posted at the point of purchase. Further, in support of this study, a 2008 study in New York at four fast food restaurants (McDonalds, Wendy's, KFC, and Burger King) found no significant difference in amount of calories chosen by adolescents after nutrition labeling had gone into effect when compared to a similar restaurant in New Jersey that had not implemented menu labeling (Elbel, Gyamfi, & Kersh, 2011). In addition, Chu, Frongillo, Jones, and Kaye's study (2009) suggests that consumer behavior after familiarity with nutritional information reverts to former ways.

Summary

Research findings vary regarding the impact on consumer behavior of nutrition menu labeling in restaurants. Similar to this study, most research analyzes calories; however, findings are mixed regarding its affect on decreasing the caloric level of restaurant food purchases. The cost for chain restaurant owners to convert their menus to nutrition-labeled menus is quite high. Due to the variation in research findings on this

topic, more research is warranted. In an attempt to study actual consumer behavior, in-store research before and after menu labeling with comparison to control restaurants that are similar in demographic and revenue characteristics would be the most beneficial.

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Identifying Critical Success Factors in Alabama Wine Tourism: A Case Study of the Providers

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Introduction

Wine tourism is a fairly new phenomenon, tied closely to the increase in wine consumption in developing and developed countries in many different parts of the world (Williams, 2001). Wine tourism, a form of alternative tourism, is the visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine shows for which the main purpose is wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a wine region (Hall, Cambourne, Macionis, & Johnson, 1997). The secondary and tertiary motivations can range from socializing, relaxation, learning about wine, being entertained and travelling in a rural setting (Getz & Brown, 2006). Wine tourism is the culmination of a number of unique experiences: the ambiance, landscape, surrounding social environment, regional culture and cuisine, local wine styles, and variety of unique leisure activities. A small industry has developed in Alabama, catering to tourists who want to taste wines, tour vineyards, and experience the production processes first hand.

Literature Review

Wine tourism has the ability to help develop regional economies as well as add dramatic depth to rural economies (Alonso & Liu, 2010). There has been an acceleration of interest in the recent past among rural farm operators and economic development agencies to use tourism as a vehicle for generating business opportunities and additional revenues (Williams, 2001). Two hospitality industry areas that have been the focus of considerable national and regional government attention because of their income generating capacities and economic development potential are the wine and tourism industries (Hall, Cambourne, Macionis, & Johnson, 1997; Hall & Johnson, 1997; Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009). For small and new wineries, ongoing visitation offers a strategy that may help to overcome barriers generated by increasing market consolidation in this globalizing industry as well as economic issues. Tourism holds many advantages for individual wineries, including increasing sales and customer knowledge, building relationships and brand loyalty, and selling directly to the public where profits are higher (Houghton, 2001). Wine tourists occupy a broad range of demographics, as well as an equally broad range of wine knowledge “backgrounds.” Because of this, there are many different factors that drive potential wine tourists when they select a wine tourism destination. When looking for a wine region to visit some wine tourists will likely consider the ability to purchase wines and learn about wine and the winemaking process,

whereas other tourists may consider physical design of the winery, location, cost, and world perception of the region (Getz, 2000).

Methodology

As the number of wine regions competing for wine tourists continues to expand, so does the need to be clearly and uniquely positioned in the minds of the potential visitor. Therefore, this paper tries to find what key factors are contributing to Alabama wineries' profitability and success in this market that is seemingly unwelcoming to such an industry. The study narrates Alabama wineries in the form of a case study to gain an in depth understanding of their business model, strategic plan, organizational structure, and marketing procedures. To begin the study the researcher performed an in-depth literature review, focusing specifically on the topics of wine tourism's benefits and issues, the providers of wine tourism, wine tourism regions, and wine tourism consumers. This literature review was used later in the study as a tool to help develop questions for interviews. In order to identify wineries that are interested in the study, the researcher contacted the Alabama Wineries and Grape Growers Association to obtain a list of wineries that hold membership in their association. Then, the researcher performed in-depth, unstructured interviews of winery representatives who agreed to be interviewed. While on site for interviews the researcher kept a log book to record data about surrounding areas, accessibility, product offerings, and anything else that provided differentiation. Next, the researcher transferred the information gathered from both personal observations on site and interview responses into code that can be grouped and reduced into common themes in Alabama wineries. The researcher focused on common constructs, themes, and patterns that are shared by all of the wineries involved in the case study.

Results

Although eleven Alabama wineries were contacted about their potential participation only two establishments were able to participate through interviews and a site survey within the timing of the study. The two participating wineries were Morgan Creek Vineyards in Harpersville, Alabama, and White Oak Vineyards in Anniston, Alabama. Morgan Creek Vineyards in Harpersville was opened in 2000 to the public on the front lawn of the proprietor's house. White Oak Vineyards in Anniston, Alabama opened its doors to the public in 2004 though the construction and cultivation process began in 1998 with the purchase of the land.

For the discussion of results information from the interviews as well as the log-book kept for notes during the site visits, findings are broken down into the important aspects of; operations, access, product, place, legal, and cooperation. These aspects of the winery are clearly important to success, and this is reflected by their repeated presence in the interviews. The first groupings of information were similarities, or near likenesses, that the wineries shared while the second section was focusing on the differences.

Beginning with product, there are many similarities among these two Alabama Wineries. Both establishments, by tracking their sales trends, have realized that their best-selling wines are classic sweet muscadine wines, a grape indigenous to the southeastern United States. Additional product offerings are also somewhat similar with both wineries displaying a variety of wine related items such as openers, chillers, glasses, and storage devices. Also offered were a wide range of jellies and jams, honeys, and grape seed oils. Moving on to access, as mentioned previously in this section both wineries are located relatively close to Alabama's largest city of Birmingham. This is no doubt a key to success as their location relative to a large population center is important.

In terms of "place" there are serious differences between the wineries. Morgan Creek's vines were first planted in the front yard of the proprietor's home and the winery was added to the same property. This was done without consideration *specifically* to growing conditions. In the case of White Oak Mr. Wilson spent much time looking for the future site of his vineyard before finally selecting the location in Anniston mostly because it was a never farmed forest with sufficiently thick topsoil and because of the elevation at nearly 1000'. Alternative rural attractions are also important to consider as they can create a flow of tourists between each other. Near Morgan Creek there are quite a few other rural attractions including Miller's Cheese House, Desoto Caverns, The Grist Mill, and Deborah Stone's High End Cheese. Closer to White Oak there are attractions such as Mt. Cheaha, multiple cheese makers and dairy farms. Cooperation is something that is mentioned in the literature as a success factor for small or new wineries. Cooperation can be in the form of wine trails, restaurant partnerships or wine associations. In Alabama currently there is a Grape Growers and Wine Makers association, but the wineries that were surveyed expressed displeasure on not having an association specifically geared towards commercial wine making.

Morgan Creek winery is a part of the Alabama Wine Trail, a group of cooperating wineries that seek to make Alabama's wineries more visible to the public. White Oak was a former part of the wine trail but had to part ways with the organization when it became, in Mr. Wilson's words, "more about politics than the health of the wineries." After getting to take an in-depth look at the operations, products, access, place, legal dealings, and cooperation with other wineries of Morgan Creek Winery and White Oak Vineyards it is clear that Alabama's wine tourism industry is just in its infancy. Alabama's wineries are not currently in a position to compete on a worldwide, or even nationwide, scale as they lack the majority of factors the literature points to as developmental requirements.

Discussion

Agriculture has played an important role in the development of Alabama's economy for hundreds of years, and winemaking has been a part of traditional farm lifestyle for a similar duration but only recently have establishments been opened with the specific purpose of drawing in tourists and expanding the brand name. Diversification of rural economies is very important for lasting success. As Alabama's winemakers progress in their ability to produce, market and distribute their products, and

as they experiment with “worldwide” products there will be an increase in winery visitation, rural employment, and beverage education. This process will not happen overnight as there are many hurdles to be cleared along the way including customer education, product offerings, and legal issues. Industry groups like the Alabama Wineries and Grape Growers Association can help accelerate this process through a variety of ways, and future research should focus on their current stance as well as what industry bodies in other regions have had success implementing.

Limitations

Specific limitations of this research are evident in the number of participating wineries. While many wineries were solicited to participate only two were able to schedule and participate in an interview within the time frame of the study. Because of this small level of participation the generalizability of the results are limited. In addition, because Alabama’s wine tourism industry is in such an early phase of its development it is unlikely that the results will directly translate to other more developed regions.

Although multiple attempts were made at gathering flawless data, the method of an in depth unstructured interview in cooperation with general observation has flaws in itself. The method of unstructured interviews was selected because of the depth of data that could be extracted. Allowing the respondents to expose other issues was deemed valuable to this and future studies. Through observation a researcher can potentially change the way that normal operation occurs, simply by being present. Interview questions can be misleading, providing the wrong impetus to the interview subject, or the absence of specific structure can lead to an overabundance of unimportant data that will only make the analysis more difficult.

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The Training Needs of Bed and Breakfast Operators

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Introduction

According to the Professional Association of Innkeepers International (PAII, 2011), a global organization of approximately 3,000 bed and breakfast (B & B) operators, an estimated 17,000 B & B lodging operations operated in the United States in 2011 that possess between 4 and 11 guest rooms, with 6 on average. Although one might think of B & Bs as being situated primarily in country settings, they are in fact located in varied settings, including 43% in village venues, 29% in rural locations, 23% in urban areas, and 5% in suburban locales (PAII, 2011). According to PAII (2011), 79 % of B & B owners live on the property, the average occupancy rate is 43.7%, and the industry is influenced by economic, technological, social, and political forces.

As this segment of the lodging industry has grown, so has the number of research studies focused on this group of operators, with much of the research centered on human resources issues faced (Harris, McIntosh, & Lewis, 2007; Hsieh, 2010; Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Vallen & Rande, 2002;) and marketing strategies used by B & B owners and operators (Kline, Morrison, & St. John, 2004; Lee, Reynolds, & Kennon, 2003). However, while B & B operators are primarily entrepreneurs, little research has focused on the training requirements of bed and breakfast operators and therefore, for this study the authors investigated those needs via a pilot study. This pilot work identified current training needs, suggested areas of future research, and made recommendations to B&B operators to help improve their business processes.

Background

In terms of issues related to human resources, Vallen and Rande (2002) studied psychological challenges facing B & B operators and found that while they felt personally rewarded they also experienced a moderate amount of emotional exhaustion. Other researchers found that B & B operators considered their work-life balance to be of great importance and the fact that a B & B is a home as well as a business makes it unique (Harris, McIntosh, & Lewis, 2007). Meanwhile Domenico and Lynch (2007) found that B & Bs embody the idea of the “commercial home” with guest rooms that are more home like than those of a hotel and that this overlap between public and private

domains in B & Bs leads to a complex interplay between host and guest and public and private. Hsieh (2010) found that while there is the interplay between personal and professional lives, most B & B operators found that these blurred lines between work-life balance were seen as enhancements to life rather than intrusions.

According to a study by Lee, Reynolds, and Kennon (2003), marketing is a major focus of small business operators including those running B & Bs and their successful marketing strategies include brochures, newspaper advertisements, guidebooks, directories, and reservation services. However, the most effective strategy employed by B&B operators appears to be word-of-mouth advertising (Lee, Reynolds, & Kennon, 2003; Lubetkin, 1999) and e-marketing, particularly as website development has become a significant tool for B&B marketing (Kline, Morrison, & St. John, 2004). As a result, studies identifying customer satisfaction with B&B websites and overall quality of B&B websites have been conducted (Jeong, 2004; Kline, Morrison, & St. John, 2005), with Jeong (2004) mentioning the need for an effective website and Kline, Morrison, and St. John (2005) noting the need for improved marketing effectiveness with regard to B & B websites in their sample. However, Hudson and Gilbert (2007) noted in another study that although B & B operators used the web as a low-cost marketing tool that they felt was good for exposure, they worried about the security of the internet.

While several researchers have focused on the marketing strategies of B& B operators, few have concentrated specifically on the training or educational needs of this segment of the lodging industry. Two studies exploring the training needs of B & B operators found that they desire training that focuses on marketing information, including Lynch's study of 41 B & B operators in Edinburgh and Rogerson's work involving 44 Black B & B operators in South Africa (Lynch, 1994; Rogerson, 2004). In Lynch's study, conducted almost two decades ago under the premise that B & B operators did not really perceive the relevance of formalized training and development programs, he determined that these small business owners and operators believed that running their businesses was a "hands-on", learning by doing experience and they could use help with training in bookkeeping, marketing, customer care, and food costing. Rogerson (2004) found that the B & B operators he interviewed felt a lack of knowledge about marketing and the tourism industry in general.

Purpose of the Study

The current exploratory study followed Lynch's (1994) work with its focus on acquiring an updated determination of the training needs of B & B operators. The research questions were the following:

1. What training programs do B & Bs currently offer?
2. What are the training needs of B & B operators?
3. Through what methods would B& B operators like to receive training?

Methods

Participants for this study included B&B operators associated with a quality assurance association specific to Inns and Bed and Breakfast establishments in the United States. The association has close to 400 members. Of these 400 members 54 completed the survey, providing a response rate of approximately 13.5%. The instrument was developed for this project through a literature review and included ten items, six assessed the training needs of these B&B operators and four items identified demographic factors, such as location, number of employees at the establishment, and position at the establishment. The instrument was reviewed by academicians and industry professionals. Feedback was shared and changes were made related to readability and clarity. The feedback provided by these individuals was used to revise the instrument and provided content validity for the instrument.

Results

Respondents operated B & B related businesses throughout the continental United States. Forty-three percent of the respondents were located within the state of North Carolina and 57% were located outside of the state, from Oregon to Vermont, to Puerto Rico and New Hampshire. Many of the respondents identified their jobs in the industry as being diverse and all encompassing. For the purpose of the study, four categories were used; department head, owner/co-owner, innkeeper/general manager, and executive. The results included 11% were categorized as department head, 13% were categorized as owner/co-owner, 62% were categorized as innkeeper/general manager, 13% were categorized as executive, and 1% did not respond to this item.

Current training sessions offered varied, with no one item receiving a large number of responses. Mentoring (with 11 responses) and service delivery (with 9 responses) received the most attention, with the other category, including training for internships also receiving consideration. Responses regarding the training programs needed by those who operate B & Bs varied, with marketing and management receiving the most responses. Very few respondents (12) indicated that they used outside training sources, one noting that few certificates and programs were available, while others said that they attended workshops or sessions perhaps once a year.

Discussion and Implications

The major finding from this pilot study concerns the need for training. Kline, Morrison, and St. John (2005) noted the need for marketing development and six years later operators still feel this is a need that has not been addressed by professional organizations or community partnerships. Therefore, there appears to be a need for training in marketing and management among B&B operators. One possible reason for this finding may be that these operators have a lack of knowledge about marketing in general, as noted by Rogerson (2004). It is possible that B&B operators are conducting marketing practices more than they realize, yet they do not report them as such because without a general understanding of marketing principles these operators are not aware of true marketing activities. The results from this study support this notion in that many respondents reported using their websites, direct information, and brochures to sell the

property; yet those sampled cited training in the area of marketing as their number one training need.

Further Research

This pilot study was limited by its small scope in terms of numbers of respondents. It may be that a more representative sample would provide researchers with different conclusions in terms of the training needs of B & B operators. This study was of a very small number of B & B operators so that the results cannot be generalized to B & B operators as a whole. A larger survey and perhaps the use of more in-depth methods such as focus groups and interviews with B & B operators might offer further evidence of the needs these unique operators have for training.

One avenue for future research would be to develop, deliver, and evaluate the training needed by B&B operators. This could be a collaborative project between B&B operators, academicians, and community development professionals. Benefits of this kind of project could include the new knowledge of marketing concepts as well as resulting products from collaborative efforts. A format for sharing best practices, access to resources, and cost-efficient practices could be developed and delivered.

Conclusions

This study provided a brief look at the training needs of B & B owners in the United States. Results indicate that there is much variety in terms of the needs of these small business operators/owners; however training in marketing and management appear to be areas of concern expressed among the B&B operators in this pilot study. Although suggestions were made to B & B operators for organizations to contact to find training support, there is still a need to develop and deliver this training. These training programs, if developed and delivered, may assist B & B operators in promoting who they are and what they do to more effectively market and manage these unique and often owner-operator lodging properties.

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