

LEISURE ACTIVITIES' SELECTION AND MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

The recent academic interest in the youth population has shown a significant increase in research pertaining to leisure. Leisure is a vital lifestyle component to balance people's lifestyle. Students incline to gain benefits from leisure activities not only to reduce academic stress but also to motivate academic achievement. The objective of this study was to explain the characteristics and motivations of leisure activities' selection among high school students in Taiwan. A total of 380 questionnaires was collected from the target group. Descriptive statistics, *t*-test, chi-square test and cross comparison for surveyed students to the questionnaires were used to analyze the valid data by SPSS version 16.0. The results revealed that playing on Computer Internet, going to coffee or tea shops and listening music and broadcasts were the top three leisure activities. In addition, entertainment, exercise and leisure were the top three characteristics of leisure activities. Enjoyment, pressure relaxing and killing time were the top three motivation selections among the surveyed group. This research may suggest that the Taiwanese government should develop more appropriate leisure places for teenagers.

Key words: Leisure, Leisure Activities, High School Students

INTRODUCTION

According to data collected by Euromonitor International (2010), the Taiwanese have gradually begun again to spend money on leisure and entertainment activities due to the economic recovery from the global financial crisis. The Taiwanese lifestyle has changed from bare necessities to leisure activities, which have become an important part of daily life. The definitions of leisure are complex, varied and often contextual. Leisure mostly refers to free time, an activity, and/or a state of mind or experience and is related to developmental action (Parr and Lashua, 2005).

With respect to the youth population, the Taiwanese Government had implemented an employment law regarding a two-day weekend, and Saturday off gives teenagers more free

time out of school to have leisure activities. As youths are more energetic, and most of them cannot endure to stay at home, sometimes young people's inappropriate behaviors during their leisure activities can commit crimes at leisure places. Leisure is characterized as specific types of activities (e.g., attending a movie); as time free from obligations (e.g., the amount of time not spent in paid employment and taking care of home, family and oneself); as meaningful and satisfying experiences (e.g., feelings of satisfaction, fun, excitement and/or belonging); or as some combinations of activities, time and experiences (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997). The higher quality of leisure lives, the healthier teenagers for our society.

Motivations for people to have leisure activities usually correspond to the quality of leisure lives. The motives propose to explain why people engaging in these types of activities have ranged from the abnormal and destructive to those that bring out the best in people (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997). Pelletier et al. (1996) have shown that motivations of leisure activities can be accounted for by three intrinsic factors—stimulation, accomplishment and the acquisition of knowledge; three extrinsic factors—social development, the constructive use of free-time and avoidance of doing something else; and another factor “motivation” to account for activities which appear to be undertaken without any sense of purpose or intent.

The theory of flow by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1980) were proposed as theoretical background in order to reveal teenagers' leisure activities and their motivations. The objective of this research was to explore and describe the characteristics and motivations of leisure activities' selection among teenagers at National Agriculture Senior High School, Taichung, Taiwan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent academic interest in the youth population has shown a significant increase in research pertaining to leisure. For example, Carr and Axelsen (2009) claimed that there is an extensive literature about the leisure choices of young people. In reference to the study by Mannell and Kleiber (1997), leisure is a vital lifestyle component, and that lifestyle balance people seem to have difficulty achieving. Therefore, students incline to gain benefits from leisure activities such as reducing academic stress (Misra and McKean, 2000) and motivating academic achievement (Bergin, 1992).

To understand and explain high school teenagers' leisure motivations and activities' selection, it is necessary to employ the grounded theory. Hence, the two theories, the theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1980; 1985) were chosen because they have been widely used and acceptable among leisure motivation theories.

Theory of flow

The theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) examined a variety of activities that appear to be highly enjoyable and intrinsically motivated, such as artistic creativity, work expected to

provide great amounts of satisfaction such as composing music and teaching, and serious leisure activities like rock climbing, chess and dance. Individuals experience optimal flow when their perceptions of what challenges and skills are equally balanced. Challenge is caused by external conditions, and the ability to handle them contributes to the "flow" experienced by the participant, and hence the degree of satisfaction gained; whereas skill comprises a function of innate ability, experience and learning. Ryan (1991; 1997) argued that the concept of "flow" can also be used in leisure studies to explain various behaviors and affective outcomes when a tourist is faced with a range of challenges that arise from being in a new place, or when faced with the unfamiliar.

Self-determination theory

According to Deci and Ryan (1980; 1985), self-determination theory is an extension of cognitive evaluation theory, which proposes that human motivation is motivated by three psychological needs: 1) autonomy means the need to initiate and regulate an individual's behavior; 2) competence refers to the need to produce and understand production of the behavioral outcomes; and 3) relatedness is the need to maintain satisfactory relationships with others and with the social order in general. Self-determination theory argues that individuals can be, to a different extent, intrinsically motivated, which reflects a more internalized orientation, extrinsically motivated which reflects an underlying attitude of pressure and external control, and motivated toward an activity. Intrinsic motivation reflects situations in which individuals perform an activity and experience fun, learn new things, or develop their competencies. When individuals are intrinsically motivated, they perform an activity for their own sakes. In contrast, extrinsic motivation describes situations in which individuals perform an activity as a means of achieving certain desirable outcomes. Their outcomes can be diverse, reflecting the multidimensional nature of extrinsic motivation. For instance, when an individual participates in activities without pressure, they are fulfilling the need for autonomy. When individuals participate at a challenging skill level, they will develop ability and confidence that eventually creates a state of intrinsic motivation—a key outcome of self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected in 2010 from subjects at National Taichung Agricultural Senior High School, located in the middle of Taiwan. Day School and Night School are two systems at this school. Most students of the Day School are teenagers and full-time students, and the majority of Night School students is older and has jobs during the daytime. Therefore, students of two different school systems were also considered as a factor to influence the characteristics and motivations of leisure activities selected. Three hundred eighty questionnaires were valid and usable, yielding 99.48% of response rate. Descriptive statistics, *t*-test, chi-square test and cross comparison for surveyed students to the questionnaires were used to analyze data by SPSS version 16.0. The results of this study are as follows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the demography of valid samples collected from surveyed students. There were 196 male students, 182 female students, and two missing data. Their ages were from fifteen to nineteen years old. Data from 220 students of Day School, and 160 students of Night School were collected.

Table 2 summarizes the surveyed teenagers' top five leisure activities. Listening to music and broadcasts, playing on Computer Internet, and mountain hiking were the top three leisure activities. If teenagers own a portable radio or MP3 player, they can listen to music and broadcasts as they wish. Although most people own at least one computer or laptop nowadays, Computer Internet Coffee Shops are still popular for teenagers. This is because they can play with Computer Internet for convenience. Regarding these results, the convenience of doing activities is the reason for teenagers to spend their free time. Ranking No. 3 to No. 6 is considered as outdoor activities, they reflect that teenagers are energetic to relax themselves.

The characteristics of teenagers' favorite leisure activities were listed in Table 3, and their leisure motivations were summarized in Table 4. Favorite leisure activities and their leisure motivations were multiple chosen by surveyed students. Entertainment, exercise and leisure were the top three characteristics of leisure activity selection among surveyed teenagers (Table 3). Enjoyment, pressure relaxing, and killing time were the top three motivations for leisure activity selection among surveyed ones (Table 4).

Additionally, there were no significant different characteristics and motivations of leisure activity selection among surveyed teenagers between Day School and Night School. The results from Table 3 corresponded to Table 4. There was 43.7% of total valid samples (N = 166) who selected leisure activities referring to exercise characteristics. However, only 3.2% of total valid samples (N = 12) samples selected motivations of leisure activities referring to health (Table 4).

Most students at Day School of National Taichung Agricultural Senior High School would like to go to colleges or universities after graduation, and most Night School students have part-time jobs during day time. They usually endure lots of pressure. Therefore, whenever they have free time, motivations of leisure activities of most surveyed teenagers are enjoyment or relaxing pressure instead of health. Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) may correlate to the characteristics No.4 (challenge) and No.5 (knowledge). Due to limitations of free time, surveyed student would like to get more knowledge or to improve their skills through leisure activities.

Table 5 is the cross tabulation of teenagers' motivations of leisure activities among school systems and grades. There were different characteristics of students between Day and Night schools, and therefore, school system was considered as a factor to analyze data. Furthermore, motivations of leisure activities were multiple chosen by surveyed students. To

reduce complexity of cross comparison, only surveyed students' first choice for motivations of leisure activities was selected. Only the second grade surveyed students had significant difference between Day and Night schools (P-value of Chi-square test = $0.029 < \alpha = 0.05$). Students of the first grade may have just entered this school, and they usually need to pay more attention to the academics rather than leisure. Moreover, students of the third grade need prepare to enter colleges or universities after graduation, so they may have more pressure. Therefore, only the second grade students select killing time as their top one motivation of leisure activities. Both of the second grade surveyed students of Day School and Night School selected killing time as the top one motivation of leisure activity. However, the second grade surveyed students of Day school (twenty-night samples) was significantly higher than that of Night school (seventeen samples) (P-value of t-test = $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$). Killing time as motivation of leisure activity may refer to boring lives for surveyed students. Most students of Day School are full-time students, and they may feel pressure from their studies. Besides school systems, working conditions may be the significant factor to influence motivation of leisure activity.

As shown in Table 6, 206 samples (54.4%) selected leisure activities on their own desires, 84 samples (22.2%) selected friends' desires, 38 samples (10%) selected classmates' desires, and 26 samples (6.9%) selected family's desires. Teenagers' own desires was ranked as the No.1 reason to join leisure activities, and this result can correspond to the phenomenon that teenagers usually have strong desires to undertake everything by themselves. Friends' and classmates' desires were graded as the No.2 and No.3 reasons, which reflected that peer pressure is also another factor to influence teenagers to choose leisure activities. Family's desires are the fourth reason to join activities, and hence this implies that teenagers still care about their family. This can correlate to the result that family get-together reunion time was the No.6 motivation of leisure activities for teenagers (Table 4). Nowadays, family members are always too busy to get together. Weekends or holidays are the only time for family reunion. Although family's desires are not ranked the first choice for teenager's motivation, this factor presents a significant motivation for teenagers to join leisure activities.

Table 7 is the cross tabulation of teenagers' leisure motivations among school systems and levels. Although there were no significant differences for all grades surveyed students between Day School and Night School, surveyed students' own desires were also the ranked as No.1 for all three grades and school systems.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the result, listening to music and broadcasts, playing on computer Internet, and mountain hiking were the top three leisure activities. As they can make friends and get more new video game quickly, most teenagers prefer playing on Computer Internet at Computer Internet Coffee Shops. Varieties of people getting together usually induce lots of crimes at Computer Internet Coffee Shops. Therefore, many parents prohibit their children to go to Computer Internet Coffee Shop but this provokes those teenagers cheat on their parents instead. Recently, parents place a request to the government to regulate the location of

Computer Internet Coffee Shops because teenagers always stay in Computer Internet Coffee Shops for a long time resulting in their unhealthy physical conditions. Furthermore, teenagers have limitations of ability to select the information on the Internet, and it sometimes causes teenagers' inappropriate behaviors to influence their mental health.

Surveyed students' own desire, friends' and classmate' desires were the top three reasons for leisure activity selection among surveyed ones. Because teenagers like to ask more freedom to do things for themselves, parents should try to make a friend with their child instead of controlling them. If teenagers like to join leisure activities with parents more than before, teenagers' inappropriate behaviors to cause crimes or the numbers of mental disorder teenagers may decrease soon. In addition, many academic pressures are the major problem for the majority of teenagers in Taiwan. It may suggest that the Taiwanese government should plan good evaluation methods for entering high schools, colleges and universities. Saturday off only can resolve parts of academic pressures for teenagers. It is important for the government to develop more appropriate leisure places for teenagers. As a result, this would be would be the best way to increase the mental and physical health of teenagers in Taiwan.

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TABLES

Table 1: The demography of valid samples

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	196	51.6%
	Female	182	47.9%
	Missing	2	0.5%
	Total	378	100%
Age	15 years old	17	4.5 %
	16 years old	79	20.8 %
	17 years old	152	40.0 %
	18 years old	100	26.3 %
	19 years old	32	8.4 %
	Total	380	100 %
Grade	The first grade	138	36.6 %
	The second grade	123	32.4 %
	The third grade	119	31.4 %
	Total	380	100 %
School System	Day school	220	52.9 %
	Night School	160	42.1 %
	Total	380	100 %

Table 2: The teenagers' top ten leisure activities

Ranking	Leisure activities	Selected people number	Selected people number/ 380 people
No.1	Listening to music and broadcasts	170	44.7%
No.2	Playing on Computer Internet	143	37.6%
No.3	Mountain hiking	127	33.4%
No.4	Window shopping	127	33.4%
No.5	Ball exercise	113	29.7%
No.6	Going to leisure farm	112	29.5%
No.7	Reading	107	28.2%
No.8	Watching movies	86	22.6%
No.9	Outing at nature area	81	28.2%
No.10	Going to tea shops	75	22.6%

Table 3: The characteristics of teenagers' favor leisure activities

Ranking	Leisure activity	Selected people number	Selected people number/ 380 people
No.1	Entertainment	302	79.5 %
No.2	Exercise	166	43.7 %
No.3	Leisure	202	53.2 %
No.4	Challenge	90	23.7 %
No.5	Knowledge	45	11.8 %
No.6	Volunteering service	11	2.9 %

Table 4: The motivation of leisure activities

Ranking	Motivation of leisure activity	Selected people number	Selected people number/ 380 people
No.1	Enjoyment	268	70.5%
No.2	Pressure relaxing	237	62.4%
No.3	Killing time	171	45.0%
No.4	Making friends	88	23.2%
No.5	Learning a skill	33	8.7%
No.6	Family reunion time	30	7.9%
No.7	Health	12	3.2%
No.8	Beauty	10	2.6%

Table 5: Teenagers' motivations of leisure activities among school systems and grades (Surveyed samples ranking as No.1)

	Motivation of leisure activity	Day school		Night school		Total		P-value
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
The First Grade	Making friends	18	23.7	18	29.0	36	26.1	0.742
	Health	1	1.3	1	1.6	2	1.4	
	Beauty	3	3.9	1	1.6	4	2.9	
	Killing time	25	32.9	18	29.0	43	31.2	
	Learning a skill	2	2.65	1	1.6	3	2.2	
	Family reunion time	1	1.3	2	3.2	3	2.2	
	Pressure relaxing	17	22.4	9	14.5	26	18.8	
	Enjoyment	9	11.8	12	19.4	21	15.2	
	Total	76	100.	62	100.0	138	100.0	
The Second Grade	Making friends	16	21.9	11	22.0	27	22.0	0.029*
	Health	4	5.5	0	0.0	4	3.3	
	Beauty	1	1.4	0	0.0	1	0.8	
	Killing time	29	39.7	17	34.0	46	37.4	
	Learning a skill	4	5.5	1	2.0	5	4.1	
	Family reunion time	1	1.4	5	10.0	6	4.9	
	Pressure relaxing	13	17.8	5	10.0	18	14.6	
	Enjoyment	5	6.8	11	22.0	16	13.0	
	Total	73	100.0	50	100.0	123	100.0	
The Third Grade	Making friends	12	16.9	10	20.8	22	18.5	0.117
	Health	5	7.0	2	4.2	7	5.9	
	Killing time	32	45.1	12	25.0	44	37.0	
	Learning a skill	2	2.8	2	4.25	4	3.4	
	Family reunion time	5	7.0	1	2.1	6	5.0	
	Pressure relaxing	6	8.5	9	18.8	9	18.8	
	Enjoyment	9	12.7	12	25.0	12	25.0	
	Total	71	100.0	48	100	119	100.0	

*P<0.05 , **P<0.01, ***P<0.001

Table 6. The motivation of joining leisure activities

Ranking	The motivation of joining leisure activities	Selected people number	Selected people number/ 380 people
No.1	Surveyed student's own desire	206	54.4 %
No.2	Friends' desires	84	22.2 %
No.3	Classmates' desires	38	10.0 %
No.4	Family's desires	26	6.9 %
No.5	Being aware of many people ever going there.	23	6.1 %
No.6	Being aware of none ever going there.	1	0.3 %
	Missing data	1	0.3 %
	Total	380	100 %

Table7.The motivation of joining leisure activities between Day school and Night school

	The motivation of joining leisure activities	Day school		Night school		Total counts		P-value
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
The first grade	Family's desires	3	3.9	3	4.8	6	4.3	0.71
	Being aware of many people ever going there.	5	6.6	4	6.5	9	6.5	
	Classmates' desires	14	18.4	3	4.8	17	12.3	
	Friend's desires	11	14.5	18	29.0	29	21.0	
	Surveyed students' own desires	43	56.6	34	54.8	77	55.8	
	Being aware of none ever going there.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	Total	76	100.0	62	100.0	138	100.0	

The Second Grade	Family's desires	5	6.8	5	10.0	10	8.1	0.64
	Being aware of many people ever going there.	5	6.8	5	10.0	10	8.1	
	Classmates' desires	9	12.3	0	0.0	9	7.3	
	Friend's desires	12	16.4	15	30.0	27	22.0	
	Surveyed students' own desires	41	56.2	24	48.0	65	52.8	
	Being aware of none ever going there.	1	1.4	0	0.0	1	0.8	
	Total	73	100.0	49	100.0	122	100.0	
The third Grade	Family's desires	7	10.0	3	6.3	10	8.5	0.92
	Being aware of many people ever going there.	0	0.0	4	8.3	4	3.4	
	Classmates' desires	9	12.9	3	6.3	12	10.2	
	Friend's desires	15	21.4	13	27.1	28	23.7	
	Surveyed students' own desires	39	55.7	25	52.1	64	54.2	
	Being aware of none ever going there.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	Total	70	100.0	48	100.0	118	100.0	

*P<0.05 , **P<0.01, ***P<0.001