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ROSEN RESEARCH REVIEW

FALL 2019



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UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

A message from Dean Youcheng Wang



**Rosen College of
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Life-long learning delivered in these pages!

Reading for pleasure is somewhat of a luxury with our over-loaded schedules. However, in the second edition of the *Rosen Research Review*, not only will you read for pleasure, but you can be enlightened by the information you gather. The research magazine of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management takes applied research and distills it into a format that can build on theories in practice, spark new ideas, and encourage you to turn the page for more. It keeps our minds engaged, open for knowledge, and breathes new life into common practices. We take research from some of Rosen College's top scholars and present it in a fashion that appeals to learners of all ages, from students just starting in higher education, all the way to the industry professionals with decades of service under their belts. We have found from feedback on the first edition of the magazine that academics enjoyed it too.

As with the first issue of the *Rosen Research Review*, we feature 10 articles, derived from research conducted by our faculty, and sometimes our graduate degree-seeking students. We also include two articles from thought leaders in the industry, those in the field who put into practice each day what we teach in our curriculum to the future leaders of the hospitality industry.

Speaking of the hospitality industry, we will be gathering academics, government officials and industry leaders at Rosen College, December 13–16, 2019, for the 5th World Research Summit for Tourism and Hospitality. The conference provides an interactive, dynamic and shared international platform for academics and practitioners to discuss how to enhance research applications and knowledge management through digital intelligence, connectivity and smart knowledge in a changing global economy. Elsevier, one of the leading publishers of research journals, hosts this conference with us. We expect it to be three full days of intelligent sessions that will bolster life-long learning.

Immediately following the 5th World Research Summit for Tourism and Hospitality, Rosen College will host the 3rd USA-China Tourism Research Summit and Industry Dialogue on December 17, 2019. This bi-lingual conference explores the challenges associated with USA-China tourism and ways to navigate the issues.



You can learn more for both conferences on the Rosen College website: <https://hospitality.ucf.edu/about-rosen-college/conferences/>.

Since our first edition of the *Rosen Research Review* we lost a member of the editorial team. Mathilda van Niekerk, Ph.D., co-editor of the *Rosen Research Review* lost her battle with pancreatic cancer on August 23, 2019. She was instrumental in launching the magazine working closely with Dr. Robertico Croes to see the vision of an industry-appealing publication realized. An associate professor and South African native, van Niekerk helped organize the 2010 FIFA World Cup and taught at Rosen College for seven years. Throughout her career, van Niekerk authored or co-authored more than 110 academic publications. Her teaching experience spanned 18 years and more than 30 courses in South Africa and the United States. She won numerous awards, including Outstanding Editorial Support in 2017 from the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, and Rosen's University Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in 2015. We miss Mathilda!

As you read this issue of the *Rosen Research Review*, think of your mind expanding, filling with knowledge, think of being a life-long learner. We hope that you enjoy the magazine and read each new issue as it becomes available.

**Youcheng Wang, Ph.D., Dean and Preeminent
Professor in Destination Marketing**

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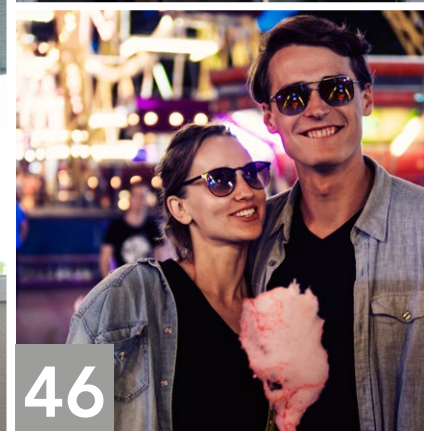
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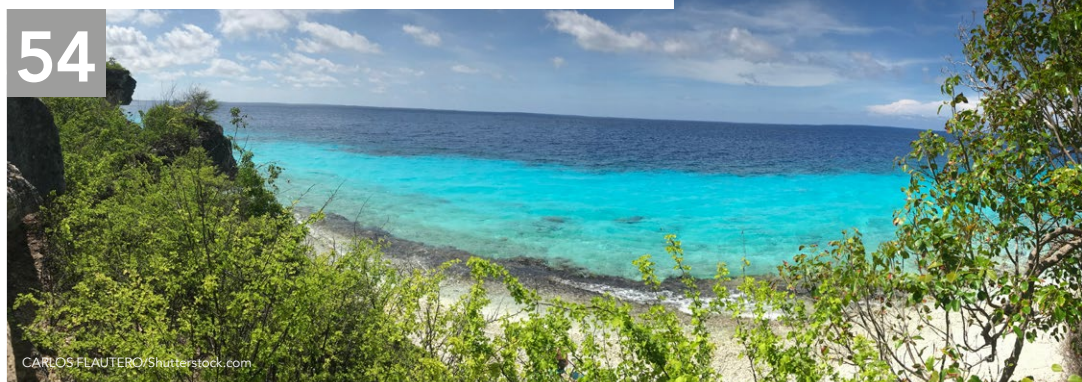
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A NEW MODEL TO HELP PREVENT FOODBORNE DISEASE



Microscopic view of *Vibrio vulnificus*.

Shellfish, such as oysters, are a well-known source of foodborne diseases. A bacterium called *Vibrio vulnificus*, commonly found in shellfish, can cause particularly severe illness. Unfortunately, regulations aimed at improving food safety also have the potential to damage the fragile economic status of small coastal communities that depend on oyster harvesting. Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Dr. Sergio Alvarez has led the development of a new bioeconomic model that has the potential to help improve food safety while minimizing economic harm.

Falling ill after eating shellfish is common enough that the mollusks have developed something of a reputation. This is not unwarranted; over the last few decades, reports of foodborne diseases (FBD) associated with shellfish consumption have been on the increase. One of the chief culprits is a bacterium called *Vibrio vulnificus*. Shellfish, such as oysters, are filter feeders that sieve seawater through their gills. Their gills trap pathogens like bacteria, which then become highly concentrated in the gut of the shellfish.

Infection with *V. vulnificus* can be extremely serious, leading to severe illness ranging from gastroenteritis to septicemia or even death. The bacterium is particularly dangerous to people with conditions such as immune disorders or diabetes. In fact, of all the bacteria and viruses that can cause FBD after eating shellfish, *V. vulnificus* leads to the most serious

threats to health. *V. vulnificus* is found naturally in marine and estuarine environments, but the prevalence of the bacteria varies depending on the water temperature and salinity. Research has shown that most *V. vulnificus* infections take place during warm weather, when water temperatures rise.

THE SHELLFISH ECONOMY

Vibrio vulnificus is not only a threat to health; it also has serious economic consequences. One study found that a single case of *V. vulnificus* costs, on average, \$3.03 million – far more than any other FBD. The total economic cost of *V. vulnificus* in the United States is estimated at \$319 million every year. At the same time, the seafood harvest remains important to the U.S. economy, particularly in some coastal communities. A 2015 report by the National Marine Fisheries Service found that the value of oyster landings in the U.S. reached \$240 million per year.

In Florida, most wild oysters are harvested using traditional, low-tech, low-cost methods. At the heart of this industry is Apalachicola Bay, in Franklin County on the Florida Panhandle. In the past, Apalachicola Bay





Oysters are a popular food but suffer from a reputation for carrying foodborne disease.



Oysters are important to the local economy.

fisheries have supplied nearly 10% of all domestically produced oysters in the U.S. Almost all fishing here takes place on small, owner-operated boats. Crucially, these vessels, almost without exception, do not have on-board cooling facilities for their catch. In the heat of summer, this heightens the chances of bacteria in the oysters proliferating to dangerous levels.

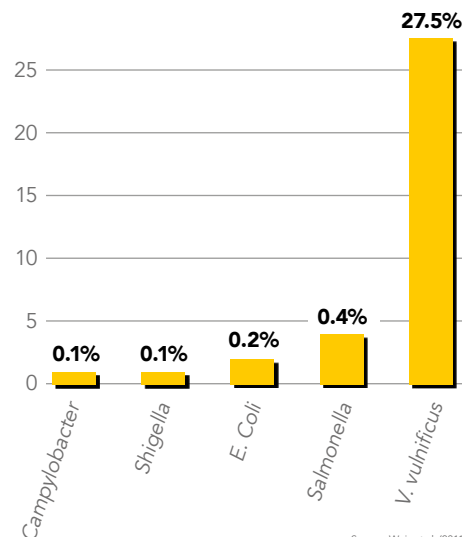
In 2015, changes were made to the laws governing oyster fisheries in Apalachicola Bay. The aim of the new regulations was to reduce the likelihood of Apalachicola Bay oysters carrying FBD, by limiting the amount of time each vessel could spend collecting oysters. The legal daily harvest period, for boats with no on-board cooling, was cut by four hours a day during the summer season. Rather than being allowed to catch from sunup to 3pm,

oysters can now only be collected from sunup until 11am. This means that harvested oysters spend less (un-refrigerated) time on board before being transferred to a processing facility. However, there were concerns that the reduced harvesting time would lead to economic losses, particularly in the small coastal communities that are dependent on the oyster fisheries.

BALANCING FOOD SAFETY AND ECONOMICS

The potential conflict between the need for food safety and the economic sustainability of wild oyster harvesting drove Rosen College's Dr. Sergio Alvarez to investigate further. Dr. Alvarez has developed a bioeconomic model to examine the impact of the oyster harvest regulations. Bioeconomic models mathematically

Case fatality rates of representative foodborne diseases



Source: Weis et al. (2011)

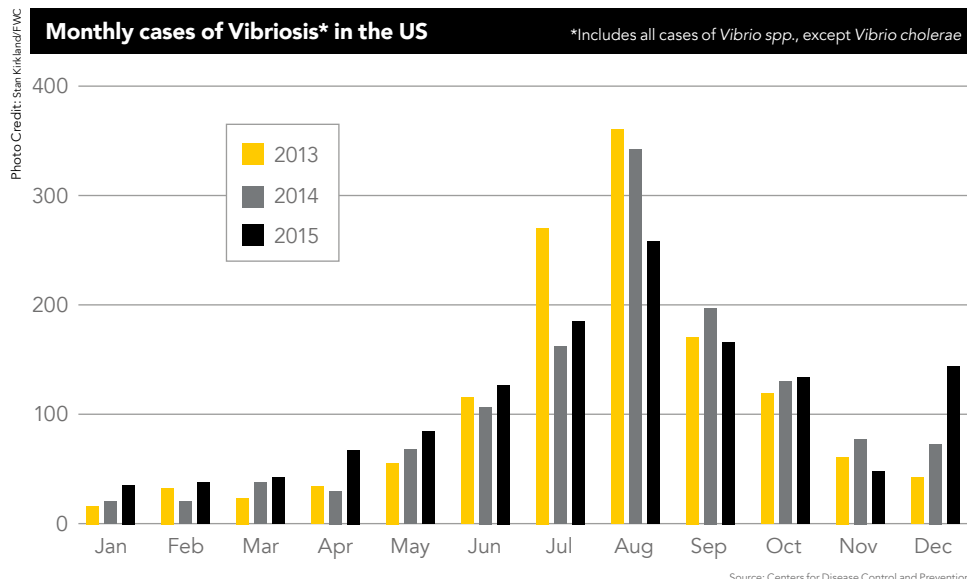
describe the relationship between natural, biological features or processes (such as *V. vulnificus*) and socioeconomic systems (like the oyster fisheries.) As such, they can be used to assess the impact of policies like those introduced in Apalachicola Bay.

Dr. Alvarez chose to look at oysters, rather than other kinds of shellfish, because oysters are the source of more than 98% of foodborne *Vibrio* infections. The 2015 policy only applies to summer season oysters harvested in Apalachicola Bay – nowhere else. As the prevalence of *V. vulnificus* is directly related to temperature, the amount of time allowed between harvest and landing varies according to the time of year.

ONE STUDY FOUND THAT A SINGLE CASE OF *V. VULNIFICUS* COSTS, ON AVERAGE, \$3.03 MILLION – FAR MORE THAN ANY OTHER FOOD-BORNE DISEASE.



Almost all fishing vessels are small and owner-operated.



A BIOECONOMIC MODEL

To build the bioeconomic model, Dr. Alvarez used oyster trip ticket records from the 2014 and 2015 summer seasons. This covers the last year of fishing under the previous regulations, and the first of the new reduced harvesting hours. Trip tickets include data on the harvester, the buyer, the date of the transaction and the weight of the catch. This meant that Dr. Alvarez could calculate fishing effort, landings, prices, and the value of landings, for each day of the 2014 and 2015 summer seasons.

Dr. Alvarez used the trip ticket data to build a model that predicts the effects of the policy changes on the fishery with a high level of accuracy. When assessing the possible impact of the policy on *V. vulnificus* infections, there was some uncertainty, as there is not yet any data available on numbers of infections (this would require several years of tracking *V.*

THE MODEL DEVELOPED BY DR. ALVAREZ HAS THE POWER TO DEFINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOD SAFETY INTERVENTIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF FISHERY RESOURCES.

vulnificus infections after implementation of the policy.) Instead, Dr. Alvarez used data including estimates of the costs of each *V. vulnificus* case.

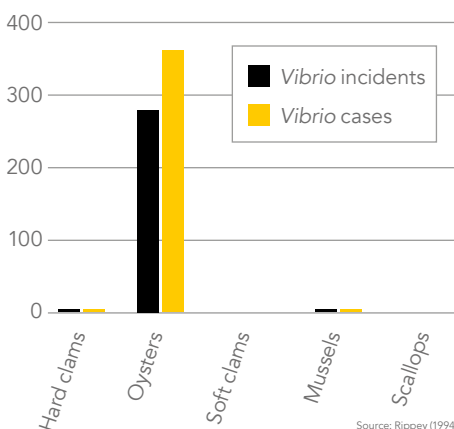
The results achieved by Dr. Alvarez and his colleagues suggest that if just two or more cases of *V. vulnificus* are prevented by the policy, the benefits will outweigh the costs – with a strong chance that human lives could be saved. According to the model, if 20 cases of *V. vulnificus* were prevented, the net benefit to society would be in excess of \$60 million.

of increased salinity of the water. The reduced stock will have also affected the behavior of oyster fishers – such as when they arrive at the fishery and for how long – but that was not covered by the current model.

Interestingly, some recent research suggests that consumers associate Gulf oysters – including those harvested in Apalachicola Bay – with a higher risk of FBD than oysters from other regions. This could potentially reduce demand for Apalachicola Bay oysters. However, if the harvest-time policy is proven to be effective, and this is widely known, the policy could actually improve demand for Apalachicola Bay oysters, leading to a price increase.

Overall, the model developed by Dr. Alvarez has the power to define the relationship between food safety interventions, such as the oyster harvesting policy, and management of fishery resources. The model could also be adapted to other interventions, involving other biological and socioeconomic systems. The ideas developed by Dr. Alvarez and his colleagues have the potential to improve food safety while ensuring that economic interests, like those of the coastal communities of Apalachicola Bay, are protected.

Shellfish related incidents and cases of vibriosis (1898-1990)



RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Alvarez and his collaborators led the development of a new bioeconomic model that has the potential to help improve food safety while minimizing economic harm.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Based on your results, do you think any changes need to be made to the current oyster harvesting regulations?

It is too early to tell. To answer that question, we will need to monitor *Vibrio* caseloads moving forward to identify the true impact of the policy in terms of reduced numbers of *Vibrio* infections. If we find that *Vibrio* caseloads have not been impacted by the policy, then further policy changes would be warranted.

Dr. Sergio Alvarez



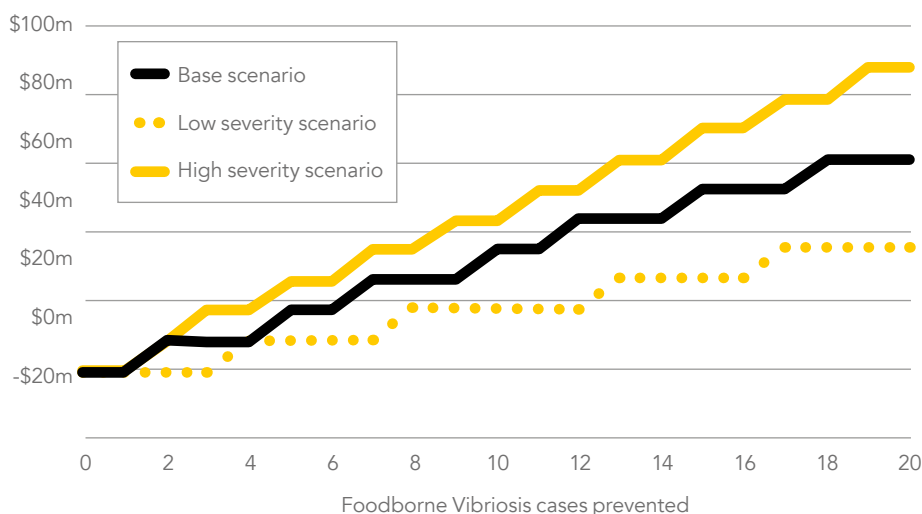
Dr. Sergio Alvarez is an Assistant Professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management and the Sustainable Coastal Systems Cluster at the University of Central Florida. He is an economist researching how natural resources and the environment contribute to human well-being through the provision of ecosystem services such as food, recreation, and protection from natural and man-made hazards.

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Cost benefit scenarios



The regulation can be expected to produce net benefits even if just a small number of cases of *V. vulnificus* are prevented.

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Oysters are enjoyed around the world.

LGBT EVENTS:

Sense of belonging for LGBT travelers



LGBT events serve as venues for self-expression and celebration of identity.

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A successful event or festival can be a huge draw to a tourist destination. As lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) travelers are increasingly recognized as a growing market for tourism, events aimed at this demographic are expanding in number and scale. It is therefore useful to understand what factors influence attendance. In a study designed to do just this, Dr. Jeeyeon Hahm and Dr. Heejung Ro from the Rosen College of Hospitality Management looked at psychological variables related to social identity to examine what influences satisfaction and repeat attendance at LGBT events.

The economic contribution of the LGBT market to tourism has been growing over the last two decades and is estimated to be worth over US\$ 75 billion per year in the United States. LGBT events have become key motivators for travel for the LGBT community. They serve as venues for self-expression, celebration of identity, and where social constraints and intolerance can be avoided. Perhaps the most well-known LGBT events are Pride festivals which occur in cities globally. Although they started as political demonstrations, they have evolved into more commercial and celebratory events.

From the perspective of destination marketing organizations, an LGBT event can raise the image of the destination by making it appear forward thinking and trendy, which appeals to both LGBT

and heterosexual travelers alike. Furthermore, LGBT events are thought to have a positive impact on the psychological wellbeing of LGBT attendees by affirming their sense of belonging i.e. their individual feelings of connection to surrounding people, places, and things.

SENSE OF BELONGING

Drawing from social identity theory, research by Hahm and Ro sought to investigate whether sense of belonging influences event satisfaction, and behavioral intention i.e., the likelihood of attending the event again in the future. In order to explore the construct of sense of belonging thoroughly, it was broken down into two levels: affective bond and collective self-esteem.

Affective bond is the emotional connection between an individual and a particular



LGBT events are thought to have a positive impact on the psychological wellbeing of LGBT attendees.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Social identity refers to an individual's self-concept in relation to a relevant social group, in this case the LGBT community. It stems from the idea that belonging to a group (be it social, family, sports team, etc.) greatly affects our self-esteem and perception of self-worth. The theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and is often used in psychology to explain and predict behavior amongst social groups.

aims to make contributions to both academic knowledge, as well as tourism and destination marketing. Psychological findings can be applied to help improve wellbeing, and from a tourism perspective it is useful to understand the motivations of LGBT individuals for travel and event attendance.

Based on the literature on affective bond and collective self-esteem, the researchers predicted that affective bond would be positively related to both satisfaction and intention to attend again, and that collective self-esteem would be positively related to intention to attend again.

DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

The researchers identified a large, week-long, annual LGBT event consisting of multiple functions including dances and parties, as a suitable place to sample participants from the target population. After heterosexual participants were eliminated, 261 LGBT attendees were recruited to complete a survey assessing the psychological constructs of affective bond and collective self-esteem, as well as their satisfaction with the event, and their intention to attend again in the future.

place, brand, or person/people. In this context it refers to the connection with other attendees at an LGBT event. The idea that this emotional connection might influence satisfaction and behavioral intention is supported by previous work on brand loyalty and travel destinations.

Collective self-esteem refers to the individual's self-evaluation of their place within the wider LGBT community. Given the history of persecution and marginalization of sexual minorities, involvement in a community provides many benefits including information, resources, and identity affirmation. Although limited, previous

work has shown that collective self-esteem influences behavioral intention.

Research in this area is lacking, both specifically in terms of the LGBT community, but also generally in terms of what motivates event attendance from a psychological perspective. The research conducted at Rosen College

LGBT EVENTS SERVE AS VENUES FOR SELF-EXPRESSION AND CELEBRATION OF IDENTITY.



Pride festivals take place all around the world.



Pride festivals started as political demonstrations and have developed into celebratory events.

Jerome / stock.adobe.com

Five key findings emerged from the data. As one might expect, the findings showed that satisfaction with the event directly impacted intention to re-attend. In line with predictions, affective bond strongly influenced both satisfaction with the event and intention to attend again in the future. Collective self-esteem also affected intention to re-attend. Interestingly, the researchers found that of the two levels of sense of belonging, affective bond had a stronger influence on intention to re-attend than collective self-esteem. This suggests that while feeling part of the wider community is important, the emotional connection and shared experience between individual event attendees has more of an impact. These findings are in line with social identity theory and confirm that the shared experiences and social interactions associated with attending an event contribute to an individual's sense of belonging.

Of further interest is the demographic information of the sample used in Hahm and Ro's research. The majority were white males

who identified as gay, were highly educated, were from high income households, and were extremely well traveled i.e., they had both the funds and motivation to travel. This makes them an extremely important target for destination marketing and event planning. Of course, whether or not the sample demographics in this research properly represent the wider LGBT community is debatable, and the researchers note this as a potential limitation of the work. Further to this, there was no representation of the transgender community, and future research would need to address this in order to provide more inclusive data. However, as the focus of the study was specifically on LGBT travelers and event attendees, the sampling method was appropriate, and the conclusions drawn were most likely applicable to other destinations holding LGBT events.

The researchers also acknowledge that there may be other motivational factors influencing event attendance and satisfaction that are overlooked in their work. In terms of future work, the

researchers suggest it may be useful to increase the number of event locations, and to look at other event-specific motivations for attending.

IMPLICATIONS

As intended, the findings present a multitude of implications for academia, as well as practical applications for the travel and tourism industry. For academia, the findings contribute to the growing LGBT literature in psychology and our knowledge of LGBT social identity relevant to event attendance. But what this research really highlights is the importance of the LGBT market in travel and tourism. Practically, this means event managers and organizers can use the findings to shape event design and marketing (with the potential of increasing revenue), as well as to enhance the emotional experience of LGBT attendees. For example, the researchers suggest the use of social media and event specific apps to facilitate networking and connection between attendees even before the event has started. They also suggest creating pre-events to facilitate bonding before the major event and special programs for first-time attendees so it's easier for them to meet and bond with other first-timers. Post-event, it is suggested that organizers could engage with attendees for the purpose of evaluation, which would enhance their sense of ownership, and give them an opportunity to influence future events.

WHILE FEELING PART OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT, THE EMOTIONAL CONNECTION AND SHARED EXPERIENCE BETWEEN EVENT ATTENDEES HAS MORE OF AN IMPACT.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Hahm and Dr. Ro have examined how sense of belonging at LGBT events can encourage repeat attendance.

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Key paper

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Given the psychological element of the work, beyond the implications for tourism, do you think there could be any other practical applications of your findings for the LGBT community?

/// Individuals of this study shared a tight emotional bond with others in the wider LGBT community by attending the event. Basically, the event served as a powerful platform for attendees to connect with others on a more personal level. The LGBT community can highlight the personal and emotional bonding experience of LGBT events. Also, host destinations and venues (e.g., hotels) of LGBT events can consider sense of belonging in their branding/marketing strategy to attract LGBT travelers who are known to be extremely loyal towards LGBT-supporting organizations. Emotional connection with a destination and/or brand can create place attachment (sense of belonging) that may lead to loyalty.

Event managers and organizers can use the findings to enhance the emotional experience of LGBT attendees.

Dr. Jeeyeon J. Hahm



Dr. Hahm is an Assistant Professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at University of Central Florida. Her research areas include destination image, destination marketing, mega events and destination image, consumer behavior in tourism and events, and film-induced tourism.

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THE BREAKERS:

How to make it in luxury hospitality management

There is no doubt that from the outside, the Italian Renaissance-style resort The Breakers Palm Beach, looks luxurious and comfortable. Executive Vice President & General Manager Tricia Taylor gives us the inside scoop on what it means to manage such a unique hotel and why she still loves her role 24 years in. She explains to Rosen College's Sr. Director for Advancement, Danielle Orchard, why she is looking to Rosen College for future star employees.

The Breakers Palm Beach is one of the most iconic resorts in the United States. Located in South Florida, it offers its guests numerous choices, from nine restaurants ranging from casual beachfront to stylishly sophisticated and a world-class private beach club with four pools, five whirlpool spas, 25 poolside bungalows and a variety of on-site watersports. Additional amenities include two championship golf courses, 10 Har-Tru tennis courts, a Forbes Five-Star spa, an indoor-outdoor oceanfront fitness center, 12 signature on-site boutiques and a Family Entertainment Center with an extensive program of activities for children.

So, what does it take to give guests the experience of a lifetime? Is it possible to meet the desires and needs of customers while maintaining an inspiring and supportive working environment for employees? In this interview, Rosen College's Danielle Orchard speaks with Executive Vice President & General Manager Tricia Taylor about starting her career in Housekeeping, becoming the first female executive in roles across the organization, as well as what The Breakers means to her

personally, to the staff and the wider Palm Beach community.

HI TRICIA! TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

My hospitality roots begin in Washington state. I grew up near Seattle where my grandparents built, owned and operated two motels, so perhaps I inherited my passion for hospitality. My teenage years were spent stocking vending machines, cleaning rooms and helping wherever needed. Now, with years of work and life experience, and some reflection, I appreciate my upbringing in numerous ways. I recognize the impact of watching my grandmother take care of guests and my grandfather manage the properties personally. I was raised with the expectation to work hard, do whatever needs to be done, and to be kind and help others.

WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE?

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree with distinction in Hotel Administration from Cornell University in beautiful Ithaca, New York. My first 'real job' after graduation was at the famed Waldorf-Astoria hotel

in New York City. I participated in Hilton's Management Training Program in the Rooms Division and my first assignment was to work in the hotel's Housekeeping Department. A year later, The Breakers Palm Beach lured me away from New York, which is why I moved to Florida and happily remain here. I have a special connection with my work and with my employer that I believe is unique and has been reflected in my growth within the company over the last 24 years.

WHEN DID YOU JOIN THE BREAKERS AND HOW HAS YOUR CAREER PATH UNFOLDED?

My Breakers career started in Housekeeping in 1996; my title was Assistant Executive Housekeeper which was an entry-level management role. I did whatever was needed from inspecting rooms, taking inventory, creating the schedule, checking payroll and cleaning.

My peers at the time did not understand why I wanted to work in Housekeeping. As an honors graduate from an Ivy League university and young working professional for two well-known landmark luxury properties, my



The Breakers' resort is 'breathtakingly beautiful' and has 'everything you could wish for'.

choice to work in Housekeeping was criticized by many people I knew at the time.

In my opinion, working in Housekeeping remains under-rated and perhaps misunderstood. We know it is essential and that cleanliness is a fundamental requirement, but this division of hotel operations offers highly valuable experience. You have the opportunity to learn your hotel product, earn instant financial responsibility and interact with numerous departments. More importantly, you have the forum to develop your human relations, communications and leadership skills. You can build a strong foundation for career success, while making a difference in people's lives; you can take care of your hotel property and the team that makes it happen; and you can make their tough work as pleasant as possible, while contributing to their job and personal fulfillment. When college students ask me about a career in hotel operations, I proudly share my perspective that you will learn more from managing a challenging area than an easier, seemingly more glamorous one.

From my start in Housekeeping, I worked my way up through the Rooms Division, supervising a growing number of departments, including Front Office, Bell Services, Concierge, Valet, Housekeeping, Laundry and more.

At age 28, I was promoted to Rooms Division Executive and appointed to the company's Executive Group. This was a noteworthy milestone in my career, as I was the youngest member at the time and the first female to join the committee.

I was promoted to Hotel Manager at age 29, working full-time, while earning my MBA

I was raised with the expectation to work hard, do whatever needs to be done and to be kind and help others.

locally from Florida Atlantic University. I was simultaneously a full-time Hotel Manager and full-time student. I share this as I greatly value education and continuous learning, even when it's not convenient or easy. I believe taking responsibility and initiative for your own growth and development has to be a top personal priority.

At age 32, my most important job opportunity arrived: motherhood. Three years later, the job doubled with the arrival of my second daughter. Managing a great hotel is definitely rewarding, but being a mom to two wonderful children is the best role I could ever ask for.

My responsibilities at work continued to expand. I was appointed General Manager in 2010, and five years later was promoted to Senior Vice President with full oversight of our business operations. In 2019, I became Executive Vice President & General Manager. While these are career milestones for me personally, they generate interest as they mark the first time

a female executive achieved these roles in our organization. I am fortunate to report to an outstanding leader in our industry, Mr. Paul Leone, the president and CEO of Flagler System Inc.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE BREAKERS?

Everything you could wish for in a luxury resort experience can be found at The Breakers. Over 140-acres of oceanfront paradise with all the amenities imaginable: nine restaurants, 12 boutiques, four pools, bungalows, golf, tennis, a spa, children's activities and more.



Tricia Taylor

Executive Vice President & General Manager, The Breakers Palm Beach
W: www.thebreakers.com.

Our resort has a rich, celebrated American history. It remains a tribute to its founder, Henry Morrison Flagler, the man who originally built

My peers at the time did not understand why I wanted to work in Housekeeping.

The Breakers in 1896 and created tourism for our state, transforming South Florida into an enduring vacation destination. Our company has thrived under the ownership of Flagler's heirs - the Kenan family - whom I consider myself truly blessed to work for. The family's commitment to the resort and the well-being of the team is unrivaled. We are proud to be the only large, historic luxury hotel that remains in the hands of its original owners, and to be the longest continuously operating business in our state.

WHAT MAKES THE BREAKERS SPECIAL AND UNIQUE?

In addition to our incredible owners, it is the team and our purpose that make The Breakers special.

The team is the heart and soul of our company. We have over 2,200 associates. While our property is breathtakingly beautiful, it is the genuine, caring service the team provides that always impresses our guests.

Our business purpose is unique. Beyond providing exceptional service, we strive



The Breakers' heritage is unique.

to make a positive impact in the lives of our team members, guests and community. Our culture prioritizes and supports team member well-being, in all its aspects, be it physical, emotional, mental or financial, and highly encourages social impact in Palm Beach County and beyond.

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES?

My job includes what you would likely expect, such as supervising large teams and overseeing operations. However, it involves much more. From my perspective, being a leader at work includes making

continuous progress and improvement with team satisfaction, guest satisfaction, financial performance, sustainability and social impact.

My ongoing responsibility is to refine and improve the employee experience. I consider myself a guardian of our culture, which should not only be nurtured and celebrated, but defended and protected at all times. Our culture is key to our business success, and I take personal satisfaction in helping build and support a workplace in which people truly enjoy working.

To achieve customer satisfaction, we continuously elevate the guest experience and introduce new and improved products and services. If a guest has concerns, it is ultimately my responsibility, and I take that seriously. I also prioritize our efforts to minimize our impact on the environment and maximize our impact in the community. You can see The Breakers team in action throughout our County, as we proudly volunteer over 30,000 hours per year.



Guests are impressed by the team's service.

HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA (UCF)?

I am proud of my association with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. My familiarity with the school began when I took notice of outstanding young performers at The Breakers. With a little investigation, I quickly learned what they all had in common: degrees from UCF, the majority of which were earned from Rosen. I am pleased to volunteer my time to assist students, visit classes, provide employment opportunities and serve on the College's advisory board.

Earlier I shared what I think makes The Breakers unique. For Rosen, the answers are similar. The people make the College special, beginning with Harris Rosen and the original Dean, Dr. Abraham Pizam, to the consistently high-quality students, and Dr. Youcheng Wang, who continues the legacy. They all reflect the college's mission, vision, values and service promise.

The College is not resting on the laurels of its current success; it is driven, relentlessly pursuing growth and recognized as a leader in hospitality education with no end in sight. Rosen values professionalism, leadership and service, and it shows. I deeply respect and admire the school's accelerated progress over its relatively young history, and I am sincerely excited to witness the next chapter for Rosen.

ANY CLOSING THOUGHTS? GO KNIGHTS!

To find out more about The Breakers Palm Beach, you can visit www.thebreakers.com.



Interview conducted by **Danielle Orchard, Sr.**, Director for Advancement at Rosen College of Hospitality Management.

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Co-Editors: Dr. Alan Fyall, Dr. Brian Garrod and Dr. Youcheng Wang



DO LOYALTY SCHEMES BENEFIT HOTEL PERFORMANCE?



Loyalty schemes were first launched around forty years ago.



Loyalty schemes have been a significant development in many industries, including the highly competitive hotel industry. But do those schemes contribute real value by improving hotel performance, or are they just an expensive but outdated marketing tool? Dr. Nan Hua and Dr. Wei Wei from the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, seek to better understand this relationship.

It's about forty years since the first loyalty schemes were launched as a proactive marketing tool to keep customers coming back and to try and stop them falling into the clutches of the competition.

Airlines and retail chains were among the first to realize the benefits of building the patronage of existing customers and tying them in through direct offers and rewards. Coincident with this was the rapid development of computer systems that could capture almost priceless information about

those customers, allowing insights on a scale that had not previously been possible.

The hotel industry was not slow to recognize the strategic value of building such relationships, especially as chains and franchise groups began to dominate the lodging industry both nationally and internationally.

But fast forward forty years to a different world where the internet has dramatically changed marketing channels for most industries, and where the consumer probably has a multitude

of loyalty schemes and loyalty cards that they leverage to get the best deal possible.

The question inevitably arises: do loyalty schemes still impact positively on business performance? Dr. Nan Hua and Dr. Wei Wei of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management and colleagues asked that question from the perspective of the hotel industry.

Today, most hotels will offer a loyalty scheme in one guise or another, and as of 2015, the major hotel groups had built up a combined membership of some 300 million members.

However, the growth of such membership does not necessarily translate into additional activity. The La Quinta group, for example, had 11 million members by 2015, but only 25.5% of them were active members. That



The benefits of customer loyalty are twofold: direct profit and a reduction in marketing expense.

apparent contradiction has led Dr. Hua, Dr. Wei and their collaborators to pose the following research question: Do loyalty programs positively impact hotel operational and financial performance?

THE BENEFITS OF LOYALTY

The perceived benefits, from the hotel perspective, of encouraging customer loyalty are relatively straightforward. Not only do customers tend to return or repurchase, which generates direct profit, but that also

The third benefit of loyalty is that loyal customers tend to be less price-sensitive, willing to pay a premium for the products and services provided, which increases the financial yield from each visit.

The fourth benefit is that happy, loyal customers tend to spread positive word of mouth (WOM), both directly and through the incredibly powerful channels of social media, with the customer becoming a valuable brand ambassador.

the trouble is, I don't know which half' (usually attributed to John Wannamaker, an American merchant famous in the early part of the last century) is almost as true today.

So, how can the hotel industry determine whether loyalty programs pay their way, or are they part of the 'wasted half' of the marketing budget?

In their literature review, the research team found that there are contradictory messages from previous studies. On the positive side, there is evidence that customer loyalty increases the perceived switching costs in the mind of the customer and that, overall, loyalty program expense contributed significantly to growing hotel profit.

AS OF 2015, THE MAJOR HOTEL GROUPS HAD BUILT UP A COMBINED MEMBERSHIP OF SOME 300 MILLION MEMBERS.

reduces the hotel's need to keep attracting new customers, thus reducing the expense of marketing communications.

Loyal customers tend to stay with one brand and build a valuable emotional commitment to it, but that alone is not enough; increasingly, the measure being used is share of wallet – the percentage of a customer's total spending within a category that is captured by a given brand. Customer loyalty doesn't deliver competitive advantage if the customer is just as loyal to the competition.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

However, whether those theoretical benefits are enough to justify the cost of setting up and running the loyalty program is still not clear, even from the research that has been carried out to date.

Only a fearless brand would rely on customer loyalty and word of mouth alone to provide future revenues, and loyalty programs tend to be part of a broad mix of marketing communication channels and choices. The old advertising adage that 'I know half the money I spend on advertising is wasted;

On the other hand, other studies were not so optimistic. The high cost of trying to make the hotel meet the exact needs of a vast range of customer types and their specific needs and interests is cited as a significant challenge to any return on investment achieved.

They also identify that loyalty schemes are straightforward to copy but very hard to differentiate, which leads directly to the need to develop a much better understanding of the contextual factors at play in the type, magnitude, and timing



Loyal customers tend to spread positive word of mouth.

of rewards offered by loyalty programs and how those are perceived by customers.

The research team identified six contextual factors:

- Franchise expense
- E-commerce expense
- Advertising expense
- Other marketing expenses
- Size of the hotel (i.e., number of guest rooms)
- Hotel chain scale (i.e., luxury, upper upscale, upscale, upper midscale, midscale and economy)

The team concluded these factors could affect the impact loyalty program expenses have on the profitability of a hotel brand or an individual property and should, therefore, be factored in as control variables.

LOYALTY PROGRAM EXPENSES HAD A SIGNIFICANT AND POSITIVE IMPACT ON ALL THREE OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND ON HOTEL GROSS OPERATING PROFIT.



Customer loyalty doesn't deliver competitive advantage if the customer is just as loyal to the competition.

Taking their initial question (Do loyalty programs positively impact hotel operational and financial performance?), they looked at operational and financial performance separately.

The researchers used a large sample of performance data from 2,120 hotel properties in the period 2011 to 2013, which included the following key performance measures:

- Occupancy – the percentage of available rooms occupied
- ADR – average daily rate
- RevPAR – revenue per available room
- GOP – gross operating profit

The study design had its challenges. The team had to avoid potential heteroscedasticity (where the variability of a variable is unequal across the range of values of a second variable that predicts it), autocorrelation (which measures the linear relationship between lagged values of a time series) and simultaneity issues (where the explanatory variable is jointly determined with the dependent variable).

To avoid these possible pitfalls, the team used the instrumental variable technique.

CONCLUSION

The findings showed that loyalty program

expenses had a significant and positive impact on all three operational performance indicators; RevPAR, ADR, and occupancy, as well as a positive effect on hotel GOP, even allowing for the potential impact of hotel location.

One of the benefits of this study, compared to previous investigations into the benefits (or not) of loyalty programs, was that the outcomes are based on methodology that controlled the series of other expenses, identified earlier, including franchise expenses, e-commerce expenses, advertising, and other marketing expenses.

However, Dr. Hua, Dr. Wei and colleagues do recommend caution when interpreting these results, given that some potential variables may have been omitted, and the fact that the market environment is continuously changing.

Instead, their recommendation is for further research into a range of factors. Among these is the degree to which individuals sign up to multiple loyalty schemes in the same service sector, and also the degree to which, although the results of this study were favorable to the contribution of loyalty schemes, that contribution may be declining due to the overabundance in the market. They also note that this study was working with secondary data and that a deeper understanding of the issues could come from qualitative and quantitative primary research.

For the hotel industry, research like that carried out by Rosen College's researchers is helping to provide much-needed clarity.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The team of researchers examined the impact of loyalty schemes on hotel performance.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What other components of loyalty schemes do we need to examine to better understand which components contribute most to their success?

While this study examined the overall impact of loyalty programs, when data becomes available, more insights can be revealed by exploring the individual components of loyalty programs, such as greater flexibility to earn and use free nights, different ways to obtain points which can be traded for hotel services and products, special members-only privileges (e.g., minibar credits or free Wi-Fi access). In addition, many other factors could affect the relationship between loyalty programs and hotel performance. For example, the employment of information technology could strengthen such relationships because IT makes loyalty programs easier and more convenient to access and use.

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ROMANTIC BRAND LOVE IN THE LUXURY HOTEL SECTOR



Uniqueness and hedonic values both play a part in creating feelings of romantic brand love.

'When I fall in love.... it will be forever.' It's one of the best-known lines in the Great American Song Book, but romantic love is now an increasingly familiar concept in marketing. It's said that people can form a deep and meaningful emotional connection with their favorite brands, just as they can with a life partner. New research from Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Dr. Juhee Kang looks at what this means for luxury hotels and what they can do to stay in tune with modern consumers.

Timeless elegance, exclusive facilities and experiences, staff who remember our children's names – we have our own expectations of luxury hotels and the things that make us feel special.

In a highly competitive and developing market, luxury hotels are continuously looking at how they can attract new consumers and retain existing guests. Given the size of the challenge, details count, as hotels welcome guests at the beginning of what they hope will be a lifelong customer journey.

ROMANTIC BRAND LOVE

This is an area of expertise in which Rosen's College of Hospitality Management

is particularly skilled. In a recent study, Dr. Juhee Kang used the marketing concept of 'romantic brand love' to look at the value of luxury hotel experiences and the relationships that consumers develop with luxury brands.

The marketing theory of romantic brand love is based on the premise that we develop emotional relationships with products in the same way that we fall in love with people.

We meet, decide whether there's an attraction, and if there is, pursue a courtship which we hope leads to a lifelong relationship. It's an emotional connection that is the ultimate in pleasure and has mutual benefits – a connection that makes us feel safe and secure and helps to define who we are.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Dr. Kang is Associate Professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management and her research into the significance of romantic brand love for the luxury hotel sector is published in the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

The study focuses on two of the concepts proposed by Sternberg in his theory of brand love, namely 'brand intimacy' and 'brand passion'.

The research sets out to identify what leads to, and what derives from, romantic brand love by looking at two key questions: Which aspects of luxury value influence the feelings of brand intimacy and brand passion toward hotel brands? And does romantic love generate desirable post-consumption behaviors such as advocacy and willingness to pay a premium price?

Dr. Kang said: "Very few studies have empirically investigated the multidimensional values of luxury hotel guests. This study



Hotels aim to develop lifelong customer journeys.



A unique experience and being made to feel 'special' drives consumers' feelings.



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fills the research gap by examining the role of luxury value in the evaluation of luxury hotel experiences.”

The research began with a review of the literature on brand love in the luxury hotel sector. From this, Dr. Kang developed a set of hypotheses which she tested by means of a survey of guests who had stayed in a luxury hotel in the past year.

The hypotheses were based on the premise that romantic brand love is determined by three dimensions of luxury, namely its uniqueness, associated status and the hedonic (pleasure-creating) feelings it generates.

The aim was to examine how these values influenced brand passion and brand intimacy, and how this affected consumers' future decision-making and behavior.

THE STUDY

Conducted in 2016, the survey was distributed by an online survey company in the USA and targeted guests who had in the last year stayed

at hotels belonging to the luxury brands Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, JW Marriott, Grand Hyatt, Fairmont, Conrad and/or Waldorf Astoria. After screening, replies from 412 guests – 53% male and 47% female – were accepted for the research. All had an annual household income of \$55,000 and above, and 16% had an annual household income of more than \$150,000.

The largest group of interviewees was aged between 25 and 44, and around three-quarters

were Caucasian. Some 70% had one or more university degrees.

The survey covered a range of qualitative statements about perceived value in luxury hotels which guests were asked to measure on a seven-point scale according to whether they agreed or disagreed. The methodology was tested before the survey was carried out.

As well as general questions about hotel décor, ambience and service, people were asked whether their experience made them feel like individuals and different from everyone else. They were also asked whether their stay reflected their wealth and place in society.

Questions tested the nature of people's passion for the brand, for example whether it fascinated them, prompted their emotional support and made them feel close. In addition, they asked such things as whether guests would recommend the hotel to family and friends, and whether they would pay more for their hotel over other luxury brands.

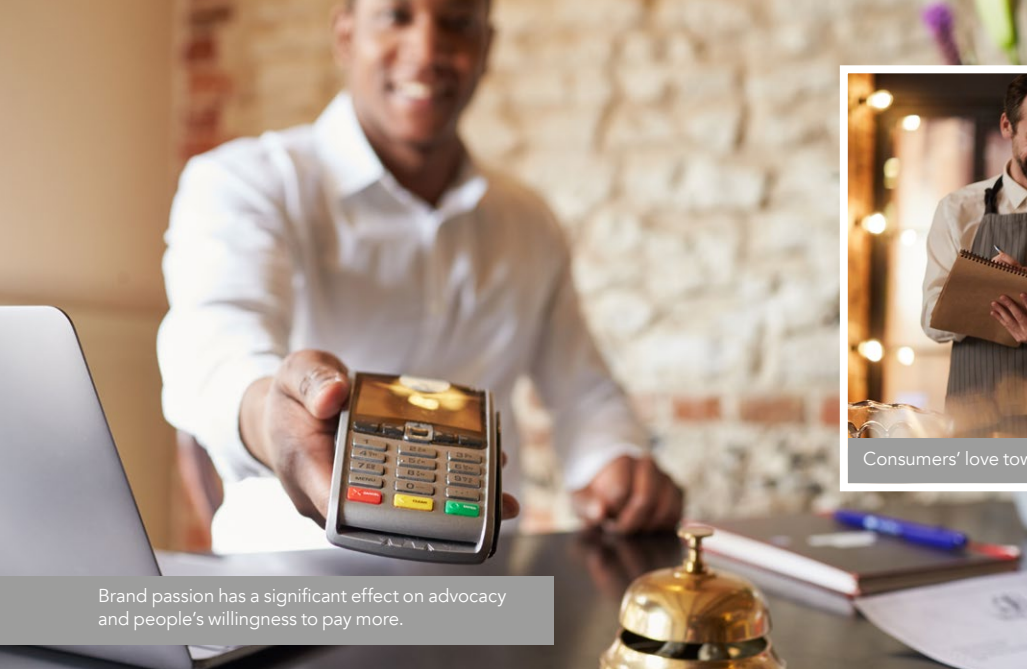
THE FINDINGS

The survey data was analyzed using a statistical technique suited to the variable nature

THE STUDY CONFIRMS THE ROLE OF UNIQUENESS IN CREATING ROMANTIC BRAND LOVE, SUGGESTING THAT CONSUMER'S LOVE TOWARDS A HOTEL BRAND IS STRONGLY AFFECTED BY FEELING SPECIAL.

of people's answers ('structural equation modeling'). This allowed Dr. Kang to measure how perceived luxury value (i.e., uniqueness, status and hedonic values) affected romantic brand love (i.e., brand passion and brand intimacy) and future consumer behavior.

The results show that the main factor affecting romantic brand love in the luxury hotel sector is uniqueness, and that being made to feel 'special' is what drives consumers' feelings most of all. In more detail, Dr. Kang found that uniqueness and hedonic values both play a part in creating feelings of romantic brand love. Uniqueness is especially important in making people feel passionate about the brand, and things that lead



Brand passion has a significant effect on advocacy and people's willingness to pay more.



Consumers' love towards a hotel brand is strongly affected by feeling special.

people to experience pleasure are especially important in creating brand intimacy.

In turn, Dr. Kang found that brand passion has a significant effect on advocacy and people's willingness to pay more. However, though brand intimacy affects advocacy, it does not directly lead to consumers being willing to pay a premium price.

Interestingly, the statistics showed that status is far less important to consumers of luxury hotel brands. Traditionally it has been thought that status is a key contributor to luxury consumption, but the findings of this study suggest that status does not significantly affect brand love.

SIGNIFICANCE

Dr. Kang's study pioneers evaluation of the relationships between luxury value, romantic



Many consumers value privacy above the social expression of wealth.

brand love and consumers' future behavior in the luxury hotel setting.

Dr. Kang said: "These findings provide a better understanding of how consumers form romantic love towards hotel brands and how this influences their behavior. The study confirms the role of uniqueness in creating romantic brand love, suggesting that consumers' love towards a hotel brand is strongly affected by feeling special."

She added: "Once guests perceive the value of staying in luxury hotels, they are likely to feel closeness and passion towards the brand and consequently provide indirect benefits to the success of favorite brands."

Given the finding that status is not important in determining brand love, Dr. Kang commented: "Expressing social identity and economic wealth are not primary reasons for Western consumers to stay at luxury hotels. These consumers are more independent and value privacy rather than social expression of wealth."

IMPLICATIONS

The study has practical implications for those involved in marketing luxury hotels, particularly in helping them to understand the values that influence existing and potential guests. It suggests that hotels should adopt different strategies to meet different consumers' needs and desires.

For those motivated by uniqueness, they should play to the distinctive and authentic

image of their guests, for example by promoting such things as selective private guests' clubs.

For those motivated by pleasure (hedonic value), they should encourage guests to immerse themselves in the hotel experience, for example by creating pleasurable activities with which people can engage.

The study also suggests that hotels should maintain relationships with consumers after their stay. Guests can be recognized for recommending the hotel to others and helping to spread brand messages and updates. They are also likely to be interested in other brand lines and future promotions, and their interest can be rewarded by being offered valued amenities and loyalty programs.

The study's third practical implication relates to people's willingness to pay more for their product. The research suggests that by paying greater attention to benefits that inspire passionate feelings in guests in a love relationship with their brand they can diminish resistance to premium prices.

Finally, the study suggests that marketers of luxury hotel brands should pay greater attention to the potential of consumers who are infrequent visitors.

Dr. Kang concludes: "As brand passion and brand intimacy are the emotional drivers of brand love, marketers should set the goal of marketing campaigns to be converting consumers into loyal customers who frequently and consistently return. For example, advertising and promotion events using consumer passion and intimacy can enhance passionate feelings. The key is the recognition of consumers' emotions and gradually strengthening the emotional bonds over time."

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Kang's work aims to better understand the relationships we develop with our favorite brands.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What do you personally value when you stay in a luxury hotel and why?

// I look for unique or exclusive experiences that I cannot have elsewhere. To me, it is a getaway from daily life and allows me to explore something new. Such experience remains longer and I realized the recollection of luxury stays induce great pleasure and happiness after all. //

Dr. Juhee Kang



Dr. Juhee Kang joined the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at UCF in 2012. Dr. Kang teaches Hospitality and Tourism Marketing and Brand Management. Her research interests have focused on social media marketing, consumer behavior, brand image, and brand experience. Many of her research papers have been published in top-tier journals.

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THE KEY IS THE RECOGNITION
OF CONSUMERS' EMOTIONS AND
GRADUALLY STRENGTHENING THE
EMOTIONAL BONDS OVER TIME.



HOW DRINKING VESSELS INFLUENCE CUSTOMER TASTE PERCEPTIONS

First impressions count and it takes just a fraction of a second for us to decide whether we like someone when we meet them for the first time. With a collaborator, Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Dr. Marissa Orlowski is looking at how similar perceptions can be made about products and what implications this has for the food and beverage sector. They have discovered that the kind of vessel in which drinks are served affects both people's taste perceptions and their willingness to pay.



Consumers have lower expectations of taste when drinks are served in flimsy cups.

There was a time when coffee drinkers only had to decide whether to have it with or without milk – it was literally a black or white choice. Now you can choose between an espresso, latte, cappuccino, macchiato and flat white. Then there's the milk – skimmed, semi-skimmed or whole, or maybe soya, almond, rice, goat's and even coconut. That's before you think about whether you want it in a cardboard cup, glass or ceramic mug – and would you like that to go?

So how do consumers decide what to buy when they are faced with such a choice?

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

It's generally agreed that consumers make purchasing decisions according to their perceptions of quality, price and value. The way products are packaged, or, in food and beverage terms, the way they are presented, helps to create these perceptions.

Now researchers have added to the academic literature by publishing a study on the influence

that different drinking vessels – cans, glasses, plastic cups and bottles – have on consumers' perceptions of taste and willingness to pay. Published in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, the research was conducted by Rosen College's Dr. Marissa Orlowski and her collaborator.

Dr. Orlowski said: "The central question underlying this research is to what extent visual perceptions of beverage presentation can influence taste perceptions and behaviors. More specifically, to what extent do variations in beverage presentation impact subsequent taste impressions and willingness to pay for that beverage?"

CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS

The study includes findings from previous studies, including the basic premise that the vessel a drink is served in can affect people's sensory perceptions such as taste, which is one of the main attributes influencing consumption.

The details are interesting. For example, consumers have lower expectations of taste when drinks are served in flimsy cups because people generally equate weight with higher quality. It has also been shown that consumers' notions of sweetness are dependent on the material from which the drinking vessel is made, as well as its texture.

RESULTS SHOWED THAT BEVERAGES SERVED IN ALUMINIUM CANS ARE EXPECTED TO TASTE WORSE THAN THE OTHER SERVICE VESSEL OPTIONS AND CONSEQUENTLY CONSUMERS ARE WILLING TO PAY LESS FOR THESE BEVERAGES.



Customers rate the taste of drinks served in a glass bottle highly and so are prepared to pay more for them.



The vessels in which drinks are served can lead to different sensory perceptions.

Based on their reaction to the images alone, participants were asked about their expectations of the drinks' taste, deliciousness and flavor, rating each measure on a seven-point scale. They were also asked how much they would be willing to pay for each drink.

Standard statistical methods were used to analyze the results. The study's findings supported all three hypotheses. Though there was no significant difference between expectations of the taste of the drinks in the glass, plastic cup and bottle, these rated higher than expectations of the taste of the drink in the can.

Dr Orlowski explained: "Results showed that beverages served in aluminum cans are expected to taste worse than the other service vessel options and consequently consumers are willing to pay less for these beverages. Furthermore, the findings support taste as the underlying mechanism for the impact of the service vessel on willingness to pay."

The second study tested the same hypotheses, using the same vessels, but this time in a live setting in which people tasted the drinks before making their assessments. To avoid potential familiarity with the drinks used, lightly flavored sparkling water was chosen rather than cola, and to avoid participants being influenced by the vessels' touch and texture, they were asked to drink through a straw.

The experiment took place in a university lab in the United States and involved 82 people, 23 men and 59 women. With an average age of 23, 52% said they dined out weekly, with a typical spend of just over \$16.

The same questions were asked as before about the drinks' taste, deliciousness and flavor, with participants again rating each

Then there is the impact of shape on consumer perceptions. Tests have suggested that drinks served in rounded vessels taste sweeter and/or fruitier than those served in a straight-sided glass. For coffee, short mugs are associated with bitterness, narrow mugs with stronger aromas, and wide mugs with sweetness. As for wine, people have discussed for hundreds of years what shape of glass should be used for different wines and the jury is still out.

Much less is known about drinking vessels for more humble beverages. This is surprising, not least because of the many ways in which soft drinks can be served.

Take the example of global brands like Coca-Cola and Pepsi. If you're dining in, the drink can be dispensed by a soda fountain into a glass or plastic cup, or be presented in a bottle or a can, with or without an accompanying straw or glass. Do those vessels create different taste expectations and perceptions? Dr. Orlowski and her collaborator wanted to find out.

TWO EXPERIMENTS

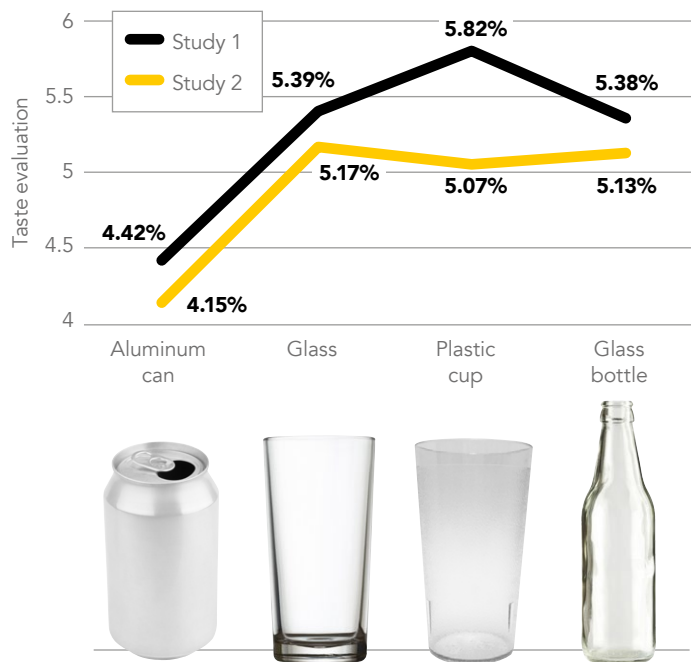
From their review of the academic literature, the collaborators developed three hypotheses which they tested in two experiments.

The hypotheses were that different service vessels influence consumer expectations and perceptions of taste, that they also affect consumers' willingness to pay, and that consumers' willingness to pay is influenced by taste perceptions.

Some 141 participants took part in the first study, 60 men and 81 women. With an average age of 36, all lived in the United States. 70% said they dined out weekly, with a typical spend of just under \$16.

Using an online survey, the first study presented participants with the scenario of sitting down for a casual meal in a restaurant and asking for a cola which was served to them while they read the menu. They were then presented with four similar sized photographs of identical drinks served in different, unbranded vessels: an aluminum can, a glass, a plastic cup and a glass bottle.

Means of taste evaluations for studies 1 & 2



Means of willingness to pay for studies 1 & 2



measure on a seven-point scale. However, the questions were modified slightly because the second experiment was about actual taste *perceptions* rather than the *expectations* of the first study.

The results were also analyzed using standard statistical techniques. The results generally supported the findings of the first study, in that participants rated the taste of drinks in the glass and from the bottle higher, and because of this would be prepared to pay more.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The research is significant in several ways, not least in that it confirms the findings of previous studies and extends the topic's research base.

The first study, based on visual cues only, contributes to other work on sensory cues, packaging and taste perceptions. It also provides evidence that the visual elements of a drink dominate other sensory cues and influence taste expectations and perceptions.

The second study adds to research on consumer decision-making by demonstrating that the vessels in which drinks are served can lead to different sensory perceptions. Like in the first study, it was again notable that drinks in aluminum cans were perceived to taste worse than the same beverage in another vessel.

Taken together, the results of the two studies offer further evidence of the effect of packaging and presentation on willingness to pay, notably that participants were willing to spend the least on aluminum cans.

INDUSTRY IMPLICATIONS

By showing how drinking vessels affect perceptions of taste and consumers' willingness to pay, the research has important implications for bar and restaurant managers, whose decisions affect customer pleasure as well as their bottom line.

The low rating for aluminum cans in both studies is a timely warning, as many producers are turning to cans as a cheaper alternative to glass. The study suggests that similar experiments could now be carried out on more complex beverages such as craft beers and specialty coffees and teas.

The findings on visual cues given by different vessels are highly relevant to all beverage categories, not least because of the influence of social media and customers' practice of checking restaurants and bars online before they visit. In such cases images are vital drivers of customer choice.

The finding of the second study, that there is no significant difference between perceptions of taste for glasses and plastic cups, also offers an opportunity for casual dining venues to consider using a lower-cost option.

Dr. Orlowski said: "There is an old adage that says one should never judge a book by its cover. Yet, when it comes to beverage packaging and presentation... the present research suggests consumers are doing exactly that."

THERE IS AN OLD ADAGE THAT SAYS ONE SHOULD NEVER JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER. YET, WHEN IT COMES TO BEVERAGE PACKAGING AND PRESENTATION... THE PRESENT RESEARCH SUGGESTS CONSUMERS ARE DOING EXACTLY THAT.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Orlowski and her collaborator's work highlights the importance of beverage packaging in determining customer's taste perceptions and willingness to pay.

REFERENCES

Key paper

Lefebvre, S., Orlowski, M. (2019) Can, cup or bottle? The influence of beverage vessel on taste and willingness to pay. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 76, pp.194-205.

CO-AUTHOR

Sarah Lefebvre, PhD, Murray State University

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Were you surprised to find that the study suggests there was no significant difference between people's perceptions of taste for glasses and plastic cups?

// Yes, Dr. Lefebvre and I were both surprised to see there wasn't a significant difference between glass and plastic cups in terms of taste perceptions. Across both studies, we expected the glass to rate significantly higher than the plastic cup because glasses are heavier, and heavier packages are generally perceived by consumers as higher in quality. One possible explanation, particularly for our second study, is that we used a hard plastic tumbler in order to stay true to a type of vessel common to fast-casual and casual dining restaurants, rather than a disposable plastic cup. This may have caused consumers to perceive the plastic cup in a more positive light, cancelling out any potential differences between it and the glass. //

Dr. Marissa Orlowski



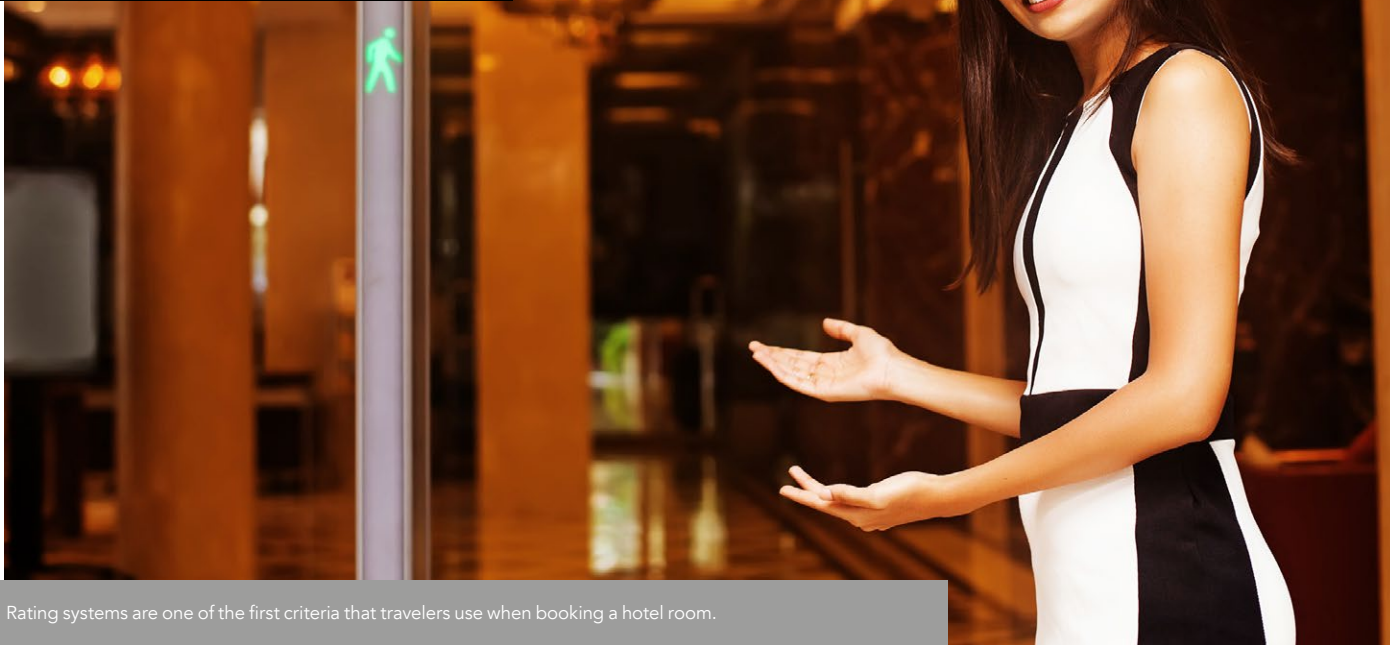
Dr. Marissa Orlowski is an Assistant Professor in the Foodservice and Lodging Management (FLM) Department at the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Her academic career is preceded by extensive management experience in the hospitality industry, and her primary research interest lies in the domain of food and beverage. She also serves as an Associate Editor for the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

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The research has important implications for bar and restaurant managers.

DIAMONDS:

A hotel's best friend?



Rating systems are one of the first criteria that travelers use when booking a hotel room.

Independent rating systems are common in many industries but possibly not as important as they are in the hospitality industry, covering both restaurants (with their world renowned Michelin stars) and hotels. In the US, the leading rating organization is the AAA (American Automobile Association) with their Diamond rating scheme. Many studies have looked at the impact of the Diamond rating on the performance of a particular hotel, but this study by Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers Dr. Michael Nalley, Dr. Jeong-Yeol Park and Dr. Diego Bufquin, takes a different perspective, looking at how a change in the Diamond rating affects hotel performance.

Since 1902, the AAA (American Automobile Association) has been covertly visiting hotels across the United States and assessing them against a range of criteria. Those that meet these strict standards are awarded an appropriate Diamond rating on a 1-5 scale. Just as crucially, a hotel with a Diamond rating will risk losing some or all of it if, on the annual inspection, they are considered by the AAA's professionally trained inspectors to have let standards fall.

There have been many studies into the impact of rating systems on hotel performance which support the correlation between respected rating and performance. However, in this current study, Dr. Michael Nalley, Dr. Jeong-

Yeol Park and Dr. Diego Bufquin from Rosen College of Hospitality Management, have chosen to apply their research expertise to the less obvious question of how the simple fact of a change in rating, whether positive or negative, might affect the key performance indicators (KPI) common in this industry.

In particular, they ask whether that change is maintained over the longer term and how this new understanding can impact hotel management strategy and investment decision making.

HOTELS TODAY

The study is particularly relevant in the current environment as the industry is facing the threat of competition from internet-enabled



minolaw, 1/Depositphotos.com



The criteria used by the Diamond rating scheme are famously exacting and specific.

HOTELS ARE EXPERIENCING GROWING THREATS FROM ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ACCOMMODATION SUCH AS AIRBNB, AND THUS, THE SEARCH FOR POTENTIAL ANTECEDENTS OF HOTEL PERFORMANCE HAS BECOME EVEN MORE CRUCIAL.

newcomers such as Airbnb. Similarly, with the advent of social media, both positive and negative customer experiences can be widely shared across the market in a way that wasn't previously possible. Unfortunately, as many businesses have found to their cost, customers are more likely to post feedback on a bad experience than they are on a positive one.

Previous studies have generally identified that rating systems are one of the first criteria that travelers use when booking a hotel room. In fact, the four most important variables on overall per-room performance are room quality, positive regional review, hotel regional reputation and regional room star rating.

Recognition by a well-respected independent body such as the AAA becomes more significant in these circumstances, providing an impartial recommendation and reference for the guest lodging decision.

THE DIAMOND RATING SCHEME

The criteria used by the Diamond rating scheme are famously exacting and specific. Take room service, for example: A five Diamond property is required to offer

room service 24/7, while a four Diamond property only has to offer room service for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Or consider the bathroom specifications: A shower base in a three Diamond property must have a base of not less than nine square feet, whereas the four Diamond property shower base must be no less than 12 square feet.

With such a clearly defined set of criteria, customers have a good idea of what they will find and experience when they book a hotel room. They can also be confident that the properties will be inspected at least annually, so a Diamond rating is always current.

HOTEL PERFORMANCE

A Diamond rating, therefore, has value for the customers' purchase decision and, consequently, the number of Diamonds the hotel is awarded is likely to be linked to the hotel's KPIs.

The KPIs that are typically used to assess hotel performance are:

- Occupancy – percentage of available rooms occupied
- ADR – average daily rate
- RevPAR – revenue per available room

Each of these tells us something different about the hotel performance. For any hotel, the number of rooms it has available for occupancy is fixed (at least in the short to medium term): A hotel with more rooms available for occupancy has less rooms booked and so is likely to be under performing. Average daily rate puts a marker on the price customers are willing to pay and RevPAR captures the value per room and assists in measuring the overall success of the hotel.






Each of these KPIs has a corresponding 'index' which allows performance in this area to be compared to the hotel's main competitors to determine if the hotel is obtaining its "fair share" of the market. So KPIs and KPI indexes are both used to assess hotel performance.

ALL CHANGE

But what about a change of rating? How can the impact of that change be assessed? The researchers from Rosen College were keen to find out.

Firstly, AAA provided its own data detailing properties that had Diamond rating changes

THE AAA DESCRIPTION OF THE FIVE LEVELS

-  Budget-oriented, offering basic comfort and hospitality
-  Affordable, with modestly enhanced facilities, décor and amenities
-  Distinguished, multifaceted with enhanced physical attributes, amenities and guest comforts
-  Refined, stylish with upscale physical attributes, extensive amenities and a high degree of hospitality, service and attention to detail
-  Ultimate luxury, sophistication and comfort with extraordinary physical attributes, meticulous personalized service, extensive amenities and impeccable standards of excellence

within a recent 10-year period (2006-2016). Nalley, Park and Bufquin were also able to access indexed performance data from 5,073 properties from Smith Travel Research.

After rejecting properties with missing KPI data, the researchers ended up with 1,824 properties that had experienced a change in rating; 499 of these had gained a diamond rating and 1,325 had lost a diamond rating. For each of these properties, they had both KPI data and KPI indexes so they could assess hotel performance and compare it to competitors.

The researchers hypothesized that, one year after the rating change, hotels with an increase in Diamond rating would have significantly higher KPIs and KPI indexes compared to hotels which lost a Diamond.

On examining the data, Nalley, Park and Bufquin found it supported their ideas: The hotels which had gained a Diamond had higher KPIs than those which had lost one. When the team looked at the KPI indexes (hotel performance relative to competitors) this was also the case with one exception: In the occupancy rate index there was no significant difference between the performance of hotels which had gained a Diamond versus those which had lost one. In the short term, they concluded, an increased rating boosted overall room rate performance.

However, they reasoned that the increased Diamond rating and resultant improved KPIs would be related to improvements in service, amenities and facilities. Would the investment needed for improvements continue over time?

In the long term, they suggested, improvements in KPIs and KPI indexes related to Diamond ratings would plateau out. In effect, there would be a significant improvement early on but, while the KPIs and KPI indexes would



The Diamond rating criteria even cover the size of the shower base.

continue to improve, the impact of this would decrease over time.

Further detailed analysis of the data supported this hypothesis. Those hotels which had increased their Diamond rating had higher KPIs and KPI indexes over the long term compared to those hotels which had lost a Diamond rating. As expected, however, the improvements tended to drop off around five years after the increase in rating.

PUSHING FORWARD

Perhaps we should not be surprised that properties that gained Diamond ratings experienced improved KPI outcomes over properties that lost ratings – it feels intuitive. But this research from Nalley, Park and Bufquin,

particularly the emphasis on the short lifespan of the benefits, has important implications for the hotel industry.

It is reasonable to suggest that the improved individual and market performances of hotels with an increased rating could be driven by the accompanying advantages and benefits perceived by the guests. An increase in the Diamond rating suggests an increase in the quality, sophistication, guest comfort, accommodation, style, service, hospitality, physical attributes, amenities and attention to detail that the guest desires and is willing to pay for. The Diamond rating is, therefore, an important factor in hotel performance.

This suggests that hotel brands and individual properties may need to reconsider their investment strategies. One-off investment purely to achieve an increased rating runs the risk of losing that rating if customer experience standards are found to be fading. Hotel management could instead apply a more informed and dynamic strategy of continuous investment to ensure the rating is maintained. It seems, after all, that Diamonds (at least from the AAA) are a hotel's best friend!

IT IS REASONABLE TO SUGGEST THAT THE IMPROVED INDIVIDUAL AND MARKET PERFORMANCES OF HOTELS COULD BE DRIVEN BY THE ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS PERCEIVED BY THE GUESTS IN THE HOTEL DIAMOND RATING SCALE.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Nalley, Dr. Park and Dr. Bufquin have examined the effect a change in Diamond rating has on hotel performance.

REFERENCES

Key Paper

Nalley, M.E., Park, J.-Y., Bufquin, D. (2018). An investigation of AAA diamond rating changes on hotel performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.07.016>

Background Info

American Automobile Association, 2017. AAA Diamond Rating System Fact Sheet. Retrieved from: <http://newsroom.aaa.com/Diamond-ratings/>.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

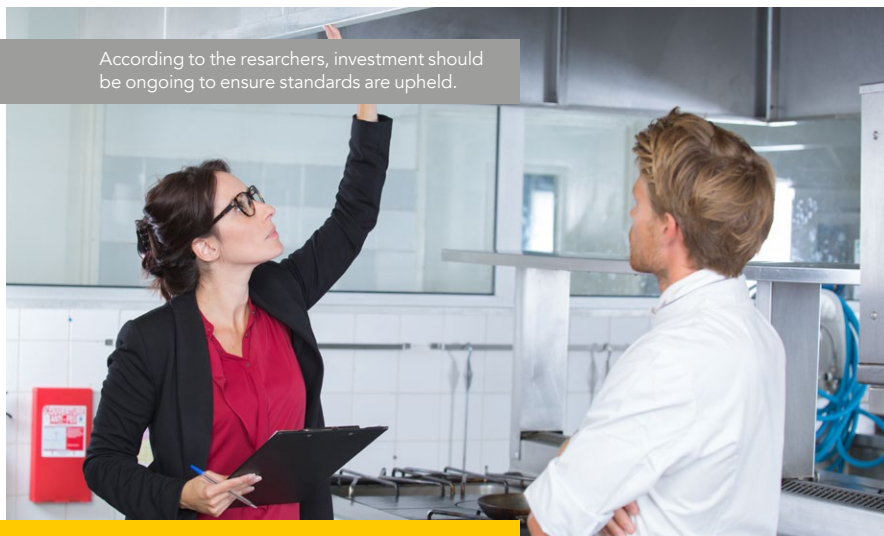
Why do you think customers are so swayed by rating systems?

Rating systems provide the customer with an authentic measure to gauge the product that they are going to buy, to ensure that it aligns with their specific wants, needs and desires. Whether this is provided by an industry organization or online by user generated content (UGC).

And what makes a good one?

Consistency in accurately representing the product for the customer experience and standards that represent the guest preferences and key concerns.

According to the researchers, investment should be ongoing to ensure standards are upheld.



Dr. Michael Nalley



Dr. Nalley is a hospitality executive with over 30 years of experience in hospitality education, training and operations management. He is a customer service and training expert experienced in global brand program development, implementation and analysis. He has worked with six hotel brands in operational and corporate level positions.

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Dr. Jeong-Yeol Park



Dr. Park has conducted multiple research studies that have examined potential travelers' purchase behavior at online travel agencies, restaurant customers' behavior, and demand analysis for hospitality industries. Currently, he teaches Hospitality Industry Financial Accounting and Research Methods in Hospitality and Tourism.

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Dr. Diego Bufquin



Dr. Bufquin has a multicultural background that has led him to live and work in a variety of countries. In the hospitality industry, Dr. Bufquin has had the opportunity to work at several hotels and restaurants. His research mostly focuses on the areas of consumer and organizational behavior.

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DARDEN RESTAURANTS:

The role of college education in the hospitality industry

Rick Cardenas' first job was waiting tables at his local Red Lobster restaurant. Now he is Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Darden Restaurants, which owns and operates more than 1,700 restaurants under brands including Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, and Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen. Here, he explains to Rosen College's Elizabeth Yost how his own career developed and discusses the importance of a college education in the hospitality industry.



Darden Restaurants is the company behind some of North America's most-loved restaurant brands. With its headquarters in Orlando, Florida, Darden employs more than 185,000 people and serves almost 400 million guests annually.

Darden was one of the original industry partners who helped build the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. The company was instrumental in the development of the Restaurant Management degree program and has contributed more than \$3 million to support the development of faculty at Rosen College. The company is also currently in discussion with Rosen College faculty to set up internship opportunities for students in the Restaurant and Foodservice Management degree program.

In this interview, Assistant Professor Elizabeth Yost speaks with Rick Cardenas, SVP and CFO of Darden. Rick gives us the lowdown on his own career trajectory and draws on his experience and accomplishments to explain the challenges currently faced by the restaurant industry.

TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF. WHO ARE YOU? WHEN DID YOU JOIN DARDEN?

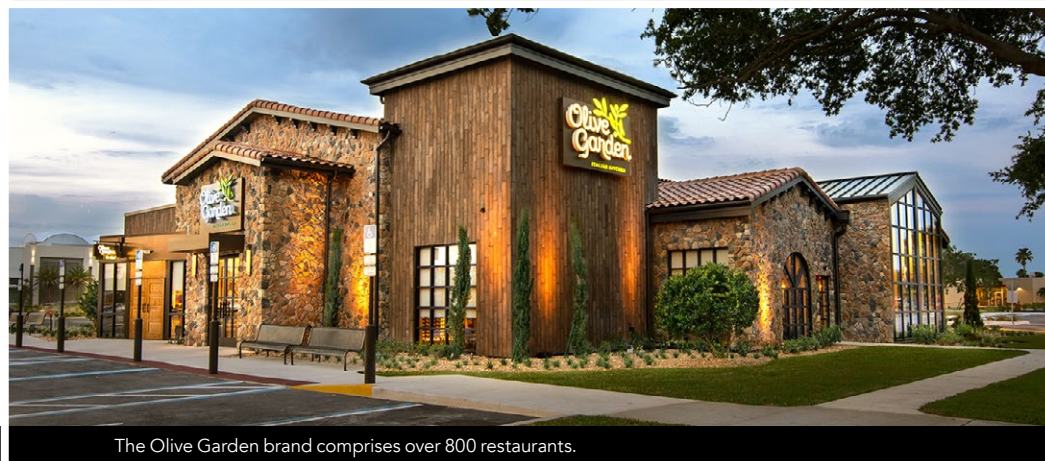
I grew up in Orlando, Florida. In 1984, I took a job as a busboy at a Red Lobster restaurant with the simple goal of earning some money to put gas in my car. This first job was what got me excited about the hospitality industry, and I continued working at the restaurant waiting tables while attending UCF for degrees in finance and accounting. Staying with the restaurant company throughout college turned out to be a great idea. Two days after I graduated from UCF I joined Darden, which was Red Lobster's parent company at the time, in a finance role supporting Red Lobster at the corporate office here in Orlando. I continued to work for Darden in various roles until 1996. That's when I remembered what a UCF professor asked me in my junior year, "What's the last job you want before you retire?" My response was that I wanted to be a CFO of a Fortune 500 company. To get to my goal, I knew I was ready to gain new skills by taking a risk, leaving a great job and going back to school.

Following a favorite quote: *You can't steal second base and keep your foot on first*, I enrolled in Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business for my MBA. Armed with a new skill set after graduation, I took a strategic consulting position with Bain & Company, followed by a strategy role with Parthenon Group in Dallas and Boston. All the while at these other jobs, Darden called me every year asking if I was ready to come back. Finally, the timing was right to come home to Orlando and Darden when they called to offer me an internal consulting position that I could not refuse. I was on the founding team for Seasons 52 before moving over to Olive Garden's finance team. In 2007, when Darden acquired the LongHorn Steakhouse brand, I ran their finance team and helped integrate that brand into Darden.

In a full-circle move, I was asked to move over to Red Lobster and lead finance for Darden's largest brand. Taking on this next challenge was a big deal to me; I worked as a busboy and waited tables at this brand and now I got to be the one to sign the paychecks. After



Cardenas helped integrate the Longhorn brand into Darden.



The Olive Garden brand comprises over 800 restaurants.

staying at Red Lobster for some time, I was asked to go back to LongHorn and help run operations. It was this role that helped me learn how to manage and lead people. It was a great experience and the most fun I've ever had. Then I moved over to IT and Strategy to learn those areas, before moving to my current role of CFO.

WHAT IS YOUR MAIN RESPONSIBILITY AS SVP AND CFO? SINCE YOUR APPOINTMENT AS SVP AND CFO IN 2016, HOW HAS YOUR FOCUS CHANGED?

I transitioned from my role as Chief Strategy Officer to the Chief Financial Officer in 2016. My responsibility now includes all the financial aspects of the company, including financial accounting, but I'm still very much a strategist at heart. I fundamentally believe that the essence of strategy is where you put your money. Being the strategy person now, but in finance, means I can help frame where we shift resources. Further, being the one responsible for where all the cash goes and being the strategy person is a really good marriage. In a lot of other

companies, the strategy person doesn't have any control over the resources – so the strategy isn't being funded. We are able to really hone in on strategy because we can direct where the resources go.

WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF AS CFO OF DARDEN?

I would say the marriage of data insights and business intelligence together under great leaders. Which leads me to the thing that I'm most proud of: helping to develop people to where and what they want to be.

The business accomplishment that I'm most proud of is the strategic acquisition of Cheddar's. It fit with what we wanted and is part of the strategy that I helped create. We found a really good brand that we wanted to buy and we integrated it.

Finally, as CFO, you don't necessarily "do" a lot of things. You lead a lot of other people to do great things. For me, I don't like to point to any one thing that I've done, because I don't do anything by myself. Stated another way, my

best accomplishment is not mine, it's Darden's. We've had a great five-year run because of the strategy and the team around us. We were the best performing restaurant company over the past three years and we've had the best shareholder return of any restaurant company over that time. This is amazing because five years ago everyone thought the company was broken. It's not a personal accomplishment: I helped set the strategy and the team executed it.

WHAT SKILLS FROM YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE/ROLES AT DARDEN HAVE BEEN MOST VALUABLE IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

I think I bring a unique skill set to Darden through my past experience as a strategy consultant. That is what made me successful throughout my career at Darden. It's not just now as CFO: Even when I was a director of finance with the various brands, I was considered the person who was strategic. It wasn't the way we used to do finance. As heads of finance for a brand, our jobs were defined as controllers, but I'm not a controller – I'm a strategist at heart. This has helped me to be successful in my job.

The other thing that has helped me is my ability and desire to find out about my team and lead them to what they want so they can have the best career experience. It's not something that you hear a lot about from people – but when your career is over and when you are done working, people care about how you helped develop them and how you made them feel.



Rick Cardenas

SVP and CFO of Darden

W: <https://www.darden.com>

You have to be a great leader, so educational courses and degree programs that promote leadership are fundamental to success.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS CHALLENGES IN THE FUTURE FOR THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY AND DARDEN?

I think the biggest challenge is having enough people to do all the jobs in the restaurant industry. Restaurants are inherently a hospitality business, so you need great people. But the industry has very low retention. Darden's challenge is attracting the best talent and making sure the best want to work for us.

There are not enough people to fill every restaurant job in the country, but there are enough people to fill every Darden restaurant job. How does Darden provide a great employee experience that makes employees want to come work for us instead of the restaurant next door? That is our focus, and it's why we invest in our people more than anyone else does. That's why we have the best retention rates in the industry. If we can staff our restaurants, we will win. This is our biggest advantage and challenge.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE HOSPITALITY (RESTAURANT) INDUSTRY AT THE UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE LEVELS?

Education is important at all levels, but certain knowledge areas are more important



The acquisition of Cheddar's allowed Darden to offer a different price point.

than others for the restaurant industry. The restaurant industry is inherently a people leadership industry. If you want to progress, you have to be a great leader, so educational courses and degree programs that promote leadership are fundamental to success. Operators also have to understand that restaurants are a margin and pennies business. Therefore, education in financial management is very important, and the hospitality management programs that provide key courses in this area are the ones that are most valuable to our industry. If they can learn in college that not every dollar is going to earn a return immediately but that it will pay off eventually, that is also helpful.

AS A COMPANY, IN WHAT WAYS WILL DARDEN BE DIFFERENT IN FIVE AND 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

I'll start by mentioning that we are a really different company today than we were 10 years ago. My best guess is that five years from now we will look a little different than we do today, and in 10 years we will be really different.

I think we will get bigger and have more brands, and hopefully, we will gain more market share in our space. We are the biggest in casual dining and our goal is to drive costs out and

continue to provide great value to consumers in the full-service casual dining space.

Part of the reason we bought Cheddar's is that we found we were eschewing too much value, and there was a big segment of the population that was being left behind. We found a huge addressable market because of the price points that Cheddar's has, which offers better value for the consumer. We purposely looked for something that would help bring a more value-oriented brand to our portfolio. It doesn't mean that the next one will do that, because as with all acquisitions, it has to be the right brand for the right price at the right time.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT COLLABORATING BETWEEN THE HOSPITALITY (RESTAURANT) INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA?

I am positive about the collaboration between industry and academia. As a business, we are always trying to find the best ways to do things, and if there are specific things that academia can help with, then we should absolutely do that. The best thing to do is to reach out to our academic partners and see if there are potential opportunities to work with researchers in areas such as frequency, data analytics, and people engagement. I think those are some things we can work on together.



Interview conducted by **Elizabeth Yost, PhD**, Assistant Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management.

DICK POPE SR. INSTITUTE FOR TOURISM STUDIES



The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies is based at the University of Central Florida.

In 1979, the University of Central Florida established the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies (DPI), after receiving \$25,000 from the Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA), Orange Blossom Chapter. The name honors the late Dick Pope Sr., the former owner of Cypress Gardens, one of Florida's first modern-day attractions, and the first commercial tourist entrepreneur in Florida.

The Institute was established for the purpose of (1) conducting proprietary and public domain research, (2) promulgating information to the public at large about the contributions of the hospitality and tourism industry, especially along economic, sociological, environmental, and quality-of-life dimensions, and (3) carrying out credit and non-credit educational activities.

Since 2005, DPI has secured over \$1.4 million in contracts and grants for research purposes. Its extensive client list includes:

categorical sampling
destination management organizations
convention and visitor bureaus
hotels
hospitals
vacation homes
restaurants
theme parks

DPI has also played a significant role in facilitating over \$4 million in non-credit educational programs with international partners. UCF's Rosen College doctoral students are extraordinarily essential to the Institute's ability to meet its objectives and its commitments. In addition, contracts and grants funded through DPI have been an invaluable source of external funds to support graduate assistantships for the doctoral students.

APPLIED INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies is the intelligent choice for private and public domain hospitality research, both domestically and abroad. We have conducted research for organizations in countries as widespread as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Ecuador, Aruba and South Korea.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TOURISM

We are dedicated to increasing the benefits of tourism through research, public awareness and education. We invite you to visit the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies digital collection to access our portfolio of research, publications, and white paper series. You may access the digital collection via this link: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/dickpopeinstitute/>



Doctoral students from UCF's Rosen College contribute to the research at DPI.



Rosen College of Hospitality Management, is among the top five hospitality and tourism colleges.

In 1983, the Institute's advisory board successfully lobbied the Florida University System's Board of Regents and created the Hospitality Management undergraduate degree program at UCF. Its successor, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, is among the top five hospitality and tourism colleges in the world with five undergraduate degrees, a master's degree and a Ph.D. program in hospitality management.

INCREASING HEALTH TOURISM SPENDING IN THE UNITED STATES



The U.S. offers a high standard of healthcare making it attractive to health tourists.

An increasing number of people are taking advantage of health tourism to access medical services abroad. For the U.S. to be competitive in the lucrative health tourism environment, it is essential to target the right markets. Until now the information available to do this has been limited. This knowledge gap is being addressed by Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat and Dr. Dipendra Singh from Rosen College of Hospitality Management and colleagues. These researchers have developed a microeconomic elasticity approach that offers an understanding of the effects of individual tourism markets on the total health tourism spending in the U.S.

Singh from Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Their research provides alternative strategies to understand these connections. The research team has developed a microeconomic elasticity approach that offers an understanding of the effects of individual tourism markets on the total health tourism spending in the U.S.

Travel that focuses on the use of healthcare services, medical treatments, or improving health or fitness outside of the country you live in has been dubbed 'health tourism.' An increasing number of people are taking advantage of health tourism to access medical services abroad. This tourism trend attracts patients searching for quality, available, accessible and affordable healthcare. Total health tourism spending each year is estimated to be between \$608 and \$635 billion worldwide.

HEALTH TOURISM IN THE U.S.

Many Americans travel abroad for medical treatments, and much research has been carried out examining the movement of tourists from developed to developing countries. There is an increasing trend, however, for international

tourists to access medical services in the U.S. The quality of physicians, together with state-of-the-art medical technology and short waiting times make the U.S. an attractive destination for those health tourists who can afford its superior medical treatment and service.

A GAP IN UNDERSTANDING

To be competitive in the lucrative health tourism environment, it is essential to target the right markets. To do this, you need to understand which countries' health tourists are the driving force behind health tourism spending. Unfortunately, there is limited information available from which to implement market segmentation, the splitting up of a market of potential customers into different groups, or segments, so that a business can target its products to the relevant customers. Enter Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat and Dr. Dipendra

While reviewing the literature, the researchers found conflicting information regarding the countries of origin of those people traveling to benefit from medical services in the U.S. While one source suggested that most inbound medical tourists to the U.S. are from the Middle East, South America and Canada, another said that the majority of inbound health tourists are from the Caribbean, Europe, and Central America. Yet another stated that they were predominantly from Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. This confusion revealed a lack of clarity in determining the tourism markets in terms of these regional classifications and hinders the implementation of market segmentation. Some authors suggested that employing market segmentation could lead to an understanding of each tourist market. This knowledge would allow prediction of market behavior and enable health tourism opportunities to be exploited, particularly



One of the U.S.'s key attractions for health tourists is short waiting times.

Until this study, there has been a lack of clarity on the country of origin of inbound medical tourists.

BRIDGING THIS KNOWLEDGE GAP IS ESSENTIAL TO NURTURE AND GROW THIS NICHE MARKET IN THESE NATIONS.

in developed countries. The research team believes that bridging this particular knowledge gap "is essential to nurture and grow this niche market in these nations."

Most studies of health tourism have used descriptive research, describing only the basic features of the data under consideration. The few inferential studies that have been carried out underpin the research team's belief that "inferential research-based coverage of health tourism is still in the early developing stage but has potential to further unravel this branch of activity within tourism."

INFERENTIAL RESEARCH

The inferential research approach involves making inferences from the sample data to more general conditions and reaching conclusions that go beyond the sample under examination to infer how the population might behave. Employing inferential statistics provides a mathematical foundation that enables the researcher to analyze phenomena

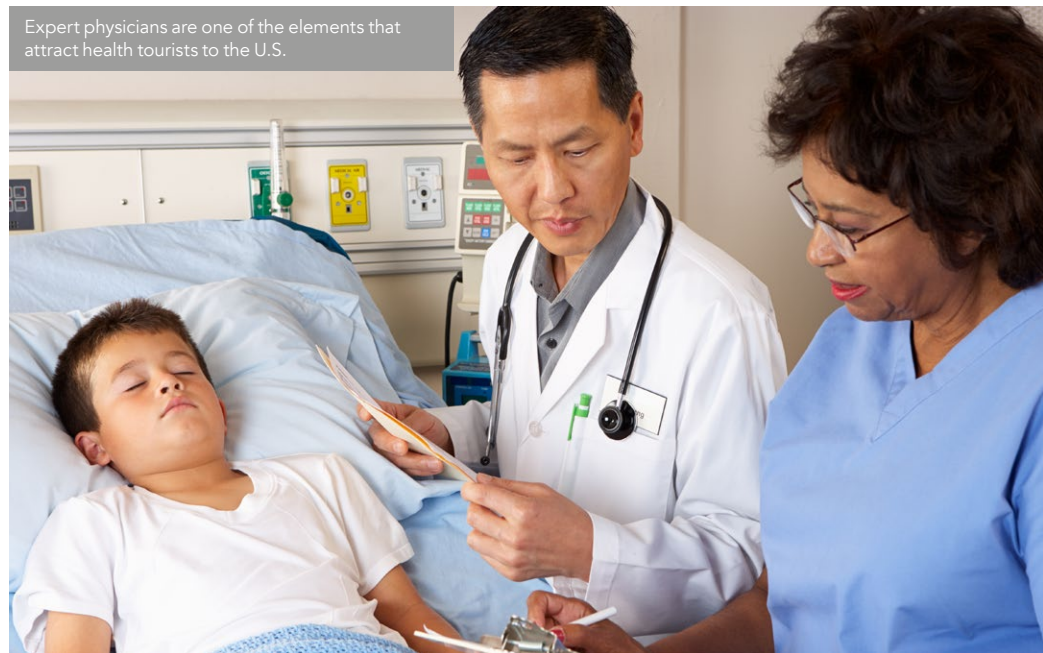
such as cause and effect, as well as measuring the strength of the relationships between dependent and independent variables.

MODELING TOTAL HEALTH TOURISM SPENDING

The research team is modeling total health tourism spending as a combination of

a volume effect (the overall demand for the specific market), and a price effect (the average spending per person per market). Employing microeconomics, they have formulated a modified version of total and marginal revenue analysis. This enables them to explore how a variety of visitors from twenty countries of origin affect health tourism spending in the U.S. Their investigation examines the effects on total health tourism spending as well as both its volume and price components, from long-term (trend) and short-term (cycle) perspectives.

Expert physicians are one of the elements that attract health tourists to the U.S.





State-of-the-art technology is a particular draw for health tourism to the U.S.

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ONLINE DATA

The researchers were able to collect secondary data from online sources. This had the added advantage that the information is available free of charge to the public. They collected data on health tourism spending from the International Monetary Fund and compiled visitors' statistics using both the U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration National Travel & Tourism Office and the U.S. Bureau of Census. This information was available on an annual basis and covered the period from 1986 to 2016. The research team then cleaned and standardized the data to facilitate comparisons.

ELASTICITY EFFECTS

The group employed a microeconomics elasticity approach to establish an understanding of both the long-term and short-term dynamics of the twenty individual tourist markets on total health tourism spending in the U.S. Elasticity gauges the responsiveness of demand in a market by measuring a particular variable's sensitivity to a change in another variable, for example measuring the shift in consumer demand resulting from a change in a particular service's price.

The researchers calculated the marginal revenue associated with health tourism for



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Better understanding where health tourists travel from can help the industry to grow.

each country of origin, i.e., how much the total health tourism spending would change with one tourist from that particular country of origin, together with the volume and price components. They were then able to compute the elasticity associated with these marginal revenues in terms of the elasticity of the total number of visitors (i.e., quantity) and the

tourism spending. The latter can inform both managerial and policy-making perspectives, bringing two implications to the fore.

Firstly, it is possible to apply market segmentation to health tourism. Based on their analysis of volume and price, the researchers found the top 10 potential markets

INFERENCEAL RESEARCH-BASED COVERAGE OF HEALTH TOURISM ... HAS POTENTIAL TO FURTHER UNRAVEL THIS BRANCH OF ACTIVITY WITHIN TOURISM.

elasticity of average health-related spending per visitor (i.e., price).

VOLUME AND PRICE EFFECTS

The results show that long-term elasticity increases in total health tourism spending are more likely to be influenced by volume rather than price. In contrast, the short-term volume and price effects tend to offset each other. This analysis reveals that many of the leading tourism demand markets for the U.S. could increase the overall long-term health tourism spending, especially as the increased volume effects outweigh any decreases in average visitor spending.

IMPLICATIONS

This research demonstrates that several of the leading tourism markets have a positive long-term effect on the growth of overall health

to concentrate on for further development of health tourism in the U.S.: Israel, Australia, Spain, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, France, Italy, China, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Secondly, the growth of health tourism spending is likely to be a gradual process, given that the elasticity effects were mainly found to be long-term. Furthermore, there are challenges such as language barriers and cultural differences that are faced by both the international patients and their caregivers in the U.S. These will all take time to address.

The research team highlights that the development of health tourism is underpinned by the volume and price-related factors. Understanding and directing their influences is necessary to achieve a competitive edge in health tourism.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The team's research interests include international tourism management and destination marketing and management, with a particular focus on sustainable tourism and destination resilience in Florida.

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CO-AUTHOR

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What advice would you give to policymakers tasked with the development of health tourism?

Policy makers should further look at the characteristics of tourists, particularly those that purposely come to the U.S. for health issues. This can be done through regular surveys of tourists visiting the U.S. This approach can provide further details on, for instance, the spending of tourists for health-related purposes, the type of services that they use, and the regions from where they get their service. The additional information will assist policymakers in preparing appropriate policies to develop health tourism further.

What are your plans for future research in this area?

The authors will continue to study relationships in health tourism in developed countries. This means expanding the analysis by considering other countries and their elasticity effects on health tourism spending. Future studies will also consider other analysis techniques, including country-specific surveys, to further understand the characteristics of the specific tourism market(s) on health tourism spending, and what type of treatment the tourists are seeking abroad.

Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat



Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat is an Assistant Professor at the University of Central Florida. His research agenda focuses primarily on the dynamics in tourism and hospitality, where he specializes in data decomposition and analysis using econometric techniques. He is the author of two books and many academic publications.

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Dr. Dipendra Singh



Dr. Dipendra Singh is an Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida. His research interests are in the areas of corporate financial management, capital structure, financial performance measures, revenue management, and information technology.

SERVICE WITH A SMILE:

How organizational injustice impacts emotional labor

In the hospitality industry, where staff are expected to always deliver “service with a smile,” organizational injustice can affect staff wellbeing and create emotional dissonance, preventing them from delivering high quality service. Dr. Valeriya Shapoval from Rosen College of Hospitality Management has documented the relationship between organizational injustice and emotional labor. Her work proposes solutions that hotel managers can implement to support their staff in achieving brand success.

The service economy relies on emotional connection between brands and customers. The traditional “service with a smile” is nowadays expanded to include customers’ expectations of empathy and relatability from the staff they interact with. Staff in the hospitality industry, in particular, are under increased pressure to regulate their emotions and deliver the most positive and uplifting experience to the customer or client, regardless of their own emotional state at any given moment. “Emotional labor” – the ability to consistently display friendliness across hundreds of interactions in exchange for salary – is a significant strain on the modern workforce. When combined with a lack of suitable support or effective management, it can lead to work stress and job

dissatisfaction, often resulting in negative customer interaction. Friendly service is associated with benefits for organizations by increasing positive word of mouth, making it important for brand performance and survival. However, over time, the strain this expectation imposes on staff can lead to emotional exhaustion.

SMILE AT ALL TIMES

Previous studies have shown the consequences of emotional labor such as job dissatisfaction, psychological burnout, high levels of stress and others, but the reasons for elevated emotional labor remain subject to controversy. In fact, other studies have shown that emotional labor can be challenging and that workplace-specific factors can affect employees’ ability to maintain a positive persona. Organizational justice

Being treated unfairly by management could result in staff experiencing procedural injustice.



Experiencing rudeness from a customer is an example of interactional injustice.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE PERCEPTION OF BEING TREATED FAIRLY AT WORK CAN SUPPORT AN EMPLOYEE'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN THE FRIENDLINESS CUSTOMERS EXPECT.

has been identified as one of the relevant determinants: Empirical evidence suggests that the perception of being treated fairly at work can support an employee's ability to maintain the friendliness that customers expect.

Organizational justice can be broken down into four components – procedural, interpersonal, informational and distributive – and perception of injustice in any of these components can harm staff's ability to deliver a positive

customer experience. Although some evidence exists for the role of each of these components in staff's ability to maintain a happy front, the associations of all four facets of organizational injustice have not been previously tested in a comprehensive and rigorous way.

WORKPLACE INJUSTICE

All four types of injustice can be experienced by frontline hotel employees. First, procedural injustice describes a situation

in which an employee's voice is not given full attention or consideration in decision-making. Feeling dismissed is often judged as a procedural misdeed and has been associated with strain and anxiety, although a direct link to emotional labor has not been firmly established in the literature.

Nevertheless, hotel staff might experience procedural injustice when customers react unreasonably to an event, for example, when they complain about receiving a smoking room despite never requesting a non-smoking one. In such situations, the staff member's emotional labor is likely to increase if their manager makes a judgment on the situation without first hearing the staff member's side of the story.

In the same situation, the staff member is likely to experience the second type of injustice – interactional injustice. This is specifically associated with the customer's behavior towards staff. The customer's reaction to the assigned room could result in mistreatment of the staff member, for example through a display of anger or rudeness. The staff member in this situation will have to exert him or herself to remain friendly and polite rather than responding in anger.

At the same time, lack of courtesy on the side of the customer can invoke feelings of being disrespected, resulting in significant emotional strain on the staff member. These responses can also be related to the third type of injustice, informational injustice, where lack of clear



Staff's job satisfaction, or lack thereof, is likely to affect their work performance.

communication from the customer impedes proper service delivery, leading to feelings of resentment in the employees.

Finally, the fourth type of injustice, distributive injustice, signals a departure from the idea that allocation of goods, such as salary or promotion, depends on input. Perceived injustice in this category is strongly associated with negative emotions.

Although conceptually convincing, the evidence of the impact of these elements of organizational injustice on emotional labor is scarce.

ROSEN'S CONTRIBUTION

To elucidate the relationship between types of organizational injustice and emotional labor, Dr. Valeriya Shapoval from Rosen College of Hospitality Management developed a series of hypotheses, stating that each type of organizational injustice increases the emotional labor of the employees. Subsequently, she surveyed hourly-wage workers employed by large hotels in Central Florida over six months, focusing on staff members who regularly interact with customers.

In her research, Dr. Shapoval used previously validated instruments to measure emotional labor and organizational justice, as well as job satisfaction. Before the surveys were distributed to respondents, their content was adapted into plain English to ensure it was accessible and understandable to the entire cross-section of backgrounds represented by hotel employees. Such adapted surveys were also translated into Spanish and Creole to reach employees with limited fluency in English. Once the surveys were returned, Dr. Shapoval conducted statistical analyses to verify her hypotheses and to test whether there were gender differences in

the effect of each type of organizational injustice on emotional labor.

UNFAIRNESS IS A MOOD KILLER

Overall, 312 survey responses were included in the analysis. The majority of participants were white and hispanic, between the ages of 18–24 and 25–34, with a rather balanced distribution of gender, and front-of-house and back-of-house staff.

One of the key findings in this study was the connection between distributive injustice and emotional labor, which suggests that

prevalent in male workers than in their female counterparts. These differences likely stem from the fact that men and women tend to perceive stressors differently as well as from the fact that men and women are subject to different cultural norms when it comes to managing their emotions. As such, while need for control tends to be more acceptable for men than for women, women tend to adapt better to handling emotional dissonance and show positive emotions more easily when disappointed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

These findings have implications for hotel managers and human resource departments concerned with staff development, compensation, well-being, satisfaction, and the overall work environment. If implemented effectively, the following points might be beneficial for the development of high-performing organizations and improvement of job satisfaction.

For example, in line with previous research, this study's findings suggest that fostering a culture where rewards are consistent with known expectations is likely to limit a sense

MANAGING PERCEIVED DISTRIBUTIVE INJUSTICE IS NOT NECESSARILY ABOUT SALARY INCREASES AS MUCH AS IT IS ABOUT APPRECIATION, RECOGNITION, AND JOB SECURITY.

growth opportunities and other direct or indirect monetary benefits which are perceived as unfair, lead in the long term to negative emotions.

This finding is particularly relevant given that hospitality is a service- and people-oriented industry, and staff's job satisfaction, or lack thereof, is likely to affect their work performance, which, in turn, is likely to affect customer experience damaging the brand.

Finally, there were gender differences in the importance of each organizational justice component on emotional labor. Moreover, Dr. Shapoval's research shows that perceived customer unfairness (informational) and managerial unfairness (procedural) is more

of distributive injustice and increase job satisfaction. Nevertheless, it should be noted that managing perceived distributive injustice is not necessarily about salary increases as much as it is about appreciation, recognition, and job security. These shifts in perception can be achieved through regular employee meetings, setting small goals, and praising staff members who achieve them. Similarly, greater involvement and engagement of employees can help counteract the perception of procedural and informational injustice. Regular meetings with management and additional training in relevant customer service areas can support employee development, allowing staff members to feel in control and to have positive influence on customer interactions.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Shapoval sheds light on how organizational injustice affects emotional labor in hotel employees.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How widespread is organizational injustice in the hospitality industry and what drives it?

It is difficult to put a number on preserved organizational injustice by hotel employees. It does exist as research indicates, and it is not a rarity or some unique cases. Reasons for it are diverse since some of it is short term, like procedural or informational, and some is a long term such as distributive. During the research process, there were many discussions about emotional labor and organizational injustice with management and employees. As an overall result, the short term perceived injustice potentially comes from the fact that "the customer is always right." Distributive injustice is the long term and more linked with the ability to have a qualification and to have an opportunity for career growth.

Dr. Valeriya Shapoval



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Appreciation, recognition, and job security are important for managing perceived distributive injustice.



TOURIST'S DELIGHT:

How theme parks can improve tourism experience

Theme parks can be described as places of entertainment, fantasy settings or social artwork.

Understanding what drives customers to write delighted or outraged reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor following their visits to theme parks would be highly valuable information for park developers and managers. Researchers Dr. Edwin Torres and Dr. Ady Milman from Rosen College of Hospitality Management use data extracted from the review platform to dissect tourism experience, delight and outrage in the previously overlooked theme park sector.

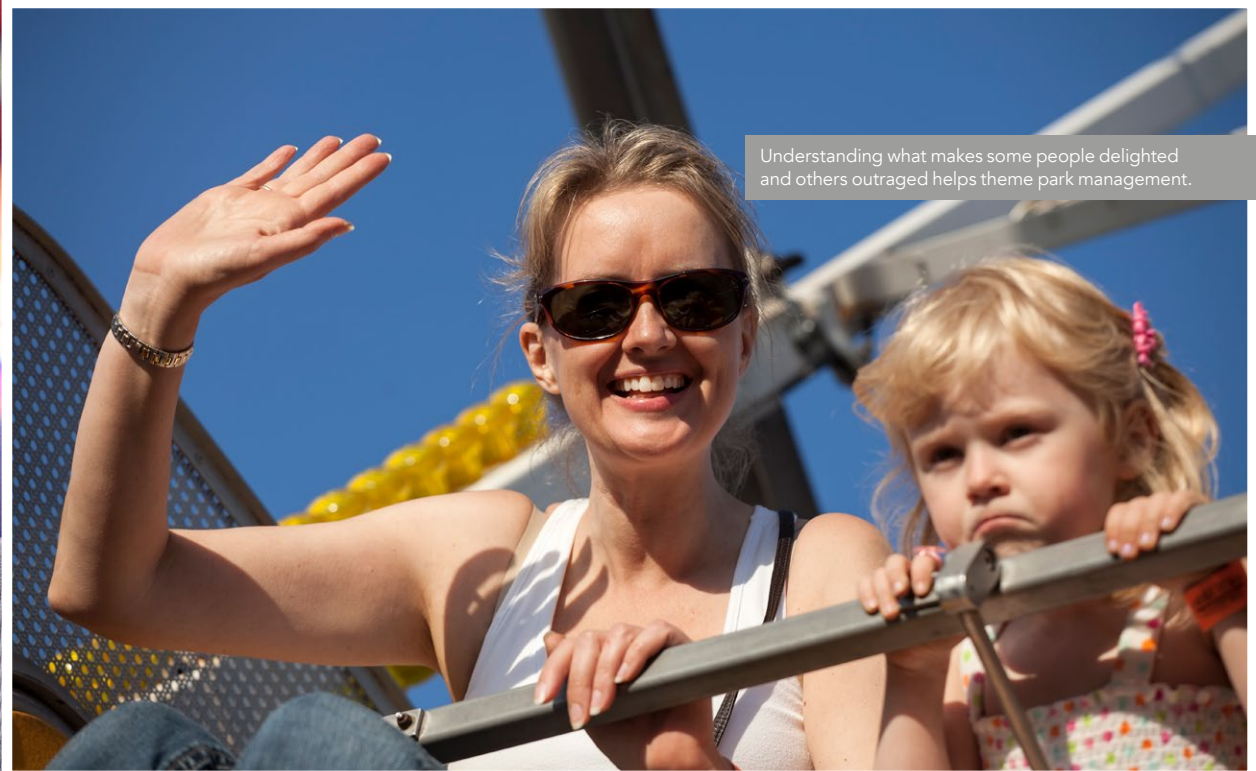
Increasingly, tourists are understood as consumers of 'experience'. How a tourist feels about and remembers an experience will inform their decision to return or recommend a place or activity to others. For scholars, understanding the critical factors behind good and bad tourist experiences is a hot topic; the ability to predict how a tourist will experience a place or activity is the key to improving that experience. On a basic level, when you take a short city-break, your experience will be affected by your mode of travel, your accommodation choice, the facilities available, the food you eat. Beyond that, other factors including tourist motivation, tourist typologies, authenticity, commodification, image and perception can all change a visitor's experience. The researchers from Rosen College used the concepts of 'delight' and 'outrage' to better understand tourists' experiences at theme parks.

DELIGHT AND OUTRAGE

To gain a deeper understanding of the emotional aspects of tourism experience, the concepts of 'delight' and 'outrage' have, over the last two decades, been increasingly applied by academics. More intense than the traditional measures of 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction', quantifying a tourist's delight and outrage could lead to better knowledge of tourist behavior and trends overall. A satisfied customer might tell their friends they've had a 'lovely time', but a delighted visitor could be impelled to write a stunning online review that thousands will see. And equally, if we understand what really outrages consumers about an experience, that confrontation, bad write-up and reimbursement could be avoided.

THEME PARK TOURISM

The concept of tourism experience can be looked at in any tourist consumer context,



Understanding what makes some people delighted and others outraged helps theme park management.

...RESEARCH INTO TOURIST EXPERIENCE AND THE DRIVERS OF DELIGHT AND OUTRAGE IN THEME PARKS SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO MANY.

including holidays, backpacking, cultural and heritage tourism, urban tourism, immersive or passive activities and food services. There is a dearth of literature on the topic of tourist experience in the context of theme parks, however, especially in relation to delight and outrage. While there have been studies conducted into consumer delight in settings such as retail, hotels, performing arts and festivals, there has been very little research into consumer outrage at all, and almost nothing of either in the theme park setting. This is surprising given how relevant these approaches are to theme parks.

Theme parks can be described as places of entertainment, fantasy settings or social artwork. The parks and the rides themselves often aim to recreate the imagined surroundings of stories, myths, books, television and film. As well as being ultimately

experiential they have also become an incredibly important element of the hospitality industry. They can serve as 'economic engines' for the communities in which they are situated: driving the need for accommodation, facilities and food and drink services; providing employment; and incentivizing investment.

Growth in both the number of theme parks and the size and sophistication of existing theme parks is particularly significant in the United States, although the trend is notable worldwide. As popularity grows and tourists become more 'demanding', theme park creators and managers are looking for ever more inventive and creative ways to distinguish themselves in the increasing pool of competition. They must take into consideration not just the rides themselves but the visitor experience as a whole; waiting in line, entertainment, food, drink, facilities and merchandise, all of which have become crucial to delivering the 'wow factor' for tourists. Imagine Disney World without the actors dressed as characters, Mickey ears

for you and your family to wear, the firework displays and the themed restaurants – much less 'delightful' indeed.

With so much growth potential in the sector, and with such a high demand for ever more 'surprising' and 'dumbfounding' experiences from visitors in order to ensure customer loyalty and positive reviews, research into tourist experience and the drivers of delight and outrage in theme parks should be of interest to many.

TRIPADVISOR

So how would you measure consumer delight and outrage in a contemporary theme park context? In the last decade, word-of-mouth behavior by tourists has moved online. Feelings of delight or outrage can trigger instantaneous reviews on social media platforms that are then transmitted to either personal networks of friends and family on apps like Facebook and Instagram or are shared publicly for even more people to see on sites such as TripAdvisor.

TripAdvisor is the largest travel word-of-mouth site in the world, with over 435 million reviews on 6.8 million attractions, places to stay and restaurants. On average, 390 million individual visits are made to the site monthly, and human moderators and automated tools help root out questionable reviews. While the site has been utilized in studies looking into tourism experience at hotels, restaurants and museums and heritage sites, as well as review credibility, until now it has not been employed as a tool in the study of tourist delight and outrage at theme parks.

THUMBS UP?

In the first study of its kind to focus on theme park visitors, Rosen College researchers Torres and Milman have used a qualitative approach to TripAdvisor data to determine patterns in delight and outrage and their resultant behaviors. The researchers built two datasets for analysis based on the top 20 theme parks in North America (by annual visitor numbers). The first dataset was constructed using keywords from TripAdvisor reviews related to delight and outrage. The second dataset was constructed using the number of 'stars' given in customer reviews on the site; five-star and one-star comments were collected. Analysis could then be done within each dataset and comparisons made between them.

Previous studies have reflected that key drivers for customer delight in other service industries are customer needs such as security, justice and self-esteem; customer emotions such as joy, thrill, exhilaration and exceeded expectations; and customer service such as friendliness, professionalism, staff attitudes and behaviors, skill and cleanliness.

This new research from Torres and Milman highlights that for theme park visitors fun, enjoyment, thrill, love, amazement, and delight are the critical drivers of customer delight. This contrasts with the most critical drivers in other tourism sectors such as hotels, where service, professionalism and cleanliness were most important to customer delight. In addition, the traveling party of the reviewer appears to play a part in customer delight, with words such as 'family' and 'kid' rising to prominence with other terms of delight.

With regards to outrage, the key drivers were identified as failing, outdated



Queuing was found by the researchers to be one of the most likely triggers for feelings of outrage.

...GOOD PARK ENTERTAINMENT CAN RESULT IN DELIGHTED CUSTOMERS, WHILST OUTDATED ATTRACTIONS CAN LEAD TO OUTRAGE.

or underwhelming attractions, and waiting, queues and crowds. The time of year that the visit took place played a part in this, as most outraged reviews occurred at peak season for the theme park in question (when crowds are largest). Value perception also drove outrage, and whilst service and staff were not noticeable as drivers of delight, they were important keywords amongst outraged reviews.

Finally, the research team noted that interestingly review posts by outraged customers were on average longer than those comments made by delighted customers, but that overall, there were more delighted theme park reviews that outraged ones. It appears that whilst outraged customers are more likely to go into detail about their experience, delighted customers are more likely to comment in the first place.

LESSONS TO LEARN

So, what can theme park managers learn from this pioneering data analysis? First, good quality entertainment is key for delighted customers, while outdated attractions can lead to outrage. Continuous innovation and renewal of theme park rides and activities is therefore needed. As the traveling party emerged as a source of delight in many reviews, theme

park attractions should improve accessibility for families and larger groups and exploit opportunities for interaction within groups.

The two main drivers for outrage were waiting times and what was perceived as high pricing. This introduces a paradox for theme park managers: increasing the price of tickets reduces crowds but leads to outrage in some customers, and vice versa. Theme park management teams have already come up with some novel ways to reduce queueing and waiting times such as virtual queues and further innovation in this area would be beneficial. The Rosen College research team suggested future studies into the demographic and visit characteristics of those outraged by admission prices might shed light on how best to deal with this. Finally, now that staff behavior and service have been identified as significant drivers of outrage, this could be tackled by better training at parks.

This study by Rosen College researchers Torres and Milman has pushed delight and outrage in the theme park setting into the spotlight. As a section of the tourism market which continues to grow but has not been thoroughly examined in the past, they highlight that delight and outrage in the theme park setting is a topic deserving further attention.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Torres and Milman use the concepts of delight and outrage to better understand visitor experiences of theme parks.

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CO-AUTHOR

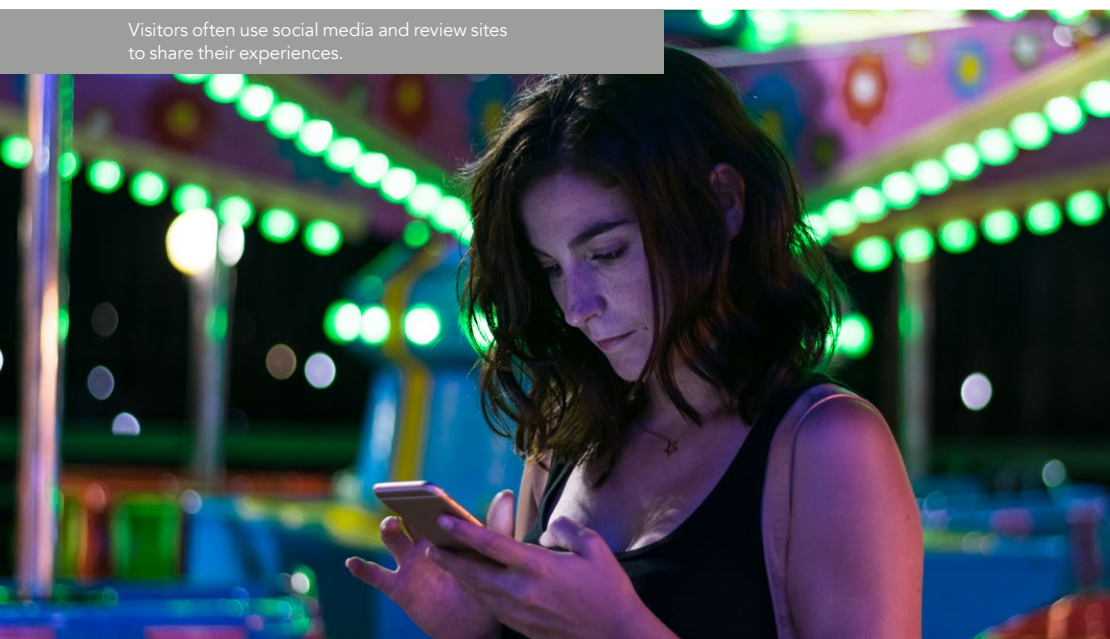
Soona Park, Purdue University

PERSONAL RESPONSE

This research is the first of its kind into delight and outrage in theme park visitors. What are your future research plans in this area?

// There are many areas of potential research in this field. The researchers are interested in studying delight and outrage in other subsectors of the attractions industry such as water parks. Additionally, the research team would like to use experience sampling methodology, whereby customers are provided with electronic devices and asked about their emotions throughout the day, in order to more accurately determine how customers' feelings change throughout the day and to ascertain the triggering events which might lead to delight and outrage. Focus groups can also be utilized to identify the characteristics of theme park visitors who are more likely to post online feedback. Finally, the managerial practices of various theme parks regarding monitoring, analyzing, responding, and taking action concerning electronic word-of-mouth can be studied through both surveys and interviews with industry managers. //

Visitors often use social media and review sites to share their experiences.



Dr. Edwin Torres



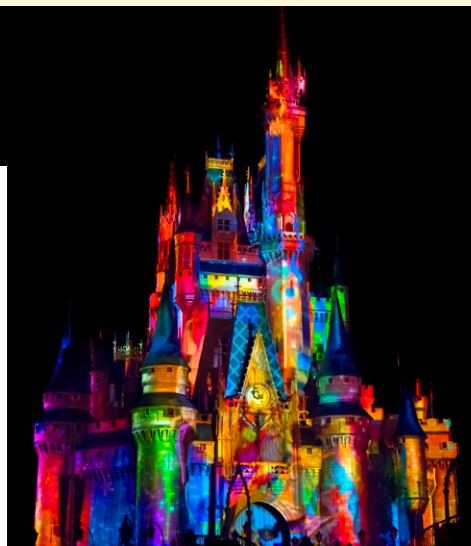
Dr. Edwin N. Torres is an Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida (UCF). Prior to joining UCF, he obtained a Ph.D. in Hospitality Management from Purdue University. He has several years of experience in the hotel, restaurant, and financial industries. His research focuses on the areas of consumer and organizational behavior.

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Dr. Ady Milman



Dr. Ady Milman is a Professor at the University of Central Florida (UCF). Prior to joining UCF, he obtained a Ph.D. in Strategic Management from the University of Massachusetts. His research focuses on the areas of consumer behavior, in particular theme park and attraction management, and international tourism.



Up-to-date and modern attractions are key for stimulating delight in visitors.

IMPROVING COUNTRY AND DESTINATION IMAGE CAN BRING MORE AMERICAN TOURISTS TO CUBA



The skyline of Havana – Cuba's best-known destination.

Country image, how an entire country is perceived by potential tourists, and the more specific destination image are important concepts in tourism marketing. They have a profound impact on a person's intent to travel to a particular destination. Suja Chaulagain, Jessica Wiitala and Xiaoxiao Fu of Rosen College of Hospitality Management have used the example of Cuba to examine the impact of country image and destination image on U.S. tourists' travel intentions. Their work provides guidance for Cuba's tourist marketing industry for attracting more tourists from the United States.

While country and destination image have long been key ideas in tourism marketing, they are often treated as separate concepts. Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu's research instead combines the two concepts and applies them to the specific case of tourism to Cuba. The results offer a reliable and detailed insight into how travel marketing can make Cuba more appealing to American tourists. The researchers hope that if their advice is followed, travelers will have a stronger intention to travel to Cuba and the country's tourism industry and economy will receive a much-needed boost.

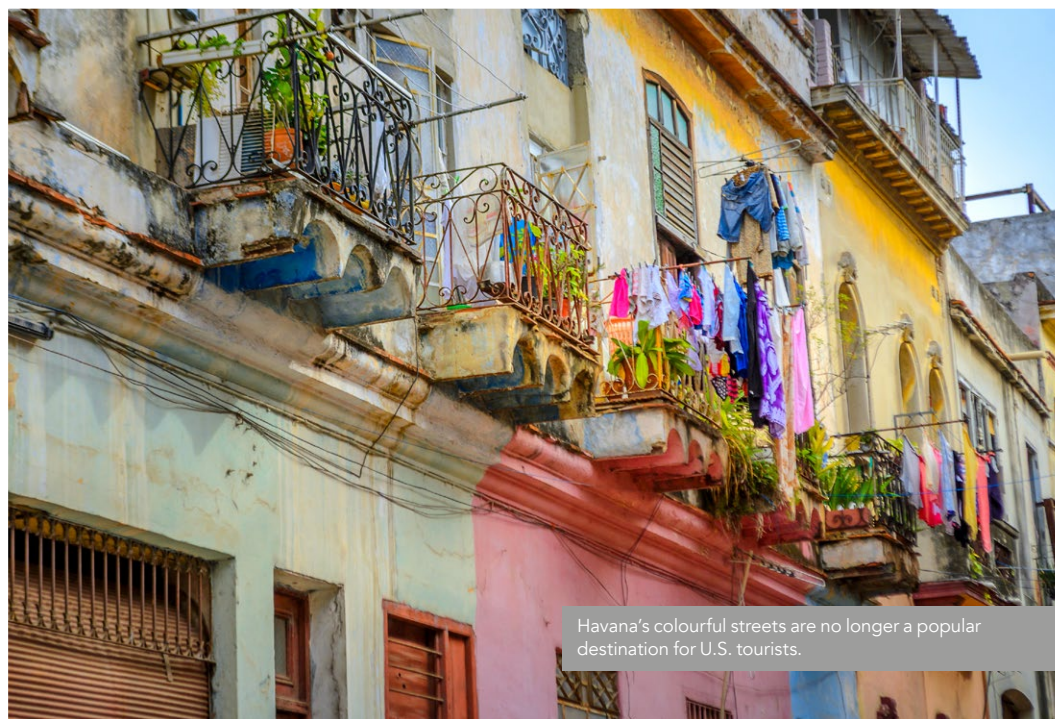
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COUNTRY IMAGE AND DESTINATION IMAGE

The researchers' work is based on two key concepts: country image and destination image. These are similar, related ideas but they have individual definitions.

Destination image is the perception that someone has of a specific tourist destination, while country image is the perception that a person has of the country that destination is in. Destination image is most succinctly and accurately defined by Crompton as "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination." Country image can be defined as "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a country." Both concepts are linked to a person's perceptions and have been used in marketing and consumer behavior research.

HOW CAN TOURISM BE IMPACTED?

Previous studies have suggested a clear and consistent link between country image and intent to visit and destination image and intent to visit. It follows, therefore, that both country image and destination image positively impact on the tourism industry by increasing the likelihood that an individual will



Havana's colourful streets are no longer a popular destination for U.S. tourists.

IF A PERSON HAS A POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF CUBA AS A COUNTRY, THEN THEY ALSO HAVE A POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS WITHIN CUBA.

travel to that country or destination. However, they have mostly been discussed separately, with few studies examining the link between the two concepts. In particular, there is little research discussing whether country image and destination image can impact one another.

The team from Rosen College were keen to discover whether there was a connection between them, as well as measuring their impact on intent to visit. In order to examine these ideas more precisely, the group examined the concepts of country image and destination image within the context of tourism to Cuba.

A LOOK AT CUBA

When it comes to American tourists, Cuba is a particularly interesting country to study. Country image changes over time, partly due to a changing political climate. Relations between Cuba and America have been

turbulent over the last few decades, but vast improvements have been made more recently.

In 1959, Fidel Castro overthrew the United States-backed government of Cuba. He established a socialist and anti-capitalist society, which was allied to one of America's greatest enemies, the Soviet Union. The fundamental difference between the capitalist and democratic United States and the socialist and authoritarian Cuba meant that Americans had a generally negative image of Cuba as a country at this time.

Before 1959, U.S. tourists accounted for 85% of all visitors in Cuba. After the rise of Castro, however, this number reduced rapidly and significantly with the country being relatively closed to foreign visitors. It was not until the year 2000 that Cuba began to open up its tourism industry, around a decade after its Soviet allies had collapsed. This led to a doubling in the number of tourists visiting Cuba, but Americans were still generally unwilling to visit the country. In 2016, U.S. tourists made up just 281,706 of a total four million holiday visitors to Cuba.

Clearly, there is still something holding back American visitors from visiting Cuba. Although tensions have reduced, decades of rivalry are likely to have impacted the image that Americans have of Cuba. Added to this is the hostile approach that President Donald Trump has taken, reinstating the restrictions on travel to Cuba that had been previously lifted. This is therefore an interesting case study for Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu, who wish to discover how far country image is impacting on the intent of travelers to visit Cuban tourist destinations like Havana, Vinales, and Varadero.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

They used a questionnaire to gauge the country image and destination image that American citizens have of Cuba. Each question is answered using a seven-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

The only requirements of participants were that they were U.S. citizens aged over 18. Their data was collected using a crowdsourcing platform (i.e., Amazon's Mechanical Turk). In total, data

Improving the image of Cuba as a country could help attract more U.S. visitors.



Cuba is of course famous for its cigars.

was gathered from 410 people of which 353 responses were considered valid. It is important to note that 60% of participants were male, 70% were white, and 60.3% were aged between 26 and 35. The sample size is considered adequate for this kind of analysis and the results are valid and worthy of discussion.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

As mentioned, there is an empirically verified link between country image and intent to visit, as well as destination image and intent to visit. For this study, the researchers wanted to discover which factors most significantly contribute to a person's perception of Cuba as a tourist destination.

Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu found that the biggest contributor to destination image is the quality of hospitality and entertainment services. After this, the state of local attractions and perceived value had the most significant impact on destination image. The researchers highlight these three areas as having the greatest impact on a person's Cuban destination image and subsequently their intent to visit that destination.

With regards to country image, the biggest contributing factors were slightly different. Results suggest that the perceived level of safety and security has the greatest effect

on a person's image of Cuba as a country. After this, people's perceptions of Cuba are impacted the most by the environmental, technological, and political environment.

Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu also found that country image and destination image positively influence intent to visit and that country image impacts upon destination image. When comparing the relative importance of country image and destination image on the intent to travel, the results were similar, indicating that country image and destination image in regard to Cuba are equally important. In addition, the study results suggest that if a person has a positive perception of Cuba as a country, then they also have a positive perception of holiday destinations within Cuba. Conversely, the more negative a view of Cuba held by a person, the more negative the same person's view of Cuban destinations. So, in order to boost tourism to specific destinations within Cuba, marketers need to focus on improving the image of Cuba as a whole.

The final finding is destination familiarity significantly moderated the relationships between country image and destination image, and destination image and intention to visit. The results indicated that the positive impact of country image on destination image

was stronger for the high familiarity group than the low familiarity group, and the positive impact of destination image on intent to visit was stronger for the high familiarity group than the low familiarity group.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TOURISM MARKETING INDUSTRY?

This research has been carried out by the group as a way of measuring the link between country and destination image and intent to travel to Cuba, a country which depends upon its tourism industry for economic growth. Cuba is failing to attract US tourists after decades of hostilities. This research suggests that a boost in country and destination image could help to increase visitation from Americans.

In particular, the country of Cuba needs to focus on promoting itself as a safe, environmentally conscious, technologically advanced, and politically stable society. Meanwhile, tourist destinations within Cuba should market their hospitality, entertainment services, and local attractions. This will increase the perceived value of Cuban destinations among Americans, thereby increasing their intent to visit.

Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu's research builds on many decades' worth of studies within tourism marketing and related fields. Unlike previous research, however, it looks at the causal link between country image and destination image. It also applies the concepts to a specific example of Cuba. Due to a turbulent and hostile history, US perceptions of Cuba as a country are low. Improving the country image that people have of Cuba will increase visitation to tourism destinations that Cuba's economy desperately requires.

*THE COUNTRY OF CUBA NEEDS TO
FOCUS ON PROMOTING ITSELF AS A
SAFE, ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS,
TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED,
AND POLITICALLY STABLE SOCIETY.*

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Chaulagain, Wiitala and Fu examine the relationship between country image and destination image in the context of U.S. visitors' perceptions of Cuba.

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Key paper

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What future do you see for tourism to Cuba? Will it once again become a favorite holiday destination for American citizens in the next few years?

// This study showed that when Americans have a favorable country and destination image toward Cuba, then they are more likely to visit Cuba as a tourist destination. Due to its unique characteristics as a tourism destination such as unique locale, architecture, cultural heritage, and close geographic proximity to the U.S., Cuba may once again become a favorite holiday destination for Americans, especially when the travel restrictions are eased by the U.S. government. //

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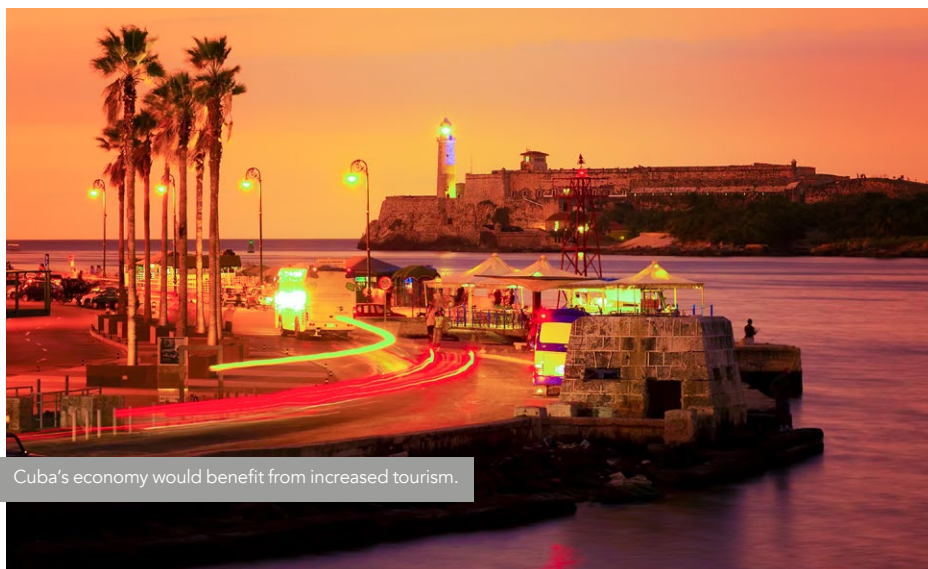


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Cuba's economy would benefit from increased tourism.

BONAIRE

The first blue destination in the Caribbean

A diver's paradise with pristine blue waters is located in the Caribbean Sea around the small Dutch island of Bonaire. With a population of about 20,000 people on 112 square miles of island, Bonaire is almost twice the size of Washington DC and lies about 50 miles off the coast of Venezuela. The island has an impressive record of protecting its natural environment and resources. These efforts have interlaced themselves with the residents' everyday life and the fabric of Bonaire's culture. Bonaire enjoys an international reputation for some of the world's best ocean activities. The island is a trailblazer in the Caribbean, developing a protected marine park in the 70s. It also began a desalination process to extract drinking water from the ocean, and continues its ongoing conservation methods to protect and conserve its marine life.

Known as a Blue Destination, Bonaire is true to its history, heritage, economy, and livelihood.

According to Commissioner Elvis Tjin Asjoe, "Bonaire as a Blue Destination repositions the island in the Caribbean region, and the world, as a progressive and transformative island closely attached to a sustainable economy that protects its natural resources, the environment and its culture. The Blue Destination concept also means a lifestyle comparable to the prudent and responsible use of ocean resources for the benefit of Bonairians and future generations."

A direct result of the Blue Destination plan is the collaboration with the European Union to promote projects focused on resilience, sustainable energy, and marine biodiversity. A UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management research team pioneered the concept of a Blue Destination in the

Caribbean as a result of a research assignment commissioned by the Bonaire government. The research team crafted the tourism master plan for the island entitled Tourism: Synergizing people and nature for a better tomorrow. The Blue Destination concept derives from the Blue Economy program from the United Nations and other international organizations like the World Bank. A Blue Destination is anchored on the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, which encourages the responsible use of ocean resources intertwined with eco-friendly "green codes." Ever pioneering, Bonaire was the first island in the Caribbean and the world to embrace the Blue Economy concept.

In December 2016, the Tourism Corporation Bonaire (TCB) commissioned the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies at UCF Rosen College to develop a Strategic Tourism Master Plan 2017-2027. At that time, the TCB felt the destination was at a critical crossroads. The central questions were how to make the tourism industry sustainable now and for the future, and how to optimize the participation of residents in the benefits that sustainable tourism could afford to them.

The UCF Rosen College research team met with more than 200 stakeholders face-to-face to conduct formal and informal interviews. The team also crafted seven surveys and administered these from March to July 2017. Nearly 3,000 respondents completed the seven survey questionnaires. The respondents included stay-over tourists, cruise tourists, Caribbean tourists who had never visited Bonaire (i.e., latent demand), tourism employees, and the local population. The research team also organized two summits on the island with all stakeholders, adopted the use of "big data analytics" on nearly 11,000 ED cards and evaluated over 3,200



Commissioner Tjin Asjoe worked with the Rosen College research team.

comments from TripAdvisor and online traffic statistics for the TCB website.

Bonaire has led the Caribbean in conservation efforts since the 1970s. Creating a legal framework for Blue Conservation will continue to place Bonaire as the leader of conservation efforts in the Caribbean. This entails choices such as banning oxybenzone (an additive found in sunscreens), plastic bags and plastic straws, and awareness programs championing the prudent use of ocean resources. The tourism master plan mainly embraced two sustainable development goals: SDG1 (poverty elimination), and SDG3 (well-being promotion).

Commissioner Tjin Asjoe reflected on his experience working with the UCF Rosen College research team, indicating that the study has already impacted the local tourist industry and is showing its relevance for the whole island society. "What has impressed me working with this team is that there were clear measurements to assess the progress of implementation," said Tjin Asjoe. "These measurements are relevant for our quality of life and are important for our hospitality businesses. Opportunities, choices, and business yield are what we are looking for, and they are closely related to our lifestyle and way of thinking."

The UCF Rosen College research team consisted of Drs. Robertico Croes, Manuel Rivera, Kelly Semrad, Valeriya Shapoval, and Mathilda van Niekerk. Dr. van Niekerk passed away during the implementation of the plan.



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