

【 論 文 】

**Exploring factors shaping the decision roles of family vacations:
A multi-level perspective**

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【Abstract】

The topics about decision-making process are critical to family vacation studies. However, typical research suggesting joint-decision style over simplified the settings in decision-making units. The purpose of this literature-oriented study is to induce factors that determine the distribution of decision roles and propose a summary demonstrating how the decision roles of family vacations are influenced. This provides interested parties guidelines for more empirical research. Sociocultural/ideological characteristics, household characteristics and travel characteristics are identified as antecedents for alternative styles of overall or sub-decisions of family vacation. This approach integrates the literature on family vacations and cross-cultural studies, provides a more comprehensive framework for gaining insight into the relevant phenomena and suggests opportunities for further development.

Keywords : Family vacation, Distribution of decision roles (DRD), Travel behavior, Family vacation decision making

1. Introduction

In the sphere of family tourism studies, family vacation decision making is a fundamental. The decision making consists of various sub-decisions such as travel destination and transportation arrangement (Jenkins, 1978; Nanda et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2010; Cheng et al., 2019). Typical research suggested that overall, family vacation decisions are made jointly by husband and wife (Rojas-de-Gracia & Alarcón-Urbistondo, 2018; Nanda et al., 2007). This locus of research ignored the role of children in family decision making and thus over simplified the settings of decision-making unit of family vacation (Rojas-de-Gracia & Alarcón-Urbistondo, 2018; Kang & Hsu, 2003; Bronner & de Hoog, 2008). Overall, compared to spouses, children in family vacations received less research attention (Carr, 2006; Nanda et al., 2007; van Raaij & Francken, 1984). Today's researchers are convinced that a complete decision-making unit of family vacations consists of husband, wife, and adolescent children (Chiang et al., 2021). In this sense, research on the distribution of decision role (hereafter referred to as DRD) in each sub-decision should consider three categories of decision makers: father, mother, and adolescent. Previous research provides only limited insight into the relative effects of different antecedents on DRD. Few findings were significant and the results were not consistent across studies (Lan & Su, 2021, in press). This interests the author to try to explore more about this issue and leave the findings and the implications to the researchers of family vacations in the future.

Following multi-level perspective, the issues associated with family vacation decision making are examined first in this study. Some of the essential factors involved in integrating considerations into the decision-making process are highlighted. A summary for understanding DRD in family vacations using the classic literature as the foundation is then proposed. This summary presents a comprehensive view of DRD in overall or sub-decisions of family vacation, which enables researchers to evaluate the association among the specific factors or characteristics simultaneously. This permits greater insight into

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the family vacation decision-making process. We identify the variables that should be examined and studied by the practitioner or the academician of DRD.

Our purpose is not to present propositions describing in detail the mechanics of forming a specific decision-making style, but rather to suggest a conceptual overview for DRD in the context of family vacation. This can be useful in designing empirical research and forming an approach for careful research results interpretation that conditions the researcher's sensitivity to the complexities of the phenomena he or she is studying.

2. Literature Review

2.1 DRD in the process of family vacation decisions

Family member's role and participation in family decisions regarding tourism or leisure products has recently been an emerging topic of tourism research (Nanda et al., 2007). On the basis of whole-family methodology, Yeoman and Schänzel (2012) found that the role of father, mother, and children are mutually connected by family power structure and participants' purpose for family travel (see Figure 1). Similarly, various approaches studied the behavior of adolescents that focus on their relative influence (Kozak & Karadag, 2012), possession of power (Liang, 2013), or dominance in relation to other members in family travel decisions (Nanda et al., 2007; Therkelsen, 2010). All these findings suggested that a complete family vacation decision unit should be a nuclear family which consists of father, mother, and adolescent children.

Overall, there are two primary deficiencies in previous research on family members' dominance of family vacation decision-making. First, typical research deemed family vacation purchase as a single-aspect decision. This approach

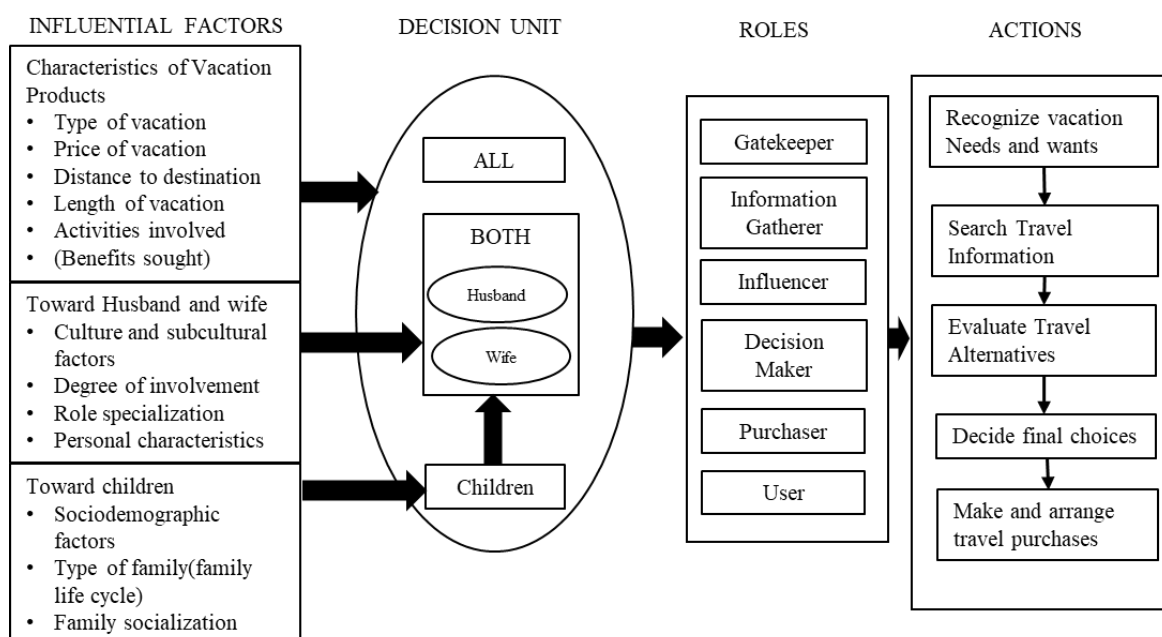


Figure 1: A Family Decision-Making Model of Vacation Purchases (Nanda et al., 2007, p.110)

oversimplified family vacation decision-making, which is a process involving multiple aspects of vacation products

(Kozak & Karadag, 2012; Kim et al., 2010; Therkelsen, 2010). These sub-decisions are determined before the family leaves home for the destination, that is, in the pre-vacation phase, or between leaving and returning home, that is, in the during-vacation phase (Spiers, 2017). Second, researchers who have discussed family vacation decisions via multiple sub-decisions typically focused on issues determined in either the pre-vacation or the during-vacation phase (Blichfeldt, 2008; Decrop, 2005). Results derived from different phases of these decision processes are less meaningful for comparisons among studies and even lead to misleading generalizations of the dynamics of family vacation decisions.

2.2 Globalization and DRD in of family vacation decisions

Tourism and leisure surveys on spousal roles in family purchase decisions typically have been conducted in a specific and constrained territorial or cultural context. In particular, globalizing markets of tourism and leisure raised the need for understanding differences of DRD in family vacation decisions across societies and how cultural values and socioeconomic features correlate with interactions among family members in the process (Su, 2011; Su & Wang, 2010).

In globalizing business environments, all issues of human life should be addressed in an integrated view of systems (Kabasakal et al., 2012). How social and cultural context shapes the process of family vacation decisions may account for inconsistent findings in the endeavour to clarify the distribution of spousal decision roles (Hofstede 2001; Nanda et al., 2007). To obtain results with cross-societal validity, a research design which investigates societies from well-defined cultural regions of the world is needed to construct a globalized sampling frame (Gupta et al., 2002). Moreover, in the practices of marketing family travel products, there has not been a globalized segmentation of societies and phases of the decision process based on parents' role distribution in family decision-making. Mapping profiles of segments globally to identify target markets is not only an imperative for international tourism business but also offers a remarkable payoff for planning the marketing of tourism products.

2.3 Linear categories of influential factors on DRD

Nanda and colleagues (2007) proposed a general model of family vacation decision-making (see Figure 2) which has been widely used for empirical research and model extension. The influential factors of decision unit are categorized into “characteristics of vacation products”, “toward husband and wife”, and “toward children”. This classification failed to incorporate societal or cultural features which are emphasized by research in globalizing trend. In addition, this list did not distinguish these factors in term of the level they are at, which failed to guide researcher to take into account the effect of the influential factors in order.

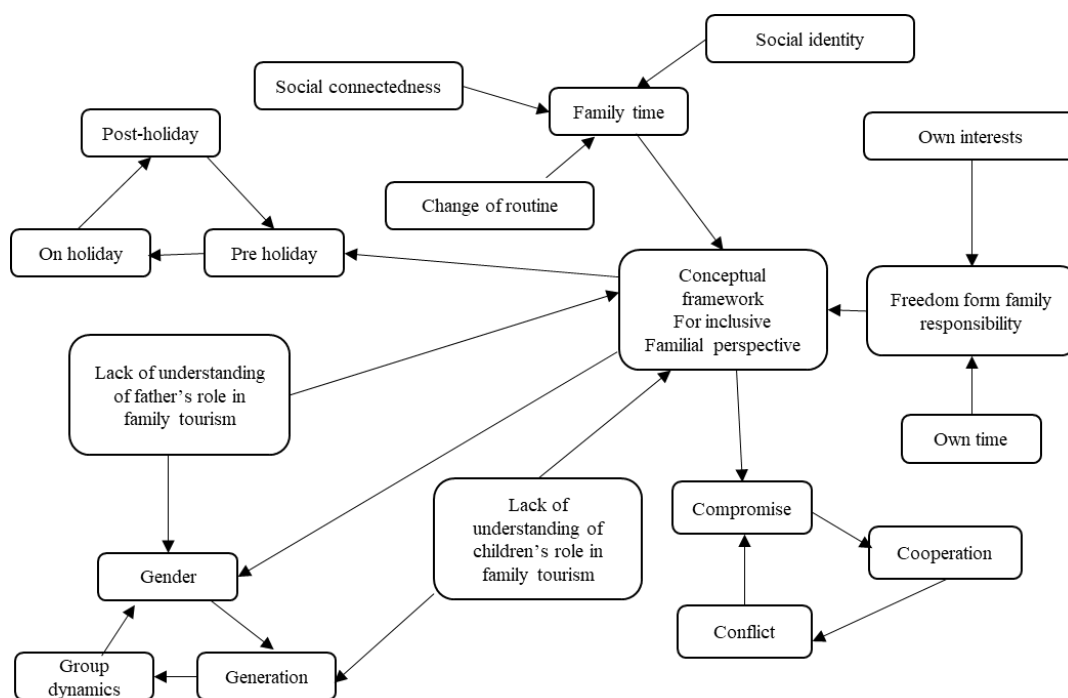


Figure 2: Conceptual Map of Inclusion of Fathers, Children and the Whole Family Group (Yeoman & Schänzel, 2012, p.180)

3. Reorganizing Influential Factors on DRD in Multi-Level Perspective

The fundamental assertion of the more comprehensive framework presented here is that a family vacation decision is a dynamic process carried out by individuals, in interaction with other people in a household, in the context of a culture or country. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to review in detail all of the works listed below, several key factors found in this article may facilitate understanding and developing this perspective (see Table 1). There are three primary categories of influential factors on DRD in terms of their level. They are (1) sociocultural/ideological characteristics – country/culture, cultural dimension, technology, development; (2) household characteristics - number of child in family, main financial source of the family, current stage in family life cycle, highest educational level of household head, occupation of household head; and (3) travel characteristics - status of travel, duration of the trip, travel group size. For countries which share similar historical, geopolitical, and geographical features, their sociocultural and ideological differences could lead to variations in DRD about family vacation (Hofstede et al., 2010; Su & Wang, 2010). Cultural and socioeconomic characteristics should be taken into consideration with travel- and household-related characteristics when we are exploring the DRD for family vacations (Cheng et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020)

On the other hand, previous research identified 15 sub-decisions which are included in overall family vacation decision (see Table 2). They are (1) time frame; (2) number of places to visit; (3) length of stay; (4) with own family or with others; (5) travel budget; (6) quiet surroundings versus lively ones; (7) destination; (8) sun-beach-water or not; (9) means of transportation; (10) having an active vacation or not; (11) accommodations; (12) doing cultural activities or not; (13) organization; (14) child-friendly or not; and (15) meeting others or not (Jenkins, 1978; Bronner & de Hoog, 2008). Previous

Table 2. Summary of Sub-decision

| Sub-decision | Time frame | Number of places to visit | Length of stay | With own family or with others | Travel budget | Quiet surroundings versus lively ones | Destination | Sun-beach-water or not | Means of transportation | Having an active vacation | Accommodations | Doing cultural activities or not | Organization | Child-friendly or not | Meeting others or not |
|--|------------|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Jenkins,1978 | | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | | | |
| Nanda et al., 2007 | | | | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | | √ | | | | |
| Ritchie & Filiatrault, 1980 | | | | | | | √ | | √ | | | | | | |
| Bronner & de Hoog, 2011b | | | | | | | √ | | √ | | | | | | |
| Kang et al., 2003 | | | | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | |
| Bronner & de Hoog, 2008 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Kim et al.,2010 | | | √ | | √ | | | | √ | | | | | | |
| Rojas-de-Gracia & Alarcón-Urbistondo, 2018 | | | √ | | | | | | √ | | | | | | |
| Rojas-de-Gracia & Alarcón-Urbistondo, 2019 | | | √ | | | | √ | | | | | | | | |
| Cheng et al., 2019 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Spiers, 2017 | | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | |

suggested that the decision making style of family vacation varied by sub-decisions (Bronner & de Hoog, 2008; Cheng et al.,2019; Chiang et al., 2021) because participants have competing needs and preference for each sub-decision (de Souza et al., 2020). In general, participants' involvement with the sub-decision shaped the DRD on each sub-decision and findings on the DRD are not comparable across sub-decisions.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The foregoing discussion indicates that the notion of DRD in family vacation is a more sophisticated phenomenon than the current literature suggests. In summary, the current research findings provide some important insights into the effective use of influential factors at different levels by tourism marketers to predict DRD in specific sub-decision. However, additional research is needed to verify and extend these findings through a comprehensive framework. Our framework portrays these factors as mutually existing in real systems. This study, when assessed beyond perceptual bias, has important implications for practice and research.

4.1. An overview of a framework

Integrating the influence literature led to the identification of four groups of variables composing a broader framework for analyzing DRD in sub-decisions of family vacation. As shown in Figure 3, each group represents a construct of the variables that is critical to the model explaining the associations among the determinants and consequences of DRD. These factors are travel-related factors, as the direct antecedents, household-related factors reflecting the decision units' settings, sociocultural/ideological factors that shape the behavioral orientation and communication norms of a country/culture, and the manifest DRD in each sub-decision. The results from this study are generally discussed by the relevant literature.

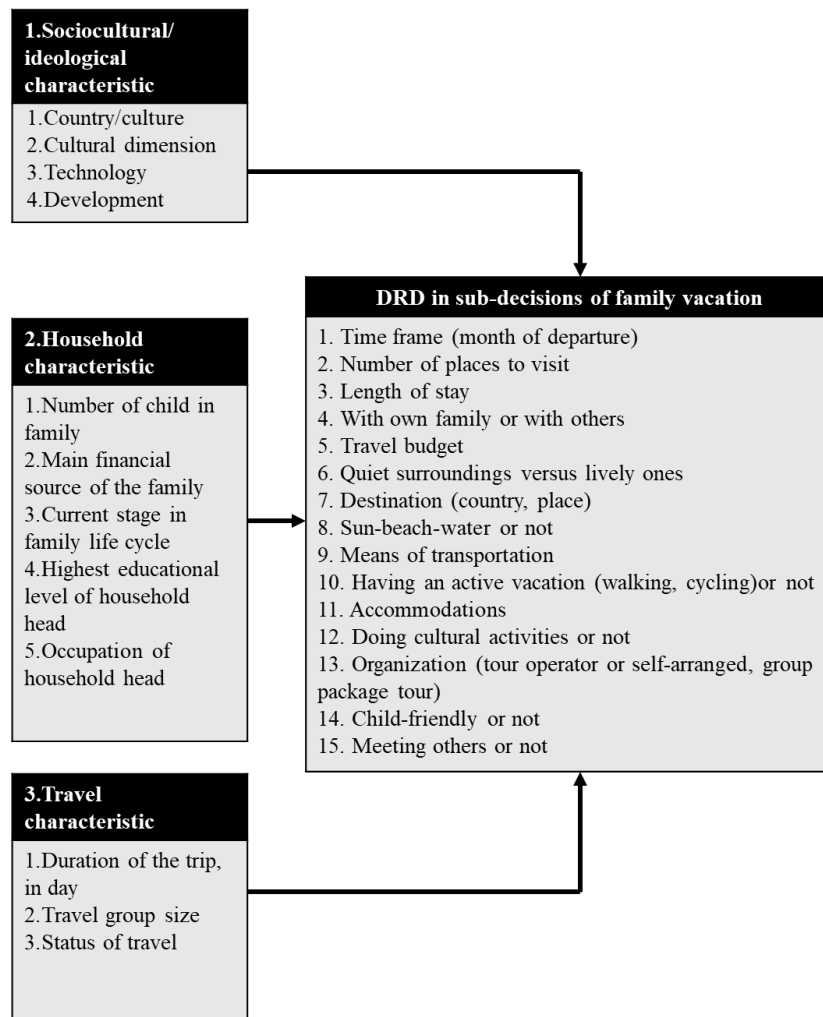


Figure 3. Integrated Framework of DRD in Family Vacation

4.2 Managerial implications

This integrated framework has implications for improving performance of tourism marketing across countries/cultures; because it is an advantage for a manager to know which member of family (i.e., father, mother, or child) has the highest likelihood of determining certain item(s) of family vacation. For example, East Asia has been attracting tourist businesses to invest more marketing resources due to the region's growing demand for family travels (Lehto et al., 2009). However, East Asia is featured with high Confucianism, which contributes to a parent-centered form of communication norms and social influence within family. Knowledge on family vacation decision making derived from individualistic cultures or countries is not an appropriate base for marketing managers to predict the role distribution in family decision making in that region. We are convinced by these conclusions that a manager's ability to choose the most appropriate target member to persuade or appeal to can be improved by training of marketing research. However, caution is needed in offering guidelines until the results are verified in follow-up studies due to the limitations of this study.

4.3 Limitations and research directions

In our view, the framework proposed in this study provides us a more comprehensive framework to explore some phenomena of family vacation decision making, and suggests opportunities for empirical research in the future. This will improve our knowledge substantially on the dynamics of family relations, and the quality of family leisure. We note that the framework suggested is tentative and developmental, so the preceding conclusions are to be viewed with some caution.

Previous research on family tourist behavior appeared to suggest an unclear locus in its designs. In the formulation of a research problem, we must consider seriously the units of analysis, that is, individual, family, or country. This suggested approach would facilitate the congruence of generalization and theorizing (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992).

Developing instruments with validity and reliability to measure the concepts concerned will be an essential methodological challenge. A questionnaire in various languages to be used cross-cultural survey should be cross-validated to secure measurement equivalence among the participant countries/cultures. Moreover, because family decision making process was not manipulated, causality can only be inferred from the results of the survey. The correlations may have been influenced by a variety of extraneous factors, such as reverse causality and respondent biases and attributions.

In summary, our efforts were exploratory and our expectations were modest. We should see this as an initial model, one that starts a new conversation and leads to future improvements. Such an attempt seems ambitious on the surface, but after years of work and drawing upon prior contribution, we are confident that it can be achieved.

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