Family Tourism: Past, present, and opportunities

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Abstract

This study provides a content analysis of the existing family tourism literature, and discusses future opportunities in this domain of research. It aims at providing a better understanding of the research topics, theoretical thrusts, methodological approaches and the evolving patterns. One hundred and fifty-nine studies related to family tourism were gathered and analyzed during content analysis. The results reveal that family tourism is a well-defined field; however, this domain of research is in need of improved depth and scope, creating numerous research opportunities.

Introduction

Although its definition can vary among disciplines, cultures, and times, family is commonly understood as "two or more persons living together and related by blood, marriage, or adoption" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The contemporary families travel and so experience providers respond with family centric programs and activities. For example, the city of Charleston presents "Family Day at Marion Square" as a tradition of its annual Piccolo Spoleto festival (Dibeela, 2018; Piccolo Spoleto Festival, n.d.). Science Centre Ontario provides a permanent exhibit called KidSpark for children under eight (Ontario Science Center, n.d.). The Children's Museum of Indianapolis envisions to be the global leader among all museums in serving children and families (CHILDREN'S MUSEUM INDIANAPOLIS, n.d.). It is estimated that family tourism accounts for a third of the world's leisure travel, and this will remain true in the future (Morrison, Lehto, & Day, 2018). Take the US for example, where research shows that there is much interest from families to go on family vacations (88%), and that shorter vacations appear to be the most common with summer being the peak traveling season for this traveler market, according to a national survey conducted by New York University (NYU) and the Family Travel Association (Minnaert, 2017). Theme parks, beach vacations, and family road trips remain the most preferred family vacation types, although cruises and all-inclusive resorts are among the favorite choices for the future. In the same survey, however, family tourists' evaluations of how well the travel industry has accommodated their needs are underwhelming. Some of the underperforming areas include affordability, and the quality of packaged options, accommodations for large families, online assistance, and travel assistance for families with special needs (young or old). The classic image of a traveling family has always been full of cheerfulness and optimism as one envisions the picture of happy parents with a few boisterous children in tow. However, not all elements of family travel are as rosy.

Traveling with infants or toddlers, for example, means lap seats on the plane. When young children are on the road, there are a lot more details that parents need to plan for and manage. The NYU study attests to the promise of this travel market and also points to unaddressed traveler needs and research opportunities in this area.

Family tourism commands our attention for a number of reasons. The sheer market size of this traveling population is reason number one. The prevalence of this form of travel makes it by default an important area for researchers to investigate. A second rationale is that family travel involves small group dynamics that possess unique characteristics and exhibit needs that are differentiated from other types of travel companionship. Knowledge of the specific needs and tendencies of family travelers can inform family tourism practitioners, allowing them to act upon research insights in their offerings, and thereby better serve this consumer segment. A third reason is that the concept of family itself is continuously evolving. In addition to the classic nuclear families of two parents with children, various other forms of family have taken shape, resulting in more varieties of family travel composition. The changing family structure must command our continuous attention. Furthermore, in the context of today's increasing digitalization of all facets of life and consumers' tendency towards physical inactivity, the importance of family tourism as a mechanism for providing meaningful family time and enhancing family wellbeing must not be overlooked (Lehto & Lehto, 2019). The significance of family tourism research in this sense goes beyond business management relevancy into the realm of tourism's social responsibility.

Aim and approach

This study aims to (1) Provide an overview of the family tourism research landscape-including a timeline, authorship, study subjects, research topicality, theories and methodological practices; and (2) Discuss missing links and future research opportunities in family tourism.

The first step in our study was to conduct an extensive search of published research on family tourism. Several research databases were searched, including the ABI/INFORM Global, Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, and Google Scholar to identify relevant literature on this topic. The search terms included "family tourism", "family travel", "family trip", "family tourists/travelers/visitors", "family holiday(ing)", "family vacation", "family leisure", as well as a combination of words that include family, children, tourism, experience, management, and marketing. Through our research, we identified a total of 159 articles, produced by 184 authors, published in a wide number of academic journals over a 45 year period of time (1975-2019).This collection of literature may not be exhaustive but we deemed it to be a reasonable data foundation to allow our analyses to be conducted, patterns to be derived, and conclusions to be made.

The first step in our analysis was to perform content analysis of the159 studies on family tourism using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This included construction of a database with information categories pertaining to authorship, authorship affiliation, topic, theory, research method, sample origin, travel destination, and publication year. Research themes were also identified using researcher judgement, which were then cross-validated through continuous discussions among the authors to address discrepancies.

An overview of family tourism research

Family tourism studies the dynamics of the family unit "on the road". A baseline question is what constitutes family tourism? Family tourism, family travel, family vacation, family holiday(ing) are a few terms seemingly used interchangeably to refer to this phenomenon. For this research, we chose to use the term "family tourism" as the overarching construct. There are some variations of definitions. For example, Schanzel et al. (2005) suggested that "family holiday" involves leisure travel away from home for more than one day undertaken by a family group with at least one child. This definition takes into account of length of stay and the presence of children. The researchers later, however, moved away from these qualifying parameters, defining family tourism at a more conceptual level - referring it as "a purposive time spent together, as a family group, doing activities different from normal routines that are fun but that may involve compromise and conflict at times". This later definition specifically conceptualizes family holiday as possessing characteristics of "Fun", "non-routine", "compromise" and/or "conflict" but did not specify mobility. How far does a family need to travel for their activity being conceptualized as family holiday is unspecified. In that sense, family staycation can be a form of family tourism. The qualifier of activities being non-routine does not necessarily suggest that families must travel to environments outside a family's everyday living community. For this study, we therefore defined family tourism as a domain of research that focuses on travel that involves the family unit without including other qualifiers such as distance, etc.

Family tourism has received research attention as early as in the mid-1970s. Since then there has been a surge in academic interest in family tourism in the past five years as evidenced by the observation that almost half of the studies we gathered were published between 2015 and 2019 (N = 73). In fact, the overwhelming majority of family tourism-related studies were produced from 2005 onward. This shows that research focusing on family tourism is a relatively recent phenomenon, although families have been traveling for much longer and family travel accounts for a major form of travel companionship. This trend is clearly evident from Figure 1 which presents a timeline of the annual frequency of publications from 1975 to 2019.
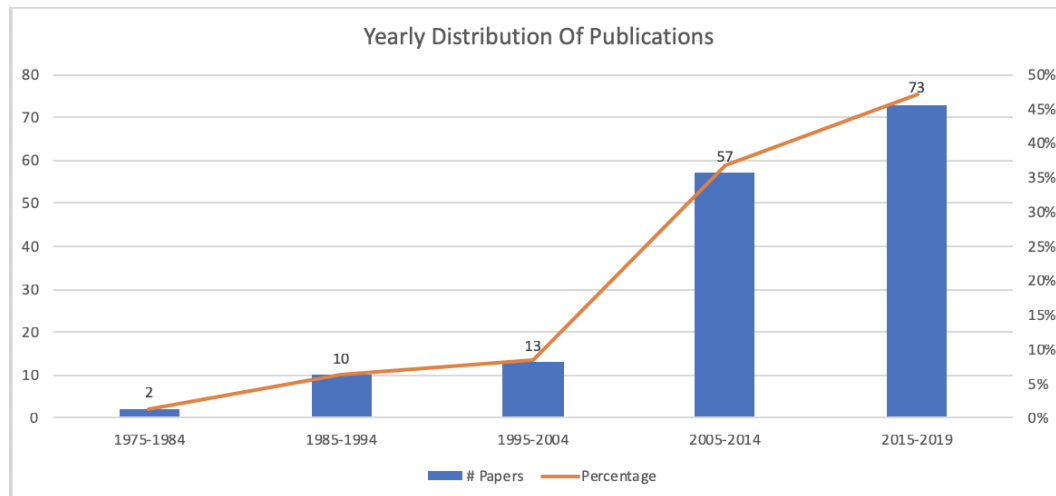
Figure 1: A timeline of family tourism publications (1975-2019)

Researchers

Where are the family tourism researchers based? The geographical distribution of researchers' work institution affiliation spans seven regions of the world, namely, Africa, Arctic regions, Central, South America, Australia & New Zealand, Asia, South Pacific, USA & Canada and Europe (Figure 2). When breaking down by countries, it seems there is a high concentration of family tourism researchers from the USA (29.35%), and UK (11.96%), followed by researchers from Australia (7.61%), New Zealand (7.07%), and China (6.52%). Researchers from the rest of the world account for about 37%, including researchers from Canada, Denmark, Spain, Malaysia, Iran, Ghana, Brazil, Italy, Iran, Ireland, Serbia, South Africa, Portugal, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Israel, Turkey, Finland, Croatia, Greece, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Thailand, Austria, Indonesia, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, and Mexico. When it comes to individual authors, a CiteSpace analysis shows that authorship networks in family tourism research appear to be highly concentrated, indicating that family tourism has yet to draw interest from a broader group of researchers (Figure 3).
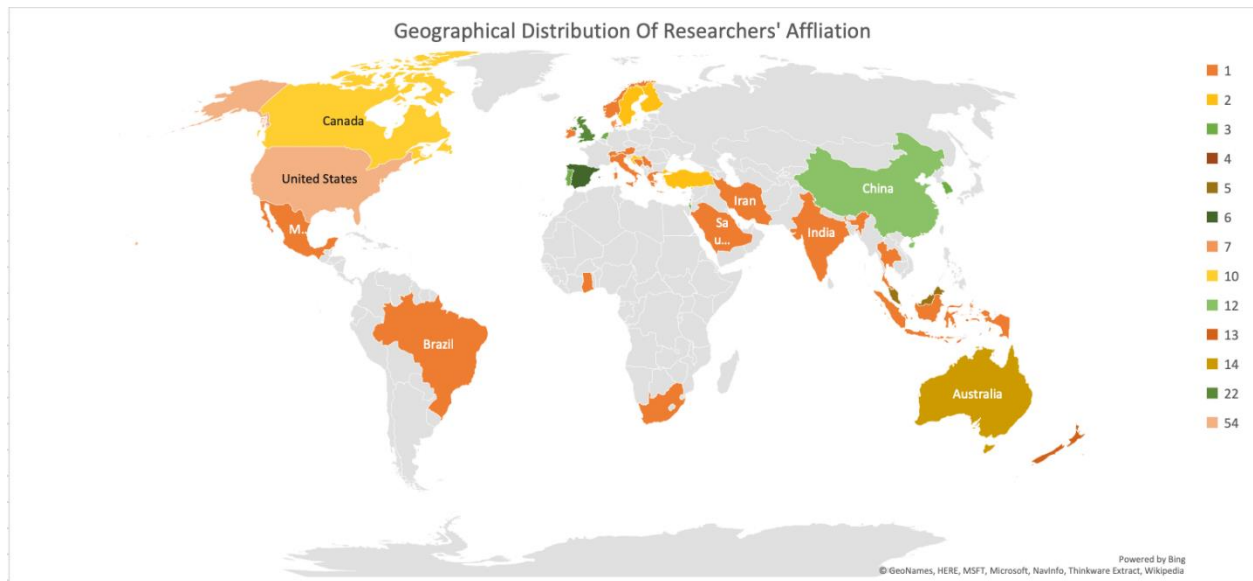
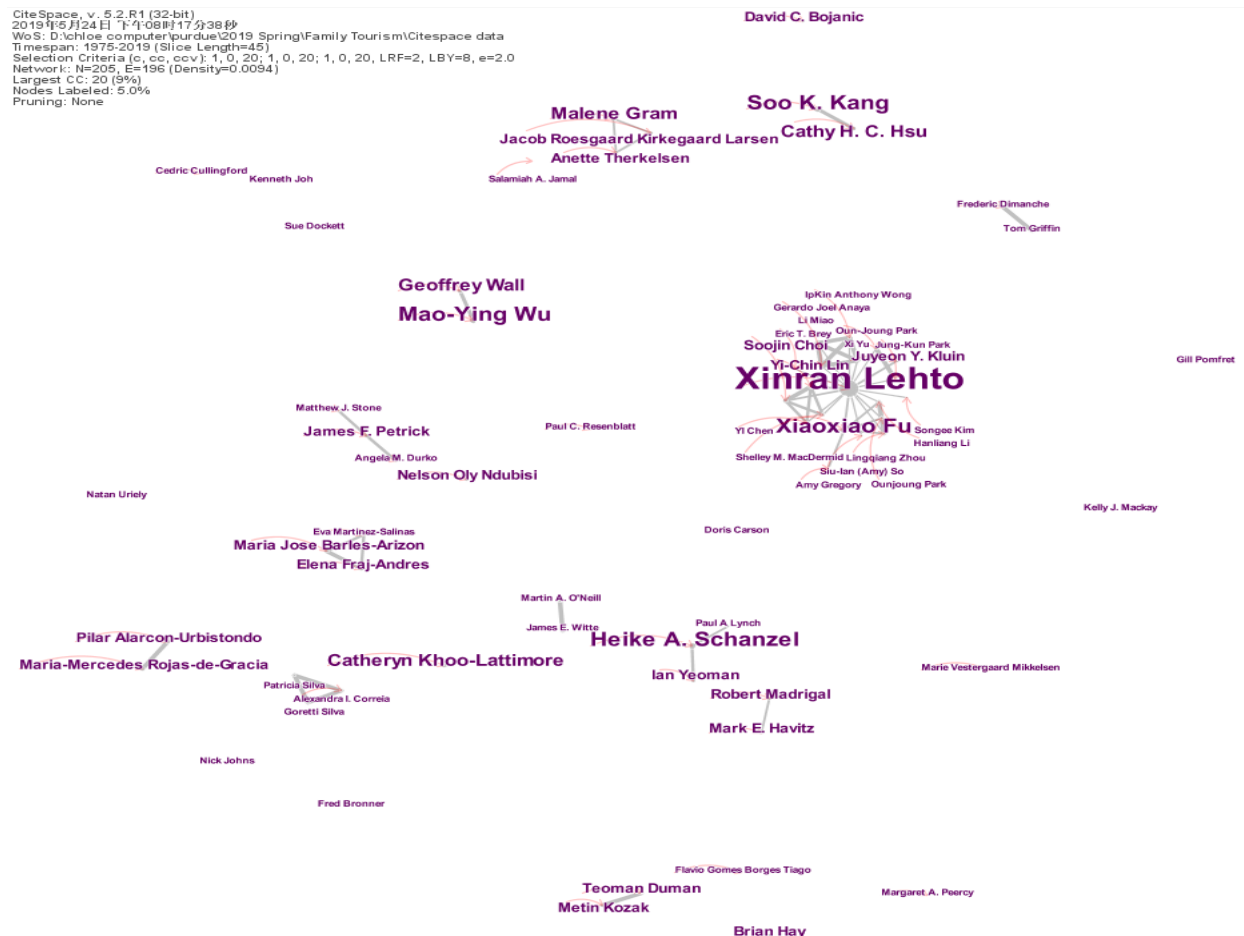Figure 2. Geographic distribution of researcher affiliations

Figure 3: Authorship Networks

Research subjects

Although not all study subjects in the reviewed articles had an articulated travel destination, for those who did, the top traveled destinations were the USA (25%), UK (12.5%), China (8.93%), and Malaysia (5.36%). These five destinations account for about 60% of all travel destinations to which the studied sample populations had taken trips. Where do the research samples come from? A closer examination of the study subjects' geographic origins shows that the family tourists being studied come from Central & South America, Australia & New Zealand, Asia, South Pacific, USA & Canada and Europe, with no sample representation from Africa nor Arctic regions. Although there was a wide representation of study subject origins, the data show a highly concentrated geographic distribution when breaking the samples down by country (Table 1). More than half of the studied samples come from five countries: the USA, UK, China, Australia and New Zealand. Other more visible sampled visitor country origins include Denmark, Canada, Germany, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Spain.

Table 1. Top five traveler origins by country

Traveler country origin	Articles and % of Total
USA	19 (17.59%)
UK	12 (11.11%)
China	10 (9.26%)
Australia	8 (7.41%)
New Zealand	8 (7.41%)
Others	51 (47.22%)

Figure 4 presents a historical and regional view of the study subjects. Traditionally, it is apparent that there has been a persistent research interest in family visitors from Western cultures. However, researchers have paid much greater attention to family visitors from Asia from 2005 onwards.   Much less research utilized samples from Central and South America. Additionally, family tourists from Africa and Arctic Regions have received scant attention from researchers.
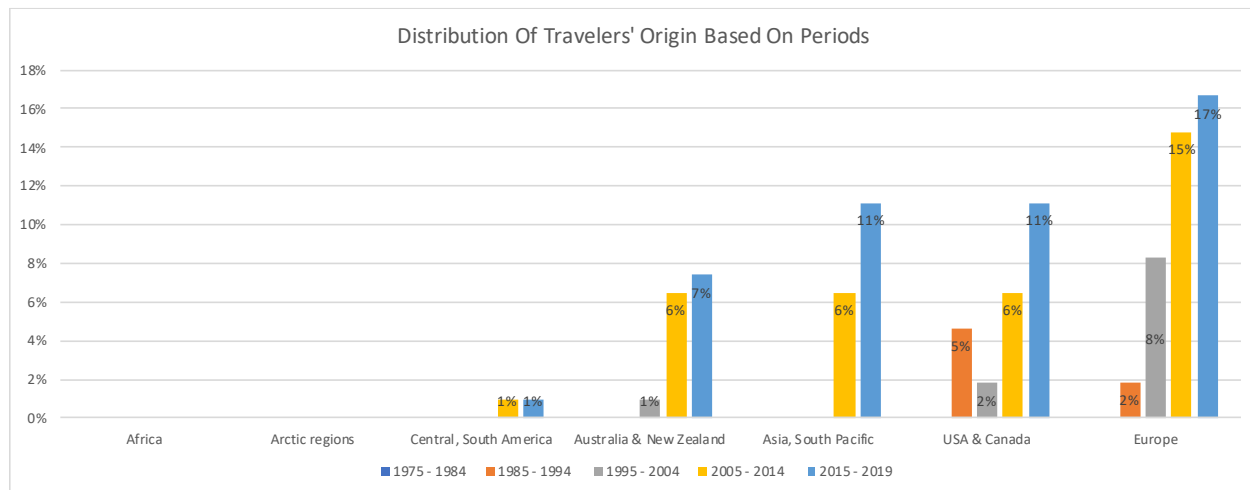
Distribution Of Travelers' Origin Based On Periods

Legend: ■ 1975 - 1984 ■ 1985 - 1994 ■ 1995 - 2004 ■ 2005 - 2014 ■ 2015 - 2019

Figure 4. Regional distribution of travelers' origin based on periods.

Research methods, themes, and theory lenses

Based on our analysis, family tourism researchers have embraced both qualitative (46%) and quantitative (46%) research methods in their investigations. About eight percent of research in this field utilized a mixed method approach. The significant utilization of various qualitative methods may reflect the complexity of understanding the contextual nuances of the family system in tourism and the challenges associated with uncovering the perspectives of multiple related members in the system and the views of (young) children in particular. When examining methodological trends from a historical angle, we note an interesting upward swing for the use of qualitative approaches, and a downward swing in the applications of quantitative methods (Figure 5). In fact, during the period of 2015-2019, the number of studies following the qualitative tradition surpassed those of a quantitative nature.

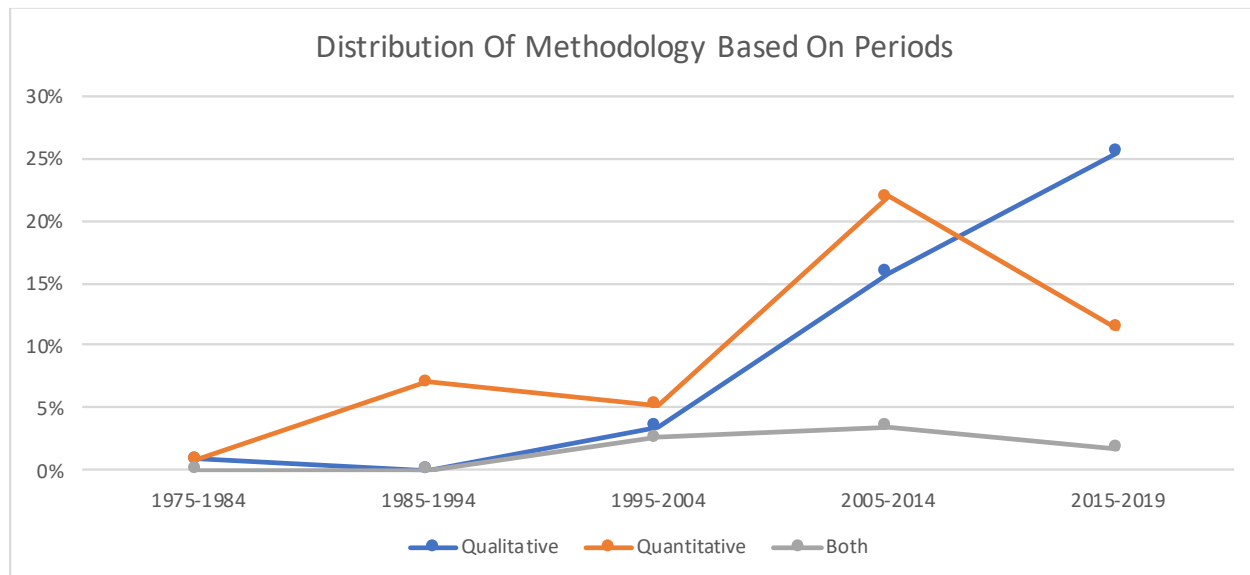## Distribution Of Methodology Based On Periods

Figure 5: A longitudinal view of family research methodology

Another interesting result is that our analysis shows that family tourism research largely addresses a few broad themes, namely, children, family role, destination activities, travel companionship, and experiences. Children have attracted considerable attention in recent years as indicated in the total number of publications (23%). With regard to this theme, researchers have focused on topics such as decision roles, special needs children, young children, information search, learning, children as study subjects, views on travel, and perceptions of specific types of travel experience. The second most popular theme was family role corresponding to 16% of the studies, followed by destination activities (14%), travel companionship (9%) and specific experience evaluations (6%). Other topics (23%) addressed include family function, travel benefits and motivation, and travel assistance.

A closer examination of research themes over time shows an evolving pattern (Figure 6). During the period of 1975-1984, there were only two themes that the researchers focused on: adverse effects of family tourism and family role influences. The number of research topics appears to broaden over the past five decades, with a narrow set of topics prior to the year of 2005 and a much larger set of topics post 2005. This correlates with the much greater number of publications since 2015.

1975-1984	1985-1994	1995-2004	2005-2014	2015-2019

Total Themes: 2
- (1) Adverse Effect
- (1) Family Role

Total Themes: 5
- (3) Family Role
- (3) Family Life Cycle
- (2) Destination Activities
- (1) Cities
- (1) Experience

Total Themes: 5
- (5) Children
- (2) Family Role
- (2) Destination activities
- (1) Experience
- (1) Travel Assistance

Total Themes: 13
- (12) Family Role
- (9) Children
- (6) Destination activities
- (5) Experience
- (4) Conceptualising family tourism
- (3) Family Life Cycle
- (2) Service Appraisal
- (2) Travel Companionship
- (2) Literature reviews
- (2) Travel assistance
- (1) Family function
- (1) Adverse Effect
- (1) Attitude toward family holiday

Total Themes: 14
- (20) Children
- (11) Destination Activities
- (7) Travel Companionship
- (6) Family Role
- (5) Travel assistance
- (3) Service Appraisal
- (3) Family function
- (2) Conceptualising family tourism
- (2) Experience
- (2) Literature reviews
- (2) Cities
- (2) Motivation
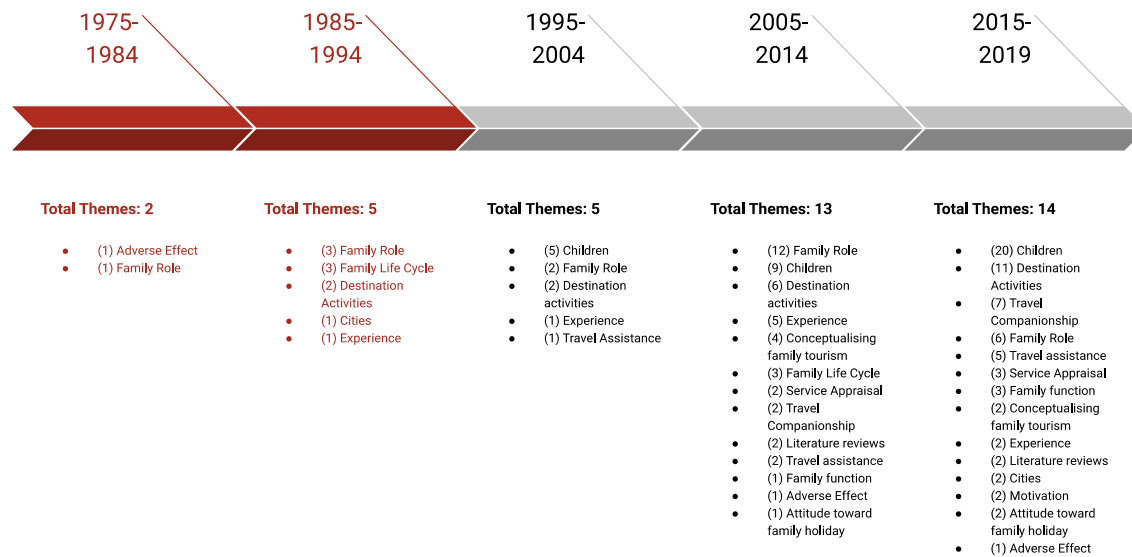- (2) Attitude toward family holiday
- (1) Adverse Effect

Figure 6. Timeline Distribution of Themes in Family Tourism Research

Another finding is that researchers have attempted to couch their research in various theoretical lenses from social psychology, psychology, sociology and family studies. Table 2 represents a sample of theoretical concepts and theories utilized in family tourism research. For the most part, these theories have been used to serve as a theoretical backdrop, guide hypothesis development, or support the validity of empirical discoveries.

Table 2: Theoretical lenses

Theories	Examples of Application
Pull-push factor theory	Shavanddasht (2018)
Experiential learning theory	Stone & Petrick (2017)
Associative network theory	Yang & Lau (2019)
Reminiscence bump	Tung & Ritchie (2011)
Consumer socialization theory	Watne et al. (2014)
Ecocultural theory	MacTavish et al. (2007)
Family life cycle	Hong et al. (2008)
Social exchange	Singh & Nayak (2014)

Goffman's dramaturgical sociology	Gram et al. (2018)
Reversal theory	Pomfret (2018)
Justice theory	Park et al. (2008)
Leisure constraints theory	Agate et al. (2015)
Performance theory	Drenten (2018)
Spillover theory	Sthapit & Bjork (2017)
Personal construct theory	Schanzel & Yeoman (2014)
Piaget's cognition development theory	Li et al. (2017)
Regulatory focus theory	Ram et al. (2012)
Resource theory	Kang & Hsu (2005)
Social judgement theory	Madrigal et al. (1992)
Social-emotional selectivity theory	Lee & Graefe (2010)
The Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems	Lehto, et. al. (2009)

Topicality of family tourism

Although the significance of family travel has always been highly valued due to both its market size and its importance for families, it must be recognized that compared to other forms of travel, family travel is inherently more complex and can come with challenges – from budgeting, to details of trip preparation, special service needs, family members varying interests and needs when on-site in destinations, and increased safety concerns to name just a few. How can research in family tourism inform us?

Family role influence

Despite of the shifts in travel trends and changes in family structure, family as a tourism consumption unit remains as important as ever. As family represents a system, how family roles influence family travel elements has been a popular topic throughout the past 45 years of research. Since family members in the system have distinct household roles, their needs, expectations and interpretations of such consumptive scenarios can vary.

Family role influence on family vacation decision-making has been a classic topic, perhaps due to its direct tie to consumptive choices. Although most of the studies on

family roles focus on how parents as a unit make vacation decisions, some have explored the differing characteristics and perspectives of wives versus husbands. It is widely acknowledged that joint decision-making is the most prevalent decision model applied by spouses (e.g. Hsu & Kang, 2003; Nanda, Hu & Bai, 2007; Nichols & Snepenger, 1988; Ritchie & Filiatrault, 1980; Rojas-de-Gracia & Alarcon-Urbistondo, 2017; Srnec, Loncaric & Prodan, 2016). However, some decisions tend to be dominated by either partner. Rojas-de-Gracia and Alarcon-Urbistondo (2017) indicated that searching for information was normally conducted autonomously by either the wife or the husband. The study of Ritchie and Filiatrault (1980) showed that decisions concerning the length of the vacation, the amount of money to spend and the actual dates of the vacation were more husband-dominated.

When it comes to parenthood, Ram, Uriely and Malach-Pines (2014) revealed that parents showed less authoritative "parenting style" when they were on vacation with children. Parents can also experience role reversal in some situations where children can teach parents skills (e.g. recreational skills, online navigation skills) (e.g. Lehto et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2018). Mothers view family vacations as an opportunity to relax and release parental control. For example, Mottiar and Quinn's research (2012) indicating that self-catering holidays were an "escape" from the daily life for females, but women and mothers' genderized roles such as cleaning clothes and preparing food that were normally performed by female respondents at home are often maintained. Interestingly, from the father's perspective, Schanzel and Jenkins (2016) noted that sharing leisure-based holidays with their children were special times for fathers to have fun, to (re)build and maintain family relations, and to experience fatherhood. It was also noted that parents attach higher regard for family vacations, especially in their beneficial functions for the family, compared to the perspectives of children (Fu et. al, 2014).

Family travel assistance

According to UNTWO (2019), among the more than one billion international travelers, a high percentage is comprised of "families with young children and/or seniors, and persons with disabilities or other special needs". Travel is not equally easy for everyone. Families with special needs members in particular require specialized travel assistance and products. All of us will need accessible environments, products and services at some point of our lives due to conditions resulting from a disability, illness, pregnancy, or young or advanced age. Accessible tourism within the framework of family tourism bears particular relevance, simply because travelers with special needs usually travel with their families and caretakers. This is an important area of research, albeit it has seen limited attention from researchers (e.g. Lehto et al., 2018; Mintz, 2018).

Aside from the more prominent financial unaffordability these families may face, mobility can be a prominent issue for family caregivers. MacTavish, MacKay, Iwasaki and Betteridge (2007), for example, investigated the meaning of life quality for family caregivers (i.e., biological and adoptive parents, and adults with siblings) of individuals with intellectual disability and noted that vacations have become an opportunity to escape caregiving responsibility. Such mobility is an essential respite for family caregivers. However, taking a vacation alone for respite time appears to be a luxury inconceivable to achieve for many caregivers, for financial reasons, time commitments, and mobility constraints. For caretakers of a member with extended illness, hospital trips, constant private home care needs and other daily necessities nullify the possibility of traveling for restorative time. This disadvantaged traveler population has attracted attention from the media (e.g. Brown, 2019), but not nearly enough attention from family tourism researchers. Brown (2019) suggests that a vacation for a caregiver is a necessary form of self-care, that both can and needs to happen. He suggests that "local parks", "community festivals", "play tourist in your own city" (visit local sites and places that are not previously traveled to), and "taking photos" (of sights and sounds when running errands) are less glamorous but practical forms of travel for caregivers. Another means of travel is what Brown termed as "armchair travel" with disabled family members. For example, online browsing and virtual travel to places are some of the suggested ways to take a journey in one's mind. As family members, care-receivers have significant meaning and also play important roles in the entire family. Their needs should not be ignored. The importance of relationality between the care-receivers and family care-givers in family mobility is another topic that should be further studied from sociological and psychological perspectives.

When families that have members who possess one or more forms of disabilities do travel, travel can sometimes be more of a challenge than a positive experience. A major barrier is that it is more difficult for caregivers to follow their ordinary care-giving routines during a journey. The result is that the affected families may travel less frequently and staying at home often becomes the most reassuring solution. The complexity of the issue is revealed by recent research focusing on families of children with autism (Sedgley et al, 2017). Sedgley discusses how tourism can provide wellbeing benefits to individuals with developmental difficulties such as children with autism, and revealed the picture of such families on vacation through their lived experiences. Their research describes such a vacation as a journey of mixed emotions for the mother – bringing attention to the stressful caregiving role of mothers and their emotional labor during such a holiday.

Further perspectives on this issue is provided by multiple research studies that have consistently noted that families' travel motivations are multi-faceted. Important elements

include family bonding, family socializing, parent relaxation and escape, as well as building children's intellectual competence and physical competency mastery via travel. Given the fact that children with disabilities in general require constant adult companionship, it makes this family population different from families with typically developing children. For this population, the parents' wellbeing is much more closely tied to the children's. Whereas the typically developing families appear to have family, self, and children-oriented motivations, this travel group is centered much more on the children.

Individuals with impairment usually travel with caregivers and these individuals need special travel assistance. Hence, developing and maturing facilities catering for different special needs is an area that deserves attention for both researchers and industry practitioners (Yau, McKercher & Packer, 2004). The needs of the care-receivers were illustrated by Mintz (2018). Mintz's study depicts how immature designs and facilities for this traveling population are insufficient. Using Disney as a case in point, insufficient stations in Disney Parks for recharging motorized wheelchairs created inconvenience to groups with special needs, Mintz (2018) argued that the standard of equality should not be measured as simple equality which focuses on equal waiting time for everyone. Instead it should be measured in terms of whether an equal access to opportunities is provided that allows tourists with disabilities to enjoy the attractions and their Disney experience as well as the non-disabled tourists. Ethically, the question of how to measure and provide equality for families with special care needs has offered public policymakers and tourism service providers an important perspective on how to improve public wellbeing. Another is on how best to facilitate travelers with babies, toddlers, and small children? This is an area that has received very limited attention from researchers.

Our review shows that some of the special need related literature has focused on families with infants and young children. Whittle (2019), for example, explored the impact of sling use on the travel experience of families with babies and young children. This study suggests that connecting with young babies makes parents feel a sense of wholeness but long-distance travelling with high requirements for individuals' walkability would be a tough task for young children. As a form of assistance, slings to some extent made it more convenient for parents to take young babies along with them and improved the whole experience of parents during the family journey.

Children, children

Families will continue to embrace traveling with children going forward as travel continues to be regarded as a unique opportunity for strengthening family togetherness and bonding. For example, close to a quarter of U.S. family vacationers travel internationally

with their children. Children have received increasing attention from researchers. Children from various age groups are a visible element in family tourism research - infants, toddlers, pre-teens, teenagers, and adult children, albeit research in this area is still rather insufficient. Topics related to children in family tourism research are diversifying from the classic decision-making angle. In addition to children's role in the decision making process, other popular topics include children's special needs, communication and negotiation with parents, learning processes and outcomes during and after a journey, and perception of travel experience from children's perspectives.

Children in decision-making Children's role in family vacation decision-making is a prominent area of interest (Gram, 2007). It is noted that children in general have gained an increasing influence in the travel decision-making processes of families. Although parents are known to have the decisive votes at final decision stages, children's preferences and wishes, especially those of the teenagers are taken into high consideration by parents (e.g. Curtale, 2018; Dunne, 1999; Gram, 2007; Thornton, Shaw & Williams, 1997). The study of Thornton et al. (1997) shows that the physical needs of children (e.g. arrangement of meal times, need for sleep) and their ability to negotiate with parents have great influences on the behaviors of family tourists, and that their influence power and methods vary by age phases.

Children's age plays a role in that their input is being considered incrementally more as they progress into adolescents and become more experienced. Gram's research, for example, notes that in the family holiday process, children can play the roles of "pestering" (e.g. I want to go to Legoland!), "blackmailing" (e.g. if we are not going to Italy, I am not coming!), "leveraging" peer power (e.g. my friends are going there.), and "negotiating" (e.g. what to do or where to eat when onsite a destination). Another interesting observation in Gram's research is that the data suggest that German children are perceived as having more power than their counterparts from Danish families, showcasing the need for cross-cultural understanding of family role influence.

Family decisions are normally not made at one point in time but are an ongoing process with constantly negotiating over the holiday course. Decision-making involving children is also characterized by occasional conflicts and compromises on the part of family members to ensure a harmonious family holiday. Conflict resolution strategies seem to be correlated to the age phases of children and different communication patterns between children and parents. The study of Therkelsen (2010), for example, showed that whereas socio-oriented communication patterns where parents control and monitor their children's consumption behavior may be prevalent in families with young children, as the children grow older, these seem to be supplemented by more concept-oriented communication patterns where children are to form their own opinions on consumption issues through

discussion and weighing alternatives and thus children's consumer skills and competences are developed. Singh and Nayak (2016) also argued that adolescents express more in concept-oriented families and use more various types of resolution strategies compared with socio-oriented families.

Child-centric services and programs have gained recent attention from family tourism researchers. A number of studies in this area represent market-driven attempts such as analyzing parents' views of children's programs and amenities in accommodation (e.g. Agate, Agate & Birchler, 2015; Birchler, 2012; Gaines, Hubbard, Witte, & O'Neill, 2004; Khoo-Lattimore, del Chiappa & Yang, 2018; Kowisuth, 2015). Studies have noted that security and hygiene are the most important elements in the selection of programs in hotels. Child-friendly interactions between children and hotel employees are another important factor for parents (e.g. Birchler, 2012; Gaines et al., 2004; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018; Kowisuth, 2015). Special amenities including bassinets, bottle warmers, stationary for children to write and draw were suggested to be offered in family-oriented and child-friendly accommodations (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). A number of studies look into summer camps- programs for children and youth. Dresner and Gill (1994) note that summer nature camps benefit children's interpersonal relationships, feelings of connection with the natural world, and importantly campers' self-esteem. Paris (2001; 2008) chronicles the history of the American summer camps and highlights the importance of summer camps in shaping children's development. From the lens of cultural comparison, research (e.g. Khoo-Lattimore et al. 2015, 2018; Lehto, Fu, Kirillova & Bi, 2017) has also noted that while sharing similar perceptions with their Western counterparts about the role of summer camps for children, the Chinese parents have unique preferences and motives when it comes to summer overseas camps for children. The study of Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2018) suggests that the parents' preferences for activity programming can vary from culture to culture. Western families tend to prefer their children to participate in physical activities related to the children's interests such as fishing, swimming, dancing and playing games, whereas Asian parents tend to seek more explicit learning-oriented activities and programs. Lehto et al. (2017) notes that Chinese parents place particular high value on a camp program that facilitates visits to well-known universities – a pragmatic element that perhaps reflects Chinese parents' tendency to link overseas summer camps with potential future college choices for their children. These differing preferences may be explainable by the Confucian values of travel as a means for education and acquisition of knowledge (Lehto et al., 2013) versus the Western travel value association with hedonic pleasure, creativity, freedom and excitement (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018).

Crying babies onboard Children have their own special needs and behave differently from adults. Small children, for example, may not have the ability to self-regulate or express emotions and feelings. By investigating public online news sites and discussion boards

about the debate over crying babies on planes, Small and Harris (2014) suggest that service providers (in their study, airlines) should engage in "customer compatibility management". These researchers advocate for targeting homogenous consumers and managing customer-to-customer interactions. Their study has led to thoughtful debates in family tourism on such issues as social inclusion/exclusion and justice issues referring to the rights and responsibilities of different groups of passengers including babies.

Children's own voice As future tourists, children's experiences from their own perspectives also draw great academic interest (e.g. Cullingford, 1995; Wu, Wall, Zu & Ying, 2019; Rhoden, Hunter-Jones & Miller, 2016; Fu, Lehto & Park, 2014; Hay, 2017; Drenten, 2018). The study by Wu et al. (2019) suggests that a memorable family travel experience to children was centered upon family togetherness and physical activities. These observations coincide with what is noted by Rhoden et al. (2016) which revealed that children prefer to be physically active. Nonetheless, although children enjoy the togetherness with parents that help build closer emotional bonds, they also recognize the opportunities to connect with their siblings and to socialize with children from outside the family group (Hay, 2017). Research also shows that adult destination preferences and choices can be influenced significantly by their childhood travel experiences. Cullingford (1995) notes that children are gullible to different sources of information. This tendency can lead them to imbibe stereotypes and prejudices toward certain countries, places or people. Overall, however, the meaning of family travel for children is underrepresented (Carr, 2011).

Learning Learning is another emphasized topic in children-related research of family tourism. Travel is seen as an excellent educational tool, especially for museums and heritage attractions – they are regarded as natural play-based learning environments for children (Dockett, Main & Kelly, 2011; Frost & Laing, 2017; Sanford, 2010; Yang & Lau, 2019). Yang and Lau (2019) for example, investigated the influence of motivation for children's experiential learning on engagement at World Heritage sites, and the subsequent influence engagement on children's learning outcomes and educational benefits. Interestingly, they found that the brand awareness of World Heritage sites has impacts on learning effectiveness. Well-known World Heritage sites bring more effective experiential learning for children, compared with less well-known World Heritage sites. In the study of Lehto et al. (2017), experiential learning for children is identified as a specific travel benefit sought by Chinese parents. Expanding children's horizons, extending children's knowledge, and their learning about culture, history and people are some of the specific aspects that parents sought to accomplish through family travel. Parents' desire for imparting children's learning orientation can vary by culture in its explicitness and magnitude, as noted by Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2018). In the case of Chinese family travelers it seems that experiential learning needs of children take precedence over family

unit needs (togetherness and shared experiences) and those of parental individual oriented needs (such as relaxation). Parents extend teaching and learning to the travel setting in a very explicit way.

Families in motion: consumptive experiences

Family travelers are unique in that they travel as a small group dynamic and but the group membership in the dynamic is permanent – long term as opposed to that of other group travelers where their social interaction and membership are liminal in nature. How do families interact with their travel environments and settings and yet interact among themselves? What are the shared aspects of experiences - how is the "I" and "me time" interface with the "We" and "Us" within the family when experiencing places and consuming products? What is the co-created experience like? What do family travelers do? How do they engage themselves with activities, programs, attraction sites and sounds? How do they engage each other while visiting a destination? How do they interact with the environment they are in? These elements of family tourism should be a core focus as what they engage themselves in onsite is the core element of a family tourism experience. It is why families travel to certain places. Specific types of attractions, products, and experiences represent important research contexts in family tourism. The existing literature has examined various attractions that include nature-based special interest tourism with family members (e.g. camping tourism), activity-related family tourism (e.g. skiing tourism), traveling and attending special events with family members (e.g. weddings, conferences), and attractions targeting specifically at families (e.g. theme parks and children's museums).

Research on nature-based family tourism spans the topics related to family experience (e.g. Goodenough, Waite & Bartlett, 2015; Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2015), motivation and satisfaction (e.g. Lee & Graefe, 2010), and destination choice (e.g. Mikulic, Prebezac, Seric & Kresic, 2017). Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt (2015)'s research assessed the family travel experience by examining how caravanning could provide family members with balance between interdependence and autonomy. Caravanning seems to offer 'real, quality family time' where adults are allowed more 'own time' and 'spouse time', and children also have extraordinary opportunities to engage in 'own time'. Goodenough et al. (2015) focused on the aspect of family togetherness and noted that leisure programs based on woodland activities seemed to alleviate parental pressure derived from their children's disconnection from nature and engender parents' self-confidence as 'competent parents' during the process of guiding their children to accomplish outdoor activities. Lee and Graefe (2010) explored the relationship between demographic

characteristics and the motivation for family recreation in a natural tourism destination and found that married visitors and visitors with children were more motivated and the consequent satisfaction was higher for families having children. Mikulic et al. (2017) uncovered that infrastructure-related campsite attributes (e.g. sanitary facilities, water and electricity), safety, and ecological standards were recognized as the most important attributes for both campsite choice and the onsite experience and suggested these campsite attributes be focused upon as basic requirements for camping businesses to build a strong and sustainable competitive position.

Other studies include the work of Schanzel, Hull and Velvin (2017) who identified the effects of global factors, including climate change, environmental/cultural conflict, energy and economic shocks, increasing competition with sun destinations, changes in demography, and changing consumers, that impact future scenarios for families engaged in skiing tourism. As a special travel type, the accompanying partners' conference travel increases the intimacy in the couple's relationship and allows opportunities for conferees to communicate with their spouses both emotionally and intellectually and thus help facilitate conferees' serendipity and their pursuit of personal interests (Yoo, McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2016).

Motivational factors seem to be a study focus in theme park research for family tourism (e.g. Bakir & Baxter, 2011; Johns & Gyimothy, 2003; McClung,1991). McClung (1991) unveiled that the most important factors influencing visitors' park attendance included climate, children's desire to attend and cost and suggested theme parks direct their marketing activities to capitalize on children's influence as a primary factor for attracting more visitors.

Clearly destination activity – what do families do at a travel destination and how do they create experiences together - is an area of research that has drawn attention. Activities together as a family has been noted to promote family cohesion - the affection, support, helpfulness, and caring among family members (Lehto et al., 2012). Lehto et al.'s research identified a seven-factor structure of family destination activities, covering a wide spectrum of leisure activities that families enjoy on a trip. These seven factors are city interests (e.g. museums, zoos/aquariums, city sightseeing), active nature pursuits (hiking, camping), shopping (e.g. for books, toys, arts and crafts), dining and entertaining (e.g. fine dining, local specialties and delicacies), family social events (e.g. VFR, festivals, sports events), outdoor sports (e.g. swimming, skiing), and farm-based activities (e.g. farmers market, visiting farms). In the context of families traveling with children with disabilities, Kim and Lehto (2012) identified a set of activities that are specifically relevant to this group of family travelers. Although some preferred activities are similar with the activities of the typical family travelers, their study also noted that wellness activities such

as yoga, health spa and wellness classes are of particular interests to parents traveling with children of disabilities, especially for the parents. This again suggests a desire for respite experiences for such parents.

In the context of family reunion travel, it is noted that family reunion travelers seem to participate in both recreational/leisure activities as well as a special set of reunion specific activities such as board/table games, family photo-sharing, extended family photo-taking, family videos, family talent shows, making family trees, family history research, and visits to sites significant to family history (Kluin & Lehto, 2012).

Beyond the nuclear family

Researchers have explored family scenarios beyond the traditional nuclear family composition. Traveling with extended family members, for example, has received academic attention. Research related to extended family tourism covers travels with various family compositions. Examples include: (1) Extended family travel/multi-generational travel (e.g. Kluin & Lehto, 2012; Pearlman, 2018; Yun & Lehto, 2009); (2) visiting friends and relatives (VFR) (e.g. Lehto, Morrison & O'Leary, 2001; Backer, 2012; Griffin & Dimanche, 2017; Kashiwagi, Nagai & Furutani, 2018; Stepchenkova, Shichkova, Kim, Pennington-Gray & Rykhtik, 2015); (3) Grandparents-children travel (Grandtravel) (Shavandasht, 2018); (4) Aunts-children travel (PANKs) (e.g. Camargo & Tamez, 2015); and (5) LGBT family (e.g. Lucena, Jarvis & Weeden, 2015; Trussell, Xing & Oswald, 2015).

Travel motivation and activities are common topical areas threading throughout research on these various forms of travel that consider travel member composition. Take family reunion travel, for example. This topic has been researched as a sub-segment of multiple generational travel, referring to "gatherings of multiple family units composed of at least three generations on a recurring basis, not for special events such as weddings or funerals" (Yun and Lehto, 2009). Such travel is seen as a form of family ritual and understood in the tourism context as a form of interactional mobilization to sustain family structure. From this perspective, Kluin and Lehto (2012) developed a four-factor family reunion travel motivational scale that includes: (1) maintaining family history and togetherness; (2) maintaining immediate family cohesion; (3) family communication; and (4) family adaptation. The order of importance of these four factors appears to follow a reverse pyramid structure with extended family needs outweighing those of immediate family needs and personal/individual needs.

VFR is another extended family related area of research interest. The VFR travel market has received research attention from the late 1990s, as destinations tap this segment for growth strategy, as VFR is seen to be an economic contributor for communities and is less vulnerable to market forces such as recessions (Backer, 2012). Kashiwagi et al.

(2018) suggested that international students are important resources for tourism practitioners for they can trigger international VFR visits by their friends and relatives.

Grandtravel is another area of focus due to its gain in popularity in recent years for reasons related to increased health, wealth, desire for more shared time with grandparents. Shacandasht (2018) further segments Grandtravel into three clusters including "family lovers" who enjoyed spending time with their grandkids and emphasized the basic values of family togetherness; "multi-purpose seekers" who expected "quality", "enjoyment"; and "historical/natural attractions", and "knowledge hunters" who preferred to enhance their knowledge by visiting new places.

Minority configurations of family that do not fit the heteronormative model have also received recent albeit limited attention from the family tourism literature. A recent paper by Lucena, Javis, & Weeden (2015), for example, called for research to understand travel motivation, decision strategy and destination choices of the lesbian and gay parented families. They noted a need for research to understand how same sex families navigate their sexuality while on holiday and whether their social interaction can be impaired in the heteronormative travel spaces.

Discussion: Research opportunities

When individuals travel, they are likely to travel with family. This is the case not only with leisure travelers but can be true for *Bleisure* travelers (e.g. conference travelers) as they increasingly attempt to balance work with family time and leisure. This trend will continue as families are increasingly looking for opportunities for quality family time. The Millennials, for example, do not want to wait until their children are older; they travel with children under the age of five (Resonance 2018). Given the prevalence of family travel, the importance of research of families in tourism cannot be overstated. This research provides a delineation of the existing family tourism literature. A look back of the research landscape of this area can serve not only as a synopsis of what it has become, but also as an invitation for researchers to actively partake in building a futurist research agenda for family tourism.

While our analysis reveals an uptick in research effort in this area especially the studies over the past decade, we have noted that research in this area is insufficient both in its scope and depth. Given that family travelers are front and center in the traveler landscape, this topic deserves much more research attention than it has been given. Our study shows that research in family tourism is highly centered on family travelers from a very small number of countries and is conducted by highly concentrated networks of researchers. Much more research is needed especially in the context of developing nations. Our analysis suggests that opportunities abound for researchers.

Supplier-side topics

As the existing studies on family tourism have a distinct consumer orientation, data from the supply side are sorely needed. How do family tourism suppliers provide consumers with family-oriented or family-friendly products? What are the design considerations? For example, it is noted that ridesharing platforms (e.g. Uber, Lyft) have begun to work on providing customers with the list of family-friendly vehicles that offer car seats to infants/toddlers/young children. It would be interesting to examine how the sharing economy as a whole systematically integrates family-friendly elements within the P2P business model. There is an increasingly urgent call for the hospitality and tourism industries to use wellness parameters to design experiences and services and therefore play an increased role in safeguarding consumer wellness (Lehto & Lehto, 2019). This raises questions such as how well have family wellness needs been factored into tourism products, experiences and services? How well do they perform? How do services cater to family travelers with special needs such as the very old, the very young, the sick, the pregnant, or the disabled? How has the principle of universal accessibility been implemented? Accessibility and equitable participation by all are three principles advocated by UNWTO as quality and competitiveness measures for tourism destinations (UNTWO, 2019). Research on accessible environments, products and services are called for. Another supply side topic that has seen little attention is ChildSafe tourism (UNICEF, 2008). The exploitation of children as part of tourism is an area of concern. How have policies, standards and procedures been implemented to protect children' s physical and emotional wellbeing and prevent children from being exploited as part of tourism offerings?

There is also a need to understand marketing in family tourism. How do destinations market to family travelers? How do they engage family travelers, especially on the newer platforms and forms of communication such as social media and other online social networks and applications? How effective are they? Most of the current advocating voices for family tourism appear to have come from online travel magazines, travel bloggers and social influencers. A recent phenomenon is the multitude of ratings and recommendations by these family travel influencers (e.g. "Top 10 family friendly places you must see"), how valid are their recommendations? What evaluative criteria do they use? Or are they simply the new form of advertising?

Demand-side topics

Opportunities also exist in the intersection between family tourism and digital technology. An example would be "how is digital technology changing the classic family road trip experience?" Dating back to the1960s, road trips with children have been a common travel experience for American families. "Dad at the wheel, Mom reading the map, siblings playing games in the back seat" (Richard, 2018) is a nostalgic memory of the baby boomers. In contrast, in the digital era, generation X and Millennials have grown to expect

shorter vacations and more instant gratification (Rugh, 2008). Devices like audiobooks/iPads/smart phones have become a constant entertaining companion for family road trips. While these contemporary technology devices help children psychologically shorten the travel distance and manage boredom, how has this digital element of a family trip altered the family tourism experience itself? Smartphones and tablet-based digital applications have become indispensable items for contemporary family travelers. These digital platforms are now used by some parents as pacifiers for car/bus/train/airplane rides, long waits and meals out. Increasingly, digital applications are designed to assist family vacation experiences - from information delivery, social interactions, and interactions with the environments surrounding them, to experiencing digitalized attractions (e.g. virtual reality and augmented reality). How do these family friendly digital technologies affect family travelers? How do they influence family travelers' decision-making processes? How do they influence their shared vacation experiences? How do they impact family functioning on the road? How do they affect children's experiences and their wellbeing? Are screen time and digital contents healthful for family travelers? How much might be too much?

Despite the recent research interest in understanding family tourism experiences, the work that has been done is far from being sufficient. There is a great need for more research in this area. For example, how do family travelers interface with specific types of tourism destinations (e.g. cities), tourism sectors (e.g. cruises, aquariums, resorts), attractions and programs (e.g. events, festivals, museums), and services and facilities (e.g. restaurants, airlines, shops, and lodging facilities). Such issues are especially important to urban destinations that rely heavily on family travelers. However, there has been very little research as to how families consume a travel product such as streetscape, museums, architecture, musicals, and restaurants.

To address these issues a children's lens is particularly needed, There has been increased effort in examining children's perspectives. However, children's evaluations of existing family-friendly tourism products and services need to be much better understood. A better understanding of children's perspectives may be able to spur the tourism and hospitality industries to be more creative and innovative in their experience offerings. The benefits of travel to children is another understudied area. Although family leisure time and togetherness are positively correlated with childhood socialization and development, little research has been dedicated to empirically understanding whether travel inherently benefits children (Durko & Petrick 2016).

Another issue is that current research provides insufficient insights into how families co-consume tourism products and co-create experiences - not enough attention is paid to the shared consumption of specific types of attractions and experiences. There is a need to consider the family from an interactive point of view, not just from a child's lens or the mother's lens. Although the latter lenses are important, where is the relational lens in the picture? How are children related to the adults and how do they interact with the adults and the setting/environment?

Additionally, how do families interface with sustainability? How do they make choices and behave based on sustainability principles? Further, a better cultural lens is much needed. For example, how do cultural dynamics interact with family dynamics? How do cultural values influence family travel behavior and consumptive experience? For example, how does cultural distance between the travelers' home origin and a destination influence the family consumptive experience? How does cultural distance influence family travelers in their decision-making, trip behavior and experiences?

Methodological opportunities

Methodologically, much more work is needed that considers the fact that a family represents a relational group dynamic. Research involving multiple families' members is necessary because it can better advance our understanding of family tourism behavior, experiences, perspectives and emotions beyond perspectives of individuals alone. Despite the call for data from multiple member perspectives, there has been underuse of this approach for data and analytical approaches.

Special methodological considerations are needed for acquiring and appropriately analyzing data from dyads and families because family data are interdependent and require analytical techniques that can accommodate this non-independency. Data collection from children remains particularly challenging despite efforts using innovative methods to understand children's perspectives (Poria & Timothy, 2014).

Additionally, longitudinal research designs appear to be non-existent. It would be of great value for such research design if researchers attempted to understand how family travelers and their behaviors change over time. For example, how does family travel correlate with children's development? Future travel styles? Career choices? A longitudinal lens would be appropriate for such investigations.

Conclusion

Despite an increased body of research, family tourism is still an under-researched area. This study sought to establish a better understanding of this domain of research. We conducted a systematic search of family tourism literature using key words including family vacation and family holiday. We identified 159 articles, produced by 184 authors and published over a five-decade period. Based on a meticulous content analysis of these studies, we developed an overview of family tourism as a field, what it has become in theoretical development, topicality and themes, and methodological advances. We suggest ways to move the family research field from a descriptive delineation to a more mature stage built upon theory and methodological knowledge.

Our analysis of the existing research indicates that while family tourism has gained a healthy dose of attention from researchers, it is far from being studied sufficiently. There is so much yet to be systematically examined. In a nutshell, future research in family tourism calls for much finer views of segments within the family travel market, finer views of impacts of family travel on the family dynamic, especially on the children, finer views of travel moments and experiences, and finer views of service providers.

Family tourism research does not just bear ramifications to the practice and destination management. It adds to our understanding and generates insights for this baseline societal unit in the travel space. How travelers function as a family on the road completes and compliments the broader literature of family studies. The sustained and growing demand for family tourism calls for a more energized focus on research in this area.

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