



Family tourism improves parents' well-being and children's generic skills

Erika Miyakawa^{a,b,*}, Takashi Oguchi^a

^a College of Contemporary Psychology, Rikkyo University, Japan

^b Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Tokyo, Japan

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ABSTRACT

Family tourism has gained increased attention from researchers in recent years; however, few longitudinal studies have examined the psychological benefits of family tourism. Therefore, this study employed a pretest-posttest design to examine the beneficial effects of family tourism on parents' well-being and their children's generic skills. We collected data from 217 families with elementary school children who went on family holidays, administering questionnaires to both parents and children. The results showed that parents' well-being and children's generic skills increased from before to after the family tourism experience. Moreover, a memorable tourism experience and children's skill development through family tourism were positively associated with changes in parents' well-being through family tourism. Our findings highlight the importance of considering multiple perspectives from family members and identify the benefits of their interactions.

1. Introduction

Family tourism has gained increasing attention from researchers as well as the tourism industry (e.g., Durko & Petrick, 2013; Lehto, Choi, Lin, & MacDermid, 2009; Li, Lehto, & Li, 2020; Schänzel, Yeoman, & Backer, 2012). According to Agoda's "Family Travel Trends 2018" survey (2018), the market for family tourism has increased, especially in Asian countries. For example, Japan's 2018 National Tourism Survey showed that family tourism is one of the most popular types of travel, comprising 19.64% of domestic tourism and 36.06% of overseas tourism among Japanese residents (Japan Tourism Agency, 2020). Moreover, many travel agencies developed a package tour called *tabi-iku*, a form of family tourism aimed at promoting children's personal development, that is gaining popularity among Japanese families (Morishita, 2013). Thus, research that investigates family tourism to increase the understanding of the family tourism market is needed.

Furthermore, family tourism is worth researching because of its essential role in the relationships between family members and how it can help family members function in society (Durko & Petrick, 2013; Lehto et al., 2009; Lehto, Lin, Chen, & Choi, 2012). Previous studies on family tourism targeted pre-trip behaviors, such as decision making, associated with family tourism (e.g., Kang, Hsu, & Wolfe, 2003; Nanda, Hu, & Bai, 2007). However, there is an emerging interest in examining the family tourism experience itself (Chesworth, 2003; Durko & Petrick, 2013). Although several studies (e.g., Lehto et al., 2012, 2009; Shaw,

Havitz, & Delemere, 2008) have shed light on families' tourism experiences, they are insufficient to fully understand the benefits of family tourism as they have not used a longitudinal design. Thus, this study examined further whether family tourism provides broader benefits for family members using a longitudinal design.

Specifically, the current study focuses on the benefits of family tourism on parents' well-being and children's generic skills. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of general tourism and vacation on well-being (e.g., Chen & Petrick, 2013; de Bloom et al., 2009; Smith & Diekmann, 2017; Uysal, Sirgy, Woo, & Kim, 2016). Moreover, some have examined the benefits on the generic skills for students and adults (e.g., Miyakawa, Kawakubo, & Oguchi, 2019; Pearce & Foster, 2007; Scarinci & Pearce, 2012), as well as educational benefits for children (e.g., Bos, McCabe, & Johnson, 2015; Park, Pan, & Ahn, 2020; Yang & Lau, 2019). However, there is a lack of research on both parents' and children's benefits within a common single-family tourism experience. As several researchers noted (Carr, 2011; Khoo-Lattimore, 2015; Poria & Timothy, 2014), previous studies have focused only on parents' family tourism perspectives, overlooking children's perspectives. Further, some research has contended that considering overall well-being, including both hedonic and eudaimonic views, is critical, yet most tourism studies have focused on the hedonic well-being of tourism benefits (Filep & Laing, 2019; Filep, Laing, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2017). Given this trend, examining multiple perspectives from the family members is crucial, as it expands the understanding of the psychological benefits of tourism

* Corresponding author. College of Contemporary Psychology, Rikkyo University, 1-2-26 Kitano, Niiza-shi, Saitama 352-8558, Japan.

E-mail address: e.miyakawa@rikkyo.ac.jp (E. Miyakawa).

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from the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives.

We also examined the antecedent factors which influence parents' well-being through family tourism. One concept of that could be a memorable tourism experience (MTE; Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012), which is "a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (p. 13). Research has suggested a positive relationship between MTE and tourists' well-being (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Vada, Prentice, & Hsiao, 2019). Families desire to spend quality time together and have memorable experiences through family tourism (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015; Schänzel et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2008), indicating a positive impact on parent's well-being. Another factor that influences parents' well-being could be children's development through family tourism. Previous research has shown that not only do parents seek to enhance their well-being through tourism but also seek educational benefits for their children (Carr, 2006; Lehto, Fu, Li, & Zhou, 2017; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Parents may need to take a break from daily life and increase well-being through family holidays to appreciate family tourism as a benefit for themselves. Further, they may also find children's educational outcomes derived from family tourism helpful, which, in turn, may affect their well-being as well.

Based on previous research, the current study aimed to examine the benefits of family tourism from both the parents' and the children's perspectives. We focused on: (1) whether parents' well-being improves after the family tourism; (2) whether children's generic skills improve after family tourism; (3) whether parents' well-being is associated with memorable family tourism experiences; and (4) whether there is a relationship between children's generic skill development and changes in parents' well-being through family tourism. Our study contributes to the literature by further examining the benefits of family tourism from multiple family members' perspectives using a longitudinal design.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedures

The research design was approved in advance by the research ethics committee of the authors' institution. Participants were families that included elementary school children who purchased a family trip from a large travel agency in Japan (Company A). We asked Company A to send an email invitation to the travelers to inquire about their participation in this study. As an incentive, respondents who completed the survey had a chance to win a voucher from Company A worth 50,000 Japanese Yen (approximately 450 US Dollar), which was available for ten families. We asked participants to complete a questionnaire before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) the family trip. The response time frame (how long before or after the trip they completed the questionnaire) differed across participants.

The invitation email included a link to an Internet-based questionnaire and asked the family to choose one parent (preferably the one who booked the trip) and one elementary school child to complete the survey. We directed the parent to respond to the first few parts of the questionnaire and ask one of their elementary school children to respond to the last part of the questionnaire. Upon receiving the completed questionnaire, Company A removed participants' personal information (i.e., email address, as participants did not give their names in the questionnaire), created a dataset that compiled participants' data, including demographics, travel information, and questionnaire responses, and sent the compiled data to the authors.

Three hundred thirty family groups completed our questionnaire at both Time 1 and Time 2. We excluded responses from the analysis to improve the data quality using the following criteria: (a) responses that did not confirm the participant's Japanese nationality ($n = 4$); (b) responses that lacked a unique identifier that matched the travel information and questionnaire data ($n = 4$); (c) responses where the Time 2 respondent differed from the Time 1 respondent (based on the respondents' age; $n = 22$); (d) respondents who did not complete the first

questionnaire (Time 1) before travel and the second questionnaire (Time 2) after travel (based on the response date and travel dates; $n = 77$); (e) respondents who were not the child's parents (e.g., grandparents or aunt; $n = 4$); and (f) respondents whose response choices indicated straight-line responding (i.e., selecting the same answer to a series of questions; $n = 2$), an indicator of low-quality responses (Schonlau & Toepoel, 2015; Zhang & Conrad, 2014). The final analytic sample comprised 217 family groups. The parents included 66 men and 151 women, with an average age of 42 years ($SD = 5.16$). Half of the respondents ($n = 109$, 50.2 %) had a bachelor's degree or higher, and the average household income was approximately 8 to 9 M Japanese Yen. The child respondents comprised 115 boys and 102 girls, with an average age of 9.20 years ($SD = 1.75$).

2.2. Measurements

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: the first four were for the parents' responses, and the fifth was for the children's responses. The first section measured parents' well-being using the PERMA-Profiler developed by Butler and Kern (2016). We used 15 items measuring the five well-being domains (positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment), with each domain including three items. All items were rated using an 11-point rating scale. This section was administered at both Time 1 and Time 2.

The second section assessed memorable tourism experiences using the MTE scale developed by Kim et al. (2012), which includes seven subscales: hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge. We used the 14-item version of the MTE, adapted by the authors for a previous study (Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2017). Participants responded on a five-point rating scale. Respondents were asked to complete this section at Time 2.

The third section measured children's generic skills based on their parents' ratings. We adopted 15 items based on previous studies (KCJ Group, 2014; Miyakawa et al., 2019; Oguchi, Abe, Sekiguchi, & Saiga, 2013; Pearce & Foster, 2007) that could be applied to elementary school children. Parents used a five-point rating scale to assess the extent to which their child was capable of each skill. Respondents were asked to complete this section at both Time 1 and Time 2. The fourth section included demographic items, including children's gender and age, household income, and educational level.

The final section of the questionnaire was designed to obtain the children's responses. We employed the same 15 items of generic skills used in the parents' section but changed the subject to children and adapted the language level to be appropriate for elementary school children. We modified each item by translating it into wording that children could understand to improve the questionnaire's comprehensibility for them. Moreover, because our target group was elementary school children (6 to 12 years old), we employed the Smiley Face Scale (SFS; Lewin, 1979), which consists of emojis ranging from an intense frown to an energetic smile. We also presented word labels ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* to accompany each face. Respondents were asked to complete this section at both Time 1 and Time 2.

In addition to the questionnaire data, Company A provided data on travel information, including travel duration, travel destination, and demographic information.

3. Results

3.1. Family tourism characteristics

The profile of family tourism is presented in Table 1. The average length of family trips was 4.52 days ($SD = 1.58$), the average number of family members was 3.75 ($SD = 1.19$), and the average cost of the trip paid to Company A was 462,223 Japanese Yen (approximately 4,200 US Dollar; $SD = 394,962$). Out of the total participants, 71% ($n = 154$) of the families bought a package tour from Company A, whereas 28.5% (n

Table 1
Family tourism characteristics (N = 217).

Variables	n	%
Travel duration		
2–3 days	57	26.3
4–5 days	110	50.7
6–7 days	42	19.4
> 7 days	8	3.7
Travel plan		
Tour package	154	71
Airline and hotel	35	16.1
Airline	27	12.4
No answer	1	0.5
Cost of travel^a		
Below 100,000	7	3.2
100,000–299,999	88	40.6
300,000–599,999	68	31.3
600,000–899,999	35	16.1
900,000–1.2 M	9	4.1
> 1.2 M	10	4.6
Family tourism type		
One family	180	82.9
Two families	8	3.7
Three families	20	9.2
Three generations	7	3.2
Single parent	2	0.9
Number of family members		
2–3 people	92	42.4
4–5 people	107	49.3
> 5 people	15	6.9
No answer	3	1.4
Travel destination		
Northern America	12	5.5
Europe	2	0.9
Eastern Asia	67	30.9
Southeast Asia	50	23
Oceania	12	5.5
Hawaii	43	19.8
Guam	28	12.9
No answer	3	1.4

Note.
^a Japanese Yen.

= 62) bought only an airline ticket or an airline ticket and hotel stay. Eastern Asian locations, including Japan (n = 21), Korea (n = 20), and Taiwan (n = 18), were the most popular tourist destination, followed by Southeast Asian locations, such as Singapore (n = 13) and Vietnam (n = 10). Regarding individual destinations, Hawaii (n = 43) and Guam (n = 28) were the top two popular destinations.

3.2. Scale reliability and correlations

The internal reliability of each scale was examined using Cronbach’s alpha. The overall score for well-being showed an acceptable level of reliability (Time 1, α = .94; Time 2, α = .95). Moreover, the generic skills overall score indicated high reliability for both the child-reported (Time 1, α = .83; Time 2, α = .86) and parent-reported measurements (Time 1,

Table 2
Zero-order correlations coefficients.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Response date (Time 1)	10.18	8.57	–	–.11	.03	.06	.03	.01	.07	.02	.03
2. Response date (Time 2)	9.90	10.87		–	–.12	–.22**	.03	–.01	.07	.02	–.02
3. Well-being (Time 1)	6.34	1.54			–	.57***	.36***	.29***	.19**	.19**	.21**
4. Well-being (Time 2)	7.01	1.47				–	.28***	.43***	.12	.27***	.38***
5. Generic skills (parent-reported; Time 1)	3.50	0.59					–	.66***	.61***	.55***	.15*
6. Generic skills (parent-reported; Time 2)	3.79	0.54						–	.51***	.66***	.32***
7. Generic skills (children-reported; Time 1)	3.65	0.58							–	.73***	.14*
8. Generic skills (children-reported; Time 2)	3.81	0.59								–	.23**
9. MTE	4.38	0.45									–

Note. The response date (Time 1) indicates how long before leaving for the trip the participants completed the Time 1 questionnaires, and the response date (Time 2) indicates how long after returning home the participants completed the Time 2 questionnaire; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

α = .87; Time 2, α = .88). Finally, the overall MTE score also showed acceptable reliability (α = .86).

Correlation coefficients are shown in Table 2. We tested the correlations between response date, well-being, parent-reported generic skills, and child-reported generic skills at Time 1 and Time 2 and found no significant correlations, except for response date at Time 2 and well-being at Time 2, which were significantly negatively associated (r = –.22, p = .001). Additionally, the results indicated a positive relationship between MTE and well-being at Time 1 (r = .21, p = .002) and well-being at Time 2 (r = .38, p < .001). Children’s generic skills from the child’s and parent’s perspectives were highly correlated. Parent-reported generic skills and child-reported generic skills at both Time 1 (r = .61, p < .001) and Time 2 (r = .66, p < .001) showed positive associations. These results indicate that the child-reported and parent-reported generic skills assessments had high internal consistency.

3.3. Benefits of family tourism on parents’ well-being and children’s generic skills

A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the benefits of a family trip on parents’ well-being. It showed that parents’ well-being significantly improved from Time 1 to Time 2, t(216) = 7.00, p < .001, d = .44. Moreover, the child-reported measure of children’s generic skills significantly improved from Time 1 to Time 2, t(216) = 5.73, p < .001, d = .28. The parent-reported measure of children’s generic skills also significantly improved from Time 1 to Time 2, t(216) = 9.36, p < .001, d = .52.

Additionally, we conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to investigate the predictors of change in parents’ well-being from before to after the family trip (Table 3). Using parents’ well-being change (difference in the well-being scores from Time 1 to Time 2) as the dependent variable, we first imported control variables including parents’ gender, age, education, and household income in Step 1. We added MTE in Step 2 and children’s skill development score (based on child-reported generic skills) in Step 3. The results indicated that gender, age, education, and household income did not significantly predict a change in parents’ well-being, F(4, 191) = 1.64, p = .167. In contrast, Model 2 showed a significant improvement of the coefficient of determination compared to Model 1, and the overall model fit was significant, F(5, 190) = 2.49, p = .033. Additionally, Model 3 indicated a significant improvement of the coefficient of determination compared to Model 2, and the overall model fit was significant, F(6, 189) = 3.89, p = .001. Overall, MTE and children’s skill development significantly predicted a change in parents’ well-being.

4. Discussion

The current study investigated the psychological benefits of family tourism using a longitudinal approach that involved surveying both parents and children. We focused on the benefits of family tourism on parents’ well-being and children’s generic skill development and

Table 3

The results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis of change in parents' well-being.

Variables	B	SE (B)	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1					
Gender ^a	-0.14	0.23	-.05	.03	.03
Age	0.01	0.02	.05		
Education	0.22	0.13	.13		
Household income	0.02	0.03	.05		
Step 2					
Gender ^a	-0.11	0.23	-.04	.06*	.03*
Age	0.02	0.02	.06		
Education	0.16	0.13	.09		
Household income	0.03	0.03	.07		
MTE	0.56	0.23	.17*		
Step 3					
Gender ^a	-0.02	0.22	-.01	.11**	.05**
Age	0.02	0.02	.08		
Education	0.17	0.13	.10		
Household income	0.02	0.03	.04		
MTE	0.46	0.23	.14*		
Children's skill development	0.75	0.23	.23**		

Note.

^a 0 = male, 1 = female; children's skill development = children's generic skills score difference between Time 1 and Time 2 based on the child-reported measure; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

investigated the association between MTE and parents' well-being. Additionally, we considered the interrelationship of family tourism benefits between children and parents. Overall, our findings showed that family tourism enhances parents' well-being and children's skill development, with MTE and children's skill development having a positive relationship with parents' well-being outcomes.

We confirmed that family tourism has an advantage for parents' well-being and children's generic skills. The results were consistent with previous studies examining the benefits of general tourism experiences on hedonic well-being (e.g., [Chen & Petrick, 2013](#); [de Bloom et al., 2009](#)) and on generic skills (e.g., [Miyakawa et al., 2019](#); [Pearce & Foster, 2007](#); [Scarinci & Pearce, 2012](#)). In addition to hedonic well-being benefits, our findings imply that family tourism may enhance eudaimonic well-being.

Moreover, when the family tourism experience was memorable, the well-being outcomes had greater effects, consistent with previous studies ([Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018](#); [Vada et al., 2019](#)). As [Shaw et al. \(2008\)](#) reported, when a family member had positive, memorable experiences during family tourism, those memories tended to last longer, which may help families to strengthen their family unit. Furthermore, children's skill development through family tourism had a positive impact on parents' well-being. In addition to relaxation and enjoyment, parents seek educational benefits for their children through family tourism ([Carr, 2006](#); [Lehto et al., 2017](#); [Shaw & Dawson, 2001](#)). Parents may invest their resources both for a fun experience for themselves and a meaningful experience for their children, thus enhancing their well-being.

Our study has several implications. The current study advances the knowledge of family tourism by demonstrating both parents' and children's benefits from family tourism. Previously, most family tourism research was market-oriented, and there was a lack of research on broader experiential perspectives ([Chesworth, 2003](#); [Schänzel et al., 2012](#)). Our study enriches the understanding of the family tourism experiential view. In line with previous studies (e.g., [Carr, 2011](#); [Fu, Lehto, & Park, 2014](#); [Gram, 2005](#)), our findings contribute to the literature by revealing the benefits of family tourism on different family members and the interrelationships among those benefits. Additionally, previous studies emphasized that memorable experiences are an important component for enriching tourism experiences ([Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018](#); [Vada et al., 2019](#)), but our study suggested that children's learning may be an additional important component in

increasing parents' well-being.

Furthermore, the current study advances methodological approaches to further understand the benefits of family tourism. Although previous studies primarily have investigated children's perspectives in family tourism using qualitative methods (e.g., [Wu, Wall, Zu, & Ying, 2019](#)), we aimed to collect quantitative data from children through unique study methods incorporating the SFS. Additionally, we used a quantitative pre-post evaluation to examine the benefits of family tourism. Although previous findings have demonstrated the benefits of family tourism using cross-sectional design (e.g., [Lehto et al., 2009, 2012, 2017](#)), we provided scientific evidence by measuring temporal changes in the benefits derived from family tourism.

Finally, we acknowledge several limitations in the current study. First, this study employed a longitudinal design to examine the benefits of family tourism; however, we did not acquire long-term follow-up data. Future studies should explore long-term family tourism effects to identify whether tourism's benefits disappear quickly or continue for more extended periods. Second, although the current study collected responses from both parents and children, future studies should consider the accuracy of the methods used to acquire data from several people in the same group. Third, while we applied several questionnaire translation methods to facilitate collecting responses from children, children may not have responded correctly to some questionnaire items. Thus, further investigation to establish the validity of the methods used to collect quantitative responses from children is necessary. Finally, future research should consider cultural differences associated with family tourism as the current findings only comprised data collected from East Asian (i.e., Japanese) families.

5. Conclusion

The current study applied a longitudinal design to examine the benefits of family tourism on parents' well-being and children's skill development. The results suggest that parents' well-being increased through family tourism, especially when parents experienced a memorable tourism experience. Moreover, children's generic skills also showed improvement through family tourism, which further increased parents' well-being. This result implies potential interrelationships among family tourism benefits experienced by children and parents. Our study provided further evidence of family tourism benefits, which may be helpful in the tourism industry. Considering multiple family members' perspectives (i.e., parents and children) is essential when planning and conducting more beneficial family tourism opportunities. Future research should consider focusing on different types of family tourism and different family group composition, which would enable researchers to deepen the knowledge for the benefits of family tourism.

6. Impact statement

The current study provides further evidence on the benefits of family tourism, which may be helpful for society. Our results showed that both parents and children experience positive benefits through a common family tourism experience, indicating that tourism providers and industries should consider children's perspectives to enhance the experiences for different family members. Moreover, understanding the psychological benefits of family tourism can provide an essential resource for tourism agencies and tourism destination management to customize experiences in family tourism. Our results indicated that memorable tourism experiences and children's skill development were positively associated with parents' well-being. Thus, the tourism industry could focus on the benefits of memorable tourism experiences and educational aspects for children, which could, in turn, enhance the parents' well-being. These results provide new insights that could foster family-centered tours or programs that focus on the psychological benefits of family tourism.

Author contributions

Erika Miyakawa: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal analysis; Investigation; Writing - Original Draft; Writing - Review & Editing. Takashi Oguchi: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal analysis; Investigation; Writing - Review & Editing; Supervision; Project administration; Funding acquisition.

Declaration of competing interest

This study was funded by H.I.S. Co., Ltd., whose employees helped the researchers collect data from the company's clients. However, H.I.S. Co., Ltd., was not involved in the analyses, interpretation, or manuscript writing for the current study.

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Erika Miyakawa is a post-doctoral research fellow in the College of Contemporary Psychology at Rikkyo University. Her research interests include the psychological benefits of vacation and leisure on well-being. Her research has been published in several journals, including the *International Journal of Tourism Research*.



Takashi Oguchi is a professor at the College of Contemporary Psychology at Rikkyo University. He has published more than 50 peer-reviewed papers on tourism, social psychology, and industrial/organizational psychology. His articles have appeared in numerous journals, including the *Annals of Tourism Research*, the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, and the *Tourism Management Perspectives*.