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The relevance of leisure marketing activities among university level students

La relevancia de las actividades de marketing del ocio entre los estudiantes de nivel universitario

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Abstract

The leisure sector represents the fastest and among one of the largest growing economic sectors of consumer spending. However, our understanding and knowledge of consumer psychology of recreation and leisure are yet limited to the social and economic significance of the under-research phenomenon. Therefore this study investigated the relevance of recreational marketing activities in leisure consumers in terms of their preferences. Through an online survey 300 responses were collected from the respondents till closing date. Confirmatory Factor Analysis were conducted with help of AMOS 24 software. Significant differences were found in terms of importance, and place, between male and female students. Moreover, higher mean observed for male students than females in terms of these sub-dimensions social, access, and place. This study offer many practical and managerial applications to marketers and policy makers by identifying the important dimension of leisure activities.

Key Words: Leisure, recreational marketing, entertainment, preferences, activity.

Resumen

El sector del ocio representa el más rápido y uno de los sectores económicos de mayor crecimiento del gasto del consumidor. Sin embargo, nuestra comprensión y conocimiento de la psicología del consumidor sobre la recreación y el ocio aún se limitan a la importancia social y económica del fenómeno que se está investigando. Por lo tanto, este estudio investigó la relevancia de las actividades de marketing recreativo en los consumidores de ocio en términos de sus preferencias. A través de una encuesta en línea, se recopilaban 300 respuestas de los encuestados hasta la fecha de cierre. Los análisis factoriales confirmatorios se realizaron con la ayuda del software AMOS 24. Se encontraron diferencias significativas en términos de importancia y lugar entre estudiantes hombres y mujeres. Además, se observó una media más alta para los estudiantes varones que para las mujeres en términos de estas subdimensiones social, acceso y lugar. Este estudio ofrece muchas aplicaciones prácticas y de gestión para los especialistas en marketing y los responsables políticos al identificar la dimensión importante de las actividades de ocio.

Palabras clave: ocio, marketing recreativo, entretenimiento, preferencias, actividad.

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Introduction

Recreational market is among one of the fastest growing market around the world. Recent reports shows that in US entertainment industry generate more than \$150 billion and some 120 billion hours of consumed time. However, the diversity of market and high fragmented consumers make it technological growth driven industry. Research shows technology advancement and consumer preferences are the key driver for success. The leisure sector represents the fastest and among one of the largest growing economic sectors of consumer spending (Wang & Lv, 2019). However, our understanding and knowledge of consumer psychology of recreation and leisure are yet limited to the social and economic significance of the under-research phenomenon (Chirazi, 2019). The increased consumer consumption makes it more growing interest for the concerned parties such as; government policymakers, marketing scholars, and practitioners, and businesses. Leisure and recreation industry products and services are normally identified are non-obligatory and discretionary (Hawes, 1977). However, leisure products or services cannot be stock when demand starts to decrease and vice versa (Oguz, Cakci, Sevimli, & Ozgur, 2010). Selling concepts like these come with some unique challenges for marketers (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006). While the commodification of leisure and its consumption behavior in pre-industrial societies is much greater than the post-industrial society (Siu, 2018). The leisure industry provides experiences mainly for enjoyment, sports, and relaxation purpose. However, new trends in recreation are emerging every day, consequently, new businesses are growing to meet with consumers changing preferences and specific demands (Yeung, Ramasamy, Chen, & Paliwoda, 2013). For instance, subject to festivals or seasons. Tourism-related travel agencies for example enjoy higher demands during summer or spring break. While a mega-event final day can bring record crowds. Hence, facilities regarding the recreational struggle for revenues on off-season or days.

The Parliamentary studies emphasize more on the institutional role as responsible for providing their citizens with conditions for the best possible quality of life. For instance in sport or entertainment, active involvement is better than passive attendance. However, the leisure behavior of adolescents may not always positive or constructive (Weybright, Son, & Caldwell, 2019). Different factors such as perceived time scarcity and lack of leisure structure facilitation contribute the passivity (Slabbert, Fourie, & Saayman, 2011). They further suggest that these needs are changing, therefore recreation departments need to undertake further research to better determine the sports and leisure learner needs to encourage healthy participation.

However, it is an incontrovertible fact that advancement in technology and the internet world has affected both enterprises' and consumer's ways of interaction. Previous research shows that people are spending more time on digital activities (Siu, 2018), while online businesses see this greater digital engagement of consumers as an opportunity to sell their products or services by innovative offerings to consumers (Ratten, 2019). Moreover, it has been noticed in previous literature that young consumers of leisure desire especially university-level students are continuously increasing and they expecting and look to experience leisure with higher quality (Mok, Sparks, & Kadampully, 2013). However, we believe in the simple universal truth "youth are a very powerful force and agent of any transformational change". While University level young consumer especially in developing economies represents the important part of change (Whiting, Larson, Green, & Kralowec, 2017). Therefore the purpose of this research is to investigate university-level student's participation in leisure and recreation activities.

Global Sports and Leisure Equipment Market (Wang & Lv, 2019), the report shows that there has been a rise in population of consumer's percentage globally adopting healthy, staying fit lifestyle, consequently resulted in increased consumer indulgence in different types of healthy sports and emerging market trends, 2020 to 2025 leisure activities (researchandmarkets.com). The increasing enthusiasm and likeness for international and domestic level sports mega-events have



seen tremendous worldwide followers and leading to large new other events each year, especially in the young developing economies. Which is propelling the demand of related businesses (Desbordes, Aymar, & Hautbois, 2019). Moreover, the increasing awareness of wellness and owing to health trends (Chirazi, 2019), perceived leisure time scarcity, coupled with social media celebrity endorsement influence consumer to shop and search for various types of recreational sports equipment which ultimately fit in individuals personalized choice.

On the other hand due to the diversity of businesses across different industries (Pope & Turco, 2001), and highly fragmented consumers all across the globe (L. Larson, Whiting, Green, & Bowker, 2014) make the competition more intensive and innovation-based for businesses in the leisure industry (Ratten, 2019). Previous research shows business organizations are continuously struggling with effective approaches of marketing which enable them to cope successfully with intensive competition while also help in capturing a constant permeant place in the market (Ratten, 2019). However, leisure and recreation marketing features vary as leisure product or services has their distinct features (S Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005). Leisure products and services are not just only physical products, they also contain positive and satisfactory experiences of leisure consumers by engaging in their free time activities. However, this also increases the human factor importance in intangible leisure and recreation products or services marketing activities (Argan & Pazarlamasi, 2007). While, leisure marketing and free time are related to, sport marketing, industrial marketing, and tourism marketing (Desbordes et al., 2019). (S Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005), describe it in other words as an electric version of mix marketing practice of the businesses firms associated with leisure and recreation industry. However, due to the nature of free time and leisure products construct, businesses used integrated approach to handle free time engagement and leisure marketing.

Literature review

Leisure has been defined and redefined in the literature with time to time by using different approaches (Iso-Ahola, 1979). For instance; freedom of choices (Stebbins, 2005) lifestyle changes (Shaw, 1985) (Furlong and Cartmel., 1997), sociological changes (Agle & Caldwell, 1999), economical circumstances (Kelly, 1972) (O'Mahony, Hurley, Kushmerick, & Silvestre, 2004), quality of life (Shaw, 1984; Siu, 2018) and others. However, there is consensus upon the definition concerning free time or leisure time as “the time left over after time taken for work and other obligations (Henderson, 1984). However, these free-time activities are highly related to income (Kelly, 2009), and the changing preferences of the individuals (Purrington & Hickerson, 2013). Research concerning youth, leisure, and recreation has spanned decades and has been approached from sociological, economical, psychological, recreational, physiological, and philosophical perspectives. More extensive educational participation (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997), lifecycle changes, and cultural influences have led to changes in lifestyle patterns of youth. Adolescents, according to (L. R. Larson et al., 2019) not only have a greater variety from which to choose but also have more time for leisure activities. Leisure activities important role in forming an identity, providing interaction with peers, wellbeing, health, and problem behavior.

In the urban area and big cities with the loss of open and green spaces (Oguz et al., 2010), rapid unplanned urban development, including poor physical health and socio-cultural problems resulted in various negative effects (Lehto, Park, Fu, & Lee, 2014). Recreation became a necessity for individuals due to the adverse conditions of today’s urban and business environments that developed in parallel with social, economic, cultural, technological, and political developments (L. R. Larson et al., 2019). However, people behavior is becoming more customized by availing such activity which can lead to more consumption (Malkoc & Tonietto, 2019). However, difficulty in the capacity of recreation firms in recreation activities when demand decreases to store services and to use when demand increase (McLean & Hurd, 2015). With changing lifestyles, shopping malls and public spaces are an important part of the leisure and recreation

experience of individuals (Schipperijn et al., 2017), because greater opportunities offered to all in these public places affect leisure preferences (Su & Hsu, 2013). The spending time pattern in shopping malls, although these places are private own use by the public and the fact that shopping malls greatly influence the behavior of people to consume more by providing facilities like security, activities for children and food items. Thus the concept of recreational and leisure activities should be the concern of the authorities with consideration of open and green places for the public (Weybright et al., 2019).

Computer technology used at home has a major impact on the leisure time spending pattern of people and what they do in their spare time (Sharaievska, 2017). Increasing leisure options like computer games, web browsing, social networking, and electronic commerce modifying former pattern behavior (Adam, Hiamey, & Afenyo, 2015) and technology is migrated to the most aspect of daily life this lead to a decline in physical activities in young people by staying more time in home computer activities. This affects the free time available for outdoor recreational activities (Whiting et al., 2017). The decrease in free time means using more digital leisure activities by using technology (Ciochetto, 2015) and thus highlight the important role of educational institutions in need to provide well-organized leisure activities with more facilitation to promote healthy outdoors organized activities. With the support of the government recreational activities can be developed to encourage maximum participation from the local community (L. R. Larson et al., 2019).

Recent research shows people tend to spend more time on social media usage and their engagement level does reflect their preferences. However, it has also been noticed that the addictive potential of this online platform results in sedentary activities engagement (Granter, 2008). (L. R. Larson et al., 2019) in their study found that social media instruments also play a very important function in recreational activities participation on campus among young students. Similar findings were recorded by (Göksel & Serarslan, 2015) (Adam et al., 2015). (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006) suggests research themes and conceptual extensions that may be useful to researchers of the leisure industry in the marketing context who are trying to increase commercial productivity or disciplinary relevance of their work. A study conducted by (Novatorov, 2015), "*The administered public recreation marketing*" emphasizes that recreational benefits should be provided by staying in ethical value. However, with regards to structural constraints in participation in recreational activities, the environment is important. (Whiting et al., 2017) argued that by leisure activities participating individual participants may receive pressure from an unfamiliar environment. While (Lou & Yuan, 2019) argued that entertainment activities are cheap and stunning especially when organized for recreational and entertainment activities for university students. However, (Schipperijn et al., 2017) further argued that many existing beliefs about leisure and its practices need to rethink and redesign to benefit the majority of the community members. They stated modern leisure as escape-oriented, oversimplifies, homogeneous, production one size fit for all (Granter, 2008). Therefore, there is a greater need to promote recreational healthy activities with the help of the government with solid policy and implementation (Motamedi et al., 2020).

(Argan & Pazarlamasi, 2007) described leisure marketing as an advanced effective marketing approach and practices. While marketing definition lies in the content its features of leisure marketing itself (S Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005). While recreation marketing has its specific features (Susan Horner & Swarbrooke, 2012). However, (Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 2013), argued that it is hard to distinguish between leisure marketing and general marketing practice (Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006) argued that in general leisure marketing can be defined as the marketing principles implementation to recreational or leisure products and services served in leisure time. The traditional marketing 4c approach, which consists of the value of a customer, cost, communication, and convenience. However, for a business organization

operating in the recreational and leisure market, the components of the marketing mix can be referred to as the leisure marketing approach (Desbordes et al., 2019).

In addition to the marketing efforts, people have also experienced nostalgia for their desired physical activities (Moe, 2003), which they have been unable to perform as they once did for example, due to the urbanization and lack of access to the open and green public places for recreational purpose (Routledge et al., 2011). Furthermore, nostalgia tends to drive future behavior, as it evokes pleasant experiences that are not being availed to enjoy presently, such as sports tourism, and restaurant visits (Fairley, 2003). Browsing behavior with offline and online shopping settings is understood to be one critical antecedent of impulse buying behavior (Zhang, Zhou, Lin, & Sun, 2018). However, focus on recreational marketing (Walls & Breidenbach, 2005), argued that many individual and environmental factors influence the result as a consumer positive or negative behavior. However, the entertainment industry's marketing differs from traditional service and manufacturing. Moreover, entertainment demand has two important distinguish properties that marketers need to pay attention to. First is the consumption of entertainment is related to the consumer free time, and secondly entertainment demand is not fixed in advance, instead it is revealed by the consumption of the product or services by the consumers.

Methodology

Participants and data collection

Participants of the survey were selected through a random sampling method (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013). A total of 300 university-level students participated in an online survey. The leisure time activity questionnaire adopted from previous literature were used for data collection. To quantify variables of the study a five-point Likert scale was utilized (between 1= Strongly Agree to 5= Strongly Disagree).

Data analysis

The collected data from survey respondents were analyzed by using SPSS and AMOS. Using Principal Component Analysis the factor extraction with varimax orthogonal rotation was performed. For the internal consistency of the items measuring their construct, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) was calculated. And finally, CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) was performed. To assess a potentially lower number of unobserved variables this study performed factor analysis to examine the variability among correlated observed variables (Frey & Pimentel, 1978). The 21 items of leisure activity preferences were subjected to PCA (Joliffe & Morgan, 1992) using SPSS (Table 1). The Barlett's test of Sphericity value was also significant (Tobias & Carlson, 1969). Thus, supporting correlation matrix factorability. Internal reliability was successfully achieved as the Cronbach α coefficient value of 0.88 for the access dimension, 0.89 for the social dimension, 0.91 for the place, and 0.78 for the importance construct, all the values are greater than 0.7 the recommended value in literature (Raykov, 1997). Further, supported by the composite reliability (CR), which was also greater than 0.6 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) (table 2).

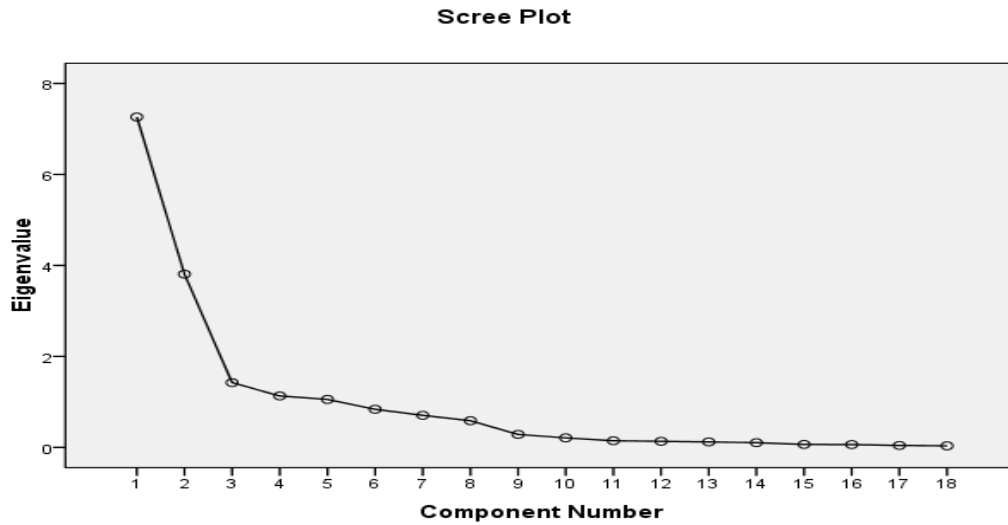


Figure 1. Scree Plot.

Table 1.
Rotated Component Matrix.

| Component | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| LT16 | .854 | | | |
| LT17 | .827 | | | |
| LT13 | .817 | | | |
| LT14 | .792 | | | |
| LT18 | .784 | | | |
| LT15 | .597 | | | |
| LT20 | | | | |
| LT25 | | .828 | | |
| LT26 | | .817 | | |
| LT22 | | .808 | | |
| LT23 | | .788 | | |
| LT27 | | .759 | | |
| LT24 | | .592 | | |
| LT30 | | | .886 | |
| LT1 | | | .876 | |
| LT2 | | | .840 | |
| LT6 | | | .805 | |
| LT5 | | | | .896 |
| LT4 | | | | .876 |
| LT3 | | | | .871 |
| LT7 | | | | .559 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To verify and validate the measurement of the study which consist of the four latent constructs, this study conducted CFA. Table 2 shows the values for ChiSq/df=2.037, RMSEA =.053, GFI= .975, NFI= .967, and CFI= .972. All the values obtained were according with the

values recommended in literature (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Therefore it can be said that the the meaurment models results have been successfully achieved.

Table 2.
Measurement model validity measures.

| | CR | AVE | MSV | MaxR(H) | Social | Importance | Access | Place |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|--------|------------|--------|-------|
| Social | 0.856 | 0.605 | 0.004 | 0.907 | 0.778 | | | |
| Importance | 0.860 | 0.613 | 0.004 | 0.922 | 0.064 | 0.783 | | |
| Access | 0.868 | 0.688 | 0.002 | 0.899 | 0.024 | 0.045 | 0.829 | |
| Place | 0.882 | 0.713 | 0.002 | 0.885 | 0.032 | 0.015 | 0.013 | 0.845 |

Internal reliability was successfully achieved as the Cronbach α coefficient value of 0.88 for the access dimension, 0.89 for the social dimension, 0.91 for the place, and 0.78 for importance construct, all the values are greater than 0.7.

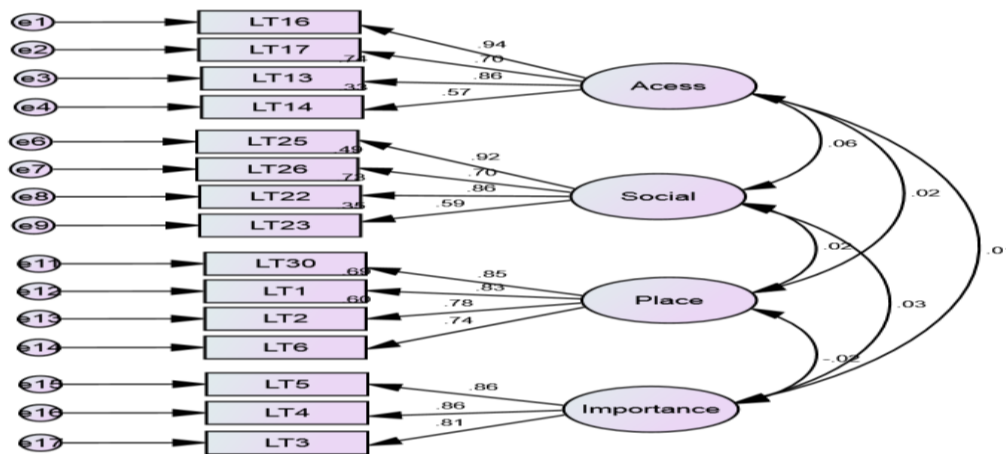


Figure 2. CFA output Amos.

Findings

A total of 300 students, 103 females (34.3 %) and 197 (65%) males participated in the survey. The ages vary between 20 to 29 years, less than 23 years (n=143), 24-25 years (n=134), and over 26 years (n=88), and the percentage was found as 39.2%, 36.7%, and 24.1%, respectively. In terms of differences between genders significant differences were found in terms of importance, and place, between male and female students ($t=1.66$, $p<0.05$) and ($t=0.98$, $p<0.01$). Higher mean observed for male students than females in terms of these sub-dimensions social, access, and place. While for importance female students have higher mean as compared to male students. However, no significant differences are found in terms of social, and access. The confidence interval was 95% (Table 3). To test the differences among different age groups One-way ANOVA test was performed. However, no significant differences was found in terms of age groups for all four sub-dimension of leisure time activities. This may be due to the small difference in age in the sample.

Table 3.
Gender differences in terms of leisure preferences.

| Dimensions | Gender | N | M | Ss | t | P |
|------------|--------|-----|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| Access | M | 212 | 12.0080 | 1.86135 | 2.374 | 0.142 |
| | F | 153 | 10.3214 | 1.76071 | | |
| Importance | M | 212 | 12.8000 | 1.77888 | 1.667 | 0.000 |
| | F | 153 | 11.0424 | 1.83362 | | |
| Place | M | 212 | 15.1850 | 2.15117 | 0.984 | 0.000 |
| | F | 153 | 15.1850 | 1.95542 | | |
| Social | M | 212 | 11.8133 | 2.96905 | 2.940 | 0.435 |
| | F | 153 | 9.5202 | 2.70523 | | |

Conclusion

The evolution of the mass leisure concept (Kelly, 2009), improved standard of living, and technological innovation (Sharaievskaya, 2017) contributed to the modern world leisure industries (Siu, 2018). Leisure and recreational activities today are of greater interest to business organizations due to the huge potential growth and development continuously into new exciting fields (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011). The diversity of business, high potential growth, and new emerging recreational trends are attracting new businesses to meet the growing consumer demand (Dibb & Simkin, 1993). However, today's abundance of choices of digital leisure activities also puts the individual in greater control of how and when they prefer to spend their free time (Cho, 2020), which is an important consideration because one may overwhelm by obligations. Participation in outdoor recreational activities improves physical wellness. However, balance participation in leisure and recreation can enhance the quality of life (Weybright et al., 2019). Which particularly, associated with improved self-esteem among young people (L. R. Larson et al., 2019). People strive to make leisure productive due to the perceived time scarcity and many things to do in their free time (Weybright et al., 2019). Research shows that human beings spend more of their entire lifetime on leisure (Lehto et al., 2014). However, previous research revealed that teenagers' involvement in delinquency is associated significantly in more participation rate in unsupervised socialization and less participation with friends in organized recreational activities and other physical activities at home and study. (Malkoc & Tonietto, 2019). Research shows individuals pursue leisure for various reasons, however, an increasing number in a variety of those activities provide more opportunities of increase participation (Juniu, 2009). Leisure research shows that the provision of physical activity opportunities leads to better health benefits to the people (Oguz et al., 2010). In addition, access to public open place or park is associated with higher rates of physical activity (Motamedi et al., 2020). There are always new examples of recreation marketing to discover from archery lessons to roller derby tournaments. However, there are many business types be part of the recreational industry but fall outside of this classification (Ratten, 2019). When it comes to recreational marketing, a casino faces many of the same challenges as an amusement park. (L. R. Larson et al., 2019) found that the most frequent choice among students was participating in screen activities (watching TV and computer games). They also found differences in leisure preferences regarding gender. This also supports our study finding of gender-free time preferences. However, participation in healthy outdoor activities can be maximize by providing facilities and also result in increased motivation where gender based motive is behind.

Future research direction

Leisure is not a temporal dimension of modern life, the future of work is important but the future of leisure is even more so. Future studies should address the question like, is this



increase in recreational and leisure activities is due to high level of income, or low price, increase in leisure time or changing preferences of the consumer.

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