

# Hospitality Review

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Volume 23

Issue 2 *Hospitality Review* Volume 23/Issue 2

Article 8

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May 2014

## Hospitality Review Volume 23 Issue 2 2005

FIU Hospitality Review

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# Hospitality Review Volume 23 Issue 2 2005

**Keywords**

Ecotourism, Tourism, FIU, Event Management, Wine, Food, Miami, FIU, Kevin Murphy, Food and Beverage, Hotel, lodging, Cyprus, Perception, Business, Customer Service

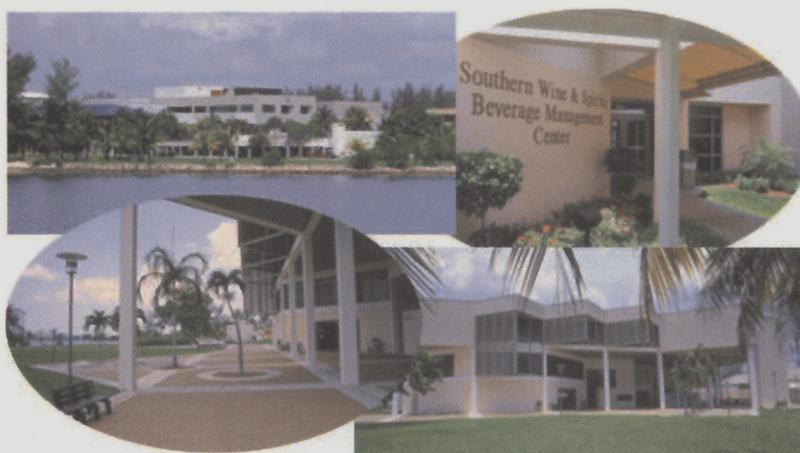
The  
Florida International University  
*Hospitality and Tourism*  
*Review*

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Volume 23, Number 2

Fall 2005

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Florida International University  
School of Hospitality & Tourism Management  
North Miami, Florida

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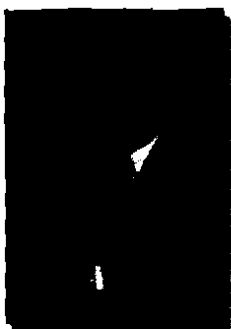
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Florida International University

## *Hospitality and Tourism Review*

Florida International University  
School of Hospitality and Tourism



## **Editorial for the FIU *Review* by Dean Joseph West, Ph. D.**

Welcome to a new Florida International University School of Hospitality & Tourism Management Review. Our new format is largely the result of two events; first, our budget for the FIU *Review* was significantly impacted by budget cuts coupled with the rise in printing costs. Secondly, we opted for a larger format in order to increase the FIU *Review*'s readability. Our editor, Marcel Escoffier, is getting old enough that he was not willing to read the "contract size" type we have used for 23 years. I hope that you will enjoy our new format and look forward to receiving your comments.

We begin this issue with several related articles on travel and tourism. Esther Periera explains why ecotourism needs knowledgeable tour guides, we then see what Lilleheim, Mykletun, Quain and Engstrom found when they survey those who participated in our School's South Beach Wine and Food Festival, and Mark Bonn along with Leslie Furr and Mo Dai studied the effects the overall economy has on visits to them parks.

The issue then looks at several management issues of importance to everyone; how management compensation may affect the restaurant manager's decision to stay (Murphy and DiPietro), and what hotel managers can do to satisfy guest's service quality desires (Loizos and Lycourgos).

Next we present a study by Leung and Law concerning what Information Technology issues have been addressed through publication in our top academic journals.

Finally, our new expanded format allows us to publish more articles than in the past, so we conclude this issue with an interesting look at a relatively new social phenomenon: people who "dine" while driving. David Walczak relates to us what his students in a research methodology class found concerning dashboard dining.

Again, let me express my enthusiasm for our first attempt at a new format. Marcel Escoffier and I will be making further revisions to the journal's format in future issues, so I encourage you to email him with suggestions at [Escoffm@fiu.edu](mailto:Escoffm@fiu.edu).

## **Editor's Remarks**

**By Marcel Escoffier**

Associate Professor

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Welcome, dear reader, to our revised format. New realities have often forced new solutions, and this issue of the *FIU Hospitality and Tourism Review* is no exception. Funding for the publication of the *FIU Review* has been significantly impacted by investment decisions and revisions to organizational goals external to our School. These financial matters brought us to the point where we had to confront our cost of publishing this journal.

Without belaboring the point, this revised format has allowed us to significantly reduce the cost of publishing the *FIU Review*. It has also given us the opportunity to make design changes which we senior faculty find more and more necessary; namely, bigger type size. Since the purpose of this journal is to provide the work of top researchers in our field in a way that is useful to all members of the Hospitality and Tourism community, we believe that the new, more readable format is a significant improvement.

As we progress into the future, it is difficult not to be a bit nostalgic. The old *FIU Review* format will be treasured by many readers, including this Editor, but change is the key to business success, and, so to, it is the key to academic progress.

### **A Reminder to Authors**

This will be the last issue wherein we publish works that are not otherwise in the American Psychological Association (APA) style. The adoption of the APA style is universal in the top research journals, and here, too, the style is preferred. Please note our submission policies as outlined elsewhere in this issue.

A reminder is due, too, to authors who find English to be a challenge. We sympathize with you. We, too, find the English language to be challenging. But, we must insist that you submit articles written in good business English. The term, "Business English", refers to writing that is direct, to the point, but maintains a semblance of adhering to grammar and punctuation. It is up to the authors to submit works in business English.

### **A Thank You to Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver**

Dr. Kopenhaver has been our Associate Editor since this publication was founded. In that time she has, among other tasks, reviewed every article published for conformity to good style and grammatical accuracy. We miss her, greatly, and we are sure that this issue reflects the lack of involvement on her part. This decision was another result of new rules and financial constraints and she did not go willingly (nor did this editor wish to see her service to this journal come to an end.) Lillian has assumed the position as Dean of FIU's School of Journalism, and we are positive that she will do an outstanding job.

# FIU Hospitality and Tourism Review

Vol. 23, No. 1

Fall 2005

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The *FIU Hospitality and Tourism Review* is published by the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Florida International University, North Miami, Florida. International Standard Serial Number: ISSN 0739-7011.

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Editorial policy: *FIU Hospitality and Tourism Review* does not accept responsibility for any of the views expressed in its pages. Rather, the editorial board accepts the responsibility for providing an open forum for a broad range of views to be expressed. Articles do not represent a consensus of opinion; some ideas presented are in open disagreement with others, and no reader should be able to agree with all ideas expressed.

Unsolicited articles, essays, or other materials may be transmitted via email to: [escoffm@fiu.edu](mailto:escoffm@fiu.edu) or via mail to the FIU Review, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, NE 151 Street, North Miami, FL 33181-3000. Telephone 305-919-4500 or via fax at 305-919-4555. See guidelines for authors.

**Not Printed at State Expense**

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## Guidelines for Authors

The *FIU Hospitality and Tourism Review* encourages the submission of manuscripts and other materials on topics relevant to the hospitality and tourism industry. The following guidelines will assist authors in preparing articles for publication.

- E-mail submissions are preferred. Please submit as an attachment a file in either MS Word® or Adobe Acrobat®. Send to: [Escoffm@fiu.edu](mailto:Escoffm@fiu.edu).
- You may mail submissions to our offices at: FIU School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, 3000 NE 151 St., North Miami, FL, 33181-3000.

### The article should:

- Have a cover page with the article title and the name of the author(s), their title, school, address, a telephone number and e-mail where they may be reached, and such other identification as may be appropriate.
- Begin with a preface or abstract, usually no more than five sentences, which briefly summarize the article. This will be printed on the first page of the article if accepted for publication.
- Be written in the third person or otherwise written so as not to identify the author(s). Our policy is not to print articles written in the first person.
- Include no more than five tables, charts, or exhibits none of whom exceed 35 lines in length and seven inches in width.
- Written using the APA style of citations.
- Range from 10 to 25 pages in length, including all tables and graphs.
- Include sub-headings, in bold, within the text.
- *The submission should be the sole work of the author(s) and must not have appeared in whole or in part in any other publication prior to the date of submission to the FIU Review. It is considered unethical and unacceptable to violate this policy.*

The authors guarantee that they have secured all appropriate authorizations to disclose the information contained in their articles and certify that they have followed all appropriate procedures in their studies using human subjects.

The FIU School of Hospitality and Tourism Management  
*Review*

# Call for Papers

Florida International University's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management announces a special issue of the *FIU Review*. It will be a special issue edited by Drs. Mike Olsen, Barbara Almanza, Chekitan Dev and Susan Murrman. The issue will be devoted to the establishment and expansion of a theoretical base for hospitality and tourism.

Those wishing to submit a paper for consideration should consider the following:

- A paper that proposes a theory of hospitality or a theory of tourism with implications for differentiating the respective field as a locus of research.
- The exposition and extension of one or more theories from a discipline that may be of use in defining research in hospitality or tourism.
- A proposal of avenues for future theory building based on the results of current empirical research in the hospitality or tourism literature.

Papers must be written in good academic style using the APA form of citation. We encourage authors to develop their ideas fully, and, hence, have no upward limit on paper length. All papers should be submitted in electronic format to the editor of the *FIU Review*, Marcel R. Escoffier at [escoffm@fiu.edu](mailto:escoffm@fiu.edu). Please enter "Special Issue" in the subject line of your email.

**Papers should be submitted for review by the special editor of the *Review* by March 31, 2006. The special issue will be published by June, 2006.**



# **How do Tourist Guides Add Value to an Ecotour?**

## **Interpreting Interpretation in the State of Amazonas, Brazil**

By Esther Periera

*In Ecotourism, interpretation by a guide creates or shapes the experience for the tourist, differentiating one episode from another. As such, the guide's interpretation adds value to the tourism product and contributes to the visitor's experience. This paper discussed the role of interpretation by guides in the State of Amazonas, Brazil, finding in them patterns from which lessons may be drawn. Given the intangibility of the Ecotourism product, this paper argues that it is the guide who defines the quality of the product. The guide may draw the tourist toward or away from sustainable practices, and significantly contributes to the success or failure of the ecotouristic venture. The State of Amazonas in Brazil already has guides, but this study questions their education and training in interpretive skills as well as their professional organization and working conditions.*

### **Introduction**

Brazilian Amazonia, an area of 5.1 million km or 59% of the Brazilian territory consists of nine states; the largest one is the State of Amazonas, at 1.5 million km. Amazonia contains part of the world's largest rainforest and offers an attractive stage for both environmental and cultural interpretation. The region's rich plant diversity supports an equally diverse fauna, along with the area's many cultural groups, making Amazonia a high-ranking place on most tourists' "to-do" list. Development and implementation of a solid ecotourism program in Amazonia, to replace traditional industries that are incompatible with a rainforest environment, can translate into economic gains for the region and the country, and is already underway (SUDAM, 1999). Brazil received 4,090,590 international tourists in 2003 (EMBRATUR, 2003). In an article about the relationship between sustainable tourism and conservation gains, Cordeiro (1999) touts ecotourism as a viable option to boost the region's economy while curbing unsustainable practices such as logging and ranching. Tourism revenues can be increased through the development of sustainable tourism, such as ecotourism. One of the main players in ecotourism, but often the least appreciated one, is the naturalist guide.

This individual has the potential to add considerable value to an ecotour both in economic and conservation gains. In the State of Amazonas, the lack of a solid training program for naturalist guides, as well as the lack of a professional guide association that could organize, train, and support naturalist guides, limits the full educational and cultural experience most visitors could expect to have. Moreover, interpreters serve in many other capacities including that of host, public relations specialist, and good-will ambassador (Ham and Weiler, 2000).

In Ecotourism, interpretation by a guide creates or shapes the experience for the tourist, differentiating one episode from another. As such, the guide adds value to the product by providing new experiences. The experience, an intangible aspect of the ecotour, is principally facilitated through the interpretive naturalist guide. The role of this individual has evolved over time from tour management to experience management. Through interpretation, the naturalist guide assists the visitor in connecting with the place visited, understanding and appreciating its significance both in local and global contexts, and becoming more aware of cause and effect behaviors. Given the intangibility of the ecotourism product, it is the guide who defines the quality of the product, may draw the tourist toward or away from sustainable practices, and significantly contributes to the success or failure of an ecotouristic venture. The guide, as an educator, adds value to the visitor's experience while contributing to conservation and economic gains.

### **Interpretation: the cornerstone of ecotourism**

The Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people' (Western, 1993, p.8). Essential to the goals implicit in ecotourism's definition is the education of the traveler so that this individual develops better understanding and appreciation for natural and cultural environments. Moreover, according to this definition 'responsible travel' is travel which respects the natural environment and makes a direct contribution to local people. Unlike traditional tourism, and even some nature-based tourism that may only use the natural environment to enhance a tour, ecotourism is based on purposeful travel. Ecotourism is a travel experience that helps travelers come to a better understanding of unique natural and cultural environments around the world (Epler Wood, 2002). Weiler and Ham (2002) contend that ecotourism is a special type of nature-based tourism for two reasons: first, it strives to offer the visitor a meaningful experience; second it does so in a way which is environmentally and culturally responsible. Because of this commitment to the natural and cultural environments, a key actor in ecotourism is the interpretive guide who can inform, involve, and offer the traveler a meaningful experience through his interpretation.

Interpretation is not solely about factual information. It is not limited to simply identifying plants and animals during a jungle walk, or in the case of touring the Amazon, naming the great Amazon explorers of yesteryear, or showing a tourist the village's main shop. Freeman Tilden, the father of interpretation, defined interpretation as "An educational activity, which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experiences, and by illustrative media, rather than simply communicating factual information" (Tilden, 1957, cited in Ham, 1992). In Ham's 1992 definition the keyword is 'communication'. In other words, the main idea of interpretation is to communicate to the visitor in a way understandable to the individual the object or site being visited. There is a plethora of other terms defining what interpretation is or should be. Tilden's and Ham's definitions, however, are particularly apt in that they include the revelation of meanings and relationships through communication. To the traveler from afar or to the local day visitor, the meanings and relationships revealed to him or to her through interpretation about a particular area are what enriches their visit, and imparts the intangible value of the trip — the experience itself. While the education of the tourist may be viewed with a certain cynicism by some authors such as Wheeler (as cited in Orams, 1996, p.91) who said: "Education is seen by many as the way forward for nurturing a 'better' tourism. Dream on!", only *good* interpretation can contribute to the visitor's learning and understanding of a site.

### **The Interpretive Guide and this individual's education and roles**

A tour guide can be defined as one with "a broad-based knowledge of a particular area whose primary duty is to inform" (Pond, 1993). In this sense, it appears that a formal education is not imperative, and that a person born in the region would know it well, thus potentially being able to inform through facts. This, however, is not interpretation.

Ham (1992) posits that an interpreter may use factual information "to illustrate points and clarify meanings, it is the points and meanings that he or she is trying first to communicate, not the facts" (p.3). An interpretive guide — one whose communication is first and far most about illustrating the meanings and the connections a place's natural and cultural environments encompass, may or may not have formal education. Ham also contends that the qualities of *good* interpretation can be learnt, suggesting that it takes training and not necessarily formal education. Likewise, the appreciation of sustainability as a holistic practice may not require formal education but training designed to fulfill this end. The guide can only explain to the visitor the meanings and relationships of a site and its inhabitants if he himself has these perceptions. This insight and ability to relate through interpretation is what may empower the guide to alter human behavior, so that intolerance for other cultures may be reduced and less environmentally-friendly practices may be replaced by more sound ones.

This is a compelling reason why specialized education is needed for the guide interpreter. Orams (1996) argues that a pedagogic approach is necessary to design and teach effective interpretive programs. "The intermediate steps of knowledge acquisition, attitude development, motivation and intention to act must be examined. Through understanding these processes, strategies can be designed which reflect the complexities of the human mind and the diversity of human behavior" (Orams, 1996, p. 86). Thus, it is suggested that trainers need education and competence in areas such as behavioral science to educate interpretive guides so that their interpretation can attain ecotourism goals.

Additionally, interpretation can facilitate economic and ecological sustainability by creating local employment and acting 'as on site regulators of visitor behavior' and potentially influencing tourists' beliefs about conservation (Ham and Weiler, 2002). Consequently, the education of the interpreter is of utmost importance and needs to be a priority for the responsible organization because poor interpretation hinders conservation efforts, leads to misunderstandings, and inhibits ecotourism growth. This study concerns the quality of interpretation in the State of Amazonas and the implications it may have regarding ecotourism goals.

In addition to being "pathfinder and mentor", referring to the guides' dual responsibility for the group and the individual, (Cohen, as cited in Black, 1999), and educator (Weiler and Ham, 2000; Pond, 1993), the guide is also a facilitator in the sense that this individual helps the visitor to understand and appreciate natural and cultural environments (Weiler and Ham, 2000; 2001). In this vein, the guide's role has evolved from simply managing the logistics of a tour to being a main contributor to the visitors' experience. Ecotourist guides have other roles as well, often interconnected with specific characteristics and needs of the visited physical and cultural environment.

### **Criteria to Qualify Interpretation**

Interpretation is an indispensable tool to achieve ecotourism goals (Weiler and Ham, 2001), which are closely correlated to those of the broader term of sustainable tourism (Diamantis and Ladkin, 1999). It follows that for interpretation to be an effective tool it needs to include criteria which assists ecotourism in reaching its goals. Ham (1992) proposes four qualities for effective communication. "Communication must be *pleasurable, relevant, organized* and having a *theme*" (Ham, 1992, pp.8-28). Communication, albeit necessary, is not only about speaking a foreign language. Communication needs to be *pleasurable* in the sense that it is entertaining to the point of holding the audience's attention; it is delivered with a smile and in an informal manner, versus a serious face and classroom style. Ham refers to a classroom style when the audience needs to learn the subject, as for example to take an exam, and in this sense the audience is a captive one and needs to learn. This type of communication is not ideal for a tourist. A tourist who is on holiday might be more receptive to communication which is delivered with humor, yet it is informative and pleasant.

*Relevance* of the communication, the second quality, refers to communication which is *meaningful* and *personal*. *Meaningful*, as opposed to *meaningless*, refers to being able to connect the information to something the person already knows. *Personal* relates to involving the person in the communication. For example, asking something like this "Have you ever thought that one day your children/grandchildren could visit this place and only see ashes?" or "can you imagine what the implications the disappearance of the rainforest would have on our lives?" Therefore, this communication carries meaning while putting the visitor in a center stage position, right at the visited place.

The third quality, *organization*, refers to the easy flow of the information. Especially for tourist audiences, who, for the most time are looking for relaxation, it makes sense that the information is organized in a way that it does not require too much thinking. Organized

communication has a beginning, middle and an end. This quality is an important one as to keep the flow continuous, thus holding the audience's attention.

The fourth quality is the *theme*. Every story has a main theme or message. In this respect, the communication needs to be built around that main message to make it relevant, and a main point to take home. Topic and theme is not the same. To echo Ham's words, "the topic is merely the subject matter of the presentation, whereas the theme is the main point or message the communicator is trying to convey about the topic" (Ham, 1992, p. 21). When interpretation by interpretive guides includes these criteria it would qualify as 'good interpretation'. Interpretation which does not, or is closer to the traditional factual information of tour guides, would qualify as "bad" or "poor". For example, when interpreting the challenges and achievements of an area in the context of tourism development, the guide who understands his role in promoting ecotourism can be influential by sharing his understanding with the tourist. He can discuss the pros and cons of unregulated tourism and talk about the advantages of responsible tourism development. As discussed by several authors (Orams, 1997; Fennell, 1999; Honey, 1999; Buckley, 2001; Wearing, 2001) tourism can cause a plethora of environmental and social impacts. The interpreter can 'slate' impacts into his talks and gently provide the visitor with guidelines to avoid them. Likewise, the guide can explain the connection between unplanned tourism and its effects on the local economy, culture and environment. Consequently, the visitor may go away with an enlightened perspective, that not all tourism is responsible tourism. In future travels, this individual may inquire about, and participate only in trips offered by tour operators, hotels, and other tourism venues whose business ethics are compatible with the principles of ecotourism. Therefore, the cornerstone of ecotourism can only hold and succeed if the interpreter can provide good interpretation. There are, however, other techniques that can be used to enhance interpretation, thus enhance the visitor's experience.

### **Techniques to Enhance Interpretation**

One of the techniques used in interpretation is that of making connections between the place and the visitor, as a way to incite this individual to question and discover new things (Ham, 1992; Weiler and Ham, 2001). In this respect the guide's ability to help the visitor *see* the not-so-obvious, such as the use of timber from slow growing trees, such as the mahogany, and the detrimental effects its harvesting can have on surrounding vegetation and the wildlife that depend on it, may help the visitor in seeing the connection between the place visited and some of his or her own practices at the place of residence.

Thought provocation is another effective technique in interpretation (Ham, 1992; Orams, 1996; Veverka, 1998), and the one that Tilden contended to be at the heart of interpretation (Pond, 1993). In fact, Tilden was accused of discounting the importance of education and emphasizing the benefits of thought provocation (Pond, 1993), a point also brought up by Ham and Weiler (2002) but to salient the importance this interpretive technique has in helping the visitor "to attach new and profound meaning to a place or feature" (p.30).

The use of visual aids, whether they are books, laminated sheets representing local fauna and flora, or a small artifact made of local materials can be a skilful way of interpreting the site for the visitor (Ham, 1992; Knudson, *et al.*, 1999; Pereira, 2004). Interpretation is not about "teaching" visitors about the place, rather, it is about revealing why it "matters" (Ham, 2002). The Amazon rainforest is one of those places whose conservation matters, and could gain through interpretation that uses the above mentioned qualities and techniques.

### **Working Conditions**

Working conditions are often seen as a contributor to high performance levels (Brown & Mitchell, 1993; Ostroff, 1992). The work of these guides contains various types of demands, including responsibility for the guests' safety on tours, quality of the program,

being a link, and sometimes an ambassador between the guests and their social and structural environment, and also working in hot, humid and wet environments. Their working schedules can be taxing at times, keeping them away from family and home for up to 25 or more days at a time. One should expect that working conditions would be an issue in discussing the quality of the guides' professional roles and performance. The climatic conditions in the State of Amazonas, as well as the vast distances that need to be covered by uncomfortable and unreliable transportation, make guiding especially daunting. Although most nature walks are conducted during the cooler hours of the morning, late afternoon, or after dinner for nightlife viewing, allowing the visitor the opportunity to rest in between activities, the guide has other responsibilities and cannot take a break. To be constantly tending to the needs of visitors and the logistics of a tour can be exhausting, thus leading the way to professional burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Zapf et al, 2001).

### **Guides' Training and education in the State of Amazonas**

In Brazil, the public sector, which has primary responsibility for training, lacks a system that would encourage the development and implementation of solid programs in both interpretation and guide certification. The highest governing tourism entity in Brazil is the Ministry of Tourism under whose jurisdiction falls the National Tourism Agency (EMBRATUR), the agency responsible for tourism at the national level. In addition, each state has its own tourism agency. In the state of Amazonas, the agency was called the Secretariat of Tourism and Culture (SECTUR) until the change of government in 2002; it is now called Amazonastur. There are numerous municipalities within each state, and many have their own tourism office that oversees local tourism development. The agencies at the national and state levels are the promoters, developers, and implementers of tourism programs, and are, therefore, the entities responsible for overseeing training and certification of guides. The existing training programs are at regional, national and international levels, but the programs are not applied on a systematic basis. The last time a guides' course was applied was in 1995 (Senac, personal communication, March 31, 2004). The programs, when applied, are conducted under the auspices of EMBRATUR, with the National Service for Commercial Training (SENAC), and the Support Agency to Micro Companies (SEBRAE) as collaborators. Participants in these training programs need to have a high school diploma, and speak a second language.

Countries with a well-developed sustainable tourism policy, and who have invested in sound interpretative training, such as Costa Rica, are successful in part by having added that intangible value to their tourism operation, as well as sending conservation messages to the world at large. A quality-training program designed for Amazonia would address areas in guides' interpretation skills and performance, while simultaneously empowering them in areas of communication, risk management and customer satisfaction. In addition, quality training increases guides' awareness of environmental and socio-economic impacts that ecotourism may cause (Black, 1999). At the writing of this paper, neither the national nor state agencies in Brazil have adopted a high quality guide/interpreter training program that would prepare and certify skilled interpreters in their fields.

### **How can we articulate the conservation and economic value of an ecotour guide?**

Ascribing a dollar value to what good interpretation brings to ecotourism is difficult. It is easy, however, to emphasize that the many roles played by the interpretative guide are central to the operation's goals of sustainable development.

In using the qualities and techniques of good interpretation the ecotour guide has many opportunities to communicate the significance of an area's conservation to the visitor. Consequently the guide can potentially contribute to the sustainable development of a region in two ways: conservation gains and economic gains.

- **Conservation gains**



The quality of the experience provided by the ecotour guide allows the visitor to establish an emotional attachment to the area visited. For example, by communicating the value of a region's biodiversity to the visitor, or the threats thereto, the ecotour guide can enlist support for conservation efforts either locally or globally. One example set by Lindblad Special Expeditions in the Galapagos Islands demonstrates the connection that can be made with the visitor. This ecotourism travel company established a conservation fund to assist the Darwin Research Station and the National Park. Their effort is successful in part because of the guides' high level of interpretive skills, and the conservation message they give to each visitor. Thus far, the conservation fund has collected over US\$ 1 million since its inception in June, 1997 (Lindblad Expeditions, personal communication with program manager, November 11, 2003).

- **Economic gains**

Because of the guide's pivotal role in the visitor's experience, his expertise can translate to economic development. It is often said that a guide "makes or breaks a tour" when referring to the success of a trip. Implicit in this statement is that the experience the visitor had will affect his future travel decisions, whether or not he will use the same travel organization, or visit the same region or country. Word of mouth is also very influential in peoples' travel decisions and a good report will generate increased business. Often times, the quality of the interpretive guides a company employs is the deciding factor in choosing one company over another. Many successful travel companies are well aware that the quality and interpretive skills of their ecotour guides are directly related to their repeat business. These operators use interpretation as a value-added exercise to attract higher-yield markets (McArthur, 1998). International travel companies with expedition vessels that ply Amazon waters often feature well-known interpretive naturalists in their brochures (A&K, 2003). Although this maybe part of a marketing technique, it also empowers the individual and establishes him or her as a professional. The travel company gains greater credibility while increasing its sales revenues.

Putting a dollar value on the contribution of the ecotour guide to an operation is difficult, but one study by Conservation International (CI), (CI, 1997) can shed some light on the question. In an attempt to understand the economics of conservation, CI compared the financial impact of deforestation versus forest preservation along the coast of southern Bahia in Brazil. Tourism revenues would decline by one-half if the forest were gone, but would increase by \$52 per visitor if the forest were preserved and forest attractions or activities were added. It is not known how much of this dollar amount can be ascribed to simply the presence of the forest itself, and how much to visitor activities led by ecotour guides. It is clear, however, that the guides' work would generate revenue.

### **Conclusion and afterthoughts**

This paper discusses the importance of good interpretation for tourists when visiting the State of Amazonas. Moreover, criteria for evaluating the quality of guides' interpretation in the State of Amazonas are proposed, and also how to enhance the quality of the guides' interpretation. To develop ecotourism in the area, the quality of interpretation will have to be improved. Four main criteria for high interpretation quality and three techniques have been identified and briefly discussed, towards which the quality actually can be compared. The point of departure for the paper is that there is a gap between the level of understanding of ecotourism and the factual competence of the guides. Moreover, it is expected that the guides lack professional skills in interpretation, thus leaving the visitors with a sub-optimal level of understanding of rainforest, cultural and natural environments. As a consequence, this also leads to reduced contributions to the development of the local communities.

A guide who understands qualities of good interpretation and applies them can contribute to the visitors' travel experience, while promoting conservation and economic

gains. These can be at the local, regional or global levels. Training and education of the guide is proposed as a first tool to contribute to ecotourism development. There is no training in the State of Amazonas which addresses interpretation. Likewise, the course that does exist is applied at several years' intervals, and not all guides have taken it. Along with a better training, there is also a need for a continuous planning process, where the organizing of the guides is also included. Guides working conditions should be considered in the planning process. It is also argued that, most likely, the guides can contribute to these planning processes along with politicians and ecotourism experts. A serious association that envisages guides' development and supports their profession is yet another immediate necessity. Considering the central role that the Amazon Region plays in global human and natural systems, the issues discussed here reach, undoubtedly, far beyond the State of Amazonas.

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# **South Beach Wine and Food Festival**

## **– why Participate?**

By Henrik Lilleheim, Reidar J. Mykletun, Bill Quain and Christer Engstøm

*This paper studies why restaurants, wineries, and other exhibitors participate in Wine & Food festivals. We hypothesized that the purpose was to acquire new customers thru promotional involvement in the festival. A secondary outcome was to ascertain if there were differences in motivation between the three groups. A survey was conducted of participating companies in one of the largest Food & Wine festivals. We found differences in what motivated winery participants from restaurants or other exhibitors. A discussion of these differences and how festival organizers may aid participants in achieving their goals is presented.*

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to analyze the reasons why restaurants, wineries and exhibitors participate in Wine & Food festivals. Specifically, we present findings from a survey given at the South Beach Wine & Food Festival in Miami Beach, Florida.

Before initiating the survey, the authors assumed that the restaurants, wineries and exhibitors participated in the festival in order to acquire new customers. However, the findings of the survey indicate that this may not be the primary reason for all of the groups. Our goal was to help establish more effective selling techniques for recruiting exhibitors by increasing the perceived value of the festival for the industry participants.

### **The South Beach Wine & Food Festival**

The Festival, which is now purported to be the largest in North America, began in 1992 as the Florida Extravaganza. The event was co-sponsored by Southern Wine & Spirits and Florida International University's School of Hospitality Management. All of the proceeds of the festival go directly to the School.

From the beginning, the Festival depended heavily on Southern Wine's extensive relationships with the wine industry. Southern identified and recruited the wineries. Each winery supplied staff members and product. FIU recruited restaurants to give food to the attendees. Many of the restaurateurs were alumni, or had strong connections with the School because of employees or management loyalties.

A singular highlight of the event has always been the auction. Over the years, many dignitaries have both donated, and purchased auction items ranging from rare wines to special events.

In 2001, Dean Joseph West from the School, and Mr. Lee Schrager, from Southern Wines & Spirits established a plan to significantly enlarge the Festival. They changed the format from a single event to a multi-day, multi-venue spectacular. This format proved so successful that, in 2002, they moved the event from the college campus and hosted it on Miami's South Beach.

Today, the South Beach Wine & Food Festival is a world-class event that is primarily housed in a tent village directly on the sands of South Beach. The main tent holds over 250 tables and exhibits. In 2004, festival participants included 88 restaurants, and 60 wineries (many, such as Berringer with several tables.) Many of these exhibitors participated in the Grand Tasting. Approximately 20,000 attendees viewed famous chefs, tasted food from some of South Florida's finest restaurants and sampled wine, liquor, beer and bottled waters from a wide range of producers.

## **The Festival Participants**

There are three groups that participate in the Grand Tasting at the Festival. These are the restaurants, the wineries (or other beverage distributors) and the exhibitors. Below is a description of each group, their relationship to the Festival and their methods of exhibiting.

### **Wineries**

This group includes traditional wineries, such as Berringer, Frapiani, etc. as well as some liquor companies, such as Belvedere Vodka, and also producers of bottled waters, beers and other beverages. Each of these companies has one thing in common, however. Their products are all exclusively distributed in Florida by Southern Wine & Spirits. (In Florida, alcoholic beverages may only be distributed by one company. Southern is the largest distributor in Florida and has exclusive contracts with many of the best known brands.)

Most of the wineries poured their products from table-top displays. A few, such as Berringer, had central display areas that used a different layout. For example, Berringer had a squared area in the center of the tent that incorporated two well-known local restaurants, Chispa and Carmen-the-Restaurant.

Besides providing all of the products at no cost to the Festival, each winery paid a fee for each table-top display area. This group occupied about 127 tables at the Festival.

### **Restaurants**

In 2004, 88 restaurants supplied Festival attendees with food samples. Like the wineries, each restaurant received a 6-foot table. While the restaurants did not have to pay a fee for the table, they were required to supply about 1,200 portions of food, staff the tables and provide their own serving equipment. The restaurants' menu choices were greatly impacted by the conditions at the South Beach location. While a prep kitchen and cold storage were provided at the Beach, none of the restaurant tables had electricity. In addition, fire codes prohibited any propane burners or charcoal grills in the tent.

### **Exhibitors**

This was a rather eclectic group. 2004 was the first year when Festival staff emphasized selling space to exhibitors. Exhibit packages ranged in price, depending on the number of days, size of the exhibit area and the ability to participate in "goodie bag" product promotions. Exhibitors ranged from restaurants (who wanted more exposure) to cookware manufacturers to wine publications.

Basically, two rules governed the selection and acceptance of exhibitors. First, their products could not compete directly with a product distributed by Southern. Second, all exhibitors had to have products that related to food and wine, cooking, or a hospitality lifestyle. In 2004, there were 22 exhibitors. Some of them, like Kitchen Aid, were also major Festival sponsors.

## **Festivals as Expositions**

The International Association of Exposition Management (IAEM) uses the word "exposition" to describe any venue or situation where products or services can be shown to potential customers or other publics. While most business people think of expositions as Trade Shows, the opportunities for promotion extend to a wide variety of venues.

IAEM roughly divides expositions into several categories. One of these categories is Fairs and Festivals. For example, they cite the World's Fair as a form of exposition. At the World's Fair, companies create exhibit that showcase their products.

The South Beach Wine and Food Festival, using the IAEM definition, is a form of exposition, and as such, the participants are all exhibiting their products and services to the attendees. The Festival even has a "trade only" tasting at the Grand Tasting Village. This is, in fact, a trade show where the attendees are primarily restaurants operators and employees.

## **A Promotional Tool**

Trade shows and expositions are part of most company's marketing plans. Interestingly, while most business people are familiar with the "4 P's" of marketing (product, price, promotion and place) far fewer understand where expositions fall within that mix. Trade shows and expositions are, in fact, a form of promotion. According to most marketing textbooks, the promotion variable has four sub-variables – personal selling, sales promotion, advertising, and Public relations. Expositions are a form of sales promotion.

The idea of most sales promotions is to create interest or excitement and to ultimately, induce a purchase. Examples of typical sales promotions include coupons, "two-for-one", contests and sweepstakes, demonstrations, etc. The purpose of exhibiting at a Festival is to promote the product by connecting it with something fun and exciting.

One of the authors, Bill Quain, is also the author of *How to Create an Effective Exhibit Marketing Plan*, which is published by the International Trade Show Exhibitors Association (TSAE). One of the opening remarks in this book is "It is a show, so show them". In other words, use the interactive nature of the occasion to clearly demonstrate, or better yet, let the attendees try and sample, the products. A wine festival, where people actually sample the products, is certainly an excellent form of sales promotion by these standards.

### **The Research Question**

All of this leads back to a basic question that the organizers of the Festival wish to answer. "Why are the restaurants, wineries and exhibitors participating in our Festival?" Another question is "Are there differences between groups as to why they would participate in the Festival?" These two questions led to the study.

We expected to find a very simplistic reason for these companies to spend their time and money to participate at the Festival. It seemed, on the surface, that the most logical reason to participate was to generate more customers and sales. For some of the participants, this was, indeed, a major impetus. However, like most things that involve human beings, there were multiple factors which affected the motivation to participate in the event.

Clearly, the Festival management has a major desire to understand their customers, and fortunately, the results of their inquiry can be used for other festivals and promotional situations. So far, participants in festivals are given scant mention in the research literature. Even the major textbook in the area, Event management and event tourism by Donald Getz pays very little attention to the participants. The results of the study, which were driven by a practical need for information, also make excellent additions to theory.

### **Research design and methods**

The population to be studied was all exhibitors, wineries and restaurants that participated in the 2004 Festival. As the number was limited, the study involved the entire population, and no sampling was done. The study was designed as a questionnaire study. Two teams surveyed wineries and exhibitors at the Festival on Saturday March 6 and Sunday March 7, and all three groups (wineries, exhibitors and restaurants) on Sunday, March 7. The teams went from table to table, identifying the decision maker for each company and asking him/her to complete the survey, which the team picked up on the return to that same table a few minutes later.

Before designing the questionnaire, we interviewed eight restaurateurs and winery representatives to identify what they thought of as the most interesting issues for this research. Based on this, the authors developed a 12-question survey that asked respondents to determine the degree to which they agreed, or disagreed with the survey statements. Responses were given on a seven point Likert scale. The response options were: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Slightly disagree, Neutral, Slightly agree, Agree, and Strongly agree. Information that made it possible to differentiate between the three groups was included. As all statements were stated in a positive wording and responses are given according to degree

of agreement, there will be a risk of having the respondents reporting too high or positive values on the items. The part of the survey reported on here is displayed in table 1.

**Table 1. Items included in the survey**

Item	Question
1	The South Beach Food & Wine Festival is important to promoting your own product or service.
2	Participating in the festival is a valuable marketing tool.
3	Identifying new customers is an important reason for attending the festival.
4	It is important to be at the festival because our competitors are there.
5	looking at the products and services displayed by others is an important reason to attend the festival.
6	Networking with other food and wine professionals is an important reason to attend South Beach Wine and Food Festival.
7	Having fun is an important reason to attend the South Beach Wine and Food Festival
8	Supporting FIU is an important reason for participating in the Festival.

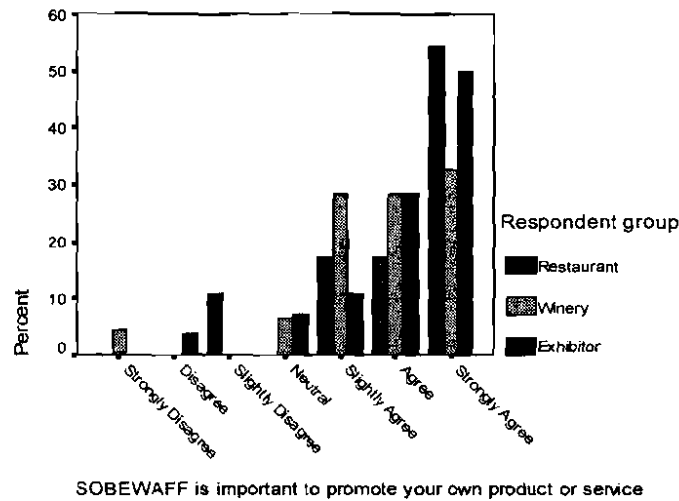
Data were entered into the SPSS 11.5 computer program, and analyzed by cross-tabulating types of participant (e.g. exhibitor, winery, or restaurant) with the eight dimensions (see table eight) we are presenting here. As no sampling was undertaken, there is no need for any statistical testing of differences between groups.

We received responses from a large number of the participants. Specifically, 47 out of 71 restaurants (66.1%), 47 out of 58 wineries responded (81%) and 28 of 40 exhibitors responded (70%). These high response rates are indicative to the spirit of cooperation and interdependence that exist at the Festival. The participants are a relatively small community. The extreme conditions at the Festival (no electricity, running water, etc.) make for a lot of cooperation in many areas. This spirit of willingness greatly enhanced the survey process.

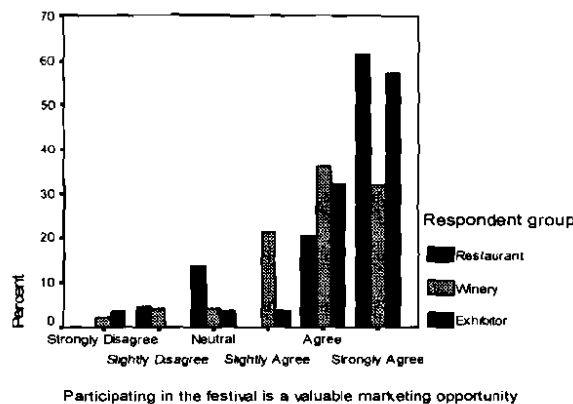
### **The Results**

The results of the study are presented graphically in Figures 1 – 8. As expected, showing own products or services were important, but far more so for the exhibitors and restaurants than for the wineries. It is also worth noticing that a significant portion of all three groups indicated that this was only a minor, or even no reason at all for attending the festival. This latter tendency was most pronounced by the wineries.

**Figure1. Importance of promoting products and services at festival for restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**



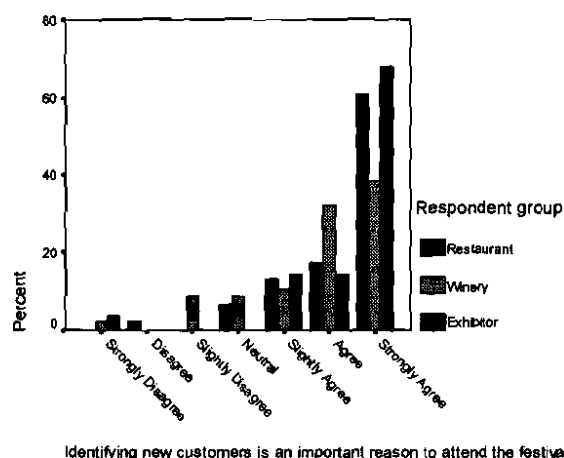
**Figure2. Importance of promoting products and services at festival for restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**



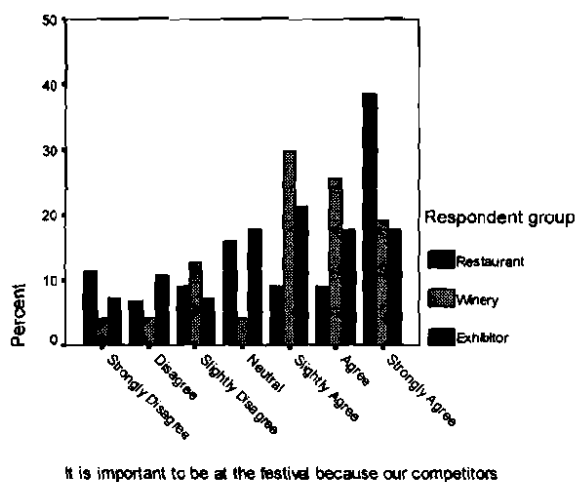
It may be observed that participating in the festival was regarded more as a valuable marketing opportunity for the restaurants and exhibitors, as compared to the wineries. Again it may be observed that a substantial portion of the wineries only slightly agreed, were indifferent and also negative to this purpose, and followed only by a minority of the restaurateurs and exhibitors. As an extension of these two observations we also found that the restaurants and exhibitors regarded the festival as a good opportunity for identifying new customers, while again the wineries held back on their enthusiasm and gave this selling part of the function a lower score.



**Figure 3. Importance of Identifying new customers at festival for restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**

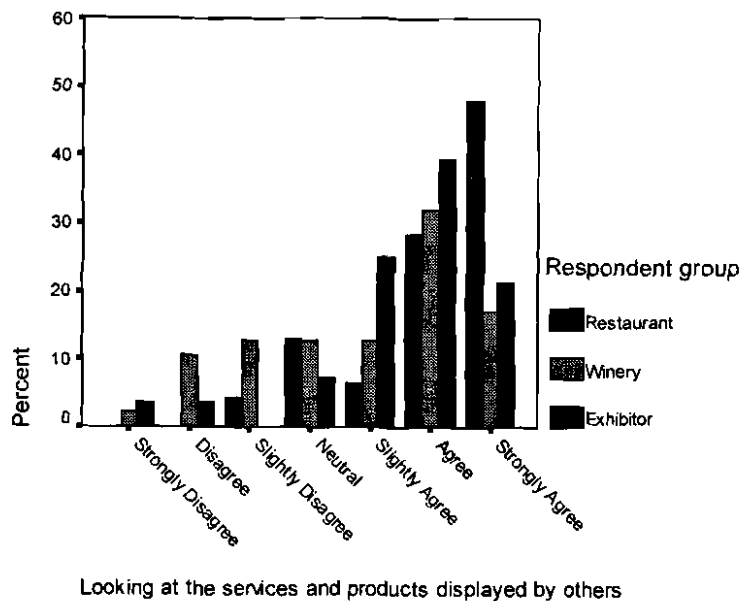


**Figure 4. Importance of being at the festival because of the competitors, restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**

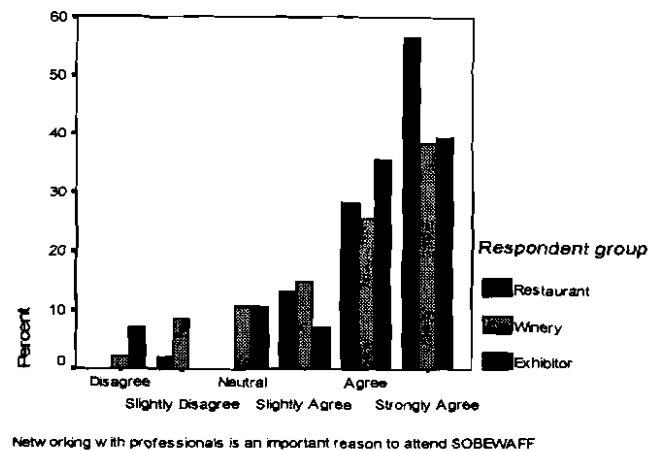


A somewhat different pattern of responses were displayed on the issue of competition and the wish to study products presented by the others. To be at the festival because of the competitors was more important for the restaurateurs than for the others, and least important for the exhibitors. The restaurateurs also held a strong belief in attending the festival to study the services and products provided by the competitors, while the wineries were least eager to participate for this reason, closely followed by the exhibitors.

**Figure 5. Importance of looking at services and products displayed at the festival, restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**



**Figure 6. Importance of networking at the festival, restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**

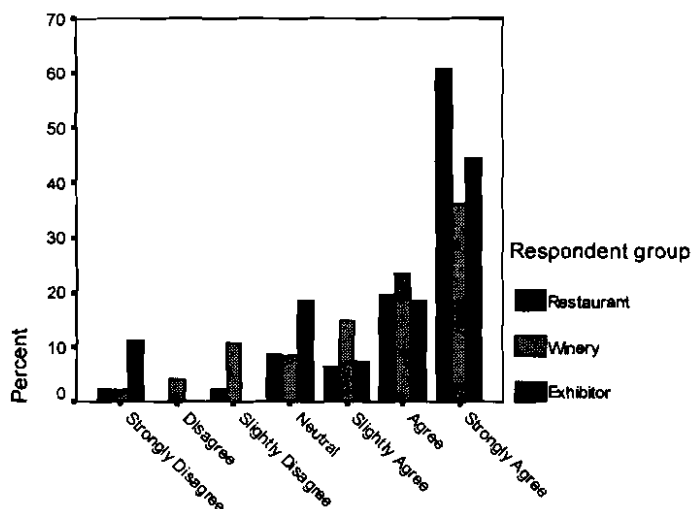


Networking was another important drive for participating at the festival that also distinguished the restaurateurs from the exhibitors and the wineries. Again it could be observed that the restaurateurs were the most positive group positive, placing a higher value on the festival as a meeting place between professionals and customers, than the other participants. The same tendency may be observed for the dimension of having fun when attending the festival. Restaurateurs were more aware of this aspect of the event than were the exhibitors and wineries.

Finally, it could be observed that supporting Florida International University (FIU) was much more important to the restaurateurs than to the exhibitors and wineries. A substantial

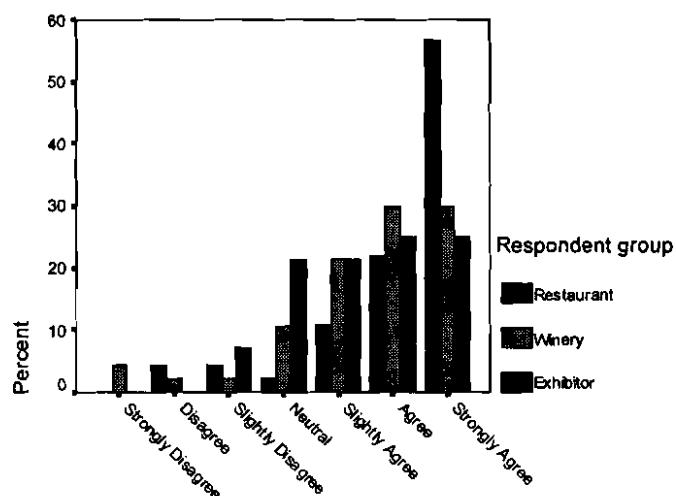
portion of these two groups did not care much about the interests of one of the organizers - the University.

**Figure 7. Importance of attending the festival to have fun, restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**



Having fun is an important reason to attend the SOBEWAFF

**Figure 8. Importance of attending the festival to support FIU, restaurateurs, exhibitors and wineries compared (N=122)**



Supporting FIU is an important reason to attend the festival

## Discussion

As expected, the study clearly indicates that the participants attend the festival to meet customers, to promote and market their products and services. Moreover, meeting new customers is an important reason for attending. This coincides well with a recent finding in a Norwegian study of the Food Festival of Stavanger, where participants mainly attend to show their products to customers, to each other, and to the media and the society. Not so obvious is the finding that it is important to be present at the exhibition area because of the competitors. This may reflect a fear of being overlooked and forgotten when not present, which adds significantly to the case of attending to *'show them'*, as stated by Quain. Knowing this, future events could probably increase the opportunities to promote products and services by focusing this important urge on the side of the participants.

More so, participants also engage in the festival to find out about products and services provided by other professionals, and also use the scene for networking and develop personal and professional relationships. This adds an educational dimension to the event, turning it into a scene of sharing competences and may be also 'steal' ideas and skills from competitors, an aspect that is clearly overlooked in previous research. Future research should focus more on the issue of competence and knowledge transfer among professionals related to festival participation. For future events, the networking and educational options could probably be cultivated to increase the professional motivation to and the rewards from participating.

Interestingly, the participants are motivated by the sheer fun of attending the event. A similar finding was reported in the Norwegian study, highlighting the rich emotional stimulation gained from just being there with the big crowds of people enjoying the event. At that Norwegian event, the differences between the festival atmosphere and everyday working in their own company were highly appreciated by the participants. This important intrinsic motivation should not be overlooked neither by researchers nor by practitioners. As such, important rewards are to be found for the attendants also on this emotional dimension, and this should certainly be observed for future research and practical event organizing.

Interestingly, supporting one of the organizers, the Hotel school at FIU was also part of the motivation. This alliance formation is important for both parties involved, as they may mutually develop each others as well as the food and wine competence and commerce in the area.

Somewhat surprising, the restaurateurs were by far the most positive group, reporting higher levels of motivation to participate on all the observed dimensions. Since quite a few of them are previous graduates from FIU, they should be expected to be the most eager to state their support to their own school. However, the differences between the restaurateurs and the other groups are reflected in all the results; their responses are in need of need explanation. One comment may include that the work of the restaurateurs is different from the other groups, and their personal and professional stimulation from the festival experience is far beyond those of the other groups. It could be that the quality of the social and professional interaction between the visitors and the participants is different across the groups, leaving the most interesting with the restaurateurs. It may also be that the restaurateurs are participating in only few events, while wineries and exhibitors are more frequently attending events like this, and thus get more easily bored by repetitions. As the restaurateurs come from the south beach area, they may be more involved both emotionally and professionally in the festival, compared to the other groups that also contain participants not local to the South Beach area. May be the restaurants face a stronger competition and have to fight harder for their customers compared to the exhibitors and wineries. Finally, it should not be overlooked that there may be significant differences in basic attitudes and personalities between the restaurateurs and the other groups. Only future research can explain this. The practical consequences are great, however. Different approaches should probably be employed to

recruit participants for future festivals, while also making sure that the present group of restaurateurs is motivated and satisfied also in the future.

In sum, the motivations for attending are promotion and marketing, just being there with customers, colleagues and competitors, learning and networking, and enjoying the thrill of the festival ambience. In general, all the measures were more positive for the restaurateurs than for the others, leaving us with an impression that this group holds a higher level of motivation and also finds the event more rewarding than the exhibitors and the wineries. Networking, having fun and altruistically supporting FIU are rewarding to the participants and of great value for the future development of the event.

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# **Economic Growth and Recession Time Periods: Their Effect Upon Pleasure Travelers Visiting Florida Theme Parks**

By Mark A. Bonn and H. Leslie Furr, and Mo Dai

*Two tourism-oriented travel samples were drawn from recent time periods that represented economic growth (expansion) and recession cycles in the U. S. economy. Analysis suggests that during the recession period, a greater percentage of theme park visitors chose to travel by air. Second, theme park travelers were more likely to visit friends or family during the recession period. Third, recession theme park travelers were 10 years older, on the average, than their rapid growth counterparts. The average age difference of theme park visitors was found to be significantly different during cyclical economic periods. Research findings support the need for additional studies that segment using generational markets.*

## **Introduction**

In the few short years since the millennium we have experienced the devastating effect certain situations have had upon travel. The outbreak of hoof and mouth disease halted travel to several regions of England. The SARS outbreak in Asia almost bankrupted an airline and interrupted travel to Hong Kong and other Asian destinations for over half a year. The specter of terrorism still hangs over the US airline industry after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. Yet it was the most recent downturn of the national economy that proved to be much more harmful to the travel industry than any of the disasters listed above. Certainly, the United States of America's continuous economic cyclical changes are more predictable and easily managed than environmental or terrorist-oriented disasters. The National Bureau's Business Cycle Dating Committee under National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) maintains a chronology of the U.S. business cycle. The chronology identifies the dates of peaks and troughs that frame economic recession or expansion. The period from a peak to a trough is a recession and the period from a trough to a peak is an expansion. According to the chronology, the most recent peak occurred in March 2001, ending a record-long expansion that began in 1991. The most recent trough occurred in November 2001, inaugurating an expansion (NBER, 2003).

Unlike natural disasters, the travel industry can easily monitor the economic health of the nation and could conceivably develop marketing strategies for future changes in visitors' behavior during similar economic periods in the past. This study spans both rapid growth (2000) and recession periods (2001) in the US economy. At the tail end of the most recent economic expansion (2000), the unemployment rate declined to an annual average rate of 4.0 percent in 2000. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) reached 172.2 in 2000, rising at an annual rate of 3.7%, the largest single year increase since 1991. In 2001, the U.S. economy stumbled across the threshold into recession as a result of stock market bubbles, large corporation scandals, and the terrorist attacks. The real GDP increased just 0.3% annually over 2000, the smallest annual increase since 1992 U.S. travel expenditures reached \$488.2 billion in 2000, rising at an annual rate of 8.1%, the highest growth rate since 1996. In 2001, U.S. travel expenditures experienced a negative increase of 4.9% to \$464.1 billion as a result of the economic recession.

## **Theoretical Background and Research Questions**

Defining specific social changes in mass travel consumption behavior over time based on family demographic attributes, such as family income and geographic area of origin, formed the conventional background for the research model used in this research paper. The basic

theoretical question was formulated on the theory that the geographic origin of visitors could affect, or be affected by changes in the economy.

According to Hagenaars (1990), valid insights into the nature of historical changes in social behavior can be “gained only from theories that have been based on the systematic analyses of empirical data” (Hagenaars 1990). Collecting empirical data in a continuous manner over an entire economic cycle does not solve all the problems facing tourism researchers interested in measuring complex changes in consumer behavior. Before the introduction of Log-Linear trend analysis in the 1970’s the use of surveys, repeated over time, that included more than one level of analysis in order to measure social change even lacked a proper method for measuring changes in behavior. Oftentimes important variations in various categories of analysis would be lost by collapsing variables or by only comparing data at individual levels. Large sample Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) “allows researchers to account for nested effects in studies that use unbalanced designs, and studies that use repeated measures” (Sibthorp, Witter, Wells, and Ellis 2004).

The number of tourism-oriented variable categories including age (Anderson and Langmeyer 1982; Dodd and Bigotte 1997); geographical implications (Etzel and Woodside 1982; Blazey 1988; Bonn, Furr, and Uysal 1992; Andereck and Caldwell 1994; Field 1999); length of stay (Pearce and Elliott 1983; Uysal, McDonald and O’Leary 1998); and level of experience (Ronkainen and Woodside 1980; Perdue 1985) that should be included in a study measuring social change over time is large. Segmentation studies that utilized benefits sought by travelers assisted interested parties in understanding issues related to travel motives also added another dimension to the social researcher’s arsenal (Shoemaker 1994; Bieger and Laesser 2002) and provided in-depth analyses for further refining our understanding of various travel markets (Spotts and Mahoney 1991; Taylor, Fletcher and Clabaugh 1993; Mudambi and Baum 1997; Agarwal and Yochum 1999; Frechtling and Horváth 1999).

In addition, segmentation travel studies often focus upon particular travel industry segments including airline transportation (Denstadli 2000), cruise lines (Marti 1995; Henthorne 2000), automotive (MacKay, Andereck and Vogt, 2002) and shopping (Reisinger and Turner 2002; Dimanche 2003). Facilities and services supporting travelers have also been the study of segmentation analysis, especially for lodging (Yucelt and Marcella 1996; Bell and Morey 1996; Manickas and Shea 1997). The wealth of “one-shot survey” segmentation research studies reviewed here provided a complex platform for developing a model for comparing and contrasting theme park visitors’ group behavior and characteristics within the context of two economically dissimilar time periods.

### **The Theme Park Industry**

Past research focusing on the U.S. theme park industry has primarily addressed future management perspectives (Milman 2001), growth issues (Samuels 1996), new market expectations (McClung 1991), competitive forces (Formica and Olsen 1998), assessments of attributes (Thah and Axinn 1994) and the overall industry (Loverseed 1994). Scholarly theme park journal articles rarely address consumer behavior issues as they relate to market segmentation of management topics such as the competitive forces issue. Milman’s examination of theme park managers recommended that future theme park studies be conducted to provide insight to decision makers regarding key issues that could impact their operations (Milman 2001).

Initially, a detailed assessment of theme park travelers’ behavior over an historical timeline was undertaken to establish periodic measures that gave a more comprehensive image of travelers. Typically, periodic measures such as the 2001 Travel Industry Association of America report citing a 1% decline in attendance to North American Theme parks provide little insight to theme-park managers about consumer behavior issues that may potentially affect theme park attendance. New findings were realized by researchers when

further differentiation of travel expenditure behavior over different economic time periods was conducted. Log-linear techniques clearly revealed certain nested behaviors of travelers from specific geographic regions during periods of recession and rapid growth.

Additionally, the study sought to establish and identify certain "baselines" for individual characteristics using a data set that represented two economic periods. The choice of this particular Florida-oriented database is significant because industry data identifies the fact that Florida theme parks visitors represent 18.6% of the 324 million national theme park attendees (Amusement Business 2003). An even more illustrative detail of this database is that during these two times Florida theme parks accounted for 72.7% (or 60.3 million) of the nearly 83 million visitors to the top eleven U.S. theme parks (Amusement Business 2002).

Lastly, the study attempted to determine individual characteristics that marked theme park visitors whose behaviors seemed most responsive to changes in the state of the economy. In particular, the study identifies characteristics of visitor segments who continued to spend on travel during an economic downturn. These group profiles should assist current and future theme park decision makers and destination marketing executives with associating key information pertaining to consumer behavior patterns and their relationship to visitor origins that could aid resort managers develop marketing plans form marketing plans for economic downturn periods.

### Method and Findings

From 1999 to 2001, visitors to Florida theme parks were personally interviewed on a random basis and asked to complete a 111-item survey related to their on-site travel experience. The selection was made during randomized days, at randomized sites and times at locations commonly frequented by visitors. These areas included theme parks, lodging properties, food service establishments, natural and man-made attractions, shopping areas and various other locations. A total of 4,189 usable responses were obtained. Completed responses were then separated into their two mutually exclusive groups representing two years; one for the time period of rapid growth (2000) and the other for the time period representing recession (2001). Table 1 provides demographic information related to the study sample.

**Table 1 Overall Theme Park Visitor Demographic Characteristics**

Variables (N=4,189)		Percentage
Marital Status	Married	69.9
	Single	19.1
	Widowed/Divorced	10.0
Education	Less than High School	2.6
	High School	17.5
	Technical School	6.6
	Some College/College	58.4
	Post Graduate	14.9
Household Income	Under \$20,000	6.0
	\$20,000-\$29,999	11.8
	\$30,000-\$39,999	14.7
	\$40,000-\$49,999	16.3
	\$50,000-\$74,999	24.5
	\$75,000 or More	26.7
Travel Mode to Florida	Air	62.1
	Auto	34.6
	RV/Motor-coach	2.2
	Other	1.1
Origin	In-State	34.8
	Out-of-State	49.0



### Overall Theme Park Visitor Experience Ratings

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest, theme park attendees rated their overall experience a 4.17. Responding on a satisfaction scale based upon 1=lowest to 10=highest, theme park attendees indicated concerns with many of the attributes associated with the on-site travel experience. For instance, "level of service" was rated as 6.87; "perception of safety and security" scored 6.85; "signs and directions" scored 6.28; and "ground transportation" scored 5.71 (see Table 2).

**Table 2 Overall Theme Park Visitor Behavioral Characteristics**

Variable	Means
Party Size	3.2
Number of Children	2.2
Length of Stay	1.85
<b>Daily Expenditures:</b>	
Shopping	\$104.71
Sightseeing	100.72
Lodging	99.79
Other	84.48
Event Fees	81.53
Evening Entertainment	76.79
Sports Fees	72.21
Restaurant	66.18
Ground Transportation	37.27
Grocery	33.38
Total Expenditure	\$272.13
Climate	7.71
Variety of Things to Do	7.60
Clean Environment	7.15
Level of Service	6.87
Friendliness of Residents	6.85
Perception of Safety/Security	6.85
Ease of Getting Around	6.80
Signs & Directions	6.28
Value for the Dollar	6.18
Ground Transportation	5.71
Overall Experience	4.17

### Geographical Segmentation Analyses

Three geographic market categories were developed to reflect this study objective and included the following: In-State (Florida Resident) theme park visitors; Domestic U.S. (non-Florida USA) theme park Visitors; and International theme-park visitors. These three groups were contrasted with one other in several ways. First, chi square tests of independence were conducted in order to determine if a systemic association existed among the three geographic visitor origins with respect to selected demographic and behavioral variables. Results indicated that the calculated value of the test statistics were all greater than the critical value of the chi-square distribution (5.991) with two (2) degrees of freedom for the upper-tail area of 0.05 (see Table 3 – see next page).

**Table 3 Chi-Square Analysis of In-State, Out-of-State and International Florida Theme Park Visitors: Selected Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics**

Variables	In-State (%)	Out-of-State (%)	International (%)	$\chi^2$ Value
Marital Status				131.522***
Married	68.1	72.6	72.2	
Single	21.1	16.7	21.8	
Widowed/Divorced	10.8	10.8	6.0	
Education				178.164***
Less than High School	3.6	2.3	1.5	
High School	18.9	16.2	18.8	
Technical School	6.4	6.2	8.0	
Some College/College	57.9	59.6	55.6	
Post Graduate	13.2	15.8	16.1	
Household Income				286.868***
Under \$20,000	6.4	5.0	7.9	
\$20,000-\$29,999	15.5	9.4	11.1	
\$30,000-\$39,999	16.4	13.1	15.6	
\$40,000-\$49,999	17.8	15.5	15.1	
\$50,000-\$74,999	22.7	26.7	21.7	
\$75,000 or More	21.1	30.2	28.5	
Travel Mode to Florida				3437.997***
Air	10.1	68.2	86.5	
Auto/Ground	85.7	28.2	11.8	
Primary Reason for Visit				729.911***
Leisure Vacation	71.2	58.9	78.2	
Visit Friends/Family	12.0	24.9	12.7	
Business	4.0	7.3	3.3	
Attend Convention	5.1	4.6	3.5	
Other	7.8	4.3	2.3	

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

These tests suggested two salient points for marketing oriented managers. First, International theme park visitors exhibited significantly higher levels of post-graduate educational achievement. Second, domestic out of state visitors' primary reason for travel was for more like to visit friends and relatives than their in-state counterparts. Twenty-five studied variables were examined for these same three geographic market segments using one-way analysis of variance tests. Twenty of these variables were found to be significant at the  $p \leq 0.05$  level. Fifteen of these were found to be significant at the  $p \leq 0.001$ . Four study variables were significant at the  $p \leq 0.01$ , and one variable was significant at the  $p \leq 0.05$  level. (See table 4 – next page) Domestic theme park visitors were significantly older (41.05 years of age) than the in-state and international theme park visitors. In addition, international theme park visitor's travel with significantly larger groups (3.50 average party size) than their counterparts.

#### Other Measures

Spending behavior was analyzed according to the three geographic visitor origins and included six significant findings out of ten study variables. In-state theme park visitors spent significantly less on prepared foods (restaurants, snack bars, concessions) and more on groceries than did the domestic and international groups. International theme park visitors spent significantly more than the other two groups on sightseeing and shopping. International theme park visitors also spent more than the domestic theme park visitors on event fees.

**Table 4 ANOVA of In-State, Out-of-State and International Florida Theme Park Visitors: Selected Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics**

Variables <sup>a</sup>	In-State (%)	Out-of-State (%)	International (%)	F
Age	39.11 <sup>B</sup>	41.05 <sup>A</sup>	38.69 <sup>B</sup>	21.836 <sup>***</sup>
Length of Stay	3.81 <sup>B</sup>	5.05 <sup>A</sup>	5.33 <sup>A</sup>	54.438 <sup>***</sup>
Party Size	3.28 <sup>B</sup>	3.12 <sup>C</sup>	3.48 <sup>A</sup>	55.436 <sup>***</sup>
Number of Children	2.25 <sup>A</sup>	2.11 <sup>B</sup>	2.14 <sup>AB</sup>	6.691 <sup>***</sup>
Daily Expenditure				
Shopping	87.33 <sup>C</sup>	101.34 <sup>B</sup>	139.16 <sup>A</sup>	76.380 <sup>***</sup>
Sightseeing	100.65 <sup>B</sup>	95.94 <sup>C</sup>	115.00 <sup>A</sup>	31.987 <sup>***</sup>
Lodging	98.74	99.98	100.69	.470
Other	75.64	91.80	81.40	2.577
Event Fees	83.33 <sup>AB</sup>	77.78 <sup>B</sup>	88.36 <sup>A</sup>	4.911 <sup>**</sup>
Evening Entertainment	82.24	73.27	79.54	2.662
Sports Fees	67.68	70.39	83.42	2.667
Restaurant	59.01 <sup>B</sup>	70.00 <sup>A</sup>	69.11 <sup>A</sup>	48.726 <sup>***</sup>
Ground Transportation	24.41 <sup>C</sup>	44.89 <sup>A</sup>	39.41 <sup>B</sup>	95.781 <sup>***</sup>
Grocery	36.40 <sup>A</sup>	32.45 <sup>B</sup>	31.47 <sup>B</sup>	4.639 <sup>**</sup>
Attributes <sup>b</sup>				
Climate	7.73 <sup>A</sup>	7.81 <sup>A</sup>	7.39 <sup>B</sup>	17.311 <sup>***</sup>
Variety of Things	7.77 <sup>A</sup>	7.66 <sup>A</sup>	7.12 <sup>B</sup>	40.237 <sup>***</sup>
Clean Environment	7.08 <sup>B</sup>	7.23 <sup>A</sup>	7.05 <sup>B</sup>	5.075 <sup>**</sup>
Level of Service	6.95 <sup>A</sup>	6.80 <sup>B</sup>	6.92 <sup>AB</sup>	4.020 <sup>*</sup>
Friendliness of Residents	6.74 <sup>B</sup>	6.92 <sup>A</sup>	6.88 <sup>AB</sup>	4.776 <sup>**</sup>
Perception of Safety	6.87 <sup>AB</sup>	6.76 <sup>B</sup>	7.06 <sup>A</sup>	8.362 <sup>***</sup>
Ease of Getting Around	6.87	6.75	6.80	2.777
Signs & Directions	6.54 <sup>A</sup>	6.31 <sup>C</sup>	5.73 <sup>B</sup>	46.250 <sup>***</sup>
Value for the Dollar	6.30 <sup>A</sup>	6.23 <sup>A</sup>	5.85 <sup>B</sup>	19.364 <sup>***</sup>
Ground Transportation	5.73 <sup>A</sup>	5.83 <sup>A</sup>	5.34 <sup>B</sup>	15.014 <sup>***</sup>
Overall Experience <sup>c</sup>	4.21 <sup>A</sup>	4.19 <sup>A</sup>	4.02 <sup>B</sup>	44.417 <sup>***</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Sheffé post hoc tests are tested on all the variables listed below. Means that are assigned capital letters (e.g., A, B, C) are significantly different at  $p \leq .05$ . Means that share letters are not significantly different.

<sup>b</sup> On a scale 1-10, with 1=Poor, 10=Excellent.

<sup>c</sup> On a Scale 1-5, with 1=Poor, 5=Excellent.

\* $p \leq .05$

\*\* $p \leq .01$

\*\*\* $p \leq .001$

The study examined theme park visitor perceptions of attributes associated with the on-site travel experience. A total of ten attributes were examined with nine demonstrating significant differences among the three geographic groups. International theme park visitors rated the attributes associated with signage, value for the dollar, variety of things to do, climate, and ground transportation significantly lower than all other groups. In-state and international theme park visitors rated the attribute of clean environment significantly lower than the domestic theme park visitors. Perception of safety was rated significantly higher by the international theme park visitors than by the domestic theme park visitors. Finally, international theme park visitors rated the total overall experience significantly lower than the domestic and in-state theme park visitors.

### Rapid Growth vs. Recession Time Period Analyses

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) allowed the researchers to account for nested effects by testing a series of categorical variables (travel mode, education, marital status, education, income and primary reason for travel) within the context of exclusive time periods and the origin of the traveler (Florida, Domestic or International). This approach was especially useful because HLM allowed the researchers to account for effects at various levels of a model (Sibthorp, Witter, Wells, Ellis and Voelkl, 2004).

The likelihood of fit analysis of visitor behavioral characteristics of theme park visitors in recession time periods provided interesting results when compared to the characteristics represented by the rapid growth time period (see Table 5). Specifically, test results rejected the null hypothesis that there was no difference between visitor behavior during the rapid growth and recession time periods. The categorical behavioral variables travel mode (L.R. = 52.453,  $p=.0000$ ); income (L.R. = 81.969,  $p=.0000$ ); and primary reason for visiting (L.R. = 138.557,  $p=.0000$ ) were particularly significant. As expected, the origin of the traveler (partial chi-square = 3361.698,  $p=.0000$ ) seems to account for most of the interaction between the visitors' geographic origin, time period and travel mode. It is the change in geographic origin over time that was surprising (partial chi-square = 1225.654,  $p=.0000$ ). It was also interesting to note that the geographic origin of the visitors explained much of the variance of theme park visitors primary reason for traveling to central Florida (Partial chi-square = 739.453,  $p=.0000$ ).

**Table 5: Hierarchical Log-linear Likelihood of Fit Analysis of Theme Park Visitor Behavioral Characteristics and Geographic Origin: Rapid Growth (2000) vs. Recession Periods (2001)**

	Interactions	df	L.R. Chi-Square	p	Pearson's Chi-square	p
Travel Mode	Geog*Time*Travel Mode	2	52.453	.0000	55.376	.0000
	Geog*Travel Mode	2			3361.698	.0000
	Time*Travel Mode	1			12.413	.0004
	Geog*Time	2			1225.654	.0000
Marital Status	Geog*Time*Marital	4	1.27395	.8658	1.27694	.8653
	Geog*Marital	4			131.458	.0000
	Time*Marital	2			42.526	.0000
	Geog*Time	2			21.194	.0000
Education	Geog*Time*Education	8	15.812	.0452	15.174	.0559
	Geog*Education	8			75.880	.0000
	Time*Education	4			35.126	.0000
	Geog*Time	2			6.963	.0308
Income	Geog*Time*Income	10	81.969	.0000	82.607	.0000
	Geog*Income	10			288.287	.0000
	Time*Income	5			120.182	.0000
	Geog*Time	2			10.998	.0041
Primary Reason	Geog*Time*Reason	8	138.557	.0000	137.744	.0000
	Geog*Reason	8			739.453	.0000
	Time*Reason	4			94.167	.0000
	Geog*Time	2			46.943	.0000

International theme park visitors with household incomes of less than \$20,000 seem to have been affected more by the worldwide recession than other income categories. Only 2.8 percent of travelers proved to be international visitors during the recession; the least amount of visitors from this category ever recorded (Table 6). Conversely, international visitors during the rapid growth period reporting household incomes under \$20,000 represented the largest percentage (9.5%). During recession time period, out-of-state theme park visitors from households earning \$75,000 or more represented the largest percentage (36.5%) of all visitor segments according to income. Domestic theme park visitors traveled by air travel more often during the recession (50.8%) time period than during the rapid growth (35.9%) time period. Regardless of economic time periods, international theme park visitors indicated that leisure vacation was their primary reason for visiting Florida significantly more than the other groups.

**Table 6: Chi – Square Analysis of Theme Park Visitor Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics: Rapid Growth Period (2000) vs. Recessionary Period (2001)**

Variables	2000 Rapid Growth			2001 Recession			$\chi^2$ Value
	IS(%) N=607	OS(%) N=789	Intl.(%) N=532	IS(%) N=688	OS(%) N=896	Intl.(%) N=674	
Gender							100.102***
Male	47.2	48.0	55.2	43.8	45.5	58.5	
Female	52.8	52.0	44.8	56.2	54.5	41.5	
Ethnicity							1252.390***
Caucasian	89.3	91.8	71.0	89.7	93.2	78.7	
Hispanic	5.4	2.8	12.1	4.2	2.1	7.4	
African-American	3.3	3.2	2.5	3.9	3.2	2.1	
Asian	.5	1.1	3.6	.9	.2	3.0	
Other	1.4	1.1	10.8	1.2	1.3	8.9	
Marital Status							194.529***
Married	67.0	71.2	71.2	71.3	76.4	75.5	
Single	22.1	17.6	22.6	18.3	14.1	18.7	
Widowed/Divorced	10.9	11.1	6.2	10.5	9.5	5.7	294.954***
Education							
Less than High School	2.9	2.1	1.6	5.8	2.9	1.1	
High School	18.7	16.0	17.9	19.4	16.6	21.8	
Technical School	6.5	6.5	7.8	5.9	5.3	9.0	
Some College/College	60.1	60.1	55.5	51.8	57.9	56.1	
Post Graduate	11.8	15.3	17.2	17.1	17.2	12.2	486.128***
Household Income							
Under \$20,000	7.4	5.1	9.5	3.7	4.8	2.8	
\$20,000-\$29,999	14.8	10.1	10.6	17.6	7.4	13.0	
\$30,000-\$39,999	17.8	14.5	14.7	12.6	9.0	18.7	
\$40,000-\$49,999	18.3	16.2	15.7	16.5	13.6	13.2	
\$50,000-\$74,999	22.3	26.0	20.4	24.1	28.8	26.2	1657.107***
\$75,000 or More	19.5	28.0	29.2	25.5	36.5	26.2	
Travel Mode to Florida							
Air	4.9	35.9	27.3	9.6	50.8	47.0	
Auto	93.1	60.2	65.3	89.8	46.9	47.9	
RV/Motor-coach	2.0	3.0	6.8	.2	2.0	4.9	923.515***
Other	.1	.8	.6	.4	.2	.1	
Primary Reason for Visit							
Leisure Vacation	76.4	59.1	78.5	60.2	58.6	77.2	
Visit Friends/Family	8.7	24.3	11.5	18.9	26.0	16.5	
Business	2.8	7.1	3.4	6.3	7.7	3.0	

Attend Convention	4.0	4.7	4.0	7.3	4.3	1.9
Other	8.0	4.8	2.6	7.3	3.3	1.3

\*\*\*p ≤ .001

### **Travel Characteristics**

A series of multivariate tests were conducted to determine what differences, if any, existed between visitors during the expansion and recession time periods with respect to age, economic spending, party size, length of stay and other selected attributes related to travel behavior (see Table 7 – next page). During the period of rapid growth, out-of-state theme park visitors traveled with significantly fewer individuals than in-state or international visitors. During both time periods, international visitors formed the largest party sizes when compared to the other two geographic travel segments. Comparing rapid growth and recession time periods, both in-state and out-of-state visitor segments traveled with a greater numbers of children in their travel parties during the rapid growth time period than during the recession time period. Predictably, the average amount spent for daily shopping dropped from approximately \$41 to \$36 with the smaller-sized travel groups in the recession period.

### **Expenditure Comparisons**

Table 7 also identifies expenditure characteristics for the three study groups. Results show that out-of-state theme park visitors during the recession period spent more on lodging than did the in-state and out-of-state visitors during the rapid growth time period. In-state theme park visitors spent more during recession time periods than did out-of-state visitors on event fees. International visitors during rapid growth spent more on sports fees than did in-state visitors during the recession period. In-state visitors during recession period spent more on evening entertainment than all the other groups in the rapid growth period. During both time periods, in-state theme park visitors spent significantly less on restaurants than all the other geographic-origin groups. Out-of-state theme park visitors during recession time period spent significantly more on restaurants than during the rapid growth period. Ground transportation results indicated that out-of-state during both time periods spent significantly more than in-state visitors. This appears to confirm the fact that many more out-of-state visitors traveled by air during the recession period and required local rentals for ground transportation. During recession period, in-state spent significantly more on groceries than the rest of the group in both periods.

### **Comparison of Area Attributes Within the Context of Economic Time Periods**

Theme Park visitors responded to ten (10) items related to area attributes during both time periods. Results suggest the following:

- **In-State Theme Park Visitors**  
During the period of rapid growth, in-state visitors rated “clean environment” lower than the out-of-state visitors. In-state visitors rated the variable “perception of safety” significantly higher during recession period compared with international visitors during that same period. Also, in-state visitors rated “perception of safety” significantly higher during the recession period than all the other groups during the rapid growth period. “Ease of getting around” and “value of the dollar” were rated significantly higher by in-state theme park visitors during the recession period compared with all other theme park visitor groups during the rapid growth period.
- **Out-of-State Theme Park Visitors**  
Out-of-state visitors rated level of service significantly lower during the rapid growth period than by in-state visitors during the recession period. During the time period of rapid growth, out-of-state theme park visitors rated the variable “friendliness of residents” significantly higher than all other groups during the recession period. Out-of-state visitors place a significantly higher level of satisfaction on climate when compared with international visitors during rapid growth and recession periods.

**Table 7 ANOVA Analyses of Theme Park Visitor Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics: Rapid Growth Period (2000) vs. Recessionary Period (2001)**

Variables	2000 Rapid Growth			2001 Recessionary Period			F
	IS <sup>d</sup> N=607	OS N=789	Intl. N=532	IS N=688	OS N=896	Intl. N=674	
Age	35.58 <sup>D</sup>	38.18 <sup>C</sup>	36.74 <sup>CD</sup>	47.33 <sup>AB</sup>	48.37 <sup>A</sup>	45.37 <sup>B</sup>	197.569***
Length of Stay	3.00 <sup>C</sup>	3.99 <sup>B</sup>	4.22 <sup>B</sup>	8.92 <sup>A</sup>	9.06 <sup>A</sup>	9.24 <sup>A</sup>	340.371***
Party Size	3.36 <sup>A</sup>	3.16 <sup>B</sup>	3.52 <sup>C</sup>	3.07 <sup>BD</sup>	3.02 <sup>D</sup>	3.37 <sup>ABC</sup>	32.392***
Number of Children	2.32 <sup>A</sup>	2.17 <sup>B</sup>	2.14 <sup>ABC</sup>	2.01 <sup>BC</sup>	1.94 <sup>C</sup>	2.13 <sup>ABC</sup>	10.349***
Daily Expenditure							
Shopping	89.82 <sup>C</sup>	103.03 <sup>B</sup>	142.85 <sup>A</sup>	80.02 <sup>C</sup>	96.06 <sup>BC</sup>	124.22 <sup>AB</sup>	32.498***
Sightseeing	100.16 <sup>B</sup>	94.57 <sup>B</sup>	113.88 <sup>A</sup>	101.76 <sup>B</sup>	99.25 <sup>B</sup>	117.89 <sup>A</sup>	13.637***
Lodging	97.41 <sup>B</sup>	98.05 <sup>B</sup>	99.44 <sup>AB</sup>	103.20 <sup>AB</sup>	105.72 <sup>A</sup>	104.73 <sup>AB</sup>	3.951***
Other	64.41 <sup>B</sup>	83.93 <sup>AB</sup>	84.50 <sup>AB</sup>	104.24 <sup>AB</sup>	110.05 <sup>A</sup>	68.77 <sup>AB</sup>	4.598***
Admissions/Event Fees	83.86 <sup>AB</sup>	80.47 <sup>BC</sup>	93.39 <sup>AB</sup>	81.11 <sup>AC</sup>	66.53 <sup>C</sup>	69.30 <sup>AC</sup>	5.895***
Evening Entertainment	74.88 <sup>B</sup>	70.64 <sup>B</sup>	78.28 <sup>B</sup>	106.15 <sup>A</sup>	81.95 <sup>AB</sup>	84.02 <sup>AB</sup>	5.069***
Sports Fees	74.53 <sup>AB</sup>	72.46 <sup>AB</sup>	91.59 <sup>A</sup>	51.22 <sup>B</sup>	62.71 <sup>AB</sup>	61.77 <sup>AB</sup>	3.558**
Restaurant	56.99 <sup>B</sup>	68.24 <sup>A</sup>	69.51 <sup>AC</sup>	65.02 <sup>A</sup>	75.41 <sup>C</sup>	67.72 <sup>AC</sup>	26.239***
Ground Transportation	22.41 <sup>B</sup>	43.80 <sup>A</sup>	40.33 <sup>AC</sup>	31.65 <sup>BC</sup>	48.47 <sup>A</sup>	35.82 <sup>AC</sup>	41.669***
Grocery	31.36 <sup>B</sup>	32.48 <sup>B</sup>	30.83 <sup>B</sup>	46.69 <sup>A</sup>	32.35 <sup>B</sup>	33.88 <sup>BC</sup>	9.298***
Attributes							
Climate	7.65 <sup>AB</sup>	7.82 <sup>A</sup>	7.44 <sup>B</sup>	7.97 <sup>A</sup>	7.80 <sup>A</sup>	7.14 <sup>B</sup>	9.293***
Variety of Things	7.73 <sup>A</sup>	7.68 <sup>A</sup>	7.16 <sup>B</sup>	7.86 <sup>A</sup>	7.61 <sup>A</sup>	7.00 <sup>B</sup>	16.903***
Clean Environment	6.97 <sup>B</sup>	7.26 <sup>A</sup>	7.13 <sup>AB</sup>	7.42 <sup>A</sup>	7.16 <sup>AB</sup>	6.67 <sup>B</sup>	7.702***
Level of Service	6.88 <sup>AB</sup>	6.77 <sup>B</sup>	6.93 <sup>AB</sup>	7.11 <sup>A</sup>	6.87 <sup>AB</sup>	6.82 <sup>AB</sup>	3.069**
Friendliness of Residents	6.82 <sup>ABC</sup>	7.02 <sup>A</sup>	6.97 <sup>AB</sup>	6.58 <sup>C</sup>	6.65 <sup>BC</sup>	6.50 <sup>C</sup>	8.960***
Perception of Safety	6.56 <sup>B</sup>	6.56 <sup>B</sup>	7.05 <sup>A</sup>	7.83 <sup>C</sup>	7.51 <sup>CD</sup>	7.14 <sup>AD</sup>	50.882***
Ease of Getting Around	6.74 <sup>BC</sup>	6.79 <sup>B</sup>	6.92 <sup>AB</sup>	7.21 <sup>A</sup>	6.63 <sup>BC</sup>	6.28 <sup>C</sup>	11.074***
Signs & Directions	6.00 <sup>B</sup>	5.82 <sup>B</sup>	5.34 <sup>A</sup>	7.56 <sup>C</sup>	7.36 <sup>CD</sup>	6.95 <sup>D</sup>	11.074***
Value of the Dollar	5.91 <sup>B</sup>	5.90 <sup>B</sup>	5.30 <sup>C</sup>	7.10 <sup>A</sup>	7.00 <sup>A</sup>	6.70 <sup>A</sup>	93.880***
Ground Transportation	4.97 <sup>BC</sup>	5.24 <sup>B</sup>	4.90 <sup>C</sup>	7.31 <sup>A</sup>	7.32 <sup>A</sup>	6.92 <sup>A</sup>	199.493***
Overall Experience	4.19 <sup>AC</sup>	4.19 <sup>AC</sup>	3.98 <sup>B</sup>	4.24 <sup>A</sup>	4.19 <sup>AC</sup>	4.10 <sup>BC</sup>	20.331***

<sup>a</sup>Sheffé post hoc tests are tested on all the variables listed below. Means that are assigned capital letters (e.g., A, B, C) are significantly different at  $p \leq .05$ . Means that share letters are not significantly different.

<sup>b</sup> On a scale 1-10, with 1=Poor, 10=Excellent.

<sup>c</sup> On a Scale 1-5, with 1=Poor, 5=Excellent.

<sup>d</sup>IS= In State

OS=Out-of-State

Intl.=International

\*\* $p \leq .01$

\*\*\* $p \leq .001$

#### • International Theme Park Visitors

International theme park visitors rated "signs and directions" significantly lower than all other groups for both time periods. International theme park visitors rated "ground transportation" significantly lower than out-of-state theme park visitors during rapid growth and significantly lower than all groups during the recession period. The international visitors during both time periods rated the "variety of things" significantly lower than the other groups. Finally, international visitors rated their overall experience significantly lower than all other groups during the period of rapid growth and their overall experience was also significantly lower during the recession period than those in-state and out-of-state visitors.

#### Summary

One of the key responsibilities of tourism research is to provide the tourism and hospitality industry with information that can help their business managers compete in abnormal situations. Without access to baseline measurements, strategic decision-making becomes more like guesswork than problem solving. The approach used in this paper assumed that there would be significant differences between visitors to Florida theme parks during periods of rapid growth and recession. Florida theme park directors are provided several pieces of evidence within this study that could be used to aid institutional strategic marketing planning when entering a recession. One counter intuitive item concerns the fact that during the recession period a greater percentage of theme park visitors traveled by air. This may be attributed to the deep discounting by the U.S. airline industry during this period but it could also be the result of older, higher income travelers taking advantage of economic opportunities created by recessions (i.e. availability and affordability of hotel rooms). A second finding was that visitors to Florida theme parks during the recession of 2001 were more likely to be traveling to visit friends or family than similar visitors during the rapid growth period. This second finding particularly documents the importance of attempting to better understand differences between segments of theme park travelers visiting friends compared with those visiting relatives (Lehto, Morrison, and O'Leary, 2001).

Florida visitors to theme parks during the 2001 recession were found to be ten years older, on the average, than those visitors to Florida theme parks during the rapid growth period of 2000. These visitors stayed longer but spent less on shopping. However, recession theme park visitors spent more on evening entertainment, lodging, groceries and restaurants, in most cases, than did their respective counter parts during the rapid growth period. The most interesting behavioral changes for recession theme park visitors seemed to revolve around the fact that these theme park visitors who were older than the average age of rapid growth theme park visitors) rated "safety", "signs and directions", and the "value received for their travel dollar" destination attributes significantly more important.

The highly significant variables of travel mode and primary reason for visit are all responses for each geographic origin area that most managers would expect. It stands to reason that many purely demographic variables will not be particularly helpful to future segmentation researchers. However, behavioral variables such as expenditures on shopping, sports fees, evening entertainment, lodging, groceries and restaurants fees do provide the strategic marketer with additional, useful information. Age is the one demographic variable that does seem to consistently explain behavioral changes for theme park participants in the two time periods.

Future marketing studies that seek to explain social change must depend on demographic time variables such as age. Make no mistake about it, "In the world of generational marketing, it's age that counts" (Janoff, 1999). One possible solution to marketing travel services to a mass audience is to focus on a combination of age, economic context, and cohort levels of analysis. The likelihood for complete success is increased when industry analysts try to understand differences between two economically-diverse time periods by taking into account the buying power, preferences, attitudes and lifestyles of various generations.

The results from this study present actionable results for marketing management application. This study confirms that theme park visitors from the rapid growth time period are different from theme park visitors surveyed during the recession time period. The study also confirmed that geographic origins of theme park visitors help to explain differences between the two time period groups. Destination managers have immediate, tangible evidence to begin addressing strategies for maximizing visitor on-site satisfaction. Particularly, actionable results may be achieved immediately by developing strategies to address improving directional signage for an ageing domestic market and international travel market segments based on this trend analysis study. However, a cohort analysis would enable researchers to use such closely related variables as generation and time period to find a



clearer means for understanding the process of social change. The problem of multicollinearity must be addressed. For example one variable in the age-generation-period is always nested in another (Toivonen 1999).

HLM might be the correct tool to unlock the age-generation-period problem. After all, age is the one easily-obtainable piece of information that seems to hold the key to many of the questions surrounding changes in travel behavior during recession times. Profiling visitors by an easily reported factor such as age is an important means for guiding travel-oriented marketing strategies (Court and Lupton 1997). The value of using age to group individuals into meaningful segments, such as generations, should guide operations managers to a more efficient use of information delivery systems, which in turn allows for elevated returns on promotional activities (McQueen and Miller 1985). Following these generations over a life course could determine how all generations respond to each new national economic stage, such as wartime or recovery periods. Lucas' rational expectations theory can be tested adequately only if the effects of generation and age can be separated from the effects of the economic age in which each consumer makes decisions.

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# **Management Compensation as a Value-Added Competitive Method for Casual Theme Restaurants**

By Kevin S. Murphy and Robin B. DiPietro

*The primary purpose of this study is to propose that the management compensation package at Outback Steakhouse is a value-adding competitive method. Specifically the research focused on a survey of general manager's attitudes in regards to their intentions to seek out new employment and the effect of the compensation plan provided by Outback Steakhouse on the managers' intentions. This research will provide insight into the use of compensation packages and programs as proactive, value-adding competitive methods in retaining good quality managers in casual theme restaurants.*

## **Introduction**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) predicts that employment of restaurant and foodservice managers will be increasing faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2010. This is due, primarily because of continued expansion in the restaurant segment. Additionally, the BLS data predict that foodservice managers will post the highest growth rate of any foodservice occupation, gaining 24.7% between 2000 and 2010. According to the National Restaurant Association (NRA), over the past few years operators have consistently identified "recruiting and retaining employees" as the top challenge for their business. The demand in the industry for competent qualified management has never been greater, according to Olsen and Sharma, "the availability, quality and motivation of the work force is of no greater importance in any other industry when compared to the foodservice industry".

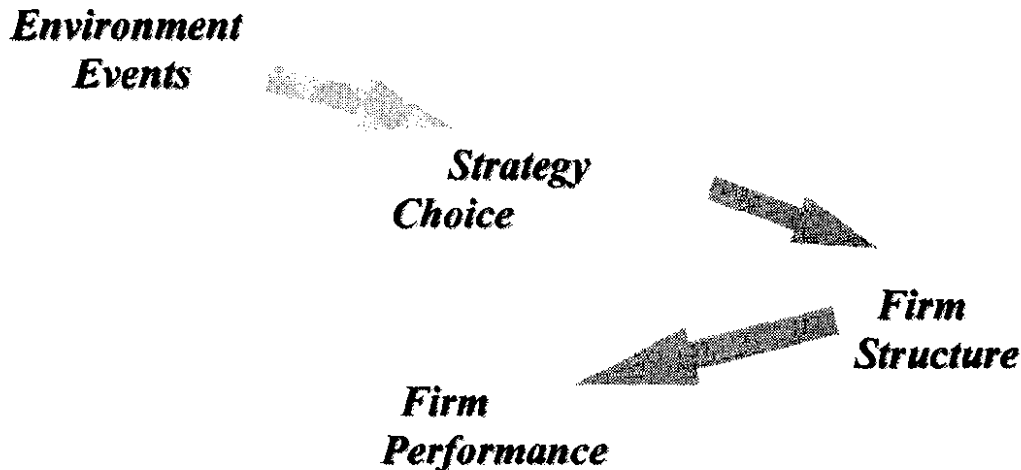
Because of this anticipated growth and demand for managers in the restaurant industry, most chain restaurants are revamping their compensation packages and incentive programs for managers, adding such items as commitment contracts, incentive bonuses, cash sign-on bonuses, profit-sharing, stock options, 401K plans and severance awards. As Dennis Lombardi, executive vice president of Technomic, stated at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Elliot Conference- "there is so much competition for employees out there, and we are not the industry of choice. However, some restaurant companies, including Sonic, IL Fornaio, P.F. Changs, Outback Steakhouse, Cheesecake Factory, California Pizza Kitchen and others, have done a good job with their turnover and compensation packages. Those restaurant companies that are able to provide quality unit level management, which enables the firms to operate efficiently and reduce turnover, will be the companies that can compete more effectively. The objective of this study is to explore the concept that management compensation can be a value-adding competitive method for casual themed restaurants.

## **Literature Review**

### **Co-Alignment Theory**

The theory of co-alignment refers to the ability of an organization's leadership to correctly align the organizations' strategy choice (competitive methods) and structure (core competencies) with the environmental trends that are driving change in their specific industry. "This alignment requires that management invest in competitive methods that yield the greatest overall financial value to the firm". Environmental scanning is the foundation of the co-alignment model and is the process of collecting information about an organization's environment, whether consciously or unconsciously, and attempting to discern useful intelligence from this information (see Figure 1).

## **The Co-alignment Principle**



**Figure 1 – The Co-Alignment Principle**  
Olsen, West & Tse, 1998

It takes extensive effort on the part of the firm to properly perceive the environment in which their organization functions. Boston Chicken is an excellent illustration of a company that had a great concept, but developed a plan that ignored the environment in which the organization operated. Boston Chicken started in the early 1990's when the management team from Blockbuster Video decided to take their business model and apply it to a restaurant company. While this was a good model for a video chain, it soon ran into multiple problems in the restaurant industry. The organization focused on rapid growth at the expense of unit economics. Growth for the sake of stock performance was the motivator. In 1993, the IPO of Boston Chicken was a high flyer, but by 1998, the company was in debt in excess of a billion dollars and shuttering 500 stores. In the end, almost 50% of the original stores closed and McDonald's bought the remainder for just over \$176 million. Boston Chicken failed to recognize that the restaurant environment could not support a video store business model and that the unit economics of stores were very sensitive to their environment, including such environmental factors as location and demographics in the various markets.

West and Olsen surveyed the hospitality industry to determine whether the relationship between environmental scanning, in support of organizational strategy, has an impact on firm performance in the foodservice industry. Further, they wanted to determine, whether high scanning activity correlates to high performance and low scanning activity correlates to low performance in firms in the foodservice industry. Ninety-two firms participated in the study by agreeing to have three members of their executive committee respond to a pre-tested questionnaire that gathered information on firm performance, environmental scanning, demographics and strategy. The dependent variable was firm performance determined by return on assets (ROA), return on sales (ROS) and unit sales growth. The independent variable was the extent of environmental scanning performed by the firm. The results indicated that higher performing firms grouped by ROS and ROA scores engaged in significantly higher levels of environmental scanning than lower performing firms. The results of this study indicate that there is a high correlation between environmental scanning and performance; high performers scan their environments at higher levels than low performers. The results of this empirical research demonstrate that companies can

improve firm performance as indicated by return on assets and return on sales through the use of environmental scanning in conjunction with organizational strategy in foodservice firms.

Previous theoretical concepts that imply an organization can be categorized into one of a small list of typologies do not mesh well with what firms are encountering in the business environment. The co-alignment model has the most relevance to the foodservice and restaurant industries because their rapidly changing environment, particularly in the realm of technology use, has forced organizations to be highly adaptive and flexible to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Some start up restaurant concepts quickly gain in popularity and grow from one store to over 500 in just a decade, while changing the rules on how to operate. Once large Goliaths in the foodservice industry that seemed unstoppable often become victims of their own success and run out of room to grow while seeing their margins strained and market share continually being pressured by new innovative competitors. What works well in today's environment are organizations that are adaptable enough to align their choice of competitive methods and core competencies with their external environment to ensure superior firm performance.

A good example of the restaurant industry aligning itself with the environment is a new breed of restaurants that are emerging. In the late 1980's, the trend in society was towards a more relaxed and casual lifestyle as baby boomers grew older and had more disposable income along with a desire to eat out more frequently, but with less formality. The restaurant industry responded with a host of casual restaurant chains that have become notable fixtures at suburban shopping malls. Now after more than a decade of long waits at casual theme restaurants, poor quality food and service at quick service restaurants, the entrepreneurs in the foodservice industry have created a new hybrid segment of fast growing restaurants: quick casual. The food is served quickly, but the quality is elevated considerably above the traditional quick service restaurants. While the segment is still small, it is the fastest growing sector of the restaurant industry today. Many of the large chains have begun to buy up the current crop of quick casual concepts with an eye on rapid expansion.

#### **Compensation as a Competitive Method**

According to Steers and Porter, the research on compensation clearly shows a link between the rewards a company offers, those individuals that are attracted to work for the company by the compensation package offered, and those employees who will continue to work for the business. In recent years the compensation available to employees has expanded both in terms of the type of compensation and the amount. Traditionally, restaurant general managers were compensated with a base pay and a business period bonus based on meeting preset goals for revenues and expenses. In general, compensation has been divided into monetary and non-monetary incentives, but with the advent of "cafeteria" style plans, where employees get to choose among a variety of options for a set price, the compensation categories have become blurred. Additionally, employees that are in high demand are increasingly acting as their own agents negotiating individual compensation arrangements, much like professional sports players, based upon their employment value to the firm.

The useful life of compensation as a competitive method is hard to determine because of many intrinsic factors. First, when dealing with people there are as many variables as there are individuals and predicting how long a restaurant manager will stay with the firm or in the industry before they burnout or decide to leave is difficult. Outback Steakhouse has done a good job of attempting to mitigate this problem so far by performing a careful screening of its' Managing Partners before they take over the management position. All of Outback's managing partners are industry veterans who have worked in the restaurant business for years. Outback does no traditional recruiting of its' managers, in contrast the managers seek them out because of the potential to be a managing partner and to receive a portion of the profits in a successful restaurant and restaurant company. Before a person can become a

managing partner they have to go through a 6-month training period as an assistant GM and are evaluated as to their potential to be successful in the Outback system and with the Outback Steakhouse culture.

This competitive method would seem to be easily duplicated, but so far no other major casual chain has attempted to duplicate the system of bringing in managing partners rather than general manager "employees" on the scale of Outback. This has enabled Outback Steakhouse to continue to recruit and retain qualified management, which is a key to the success of the concept. The high compensation and the continued ability to renew the management contracts every five years or find a replacement for the departing manager enables Outback to maintain this competitive method in the present and far into the future. With the success of this competitive method it seems that some other large casual theme restaurant organizations will realize that in order to grow and create value into the future they need to hire the best general managers and reward them well in order to continue to strive for excellence in staffing and operational performance into the future.

### **Compensation**

Ask someone to define compensation, and depending on the life experiences of that person, you will get a range of definitions. The combination of all cash incentives and the fringe benefit mix that an employee receives from a company constitutes an individuals' total compensation according to Lawler. Dibble expands the definition of compensation to mean the benefits provided by employers that do not have to do with earnings or cash. Even benefits such as employee training and development, though not necessarily viewed by the employee as compensation, are a substitute for money and a major cost for employers. However, for the purposes of this study, company benefits which are mandated by law, (e.g. FICA, workers compensation insurance), and other firm benefits that are not traditionally thought of as compensation by employees, (e.g. training and development), will not be considered. The study will use a list of compensation items as defined in published literature about Outback Steakhouse, company published literature and personal interviews with managers.

### **The Outback Steakhouse Compensation Plan**

For many inside and outside observers, the compensation plan at Outback Steakhouse is the cornerstone of Outback's success: the ability to hire and retain well-qualified restaurant management by providing managing partners the opportunity to purchase a 10% ownership stake in the restaurants they operate for \$25,000 and requiring them to enter into a 5-year contract. By offering this level of commitment and by providing the managing partner with a significant stake in the restaurant (10% of operating cash flow), the company believes it can attract and retain experienced and highly motivated restaurant general managers. The company also limits most restaurants to "dinner only" service, which reduces the hours for managers and employees. Managers typically work 5 days a week with a 55 hour maximum work week. This enables the average managing partner to earn \$73,600 a year in bonuses from cash flow coupled with a \$45,000 base salary for annual cash compensation of \$118,600. The eight monetary compensation offerings at Outback are: Ownership equity stake-10%; Retirement plan; Cash flow bonus- 10%;Base salary of \$45,000; Stock option of 4,000 shares vested over five years; Deferred compensation/ end of contract cash out ( 10% of cash flow for last two years times five); Medical, dental and life insurance; Vacation/ paid time off. The five non-monetary compensation offerings are: Quality of work; Status as manager/ partner; Community association/ location; Job Autonomy; Job status.

### **The Research Question**

The purpose of the current research is to determine if the compensation plan in a casual theme restaurant company is a value-adding competitive method that can be used to help attract and retain good quality restaurant managers. More specifically the research question to be answered is: Is the compensation plan for Outback Steakhouse's managing partners an effective value-adding competitive method?

### **Methodology**

The study used a quasi-case study method that included an examination of ten years of primary and secondary public archival data, an extensive compensation survey of the unit general managers at Outback Steakhouse and interviews with unit general managers.

The population selected for this study was the U.S. managing partners/general managers/proprietors of Outback Steakhouse Inc. As of September, 2004 the company operated 853 restaurant units under the Outback Steakhouse brand in 50 states and 21 countries according to a company news release. The sampling frame for this study includes all those managing-partners at the Outback Steakhouse concepts in the U.S. listed on the company web site as of August 2000, a total of 600 managers. The questionnaire for this study was a self-administered survey, which probed work history, demographic, and compensation variables.

The survey was developed by researching other compensation, turnover and job satisfaction survey instruments that had been previously used in the hospitality field and human resources management field for data collection purposes. The survey and a letter of introduction developed for this study was sent by mail to all of the 600 general managers of Outback Steakhouse listed on the company's web site. Considering the delicate and personal nature of the questions about turnover intentions and compensation, complete confidentiality and anonymity was promised and used on the survey. The instrument contained items intended to measure general demographic information for the purpose of gaining a profile of the typical respondent and for the intention of measuring the differences between groups of respondents. The survey also contained questions designed to measure the influence of the compensation package on the general managers' intent to turnover.

Pilot testing was done to help ensure that the questions would reflect accurately the compensation package that was used by Outback Steakhouse. Two managing partners at Outback Steakhouse and two human resource management experts were given the survey as content experts and were asked during personal interviews if any relevant factors of the compensation plan of Outback Steakhouse, Inc. were not included on the survey instrument and they were asked if they understood all of the questions on the survey. The content experts did not identify any missing factors on the survey instrument, but they were able to provide additional details regarding recent developments affecting two compensation variables included in the survey instrument. The first included the second five-year contract, which is the manager's option to purchase an additional stake, up to 20%, in their unit and receive the associated cash flow. The second addition is the paid one-month break and re-indoctrination into the company at the corporate headquarters in Florida. Both of these additional benefits are designed to help retain managers for another contract period.

### **Results**

Of the 600 surveys that were sent out to the general manager's of Outback Steakhouses in the U.S., 70 surveys were returned for a response rate of 12%. Of the 70 surveys returned, 64 were usable (91%) for a final usable response rate of 10.6%. Considering the personal nature of the survey regarding compensation and turnover intentions, and the target population of very busy restaurant general managers, the response rate was considered within acceptable ranges.

Of the 64 responses, there were 6 respondents (9.4%) under the age of 30, there were 34 respondents (53%) from the ages of 30 – 39, 23 respondents (36%) were between the ages of



40 – 49, and one respondent was over 49 years old. The sample of respondents is in general older than the ages reported for restaurant managers in other surveys and by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003). Possible causes for the older age of respondents in this study could be that the stated philosophy of Outback Steakhouse, Inc. is to hire only experienced managers as well as the fact that the rewards associated with Outback's compensation package could be an incentive to encourage managers to stay, while also helping to prevent industry burnout of older managers.

In response to the question, "How long have you been with your current employer" the mean response was 6.87 years with a standard deviation of 2.58 and a range of 1.5 years to 12 years. The mean response to the question "How long have you worked in the hospitality business" was 18 years with a standard deviation of 6.4 and a range of 6 years to 38 years. This question was intended to include all positions the respondents may have held in the hospitality business including part-time jobs. For the question "How long have you been a restaurant manager" the mean response was 12.42 years with a standard deviation of 6.61 and a range of .5 years to 30 years. Finally, for the question "how many other hospitality organizations have you managed" the mean response was 2.63 with a standard deviation of 2.18 and a range of 0 to 12 other organizations managed. These responses illuminate the success that Outback Steakhouse has had with hiring experienced restaurant managers and it shows the amount of experience that they have in the restaurant general manager ranks in their individual units.

Next, we asked questions related to the compensation package (see table 1).

**Table 1- Compensation Elements (Q1) & Compensation Package (Q2) Rankings**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Ownership Stake/Equity Interest	6.56	0.97
Compensation Plan (question # 2)	6.31	1.04
Deferred Compensation/End of Contract Cash Out	6.17	1.30
Performance Bonus	6.16	1.56
Job Responsibility*	6.05	1.24
Job Autonomy*	6.05	1.17
Quality of Work Conditions*	6.03	1.31
Status as a Restaurant Manager *	5.86	1.68
Community Association/Location*	5.80	1.25
Stock Options	5.34	1.90
Vacation/Time off	5.03	1.65
Base Salary	4.91	1.43
Medical, Dental, Life Insurance	4.56	1.66
Retirement Plan	4.47	1.92
Monetary Compensation Elements Combined	5.40	0.96
Non-monetary Compensation Elements* Combined	5.96	0.76
N=64		

In response to the question regarding the degree of influence the compensation package of Outback Steakhouse has on their desire to turnover or to stay with the company (scale item 2), 89% of the managers stated that this factor was highly influential in their desire to stay with the company. The composite mean score for item 2 was 6.31 (on a 7 point Likert-type scale with 1 being "not influential at all" and 7 being "highly influential") with a standard deviation of 1.04, the second highest composite mean score for all 14 variables that were rated by managers. Only having an "ownership stake/equity interest" in the company ranked higher when rated as a factor in causing them to turnover or to stay with the company with a composite mean of 6.56 (on a 7 point Likert-type scale with 1 being "not influential at all" and 7 being "highly influential") and a standard deviation of .97.

Factors influencing managers' decisions to stay or leave were collected through the use of open-ended survey items 3 and 4, which provided a descriptive rank of those variables that are most important in influencing managers to leave and those variables that are important in getting managers to stay. These rankings can be compared to the compensation attributes in item 1 to determine if any compensation attributes were missed in the survey, as well as providing a method to check on the responses from the managing partners related to items 1 and 2. For item 3, the "most important factor influencing your decision to stay", there were fourteen factors reported by general managers that influenced their decision to stay. "Ownership stake/equity" was the most frequently cited factor in manager's decision to stay with a 25% response. This was followed by "compensation/money" with 18.8%, "cash-out at end" with 10.9%, "opportunity" with 7.8%, and "quality of life" with 7.8%.

In response to item 4, what would be the "most important factor influencing your decision to leave", there were twenty factors reported by general managers that would influence their decision to leave. "Quality of life/family life" was the most frequently cited reason/factor managers cited that would influence their desire to leave with a 24.6% response. This was followed by "pay/compensation" with 16.4%, "better opportunity/growth" with 9.8%, "poor management", "company change" and "ownership" with 6.6 % each.

The results of the correlation analysis support in part the proposition that Outback's compensation plan has a significant positive impact on turnover intentions of general managers. Five of the eight compensation variables (deferred compensation  $R = .582$ , ownership stake/equity  $R = .483$ , stock option  $R = .477$ , base salary  $R = .298$ , vacation/time off  $R = .272$ ) had a significant positive relationship with the compensation plan's impact on the general manager's desire to stay with Outback Steakhouse. This is not to say that correlation implies causality, it only demonstrates the strength of the relationship between the variables.

The respondents to the survey ranked item 2 with a composite score of 6.31 on a 7-point Likert-type scale indicating that the compensation package of Outback Steakhouse is highly influential on their desire to stay with the company. Item 1 asks, "the degree to which each of the following elements (13) has a positive influence on your desire to stay with your current employer and not join another company", while Item 2 refers to the influence of the compensation package as a whole plan. Both items 1 & 2 were based on a 7 point Likert-type scale, with 1 = "not at all influential" to 7 = "highly influential". The responses ranged from a composite mean of 4.47 for retirement plan to 6.56 for ownership/equity stake. The composite mean across all variables for question 1 & 2 was 5.66. With 7 of those variables scoring an individual composite mean of 6 or higher. This would seem to indicate that the respondents as a group felt that 7 of the 14 variables were somewhat highly influential on their desire to stay with the company.

Reliability tests were run on the survey items related to compensation elements and it was determined that all items were within the acceptable range of .70 or higher.

## Discussion

The compensation plan for Outback Steakhouse Inc.'s managing partners has significant positive impact on manager retention; consequently reducing their intention to turnover to an annual manager turnover rate of 4-5% compared to an industry turnover average for managers of 27%. This is in accordance with some of the previous research on manager turnover that the compensation an organization provides clearly influences the decision employees make about the organization and turnover intentions. Additionally, Steers and Porter support the premise that companies which offer the greatest compensation retain the most employees. Steers and Porter have found that high reward levels lead to high satisfaction, which in turn leads to lower turnover. The results of this study would seem to add credence to the conjecture that the compensation plan for Outback Steakhouse managing

partners is a value-adding competitive method considering the low turnover rate and the industry leading financial performance of their restaurants.

Outback believes that the compensation plan they offer is effective in preventing turnover, retaining quality management while helping to attract experienced well qualified managers and gives the company a value-adding competitive method. The findings of the current study shows that Outback Steakhouse's managing partners are highly influenced by the compensation package that the company offers in regards to their intentions to stay with the company. The findings also demonstrate that the managing partners are most influenced by the non-traditional attributes of the plan (deferred compensation, stock option and ownership stake) as opposed to the more traditional attributes of compensation plans (base pay, insurance & retirement plans). The managers appear to be overall positively influenced by the compensation plan of Outback. This bodes well for Outback because these well-developed, non-traditional aspects of their compensation plan are a successful competitive method for the company.

The study also indicates the factor that would be most influential in the managing partner's decision to leave is a non-monetary element perhaps not addressed by their compensation strategy, quality of life and quality of family life. While the respondents clearly indicated that it is the monetary aspects of compensation influencing their decision to stay with Outback, they were also equally clear that it is the non-monetary aspects of compensation, quality of work and life that would most influence their decision to potentially leave. Working 55 hours a week, nights and weekend all the time can start to become burdensome for managers. The lack of time spent with family and friends can start to wear on managers as they get older. There is also the risk of burnout as managers decide that they want something more out of life than just being a successful restaurant manager. For Outback to continue to consider its' compensation plan an industry leader they will need to address these issues in the future.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research**

In the search for competent restaurant managers that can successfully operate in today's increasingly competitive environment and help a restaurant company continue to grow, there are compensation strategies that will work in attracting and preventing turnover among the management ranks. Organizations should develop a comprehensive compensation strategy to use as a competitive method, which will help ensure job satisfaction, prevent turnover and burnout for operational management. Restaurant organizations need to make a commitment to be a leader in overall total compensation and use their company's compensation practices as a competitive method to gain a competitive advantage in the restaurant industry. In order for a company to succeed at being a leader in the restaurant industry, it should show the way with practices that will attract the best managers, produce competitive methods and create additional shareholder value for the firm.

If the restaurant industry is going to break out of the mold it has so long cast itself into, it will need to gain a better understanding of the issues that exacerbate turnover and cause burnout. More research is needed to determine the degree of influence other progressive compensation plans have on managers and competitive methods for different restaurant organizations. Additional variables should be included in future research including, quality of life, family time, growth opportunity and burnout as some possibilities. The sample size and population should be expanded in future research in order to include a broader cross section of restaurant companies and number of managers.

With the future growth of the restaurant sector dependent to a large extent on its' ability to find employees and managers to operate units, the old ideas about compensation and attitudes about the quality of life outside of work are undergoing a transformation. Several reports cited in this study imply the old ideas regarding compensation and work concepts are

under assault. Experienced managers are increasingly leveraging their value to the company and to the restaurant industry by "making a statement about whom they are, where they want to live, how they want to work". The restaurant industry has been challenged by these issues for a long time and the inability of some organizations to change continues to prolong the problem, "employers, unwillingness to increase pay, shifts with long hours and poor corporate recognition of good performance just scratch the surface on a list of shortcomings that exacerbate employee flight".

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# **A Customer's Expectation and Perception of Hotel Service Quality in Cyprus**

By Christou Loizos, and Hadjiphanis Lycourgos

*In recent years, hotels in Cyprus have encountered difficult economic times due to increasing customer demands and strong internal industry development competition. The hospitality industry's main concern globally is to serve its customer's needs and desires, most of which are addressed through personal services. Hence, the hotel businesses that are able to provide quality services to its ever-demanding customers in a warm and efficient manner are those businesses which will be more likely to obtain a long term competitive advantage over their rivals. Ironically, the quality of services frequently cannot be fully appreciated until something goes wrong, and then, the poor quality of services can have long lasting lingering effects on the customer base and, hence, often is translated into a loss of business. Nevertheless, since the issue of delivery of hospitality services always involves people, this issue must center around the management of the human resource factor, and in particular, on the way which interacts with itself and with guests, as service encounters. In the eyes of guests, hospitality businesses will be viewed successful or failure, depending on the cumulative impact of the service encounters they have experienced on a personal level. Finally, since hotels are offering intangible and perishable personal service encounters, managing these services must be a paramount concern of any hotel business. As a preliminary exercise, visualize when you have last visited a hotel, or a restaurant, and then, ask yourself these questions: What did you feel about the quality of the experience? Was it a memorable one, which you would recommend it to others, or there were certain things, which could have made the difference? Thus, the way personalized services are provided can make the difference in attracting and retaining long-term customers.*

## **Introduction**

In the marketing theory, the concept of quality service coupled with customer satisfaction has a long history. Since Cardozo's (1965) seminal study of customer effort, expectations, and satisfaction, the body of work in this field has expanded greatly, with more than 900 articles focusing on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Perkins, 1991). However, since service quality has been characterized by researchers as an important determinant in successfully attracting repeat business, consistently delivering high quality services must be considered as an essential and crucial strategy element for surviving in today's highly competitive environment.

## **Literature Review**

### **Study's needs**

Quality improvement has become a vital ingredient in destination competitiveness strategy, its successful operationalization requires the collection of accurate and actionable information, which is then carefully analyzed to allow managers to manipulate key components in order to create the right level of quality for a competitive tourist experience.

As a holiday destination, Cyprus faces three considerable challenges stemming from the following factors: competition from similar resorts; an economic system that has not traditionally emphasized service quality, and an unstable political environment (war, terrorism). However, there exist different perspectives in the Cyprus hospitality industry concerning how to address these issues.

The Cyprus Hotel Association has announced satisfactory occupancy rates and has anticipated recovery rates better than the ones predicted. They said: "the hotel industry is in a much stronger position to absorb any downturn than during the last recession". On the contrary, some hoteliers claimed: "occupancy rates are not expected to increase despite a high

number of customers, due to the increased hotel capacity.” Under such conditions, both the Cypriot authorities and hoteliers should seek effective means of monitoring and evaluating whether or not Cyprus is delivering the quality and range of services, activities and experiences necessary to satisfy the customers. In addition to these, industry rumors indicated that the hotels in Cyprus are planning extensive redevelopment.

The problem remains for the hoteliers to specify service quality, failure to do so can lead to a quality gap or gaps. Furthermore, it is important to understand customers’ attitudes towards the quality of the service provided by hotels before implementing any service-improvement training programs. Any research should aim to explore the importance of customer care in the hospitality industry generally, covering the following points in particular: the customers’ expectation and perceptions of the service quality; the gap between the expectations and perceptions; and the impact of training factors determining service quality on overall customer satisfaction. The study involves the collection of consumer opinion data that might be helpful to the whole hospitality for improving the quality of service, which delivers or achieves customer’s satisfaction.

#### **Literature on Quality**

In assessing consumer opinion to assist in the hospitality industry, the assessment should involve gathering information on service quality and customer satisfaction. In order to do this, a consumer opinion survey must be created, data collection must proceed, and effective methods of assessing and presenting data must be considered. To accomplish this. The researchers should draw on information from a number of publications and journals.

#### **Service quality**

In the service literature, there is a number of studies looking at the operational and theoretical framework using various methodologies to measure service quality in different hospitality sectors (see Ryan & Cliff, 1997; Getty & Thompson, 1994; Saleh & Ryan, 1991; Pizam & Milman, 1993). In the service industry, definitions of service quality focus on meeting customers’ needs and expectations, and on how well the service actually meets these customers’ expectations (Lewis & Booms, 1983). Gronoos (1984) had stated that perceived quality of service was dependent on the comparison of expected service with perceived service, and thus, the outcome of a comparative evaluation process. Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) had developed the GAP model, and the subsequent SERVQUAL model within the GAP framework. Parasuraman *et al.* had defined “service quality” as the degree and direction of discrepancy between customers’ perceptions and expectations, and defined “perceived service quality” as the gap between customers’ perceptions and expectations -- a measurement of service quality. The smaller the gap, the better the service quality provided, and the greater the customer satisfaction.

#### **Customer Satisfaction**

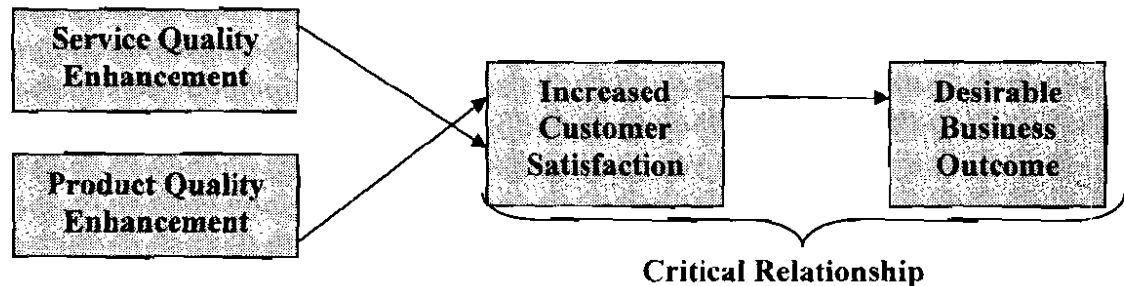
The concept of “customer satisfaction” is different from “perceived service quality”, although some studies have found a significant correlation between the two paradigms, and included similar errors of interpretation (Oh and Park, 1997). Perceived service quality differs from satisfaction in that service quality is the customers’ attitude or global judgment of service superiority over time, while satisfaction is connected with a specific transaction (Bitner, 1990; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

Most of the studies into customer satisfaction in the hospitality literature have focused on identifying service attributes, which are treated as customers’ needs and wants. From a marketing perspective, customer satisfaction is achieved, when their needs and wants are fulfilled. There is a general widespread agreement in the literature that the provision of service quality is concerned with generating customer satisfaction. Gronoos, Parasuraman *et al.* and Johnston have defined service quality in terms of customer satisfaction, that is, the degree of fit between customers’ expectations and perceptions of service.

### Service Quality & the Satisfaction

Quality improvement has become a vital ingredient in the strategy for making destinations more competitive. Customer satisfaction has its roots in the global quality revolution. The relationship between service and product quality and overall customer satisfaction has been repeatedly demonstrated.

**Figure 1: The relationship between quality and satisfaction**



The first research involving the measurement of customer satisfaction occurred in the early 1980s. Works by Oliver (1980), Churchill and Surprenant (1982), and Bearden and Teel (1983) tended to focus on the operationalization of customer satisfaction and its antecedents. By the mid-1980s, the focus of both applied and academic research had shifted to construct refinement and the implementation of strategies designed to optimize customer satisfaction, according to Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996). Their discussion of customer satisfaction, service quality, and customer expectations represents one of the first attempts to operationalize satisfaction in a theoretical context. They proposed that, the ratio of perceived performance to customer expectations was key to maintaining satisfied customers. Several years later, Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1988) published a second, related discussion that focused more specifically on the psychometric aspects of service quality. Their multi-item SERVQUAL scale is considered as one of the first attempts to operationalize the customer satisfaction construct. The SERVQUAL scale focused on the performance component of the service quality model in which quality was defined as the disparity between expectations and performance. The battery of items used in the SERVQUAL multi-item scale is still used today as a foundation for instrument development. The primary areas considered in the scale involved tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. For many years these dimensions were regarded as the basis for service quality measurement.

### The SERVQUAL and HOLSAT Instruments

The SERVQUAL instrument was developed by Parasuramen *et al.* in 1985 to measure service quality. The instrument consists of 22 statements across five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Fick and Ritchie (1991) had demonstrated the usefulness of the SERVQUAL instrument in measuring service quality in hospitality-related service industries, although a number of concerns and shortcomings of the instrument were identified. Saleh and Ryan had (1991) developed a modified SERVQUAL questionnaire to survey guests and the management staff of a hotel. A number of criticisms have been made regarding the underlying conceptualization and operationlisation of the SERVQUAL model and scale (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Brown *et al.*, 1992). Carman (1990) had stated that the 22 SERVQUAL items could not be used exactly as designed unless modifications to items and wordings were made to accommodate the new settings. Despite the criticism of the applicability of SERVQUAL, many researchers have found that the instrument is useful for measuring service quality

HOLSAT is the name given to the research instrument designed for particular investigation. The design of the HOLSAT survey builds on previous work to develop



indicators of service quality from the consumer perspective. In particular, the method seeks to clarify some confusion that exists in the literature between the terms expectation, perception and satisfaction.

Based on the service quality instrument developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1998), and holiday satisfaction instrument, this study aims to assess any service quality gaps between customers' expectations and perceptions of Cyprus mainly important hotels, and to explore the factors in predicting customers' satisfaction with Cyprus hospitality industry.

#### **Key variables in the literature**

In sum, a number of researchers have investigated the customers' expectations and perceptions of the service quality, and the customer satisfaction. As the key variables, service quality and customer satisfaction have been examined extensively in the literature. Undoubtedly, survey instrument design is a highly technical process. Study in instrument design and testing is critical to the development of a valid and reliable survey instrument.

#### **Research Hypothesis**

Given the research aim, we developed the following hypothesis; A customer's expectation and perception of service quality, when surveyed, will provide significant information that can be used by hospitality leaders to develop service-improvement training programs.

#### **Research Methodology**

This research used sampling and assessing techniques to gather data on consumer opinion regarding service quality and expectations in order to assist hospitality officials in their effort to develop service-improvement programs. The study used a descriptive research design, in part, because the study involved the use of secondary research in the form of existing information in order to design a consumer opinion survey. The survey also used descriptive statistics for the assessment and presentation of data. A self-administered survey questionnaire was constructed and used to collect data from the target samples. The questionnaire consists of three sections: general information about the respondent and the customer's holiday purposes, ratings on expectations by the respondent, and ratings on their overall holiday satisfaction. The respondents were asked to assess the performance of those facilities and services identified by the questionnaire on a 7-point Likert performance scale. The study adopted the use of a single overall measure of tourist satisfaction.

There were several procedures used in designing this study. First, a review of the literature was conducted. Second, participating hotels in the major tourist region were contacted and interviewed. Third, the instrument underwent preliminary testing. Fourth, the survey was implemented, instruments were delivered to the community sample. Surveys of visitors were conducted in hotels. Fifth, and finally, survey results will be tabulated for presentation.

#### **Secondary Data**

The data collection was carried out in two stages. The first stage adopted an inductive, qualitative approach in order to identify the SERVQUAL issues of importance to hospitality industry participants. Secondary data in the form of the magazines (Hotels, Hospitality Industry, etc.), newspaper articles, hotel brochures, and other related information from Internet were collected. As a result of the data collection, a number of quality issues were included in a simple consumer opinion survey. The survey is self-administered and so it was designed so as to collect data regarding the relative importance of factors dealing with lodging, food service, and service attitude.

#### **Primary Data**

The second stage was data collection. Primary data collection methods included the distribution of the self-administered survey questionnaire.

## **Questionnaires**

There are two main research instruments designed for analyzing the concepts of quality service and consumer satisfaction. They are: SERVQUAL, and HOLSAT. In the SERVQUAL instrument, five elements of service quality are tested: reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, empathy and assurance. Gap scores are calculated based on the difference between expectation and perception of service delivery.

The other instrument is HOLSAT. It was used by the researchers to measure holiday and hotel satisfaction. A pilot study was used in order to construct the final instrument. An integral part of the development of HOLSAT was the testing of its efficacy in the main destinations on Cyprus, Nicosia, Pafos, Limassol, and Ayia Napa. The instrument is divided into distinct sections. Respondents are asked to rate their opinions according to a seven-part Likert-type scale, 1-7. The data entry was performed using the Questionnaire Processing System program that result in a database of quantitative information from which a cross-tabular report will be produced.

The structured questionnaire contains four parts. Part 1 was designed to assess customers' expectations of service quality on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" (7) to "strongly disagree" (1). Part 2 assesses customers' perceptions of service quality on the same 7-point Likert scale. Part (3) was used to evaluate customers' overall satisfaction with service quality, again on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "very satisfied" (7) to "very dissatisfied" (1). Part 4 was the collected socio-demographic data about the respondents. The surveys were conducted from May 2005 to July 2005. The questionnaire used in this survey has been extracted by the revised publication of the SERVQUAL tool.

## **Interviews**

Interview are an important measurement tool for the research information. Through the interview, we can directly contact members of the firm and gather the most current information. The contact method chosen, personal interviews, is where the interviewer was face-to-face with respondents. A series of in-depth interviews were conducted with hotels guests to understand the expectation and perception of the hotels that they considered important when selecting hotels.

## **Sample**

The guest sample was select in six hotels within Cyprus. There are: the Holiday Inn hotel and Cyprus Hilton Hotel in Nicosia, the Amathus Beach Hotel in Limassol, the Venus Beach Hotel and the Pioneer Beach Hotel in Pafos, and the Adamas Beach Hotel in Ayia Napa. The reason for choosing a wide range of hotels in different destinations was to achieve a reliable and valid research sample of guests who responses represent an overall picture of quality in Cyprus. The sample consisted of hotels guests, both male and female, above age of 18. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to guests lodging in the hotels. The sample size was limited to a quota of 50 respondents per hotel. Through a simple random sample selection technique, each hotel guest had an equal chance of being selected for an interview. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the sampling unit, and was collected immediately after completion.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Demographic Findings**

The first set of analysis, involved objective statistics associated with the major personal and socio-demographic variables. Of the 300 questionnaires received, 210 were completed and usable, representing a response rate of 70%. Table 1 shows that 55.1% of the respondents were female. Most respondents were in the age categories 35-44 (21.1%) or 55-64(17.7%). The majority of respondents were staffs (35%), retired (24%). Russia, Britain, and Germany were the top three countries regarding to the tourists arrival volume. It appeared that respondents with a "leisure"

purpose for their trip (69.4%) dominated the sample, while “business” and “visiting friends/relatives” accounted for only 19.6% and 11.0% respectively. Obviously, 7 days and 14 days are the most popular options for the length of stay. Table 1 contains details from this analysis.

**TABLE 1: Profile of tourists in Cyprus**

Variables		Results
Gender	Male	44.9%
	Female	55.1%
Age	18-24	15.4%
	25-34	15.7%
	35-44	21.1%
	45-54	15.3%
	55-64	17.7%
	65 or above	14.8%
Occupation	Student	10.0%
	Retired	24.0%
	Housewife	14.0%
	Staffs	35.0%
	Manager	14.0%
	Others	3.0%
Nationality	British	30%
	Russian	32%
	Germany	14%
	Finish	8%
	French	3%
	Arabic	4%
	Norway	2%
	Others	7%
Purpose of traveling	Business	19.6%
	Leisure	69.4%
	Visiting friends & relatives	11.0%
Length of stay	Less than 7days	15%
	7days	31%
	14days	35%
	21days	10%
	Over 21days	9%

### **Expectations Vs Perceptions**

It is important to remember that this is a pilot study and that the significance of results may be reduced by the inherent limitations of the methodology. The results, however, serve to illustrate the potential utility of SERVQUAL and HOLSAT in the measurement of holiday satisfaction. Table 2 shows the respective expective expectation means, perception means, gaps mean regarding the service quality received by tourists in Cyprus. The results show that tourists had relatively high expectations (means=6.52) of hotels, in regard to, “employees would never be too busy to respond.” However, they reported relatively low expectation scores (means=5.06) for items referring to convenient operating hours.

It should be further noted that all the perception scores in relation to the service attributes in this study were lower than the expectation scores, implying that each service attribute suffered a service quality shortfall. The largest gap scores were found for “Employees are never too busy to respond to customers’ requests” (gap score=-2.21). This might indicate that employees were not motivated to take the initiative in solving customer’s problems.



**Table 2: Distribution of service quality values between consumer's expectations and perceptions of Cyprus hospitality industry (n =300)**

Statement	Expectation	Perceptions	Gap means
1. The holiday would be good value for money.	5.48	4.96	-0.52
2. The destination would be safe and secure	5.57	4.13	-1.44
3. The destination would have a variety of nightlife.	5.53	4.77	-0.76
4. The would have convenient operating hours	5.06	4.42	-0.64
5. The destination would have a variety of restaurants and/or bars	6.64	4.45	-2.19
6. Employees would never be too busy to respond	6.52	4.31	-2.21
7. The restaurants and bars would be cheap.	6.32	4.10	-2.22
8. I would be able to sample local food and drink.	6.54	4.52	-2.02
9. The shops would be cheap.	6.27	4.33	-1.94
10. The nightlife would be cheap.	5.87	3.70	-2.17
11. The hotel staff would be friendly.	5.79	4.19	-1.60
12. The room would have quality furnishings.	6.00	4.16	-1.84
13. Facilities in the rooms would be function properly.	5.76	4.49	-1.27
14. Hotel meals would be of a high quality.	6.03	4.00	-2.03
15. Laundry service would be good.	6.18	4.22	-1.96
16. I would be able to mix and talk with Cypriot people.	6.13	4.40	-1.73
17. I expected the good weather conditions in the area	6.13	4.35	-1.78
18. I would be able to learn more about Cyprus history.	5.57	3.98	-1.59
19. I would be able to visit museums and archaeological sights.	5.21	4.33	-0.88
20. I would be able to use local transports.	5.44	3.97	-1.47
21. The beach and ocean would be clean.	5.79	4.20	-1.59
22. Efficiency of check-in and check-out at the accommodation	5.69	4.92	-0.77
23. Employees would be neat employees	5.65	5.25	-0.40

Note: Gap-mean score is defined as: Gap-mean= Perception mean - Expectation mean.

The results of factor analysis as shown in table 3 suggested that five factors, or dimensions with 23 variables from the original 26 variables, were abstracted for interpretation of the scale. The five dimensions were named: "responsiveness and assurance", "reliability", "empathy", "resources and corporate image", and "tangibility".

Based on the results of factor analysis, table 2 presents the results of expectation, perception, and gap mean scores for the five factors. The results show that customers had the largest gap score (-1.99), for this factor, suggesting that they had felt relatively disappointed with hotels in relation to this aspect. The shortfall, may also suggest that employees were not able to deliver quality service as promised. The smallest gap score was tangibility (-0.91), indicating perhaps that most hotels were able to provide a computerized check-in and checkout facility, and to ensure that employees were neat and tidy, thus, generally meeting their customer's expectations.

**Table 3: Results of factor analysis on 23 attributes and its five dimensions (n = 300)**

1. The holiday would be good value for money. 2. The destination would be safe and secure 3. The destination would have a variety of nightlife. 4. The would have convenient operating hours 5. The destination would have a variety of restaurants and/or bars 6. Employees would never be too busy to respond	Factor 1 Responsiveness and assurance
7. The restaurants and bars would be cheap. 8. I would be able to sample local food and drink. 9. The shops would be cheap. 10. The nightlife would be cheap. 11. The hotel staff would be friendly.	Factor 2 Reliability (-1.99)
12. The room would have quality furnishings. 13. Facilities in the rooms would be function properly. 14. Hotel meals would be of a high quality. 15. Laundry service would be good.	Factor 3 Empathy
16. I would be able to mix and talk with Cypriot people. 17. I expected the good weather conditions in the area 18. I would be able to learn more about Cyprus history. 19. I would be able to visit museums and archaeological sights. 20. I would be able to use local transports.	Factor 4 Resources and corporate image
21. The beach and ocean would be clean. 22. Efficiency of check-in and check-out at the accommodation 23. Employees would be neat employees	Factor 5 Tangibility (-0.91)

### Limitations

As for the limitations of this study, measurement of perceived service quality in terms of perceptions and expectations was made at the same time, in that respondents attempted to compare their perceptions of service quality with their expectations. It may be argued that guest may not remember what the expected prior to arrival. Respondent bias can also be due to demographic differences from the whole population of travelers to Cyprus. Due to the fact that a convenient sampling method was used to collect the data, guests staying at other times of the year may be different from those surveyed.

It could be argued, then, that the study results might have been different had the survey been conducted in different months of the season or in different seasons.

Also, there is a limitation which relates to differences in perceptions of tourists, as the majority of the sample in this study was British tourists. Thus, this study could be replicated with other nationalities, as the relative importance of destination components may be nationality-specific.

### Conclusions

The study accepts the hypothesis question as the research findings reveals that there was a gap between customer expectations and perceptions, in terms of the quality of the service provided by hotels, meaning that customer's expectations of service quality were not met. Factor analysis showed that "reliability", "responsiveness and assurance" were the most influential factors in this study in predicting customer satisfaction. These two factors had the largest gap scores, suggesting that customer's perception fell seriously short of their

expectations. To be competitive, it seems that hotels should have to focus on more efforts on improving these two critical areas in terms of employees and professional service attitude.

To achieve this may mean that hotels will have to implement long-term human resource strategies to recruit, train and develop qualified employees. In turn, this may require additional investment in terms of time and training costs. The findings of this study have shown that such an investment is critical to fulfilling customer's expectations, and ensuring customer satisfaction.

In conclusion, delivering quality service will be one of the major challenges facing hospitality managers in the opening years of the next millennium. It will be an essential condition for success in the emerging, keenly competitive, global hospitality markets. While the future importance of delivering quality hospitality service is easy to discern and to agree on, doing so presents some difficult and intriguing management issues.

### **Managerial Implications**

The challenge of providing high quality tourist experiences becomes less difficult when managers know what tourists' needs are, and can correctly assess the importance that tourists attach to individual service elements which make up the total tourist experience. Given the criticality of satisfaction data in developing management strategies and scarcity of research on this concept in Cyprus, the study results have important implications for the Cyprus Tourism Office, which has the opportunity to make recommendations to the various tourism sectors that operates. Considering the multi-dimensional nature of factors affecting tourist satisfaction, authorities should ensure that these factors work together in a systematic and synergistic fashion to secure the delivery of quality experiences to the tourist. The current level of overall satisfaction with the holiday in tourist destinations in Cyprus appears to be largely determined by the level of tourist impressions of hospitality, service quality, accommodation, catering, and other tourist facilities and activities in which the tourist participated. Therefore, there is substantial responsibility on the part of those who run these facilities. They need to ensure that current levels of satisfaction with their businesses are maintained or improved. This responsibility is particularly critical given that these components impact significantly on the likelihood of recommending, an important factor in generating favorable word-of-mouth. In today's highly competitive market, the destination's survival depends greatly on its ability to provide superior tourist experience, which generates tourist satisfaction.

How can hospitality businesses manage them more effectively? We suggest a two-step process in the evaluation of a service chain.

*First*, hospitality managers should identify each encounter in the service chain that they wish to take apart, and then single out those that are of operational or strategic significance – in effect, focusing in on the few encounters that really make a difference to guest experience and thus to the bottom line.

*Second*, apply what we have called the 6 S's to improving these critical encounters through effective redesign. These are:

1. Specification
2. Staff
3. Space
4. System
5. Support
6. Style

"Specification" means clearly detailing information about the "what, when, where, and how" of service encounters. It requires giving careful thought to the linkages between particular service encounters and others in the service chain.

Questions such as which staff members are involved in providing the service? What skills do they need? What training has been provided? How committed are they to service goals? Is team cooperation or individual empowerment required? What attitudes are appropriate—friendly, open, helpful, warm service, or efficient? What staff members deal with guests? Are staff presentations and appearances appropriate?

Is there adequate space to handle each of the activities such as waiting, handling luggage? Are the necessary systems to support the service in place? Is the appropriate technology being fully used? Are the services provided given the facilities and financial and human support needed to do the job? Is the management style, and marketing orientation, appropriate for the tasks? All need to be answered in order for service quality scores to improve.

When hospitality managers have carried out this two-step process of analysis and corrective action implementation, they will be in an excellent position to make decisions that will both improve the quality of hospitality services provided and the guest perceptions of them.

In short, it is clear that hospitality and tourism managers need to undertake periodic tourist satisfaction assessment, as satisfaction cannot be improved without measuring it. However, they also need to incorporate relative performance measurement into their investigations, as any information without relative performance is incomplete. Service encounters are the building blocks of quality in hospitality service. Zeroing in on hospitality service quality in this manner will help hospitality businesses meet the service challenges of the millennium, enhance their market positions. So far, our hypothesis has been proved. "A customer's expectation and perception of service quality survey will provide significant information that can be used by hospitality leaders to develop the service-improvement programs".

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# **An Analysis of Information Technology Publications in Leading Hospitality Journals**

By Rosanna Leung and Rob Law

*In response to the recent wide-scale applications of Information Technology (IT) in the hospitality industry, this study analyzed articles in leading hospitality research journals, including the International Journal of Hospitality Management, Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, and the Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research published in the period 1985 to 2004. A total of 1,896 full-length papers were published in these journals during the study period. Excluding book reviews, research notes, and comments from editors and readers, 130 full-length IT-related papers were identified. These papers were then grouped into six defined categories of IT. The findings revealed that during the entire study period, the largest number of publications were in general business applications, whereas the highest growth rate from the first decade to the second decade were in articles on networking.*

## **Introduction**

As a tool for producing products and providing services, IT can be defined as “the use of computing and communication technology to maximize benefits to all clients” (Kirk and Pine, 1998). Although the hospitality industry is not technologically oriented, the information-intensive nature of the industry requires that IT be used to assist daily operations and business decision-making. It would be disadvantageous to organizations to be unaware of recent changes in technology and its relations to customer service (Cline and Warner, 1999). In addition, investment in IT has become an indispensable business activity in the hospitality industry. IT has been identified as not only enabling, but also inducing changes (Werthner and Kline, 1999). Frew (2000) mentioned that the hospitality and tourism industries have emphasized IT since late 1970s, and that IT has developed rapidly since then. During that time, computer operations have changed from involving heavy training to a compulsory subject in universities. Furthermore, knowing about past developments helps researchers and practitioners to understand historical patterns and to predict future trends in the development of IT and to raise the value of research. Specifically, Frew advocated that:

“If the past 20 years have seen an emphasis on information technology (IT) per se, then the past five years have witnessed the truly transformational effect of the communications technologies ... there can be little doubt that the next 20 years will see ICT bring about a metamorphosis in the industry.”

The importance of IT in hospitality has also been stated by other researchers. For instance, Buhalis (1998) argued that IT plays an important role in strategic and operational management, as it also provides opportunities and challenges for the industry. The use of IT in the hospitality industry has changed dramatically over the past few decades, shifting from a backstage supporting role to its current role as an interactive platform for guests (Nyheim, *et al.*, 2005). Hence, the hospitality industry constantly needs new technologies and innovative ideas.

As stated, the hospitality industry now requires the extensive use of IT to support their daily operations and managerial decision-making. In order to get the latest information about technology, hospitality managers choose to read articles in trade magazine as well as research journals. A natural instinct of trade magazines is to publish information that shows the sponsors in a favorable light, and that is therefore potentially biased. Articles in research journals, however, can function as an important channel providing rigorously refereed findings and unbiased viewpoints on analyses and evaluations of technology. Academic researchers have published many empirical and theoretical papers on the development of technology. These publications have helped suppliers of technology suppliers by saving them

a large amount in development funds. Similarly, hospitality managers can apply the new academic findings to their business environments in order to enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs and, more importantly, improve the quality of their services. In other words, academic researchers strive for new knowledge that can be directly or indirectly applied to the hospitality industry. Analyzing research endeavors in leading hospitality research journals can, therefore, reflect the growth and trend of IT applications in the hospitality industry. Despite the need for such an analysis of published IT articles, there have been only a very small number of studies in which such an attempt has been made. In other words, it remains largely unknown to what extent various types of IT have been of interest to academic researchers in the past 20 years during which the global hospitality industry has experienced rapid growth. Baker and Riley (1994) put forward a similar argument that the literature in service industries has been unable to establish the relationship between the use of technology and its impact on productivity. To obtain a more in-depth understanding of such a potential gap between the industrial setting and academic research, it is important to carry out a content analysis of published articles.

The primary objective of this paper is to analyze the progress of different types of IT research papers published in leading hospitality journals in the period 1985 to 2004. Having introduced the background of this study in the previous paragraphs, the following section of this paper reviews related literature on publications in research journals. The section after that describes the methodology used in this study. Next is a section presenting the empirical findings. The last section of this paper concludes the study, and discusses its implications.

## Literature Review

It is generally agreed that research journals are a channel for the dissemination of high-quality and rigorously reviewed articles in specific academic fields (Sheldon, 1889). Schmidgall and Woods (1993) performed an analysis of the ratings of different publication channels and found that research journals are the most important such channel. Thus, academic journals play an important and significant role in the world of research. These journals also reveal the direction and nature of research in a field, as they are essential for generating and disseminating new knowledge (Perchlaner, *et al.*, 2004). Heck and Cooley (1998) further stated that the development of literature can reveal the degree of maturity of the field and the codification of contributions, which subsequently influence perceptions within the academic and industrial communities. In addition, universities largely believe that the quality of their research output will directly enhance the reputation of their programs, and that this will eventually help them to get support from industry (Eder and Umbreit, 1988).

In the past twenty years, the number of hospitality and tourism journals has increased significantly. In the early 1980s, there were only 24 journals in the fields of hospitality and tourism, but this number increased to more than 100 in 2002 (Hsu and Yeung, 2003). Although the increasing number of academic journals reflects the active participation of researchers in hospitality and tourism, the quality of such journals is also an important concern for educators, researchers, and practitioners. Pechlaner *et al.* evaluated twenty-two tourism and hospitality journals for practical relevance, scientific relevance, overall reputation, readership frequency, and their importance for professional careers. Similarly, Ferreira *et al.* (1994) performed a survey involving directors of 120 institutes that offered four-year hospitality programs in the United States on their views of 15 hospitality journals. Recently, Law *et al.* (2005) carried out a survey with 520 scholars from 195 universities around the world to seek their perceptions of the quality of 88 hospitality and tourism journals.

Some hospitality researchers have performed content analyses on hospitality journals. For instance, five hospitality journals that were published in 1983 to 1989 (Balogu and Assante, 1999) and in 1990 to 1996 (Crawford-Welch, 1992) were examined for subject areas and

research techniques. Chon *et al.* (1989) conducted a content analysis on the hospitality management literature appearing in four journals from 1967 to 1986. These studies examined the journals for different research areas and the types of research methodology adopted. A similar study was performed by Bowen and Sparks (1998), which categorized hospitality marketing into nine sub-categories and analyzed the content and research methodologies from eight major hospitality journals in the period 1990 to the first half of 1997.

Kluge (1996) reviewed the literature on IT in hospitality curriculum. This research examined a total of 102 IT articles related to hospitality curriculum in seven journals. These articles were grouped into 12 subject areas in relation to IT in education, curriculum development, and educational contents. In addition, Kirk and Pine categorized IT research into six areas including IT development, technologies, types of technologies, technology transfers, future predictions, and methodological approaches. However, the broad extent of this categorization made it difficult to analyze specific technological changes. Frew conducted a survey in relation to information and communications technologies from a database that originated from a specific research project that analyzed the content of IT publications using 15 keywords during the period 1980 to 1999. It is interesting to note that the some general keywords were also used in the study, such as hotel, computing, and reservations. Another study performed by O'Connor and Murphy (2004) analyzed articles in IT publications published in 12 research journals over a period of 19 months. The study classified the IT publications into three main areas, including IT and distribution, IT and pricing, and IT and hospitality customers. Although the findings of the study period were appealing, the time span of the investigation appeared to be too short, making it difficult to draw any conclusions on changing trends.

As advocated by Khan and Olsen (1988), young and developing fields need more rigorous research. Nonetheless, there seems to be no clear direction on what has been done, and therefore, what needs to be done in IT research in hospitality. Along with its rapid development, IT is expected to bring dramatic changes to the hospitality and tourism industries (Frew). Hence, it is important to give an overview of what has been done in IT research in the context of hospitality. As a last comment, many prior content analyses of research journals have concentrated on authorship rankings, analyzing research methodologies, and keyword analyses. These studies, however, do not offer enough information on specific types of technological usage.

## Methodology

This study aims to investigate the changes in IT publications in the leading research journals in hospitality in the period 1985 to 2004. Based on previous studies (*Op. Cit.* and Howey, *et. al.*, 1999), the three leading hospitality research journals have been identified as being *International Journal of Hospitality Management (IJHM)*, the *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly (CQ)*, and the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research (JHTR)*. This study only analyzed full-length papers, and excluded book reviews, research notes, abstracts, comments from editors and readers, conference reports/reviews, rejoinders, and viewpoints. This study analyzed research papers that were published between 1985 to 2004. During this period, the hospitality industry experience rapid changes and development. Within the period under study, it should be noted that the *JHTR* underwent a couple of name changes, to the *Hospitality Education & Research Journal* from 1985 to 1989, the *Hospitality Research Journal* from 1990 to 1997, and the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* since 1998. For consistency, these journals are all referred to in this paper as *JHTR*.

Buhalis (1998) categorized the components of technology into four different categories: networking, information management, intelligent applications, and user interface. These four categories basically cover the various aspects of technology, but not general business

applications. In addition to the inclusion of the modified categories as presented by Buhalis, two new dimensions of general business applications (GBA) and miscellaneous were added. The components in GBA were based on the respective studies by Sheldon (1997) and Inkpen (1998), which included software and applications used by the industry along with guest-operated devices.

To ensure that the proposed categories fully covered industrial IT components, the list was reviewed and validated by a group of seven industrial professionals. Four of the professionals were hotel IT managers, each with more than ten years of working experience in the industry; two were IT managers in travel agencies with at least five years of working experience; and the last one was a systems specialist who had worked for a property management system vendor for more than 15 years. Table 1 shows the six categories and the corresponding attributes.

**Table 1: Six categories of information technology components**

<b>Networking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ISO/OSI</li> <li>- Internet</li> <li>- SGML</li> <li>- World Wide Web</li> <li>- Hyper Text Markup Language</li> <li>- XML</li> <li>- Cryptography</li> <li>- GSM</li> <li>- WAP</li> <li>- ATM <math>\leftrightarrow</math> IPv6</li> <li>- System Architectures</li> <li>- Client-server</li> <li>- Distributed and mobile computing</li> </ul>	<b>Information Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Database, relational, object-oriented</li> <li>- Multimedia</li> <li>- Data modeling</li> <li>- Data mining and warehousing</li> <li>- CRM</li> <li>- Unified Modeling Language (UML)</li> <li>- Programming languages</li> <li>- Information search</li> <li>- Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)</li> <li>- Authoring tools</li> <li>- Participatory design</li> </ul>
<b>Intelligent application</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Artificial intelligence</li> <li>- Logics</li> <li>- Optimization</li> <li>- Simulation</li> <li>- Statistics</li> <li>- Knowledge discovery and data mining</li> <li>- Learning systems</li> <li>- Agents</li> <li>- Artificial life</li> </ul>	<b>User Interface</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG)</li> <li>- Multimedia</li> <li>- Windowing</li> <li>- User modeling</li> <li>- Natural language processing</li> <li>- Metaphors</li> <li>- Visualization</li> <li>- Adaptive interfaces</li> </ul>
<b>General Business Application</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Property Management Systems (PMS) and Interfaces</li> <li>- Point-of-Sales Systems (POS)</li> <li>- Restaurant Management systems</li> <li>- Call accounting Systems (CAS)</li> <li>- In-room Systems</li> <li>- Computerized reservation Systems (CRS)</li> <li>- Self-Service kiosk Systems</li> <li>- Reservation Systems</li> <li>- Yield Management Systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food and Beverage Systems</li> <li>- Back-office Systems</li> <li>- Sales and Marketing Systems</li> <li>- Travel Information Systems</li> <li>- Global Distribution Systems (GDS)</li> <li>- Tourism information Systems</li> <li>- Destination Information Systems</li> <li>- Video-conferencing</li> <li>- Telecommunications</li> </ul>
<b>Miscellaneous</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any topics that do not fit into one of the above five categories</li> </ul>	

The identified IT-related publications were then grouped into the appropriate categories as presented in Table 1. It is necessary to mention that the contents of certain articles did fall into more than one category.

## Findings and Discussions

### Analysis according to Journals

In total, 1,896 full-length research papers were published in all three research journals during the period from 1985 to 2004. *CQ* had published the most full papers ( $n=901$ ), followed by the *JHTR* with 576 papers, and *IJHM* with 419 papers, the smallest number.

Among the three research journals, *CQ* had the highest ratio of published IT papers. Within the study period, *CQ* published 68 IT research papers out of a total of 901 papers (7.55%); followed by *JHTR* and *IJHM*, which published 37 and 26 IT papers from a total of 576 and 419 research papers, respectively (6.42% and 5.97%). (Table 2)

**Table 2: IT publications in leading research journals**

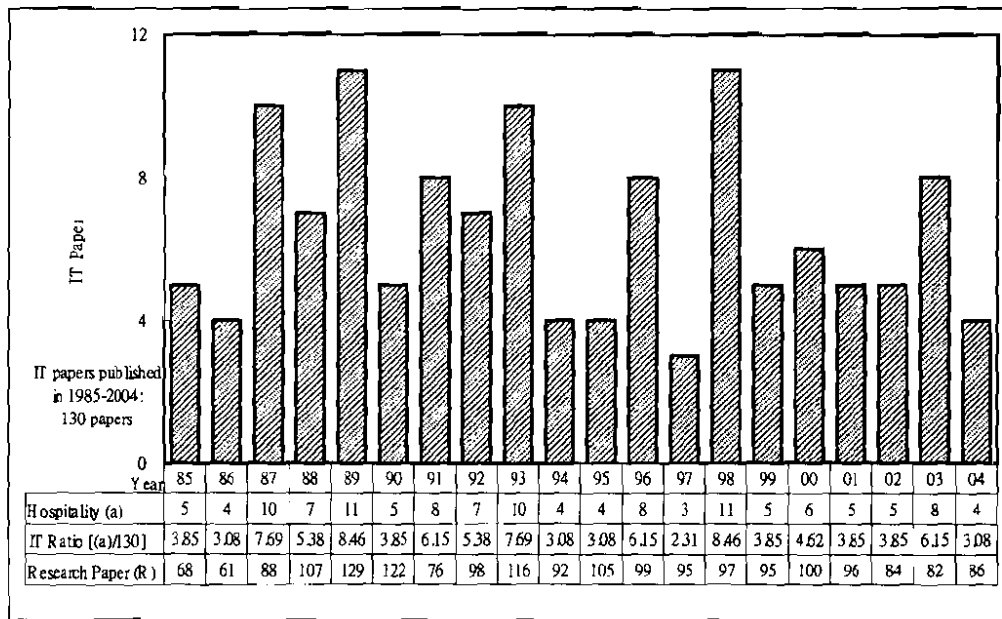
Journal	Total Research Papers (a)	Total IT papers (b)	(b) / (a)	(b) / (c)
<i>IJHM</i>	419	25	5.97%	19.23%
<i>CQ</i>	901	68	7.55%	52.31%
<i>JHTR</i>	576	37	6.42%	28.46%
Total	1,896	130 (c)	6.86%	100.00%

The most popular IT category within the whole study period was GBA, which had 41 occurrences. As the Internet has become more popular, networking was ranked the second most productive research area with 30 occurrences, which was followed by intelligent applications with 27 occurrences. Information management ranked fourth with 16 occurrences, and 12 papers were in the user interface category. In addition, about 20% of the IT papers fell into the category of miscellaneous, with 32 occurrences. In total, *CQ* had published the most number of IT papers in all six categories. *JHTR*, in turn, outperform *IJHM* in terms of the number of IT publications.

### Distribution of IT papers published

The total number of full-length research papers in the selected journals increased from 68 papers in 1985 to 86 papers in 2004 (Figure 1). The number of IT papers, however, did not show a major increase during the study period. On average, 94.8 full-length research papers were published annually, of which 6.5 were IT papers. During the period from 1985 to 2004, the least productive year for full-length papers was 1986 with a total of 61 research papers, and the most productive year was 1989 with a total of 129 papers published. For IT papers, the most productive years were 1989 and 1998 with 11 IT papers published each year. However, the number of IT papers appears to drop in 1994 and 1995. In 1997, the number of IT papers dropped to the lowest level of three papers. One of the possible reasons for this was the establishment of the ENTER Conference organized by the International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism (IFITT) commencing from 1994. The ENTER Conference is the world's largest tourism and IT conference, and attracts many IT research papers from other research journals (IFITT, 2005). Moreover, with the introduction of journals specializing in hospitality and tourism IT, including the *Information Technology and Tourism* published in 1998 and the *International Journal of Hospitality Information Technology* published in 1999, some IT research papers were submitted and eventually published in these journals.

**Figure 1: Distribution of IT papers from 1985-2004**



#### Analysis of IT Categories

Since each paper might cover more than one IT category, the total count in IT categories was 158, which exceeded the total number of IT papers of 130. Table 3 lists the number of IT publications in the selected journals.

**Table 3: Distribution of IT papers in each category and in each journal**

	Networking	Information Management	Intelligent Applications	User Interface	General Business Applications	Miscellaneous	Total
<i>IJHM</i>	4	1	7	1	6	8	27
<i>CQ</i>	21	12	11	7	25	10	86
<i>JHTR</i>	5	3	9	4	10	14	45
Total	30	16	27	12	41	32	158
%	18.99%	10.13%	17.09%	7.59%	25.95%	20.25%	100.00%

The most popular IT category within the whole study period was GBA, which had 41 occurrences. As the Internet has become more popular, networking was ranked the second most productive research area with 30 occurrences, which was followed by intelligent applications with 27 occurrences. Information management ranked fourth with 16 occurrences, and 12 papers were in the user interface category. In addition, about 20% of the IT papers fell into the category of miscellaneous, with 32 occurrences. In total, *CQ* had published the most number of IT papers in all six categories. *JHTR*, in turn, outperform *IJHM* in terms of the number of IT publications.

### Analysis of different decades

Table 4 shows the IT publications in the first decade (1985 – 1994) and second decade (1995 – 2004). In the first decade (1985-1994), GBA produced the largest number of IT papers (29.55% of all IT papers). The dominance of IT publications in the second decade, however, was taken over by networking, comprising 28.57% of all publications on IT. The number of GBA publications dropped from 26 papers in the first decade (29.55%) to 15 papers in the second decade (21.43%). Likewise, the number of papers on intelligent applications experienced a large drop from 19 papers in the first decade (21.59%) to 8 papers (11.43%) in the second decade. In addition, two less papers were produced in each of the categories of information management and user interface.

**Table 4 Research categories in hospitality journals in different decades**

		Networking	Information Management	Intelligent Applications	User Interface	General Business Applications	Miscellaneous	Total
number	1985-1994	10	9	19	7	26	17	88
	1995-2004	20	7	8	5	15	15	70
%	1985-1994	11.36%	10.23%	21.59%	7.95%	29.55%	19.32%	100.00%
	1995-2004	28.57%	10.00%	11.43%	7.14%	21.43%	21.43%	100.00%

### Research on Networking

The first networking paper published in *CQ* was entitled “Computer Confusion”, and was co-authored by Cummings and Robinson in 1986. However, only the final part of this paper discussed the LAN setting. The second networking paper was published four years later in 1990, also in *CQ*. Prior to 1993, none of the published papers focused on networking, as sections of the networking papers were either in GBA or intelligent applications. The first “true” networking paper, coauthored by Moore and Wilkinson in 1993, was entitled “Communications Technology”, and appeared in 1993 in *JHTR*. Frew commented that there were no Web-related publications prior to 1994. As Internet applications increased, more research papers were published on networking. In total, 85.71% of the papers on networking were related to the Internet or the World Wide Web (WWW). The first Web-related paper was published in *CQ* in 1996. It was entitled “Restaurant Marketing on the Worldwide Web” and was written by Murphy *et al.* (1996). The most noticeable change in this category was the large increase in the number of publications in the second decade (from 10 to 20). This showed the effect of the downsizing of computer systems from mainframe computers and minicomputers to networked personal computers, the increasing use of Internet applications and, more importantly, the optimization of resource sharing. Law and Jogaratnam (2005) made a similar claim that hotels at present find the Internet to be the most useful technology.

### Research on Information Management

*IJHM* published the first paper on this topic, entitled “Information technology supporting fast food phone-in order responsiveness”. The paper was authored by Cummings in 1987, and related to the application of IT in managing marketing information. The most frequently occurring topic in this category was Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and database marketing, comprising 34.62% of the published articles. The second most popular topic was searching for information (19.23%), followed by using multimedia as training media (15.38%). Overall, information management did not seem to be a “trendy” category in



the period under study, as only 16 papers were published and no significant changes in the number of papers was seen between the first and second decades.

#### **Research on Intelligent Applications**

A total of 27 IT papers (17.09%) were published in the category of intelligent applications. The first paper on this topic was published in 1986 by *IJHM*. It was entitled "Expert front office management by computers" and was written by Gamble and Smith. Within the study period, one-third of the published papers were related to expert systems and eight were on yield management (29.62%). In 1987, intelligent applications were the most popular category, with five papers on the topic appearing in the selected hospitality journals. Once a fad, the number of published papers on intelligent applications dropped dramatically from 19 in the first decade to only eight in the second decade. Basically, no research paper in this category was published after 1999 except for one paper in 2004 that appeared in *CQ*.

#### **Research on User Interfaces**

Apparently, user interfaces was the least popular research category. Within the entire studied period, only 12 papers were published in this category. The first published paper was authored by Harris and entitled "Employee training: Using high tech & videodisc technology". It appeared in 1988 in *JHTR* (originally the *Hospitality Education & Research Journal*). Of all twelve papers, seven were related to training and education. The most productive year in this category was in 1993, during which four papers were published.

#### **Research on General Business Applications (GBA)**

This appeared as a much-needed research category during the study period. Written by Patterson and Alvarez in 1985, the first paper published in this category appeared in *CQ* and was entitled "Computer systems for food-service operations". In the first decade under study, the research articles focused mainly on the operation of IT devices. Their contents were mostly descriptive in nature and aimed to reveal the general concepts and operation of computers (both hardware and software) as well as the implementation of IT. Ever since personal computers have become an essential tool at work and at home, IT has become a compulsory subject at school and most people can thus acquire a basic knowledge of computer operations. Hence, research in the second decade moved to the analysis of new technologies and the strategic use of IT in hospitality. With these significant changes in the development of IT, GBA underwent some significant changes. With the increasing use of computer networks, the operating platforms of many business applications changed from local servers to Internet-based servers. This, in turn, caused a significant decrease in the number of publications in this category.

#### **Conclusions**

It is generally agreed that IT can be used in the hospitality industry to enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs, and provide better service to customers. However, among the published full-length articles, the percentage of IT papers is still very low (6.86%). This finding suggests that not enough effort has been spent on researching this important area, and that it is necessary for hospitality researchers to conduct more studies on IT related projects in order to meet the needs of industry.

In addition about 20% of the IT papers were found to be theoretical and descriptive in nature. O'Connor and Murphy argued that future research should have more "field experiments to show causality, and [rely] upon actual behavior rather than intended behaviour". They quoted an example of the development of restaurant and food service management affected by new IT, but no article has been published on such a topic in any high-quality research journal for 18 months.

In terms of decades, the numbers of IT papers published in the first and second decades were 71 and 59 papers, respectively. However, the total number of full-length research papers

increased slightly from 957 papers in the first decade to 939 papers in the second decade. The percentage of full-length papers in IT publications dropped from 7.42% to 6.28% from the first to the second decades.

Research journals in hospitality basically share the similar goal of publishing peer-reviewed scholastic information that helps to advance the development of knowledge in hospitality-related industries. One of the major target groups of readers for these journals is industrial professionals in hospitality. At least, the leading hospitality journals included in this study aim to have practitioners, among others, as their readers. A noticeable gap, however, is the composition of reviewing panels for the submitted articles. In many cases, only academic reviewers are invited to serve as reviewers. While agreeing that comments from academic reviewers can help maintain research rigor, if hospitality practitioners are not involved in the evaluation process, the extent to which industrial professionals accept the research findings (or approaches) will remain unknown. In other words, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether the published articles in hospitality journals have any applicability to the related industry.

In the context of hospitality information technology, empirically based papers with demonstrated industrial applications would be more important and useful than conceptually based papers. It has been said that IT capabilities are often limited by the background, ambition, and attitude of hospitality managers instead by the technology (Law and Lau, 2000). Moreover, as most hotel managers are not technically competent, the adoption of IT systems by hotel managers without enough background knowledge often leads to frustration, disappointment, and eventual abandonment of the systems (Law, 198). This paper, therefore, suggests that hospitality researchers be obligated to offer professional advice to industrial practitioners through proven research outcomes. Lastly, as information is essential to hospitality managers at virtually at all levels, IT should be able to do more than assist with operations. IT can, and should, be part of the management strategy that emphasizes high-quality services in the hospitality business. However, such an event will only occur when hospitality managers can make full use of IT.

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# Beginning to Explore Dashboard Dining

By David Walczak

*It can be nutritious and healthy if done right. Fruits and vegetables, a granola bar, smoothie, or some fresh squeezed Florida orange juice would be good choices. On the other hand, it can poison you. Perishable protein and dairy products must be packed in a well-insulated cooler with plenty of ice and a refrigerator thermometer kept inside to ensure the food stays below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. If you are not completely safe, it can kill you. According to Hagerty Insurance of Traverse City, Michigan, the top ten worst foods to consume are coffee, hot soups, tacos, chili, juicy hamburgers, fried chicken, any barbecued food, filled doughnuts, soft drinks, and chocolate. (see Lisa Chin, 2003) It simply takes a sudden scalding spill, an unexpected splash, or dripping condiments, any of which demand your immediate attention, to become an instant fatality.*

## Introduction

Dashboard dining goes by many different names: cup-holder cuisine, drive-through cuisine, one-handed food, port-a-fuel, meals-on-the-move, and "car-nivores" are used interchangeably. All refer to the same idea: consuming food and nonalcoholic drinks while driving a car or truck.

It is fast becoming part of everyday life for drivers across America. People eat while they drive because of their busy lifestyles, while stuck in traffic, or as a way to kill time on a long, boring commute to and from work. New products such as hamburgers in the shape of hot dogs, applesauce, yogurt, peanut butter, or pudding in squeezable tubes, and snacks in cup-holder friendly containers are being produced to make dining easier for drivers.

Most of what has been written about dashboard dining appears in the popular press, mostly newspaper stories, and is anecdotal and speculative. Few independent, scientific studies have been conducted on this topic. This paper attempts to shed a little scientific light on the practice of dashboard dining by reporting on the results of a survey. The information should give some insight into the behavior of dashboard diners that could help fast-food, convenience store, and gas station mini-mart operators, as well as food and beverage manufacturers, to make more informed decisions about which products and services to provide.

## Literature review

Few studies address the topic of dashboard dining. Those that do focus on eating and drinking while driving as a source of driver distraction. In 2002, the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety conducted a national telephone survey of 1,013 drivers. Eating a meal or snack while driving was the third most likely distracting activity followed by talking with a passenger and adjusting the vehicle's stereo or climate control. The survey also revealed that only 10% of those who eat a meal or snack while driving consider the activity to be "very dangerous," compared to 19% of the general public, i.e., those who do not dashboard dine.

These results were supported by a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 4,010 drivers conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2002). Talking with passengers, changing radio stations, or looking for CDs/ tapes were potential distracting behaviors that drivers engaged in more frequently than eating or drinking. When asked to rate twelve potentially distracting behaviors that make driving more dangerous, drivers rated eating and drinking in eleventh place.

These studies looked at eating and drinking only as a potential source of distraction. They did not consider the role this behavior plays in specific crashes. In the mid-90s, the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center was awarded a contract by the American Automobile Associations' Foundation for Traffic Safety to study the role of driver distraction in traffic crashes. The project was divided into two phases. The primary focus of

Phase I was the analysis of five years of National Automotive Sampling System Crashworthiness Data System data covering the years 1995-1999. (see Stutts, *et. al.* 2001) During Phase II, the researchers videotaped the behavior of 70 volunteers while driving. (Stutts, *et. al.* 2003)

Results from Phase II indicate that distractions are a common component of everyday driving with eating and drinking right at the top of the list. It was surpassed only by conversing with a passenger. A little more than 4.6% of driving time was spent either preparing to, or actually, eating or drinking something, again surpassed only by talking with a passenger (15% of total driving time). Preparing to, or actually, eating or drinking while driving were associated with no hands on the steering wheel, and eyes directed inward, but only preparing to eat or drink something was associated with adverse vehicle events such as a vehicle encroaching across the lane or a vehicle breaking suddenly.

Surprisingly, few of these negative outcomes seem to translate into increased crashes on the highway. Analysis of the 1995-1999 Phase I data reveals that 8.3% of drivers were identified as distracted at the time of the crash. Of these, eating and drinking was cited as the specific source of the distraction in only 1.7% of the crashes. Distraction outside the vehicle, adjusting audio equipment, another occupant in the vehicle, a moving object in the vehicle, some object brought into the vehicle, and adjusting vehicle controls, were distraction all found to be more likely to be causes of a crash than eating or drinking. Additionally, drivers who were age 50 to 64, as well as those driving pickups, vans, and sport utility vehicles were associated with higher incidences of collisions while eating and drinking.

Driver inattention and distraction was also studied over a 2 ½ year period in Virginia. (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2001) Eating or drinking while driving was found to be involved in less than 4% of the traffic crashes studied.

Another line of research is on the topic of dashboard dining is that approximately 75% of drivers engage in this activity. Both the Network for Employers Traffic Safety study and Phase II of the study conducted by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center support this finding. A "Driver Friendly" survey sponsored by Exxon (1999) confirms these results. According to Exxon, 83% of drivers drink coffee, juice, or soda while in their cars. This is up from 74% in 1995. In 1995, 58% of drivers said they eat a snack in the car. By 1999, this number had jumped to 70%. A study conducted by Nationwide Insurance Company in 2002 found that 65% of Americans "occasionally" eat or drink while driving, while 17% said they do so "often." (National Association of Convenience Stores, 2002).

### **Research Study**

In the Fall of 2004, nine Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale students who were enrolled in an 11-week upper-level honors survey research methods course dashboard dining as a topic for research. It was chosen because it is a relatively new idea and little research has been done in this area. The class followed the steps for conducting a survey outlined in Priscilla Salant and Don A. Dillman's How to Conduct Your Own Survey (1994).

The target population was the administrative staff at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. To minimize coverage error, the most recent list of administrative employees was obtained from the Director of Human Resources. The list included the names of 191 administrative staff employed as of Fall 2004. Based on the assumption of homogeneity of respondents, choosing a 95 percent confidence level, and anticipating a +/-5% sampling error, 98 employees were randomly selected to participate in the study.

The final questionnaire designed by the students included twenty questions covering various aspects of eating and drinking non-alcoholic beverages while driving a car or truck. During the first week of class, each student conducted an informal focus group with friends and family to brainstorm the topic. The questionnaire was written during weeks 2-4. To test

the survey, the author administered it to two separate classes during week 5. At this time each student also worked on a graphic design for the front cover of the survey. Final decisions about the questionnaire and the front cover were made during week 5, and a cover letter was written. The following week, envelopes were stuffed and sent via inter-office mail to the staff selected in the random sample.

Initially, 54 employees returned the survey. The class re-sent the survey to non-respondents, writing "second request" on the cover letter. Fifteen employees responded to the follow-up request to participate. However, 11 of the 69 returned surveys turned out not to be useable. The analysis, therefore, is based on 58 useful questionnaires: a response rate of 59%.

## Results

Sixty-six percent of the respondents were female and nearly three-fourths were over thirty years old. Sixty-one percent were white, 16% Hispanic and 14% Black.

Consistent with the results of studies described earlier, 81% drink non-alcoholic beverages and 68% eat while driving. Forty-two percent dashboard dine because they are too busy or do not have enough time to eat regular sit down meals, and 36% do so while running errands during short lunch breaks or between jobs.

Most respondents do not engage in these activities very often. Nearly two-thirds (62%) said they drink nonalcoholic beverages while driving only sometimes or rarely. And nearly everyone in this survey, 95%, said they only sometimes or rarely eat while driving. Furthermore, 63% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that eating while driving is becoming more and more a part of their daily routine.

For both men and women water is the most popular nonalcoholic beverage to drink while driving. For women, coffee was the second most popular drink, while for men, juice was the second choice.

Forty-four percent of the respondents do not experience any problems drinking their beverage of choice while driving. One quarter said that spills from drink covers and straws that do not fit tightly are the biggest problems they experience, while for 15% it was inconvenient, hard to reach, or lack of cup holders. (see Table 1)

**Table 1: Products Drivers Said Would Improve Dashboard Dining**  
**Products to Improve Drinking Nonalcoholic Beverages**

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Cup holders (sturdier, adjustable)	25	35
Covers and straws that fit tighter/more snug	19	26
Soda in sports-type botties with easy open-close tops	14	19
Mini-cooler/refrigerator for keeping drinks cold	7	10
Built in hot/cold thermos	7	10
Built in coffee maker	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Totals</b>	72	100

### Products to Improve Eating

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Trays that fold out for holding food	24	29
More food in mini-bite sizes	21	25
More durable, less crumbly food items	13	15
Hot dog shaped omelet's and hamburgers	8	10
Disposable bibs for protecting clothes	7	8
Sauces packaged in containers that fit in cup holders	6	7
Bagels in stick form	5	6
Microwave oven for warming food	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Totals</b>	84	100

Predictably, 35% want more sturdy or adjustable cup holders to help improve their experience of drinking nonalcoholic beverages while driving, and 26% said the same about better fitting covers and straws. (See Table 1) Consistent with this latter finding is the 19% who would like to see soda made available in sports-type plastic bottles with easy open-close tops. Seven respondents, or 10%, would like to see vehicles equipped with a mini-cooler/refrigerator. Another 10% would like to see vehicles equipped with a hot-cold thermos.

The three most popular breakfast items eaten while driving were as follows: breakfast sandwich (38%); fruit (28%); and something sweet such as a doughnut or pastry (22%). Sandwiches, including hamburgers, hot dogs, subs, tacos, and wraps were also popular foods eaten by drivers during both lunch and dinner times. French fries and onion rings were the second most popular food items eaten during both lunch and dinner, while chicken nuggets, fingers, and wings came in third. The three most popular snack items fit into the following categories: chips, pretzels, or crackers (30%); fruits and vegetables (28%); and cookies, candy, and snack cakes (23%).

Only 12 percent of respondents do not experience any problems with the food they eat while driving. Most problems were evenly distributed among the following four categories: food falling apart, messy food, moist and soggy breads, buns, and wraps; difficulty holding food with one hand; inconvenient, hard to reach, or no place to hold food; and, staining clothes or greasy hands.

When drivers were asked to identify the products they thought would improve their dashboard dining experience, trays that fold out for holding food were the most popular suggestion. (See Table 1) This was closely followed by more food in mini-bite size pieces, and more durable, less crumbly food items.

## Discussion

Like other research on dashboard dining, this study found that most drivers dine while driving. Unlike the Nationwide Insurance study, most of the respondents to this survey do not do it very often. And, nearly two-thirds said it is not likely to become part of their daily routine in the future.

The difference is probably the result of the populations studied. The results of this study are generalizable only to a limited population: middle-aged, female, office workers. The young, the elderly, people who rely on their vehicles for a living such as truck drivers, cab drivers, policemen, sales personnel, as well as blue-collar workers and professionals are excluded.

Similar to most dashboard diners, respondents in this study are interested in portability and ease of consumption. While some may want or need the 15-17 cup holders such as are available in the 2005 Honda Odyssey Touring automobile, sturdier and adjustable cup holders are even more important.

Another suggestion might be a reusable or disposable, functional, fashionable driver bib endorsed by and emblazoned with an image of your favorite NASCAR or Formula 1 driver. One does not need an Army surplus camouflage outfit to dashboard dine safely as Stan Freberg once suggested on the radio. The bib can be a light-weight, clear, disposable, plastic type that outlets can offer their customers as a convenience, or it can be more traditional, reusable cloth for purchase. In this survey, 8% of respondents stated they thought a disposable bib for protecting clothes would improve their experience of eating while driving. One can only imagine how many more would have said yes to this idea if they were told the bib was provided free by operators or endorsed by and engraved with images of popular race car drivers.

David Podeschi, Senior Vice President for merchandising at 7-Eleven has it right when he says "food in 'grippable' packages that 'pops in your mouth'....flies off the shelf." (National



Association of Convenience Stores, 2003) This is what needs to be done with hamburgers, hot dogs, subs, tacos, and wraps. Fast food operators need to take a lesson from ready-to-eat snack food manufacturers. Dashboard diners want more bite size, single serve products.

Perhaps insights for new products that fit the bite size idea can be gleaned from the gourmet chef. Tea sandwiches are thin slices of bread, crusts trimmed off, cut into quarters. Canapés use a thin bread, cracker, or pastry base covered with a spread topped with one or more ingredients and a garnish. Traditional tea sandwiches and canapés such as filet mignon with horseradish cream or goat cheese with cracked pepper would be new for dashboard diners to eat, while the traditional foods of dashboard diners, hamburgers, hot dogs, subs etc, would provide new ingredients with which the gourmet chef could experiment. The varieties are endless and can be served or packaged individually or in multiples.

Evidence does not seem to support operators' concerns and fears about the possibility of legislation banning eating and drinking nonalcoholic beverages while driving. Dashboard dining is not increasingly becoming a dangerous trend because at this time it has not been proven to be a major cause of crashes. As more and more drivers dashboard dine it may increase the potential risk of a crash, but legislation would first have to ban talking with passengers, adjusting vehicle controls or audio equipment, looking for CDs or tapes, and objects brought into or flying around the vehicle, if potential risk is the concern.

Perhaps the main reason why eating and drinking distractions do not easily translate into vehicle crashes is because drivers may be less likely to engage in this activity at inappropriate times while driving. "While some distracting events are outside the driver's control (e.g. the actions of another vehicle, or a child's sudden cries), most can be avoided by some simple precautionary measures (for example) hot drinks and messy foods can be saved until the vehicle is safely stopped." (Stutts, 2003)

It is just too early to draw firm conclusions about the role of dashboard dining in vehicle crashes. Because of the small sample size, the fact that researchers analyzed only 3 of 10 hours recorded, lack of inter-rater reliability, and no measures of cognitive distraction, Stutts concludes we are "not able to provide a definitive answer as to which activities, or which driver distractions, carry the greatest risk of crash involvement." The main finding to emerge from the Virginia study is that the results are probably underrepresented because most police crash reports do not require specific driver distractions to be identified.

While distractions caused by eating or drinking non-alcoholic beverages during the operation of a motor vehicle do not appear to be a major cause of traffic crashes, more research is needed.

## **Conclusion**

Operators need to continue to make dashboard dining safe. The National Association of Convenience Stores suggests that in addition to different kinds of containers operators should take such proactive measures as "signage that could help alert consumers to the dangers of certain kinds of foods eaten while driving. It could also be as simple as drive-up window personnel being willing and able to put milk and sugar into coffee instead of requiring that the driver to it himself." (National Association of Convenience Stores, 2002)

Fast-food, convenience store, and gas station mini-mart outlets are quickly becoming the new DMV, Department of Motor Vehicles. Managers need to make sure that their "CARte" "du jour is portable, convenient, delicious, safe, and based on scientific principles similar to those used by students in this study.

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Florida International University  
School of Hospitality & Tourism Management  
Announces

## Tianjin, China Program



Florida International University is expanding its reach in hospitality studies -- to China. FIU signed an accord with Tianjin University of Commerce for a hospitality management school in that northeast Chinese city, similar to FIU's top-ranked program in Miami. The pact is thought to be the first on such a scale between the government and a university outside China.