

Chapter 14

Impacts of Family Tourism on Families' Quality of Life – Differences According to the Family Economic Profile



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Abstract Tourism plays a significant role in our lives and is increasingly becoming associated with Quality of Life (QOL). Tourism offers opportunities to explore new environments, participate in new activities and to meet people as well as relax. While the effects of tourism on the QOL of individuals are nowadays recognized, the effects of family tourism upon families' QOL are relatively blurred. This neglect is more worrying insofar as it is known that family tourism represents a significant share in the tourism market globally. This study aims to overcome this gap by analysing the effects of family tourism on some dimensions of families' QOL, using survey data collected from a sample of Portuguese families (N = 825). Moreover, we explore whether the impacts of family tourism on families' QOL vary across the economic profile of families. This study is of utmost relevance given that families with low income represent a significant share of the Portuguese population nowadays. The results reveal significant effects of family tourism on family cohesion and on the improvement of families' QOL. The effects differ between families, with families with scarce economic resources being those that feel the effects with greater intensity. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the implications of the results for the design of family tourism experiences and also identifying paths for future research.

Keywords Family tourism · Impacts · Family's QOL · Low income families

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14.1 Introduction

Taking a holiday has become an important and expected part of life for most citizens. This importance of holidays and travel for the well-being of individuals has been formally accepted since 1948 with the recognition by the United Nations of vacations as a basic human right (article 24). This importance was reiterated by some governments, who over the years have been recognizing the right to paid leave (Hall and Brown 2006). There is a belief that the benefits that holidays bring are plentiful. Tourism offers opportunities to explore new environments and engage in new situations. When the tourism activity occurs in a family, taking a holiday can also benefit the family as a whole. The in-family experience tends to increase the sense of belonging and identification among its members, contributing to a shared vision of the world and new experiences. Indeed, family tourism nowadays accounts for a significant share of tourism flows (Gram 2005; Obrador 2012; Small 2008). In spite of this, there are few empirical studies about the consequences of tourism for the tourists (Alexander et al. 2010), with even fewer studies existing which examine the effects of family tourism, both for individuals and for families (Lima et al. 2012; Minnaert et al. 2009).

This study, based upon survey data collected from a sample of Portuguese families ($N = 825$), aims to overcome the aforementioned gap by analysing the effects of family tourism on families' Quality of Life (QOL) and how they differ across families' economic status. For those on a low income, a holiday is often far from reach and not something they would even be able to consider. Low-income families are often those most in need of a holiday, yet they are the least likely group to take one.

Due to the economic developments in the last decade or so, low income families nowadays represent a significant share of the population – 24.5% of the EU-28 population was living in households facing poverty or social exclusion in 2013 (Eurostat 2015). In Portugal in 2012, the poverty risk rate, after social transfers, of families with dependent children rose to 22.2% (INE 2014a). In 2013, the material deprivation rate in this country stood at 25.5% and 59.8% of families were financially unable to afford a week's annual holiday away from home (INE 2014b). Additionally, the fact that there are no studies on the effects of family tourism and on the different effects that family tourism may have on the Portuguese families' QOL was another foundation for the choice of this territory as the empirical context of this research.

In the following section a review the background literature on family, QOL and tourism, and also on the effects of family tourism on family QOL, identifying factors likely to influence those effects will be presented. In the Sect. 14.3 the methodology adopted will be described. The results are presented and discussed in Sect. 14.4. The results confirm the relevance of family holidays for the family's QOL and indicate the existence of the effects of family tourism on families' QOL, as well as the fact that these effects differ according to the economic status of the families. Sect. 14.5 concludes the article, discussing some implications of the results and identifying possible paths for future research.

14.2 Family Tourism and Its Effects on QOL

Family is a structuring social group in society because of its role as a space for the individual personal and social construction (Agate et al. 2007; Alarcão and Relvas 2002; Howard 2012). Despite the changes which the family has suffered in recent decades and the growing number of types of family that differ from the traditional concept of family, the structuring role of family on society maintains its importance. Families persist as dynamic entities, with their own identity, composed of members connected by biological and/or emotional bonds, coexisting for a certain period of time during which they build a life story that is unique and unrepeatably (Agate et al. 2007; Alarcão and Relvas 2002). The family is also a unit of analysis of great relevance for tourism. A significant part of tourism experiences occur as a family (Gram 2005). As Gram (2005: 6) stated, “the family is a unit of individuals who seek experiences together”. Obrador (2012) and Small (2008) point out that, though family is the main segment for consuming many tourism products, tourism research has rarely considered family tourism (parents and children together).

Schanzel et al. (2012) point out three-dimensional dynamics that must be understood when studying the family as a tourist segment: the family is a social group that brings together dynamics between genders, generations and between different people. From the studies undertaken by Agate et al. (2007), Fu et al. (2014), Lehto et al. (2009), Minnaert et al. (2009), Obrador (2012) and Schänzel and Smith (2014), it is possible to conclude that the common assumption is that family vacations happen when at least one of the parents and children travel together for leisure purposes. Based on these definitions, the present study defines family tourism as the leisure travel, for a minimum of 4 nights away from home (EC 1987; Hazel 2005; UNWTO 2008), of a group constituted by at least one of the parents (or legal guardians) and their children (or the children in their care). Children were considered to be individuals under 18 years old.

As Richards (1999) argues, holidays attenuate two constraints of everyday life – time and place, creating conditions for individuals to engage in their personal and social fulfilment, potentially enhancing their subjective well-being and QOL (Genç 2012).

Regarding the concept of QOL, there is no consensual definition (Andereck and Nuaupane 2011; Dolnicar et al. 2013; Eusébio and Carneiro 2014). The World Health Organization QOL (WHOQOL) Group (The WHOQOL Group 1994: 29) suggests that this construct is a “measure of the individuals’ perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”.

Confirming the importance of leisure activities, such as tourism, for the family, several studies in the leisure field concluded that there are very positive effects for the family (satisfaction, functioning and family stability) as a result of family leisure activities (Agate et al. 2007). Goeldner and Ritchie (2009) report that tourist experiences have a profound effect on individuals and on society, because these experiences are often among the most striking memories of people’s lives. Shaw et al. (2008) consider that family holidays are important shared experiences that become

family memories. Obrador (2012) states that, by allowing the spatial mobilization of the feeling of “being at home”, family holidays facilitate authentic relationships in the family. Haldrup and Larsen (2003) add that family holidays support and stabilize family relations and bonds, which otherwise could turn out to be poor. These findings suggest the importance that family tourism can have for improving the QOL of families.

Some literature on tourism marketing focuses on the benefits of tourism activities (e.g., Pesonen et al. 2011). However, most of these studies are related to the benefits sought and there are a very limited number of studies analysing the obtained benefits (Alexander et al. 2010). Alexander et al. (2010), Ballantyne et al. (2011), Chon (1999), Genç (2012), Gilbert and Abdullah (2004), Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010), Minnaert (2006), Minnaert et al. (2009), Neal et al. (1999), Richards (1999) and Smith and Hughes (1999) are examples of studies about the effects of tourism practice for the visitors. These studies conclude that access to vacation away from the usual place of residence contributes to the personal and social development of individuals for physical and psychological well-being, QOL and relief from daily pressures. However, Gram (2005) and Lehto et al. (2009) recognized the existence of a gap in the literature on the effects of family tourism on the family.

In their review, Lima et al. (2012) identified 20 empirical studies on the effects of tourism for participants. These studies use two main units of analysis: the effects of tourism on individuals and the effects of tourism on the family, with the individual being the most analysed unit. Only 7 studies out of 20 discuss the effects of tourism for families (Gram 2005; Lehto et al. 2009; McCabe et al. 2010; Minnaert et al. 2009; Minnaert 2006, 2012; Smith and Hughes 1999).

Also, despite the growing number of studies examining the benefits derived from the practice of tourist activities for tourists and examining the relation between tourism and QOL, little research has been conducted specifically on the effects of tourism on the QOL of families (Gram 2005; Hazel 2005; Schänzel et al. 2005). The first empirical study on the benefits of tourism for families identified in this research is the notable contribution of Smith and Hughes (1999). Six more years passed until a new study was published on the matter. Additionally, although a significant number of studies recognized that “leisure life” is an important life domain affecting overall QOL, the concrete impact of a specific type of tourism (family tourism) on QOL is much less studied.

Uysal et al. (2016) mentioned that in the literature both objective and subjective indicators have been used to analyse the effect of tourism on QOL. However, there is a predominance of studies using subjective indicators. Several scales have been adopted for assessing QOL, such as comprehensive QOL scales, health-related or multicultural QOL indexes or the WHOQOL scales (e.g. Chen and Yao 2010; Eusébio and Carneiro 2011; Skevington et al. 2004). So, similarly to what happens in the concept of QOL, there is still no consensual group of indicators to assess QOL. The WHOQOL-BREF (one short version of the WHOQOL) is one of the scales most frequently used for the assessment of QOL and Eusébio and Carneiro (2011, 2014) argue that it should be more extensively tested and used in the area of tourism.

Table 14.1 Effects of tourism on family QOL

Domain	Type of effect	Studies that identify the effect
Overall QOL	Improvement	Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010), Minnaert (2006, 2012), Minnaert et al. (2009), and Smith and Hughes (1999)
Health (mental and/or physical)	Improvement	Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010), and Smith and Hughes (1999)
	Deterioration	Minnaert (2012) and Smith and Hughes (1999)
Environment	Increased information access ^a	McCabe et al. (2010)
	Deterioration in the financial resources ^a	Smith and Hughes (1999)
Family relationship	Increased family cohesion/bonding	Gram (2005), Lehto et al. (2009), Minnaert (2006, 2012), and Smith and Hughes (1999)
	Formation of good memories (quality and shared time)	Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010), and Smith and Hughes (1999)
	Quality time dependent on the children's behaviour	Gram (2005)
	Increased feeling of sharing/togetherness dependent on the intensity	Gram (2005)
	Increased feeling of sharing/togetherness	Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010), Minnaert (2006, 2012), and Minnaert et al. (2009)

Legend: ^aEffects on low-income families

Table 14.1 summarises the conclusions from empirical studies regarding the main effects of tourism on families' QOL. These effects can be grouped in Overall QOL and QOL domains. The *Health* domain includes effects on the families' physical and mental health (mainly the reduction of stress associated with breaking stressful routines, but also an increased level of stress from "practical problems" – particularly detected in families inexperienced in travel). The *Environment* domain includes an increased access to information and negative effects on the family's financial situation, in some cases economically disadvantaged families. *Family relationships* includes effects of holidays on family cohesion/bonding (strengthening family bonds), on the good memories that the holiday provides as a result of the quality and shared time and on the opportunities for sharing moments and doing things together (Table 14.1).

Family vacations provide a temporary disconnection of the family from its usual work or other social networks, which usually represents a new configuration of mental and physical space among family members (Lehto et al. 2009). Consequently, Table 14.1 shows that the majority of studies report positive effects of tourism on families' QOL and that the main benefits from tourism observed on families' QOL, besides the general improvement in the overall QOL, are related to family interaction and cohesion/bonding, improvement of the relationship with children (family relationship domain) and escape from routine and stressful daily routine (health

domain). However, very few studies raise concerns over potential negative effects from tourism, which should not be neglected in research and practice. In this line of thought, Gram (2005) draws attention to the fact that family holidays may contribute to family members feeling tired of each other as a result of an excessive time spent together and the behaviour of the children during the holidays.

Considering special types of families, such as economically and/or socially disadvantaged ones, other benefits related with the Environment domain of QOL (particularly the increased access to information) appear to be important and also the strengthening of family bonds appears as an important aspect to consider (Minnaert et al. 2009; Smith and Hughes 1999).

Dolnicar et al. (2012) and Moscardo (2009) argue that the intensity and type of tourism effects are different according to the travel behaviour and certain personal and social characteristics of the individuals. Uysal et al. (2016) also concluded, from the literature review made, that the impact of tourism experience on QOL depends on life cycles and other background variables (cultural proximity, demographics or the experience context) that potentially influence the importance of travel. Several authors (e.g. Alegre et al. 2010; Hall and Brown 2006; Haukeland 1990) concluded that low income is one of the major determinants of tourism participation.

The relevance of analysing the differing effects of tourism in families' QOL, according to families' economic status, increases in a context of economic crisis like the one that has existed in Europe since 2008, particularly in Portugal, with austerity measures and the disposable income of many families having decreased significantly, aggravating this constraint to tourism participation. As mentioned above, when considering special types of families, such as the economically and/or socially disadvantaged ones, the main benefits that tourism can bring to families in terms of promoting access to information and the possible strengthening of family bonds, are extremely important aspects to consider (Minnaert et al. 2009; Smith and Hughes 1999). This importance stems from the fact that information and family socialization is strongly structuring the reintegration of families in society and power bases to promote changes in attitudes that perpetuate a situation of social exclusion.

McCabe et al. (2010) examined the relationship between well-being, QOL and family holiday participation among low-income families in the UK. The results of this study demonstrated that the impact of the family holiday on family relationships and on the quality time spent together, having fun, is significant and that the emotional well-being factors, related to QOL issues, were more important than situational factors affecting families. This result seems to be related to the result obtained by Smith and Hughes (1999), showing that disadvantaged groups feel the effects of tourism participation with greater intensity. It can then be concluded that income can be a differentiating and determining variable in terms of families' tourist practices and that the effects of family tourism on families' QOL can differ according to the economic profile of the families.

In this study, it is considered that the effects of family tourism depend on several variables, in which the features of the particular experience during a family holiday

may assume great importance, and are differentiated according to socio-demographic and economic characteristics of families. It is believed also that these factors will, in turn, influence the overall satisfaction of individuals with their QOL (improving life satisfaction and satisfaction with the holidays). Therefore, the main research question of this study is: Are the effects of family tourism on family QOL more intense for low-income families?

14.3 Methodology

14.3.1 Objectives/Aims

In order to extend the knowledge regarding the effects of family tourism on QOL, the aims of this chapter are to: (i) analyse the effects of family tourism in some domains of families' QOL and (ii) identify if there are statistical differences in the impact of family tourism on families' QOL according to the economic profile of the families. To accomplish these objectives a sample of Portuguese families were analysed. As mentioned above, in this research, similarly to McCabe et al. (2010), an adapted version of the WHOQOL-BREF scale was used to measure the impact that family holidays have on families' QOL. In this scale, two approaches are used to measure QOL: (i) overall QOL (through overall satisfaction with life) and (ii) several domains of QOL (e.g. health, social relationships and environment).

14.3.2 Data Collection

A survey was carried out to collect data from a sample of Portuguese families ($N = 825$). The population of the study is composed by families living in the Central Region of Portugal. In 2014, 21.8% of the resident population in Portugal lived in the Central Region (INE 2015). The importance of tourism and the challenges related to the QOL of the population, emphasized by the present economic situation, make Portugal an ideal test bed for this study.

The population defined for this study was Portuguese families with at least one child aged between 6 and 17 years old and with different socio-economic characteristics, resident in the Central Region of Portugal. Since it was not possible to survey all the families residing in this region, a multi-step cluster-sampling approach was undertaken. The choice of this sampling technique was based not only on the objectives of the study, but also on the characteristics of the population under study (large and dispersed, in spatial terms). The sample included households from municipalities of inland and of coastal areas, regions with higher levels of economic development (coastal areas) and regions currently facing demographic and economic problems (inland regions).

In the first phase, two NUTS III of the Central Region – Cova da Beira (inland) and Baixo Vouga (coastal) – were selected, within which two municipalities were randomly selected – Covilhã, Fundão, Aveiro and Ílhavo. Once the four municipalities were selected, a Group of schools¹ was randomly chosen within each municipality and within each Group of schools, two classes of each year of education (from 1st year to 12th grade) were randomly selected. In each selected class, questionnaires were distributed to all students so they could ask their parents or legal guardians to fill it in.

The distribution of questionnaires to the schools took about 2 months (between April to June 2014) and 2077 questionnaires were distributed to be filled in by the parents or legal guardians of the students. 825 questionnaires were returned completed and were considered, which represents a response rate of around 40%.

14.3.2.1 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire included questions to measure the travel experience of those interviewed (number of family tourism trips undertaken in the last 4 years), questions regarding the last family holidays (type of destination, travel group, satisfaction with travel experience and tourists' perception of tourism impacts on family's QOL), and questions related to the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and the family. The literature review made it possible to support variables and for items to be included in questionnaires to operationalize the constructs related to the effects of family holidays on their QOL (Table 14.2). The respondents had to reply using a scale from 1 – “totally disagree” to 7 – “totally agree”.

In order to analyse the validity and reliability of the questionnaire used in this research, a number of steps were undertaken. First, the literature review helped identify valid questions to obtain the required information. Second, a pilot test was conducted with 126 parents. Based on the inputs provided by the pilot test, the questionnaire proved to serve the research objectives, needing just some small language adjustments.

14.3.3 Data Analysis

Each family was classified according to its economic status. For this, the index of material deprivation was used. The “deprived families” are the families who suffered forced absence of at least three of nine items that comprise the Material Deprivation Rate and “other families” (or “families without deprivation”). The Material Deprivation Rate considered for this study included nine items: ability to

¹Groups of schools or School groupings are “defined as organisational entities with their own powers of administration and management at pre-school or compulsory level around a common pedagogical project” (Ministry of Education 2007).

Table 14.2 Variables and items included in questionnaires to operationalize the constructs related to the effects of family holidays on their QOL

Construct	Items	Source ^a
Overall QOL	All in all, I feel that these holidays have enriched my life	Neal et al. (1999)
	I felt much better about life after these holidays	
Family relationship	Traveling together strengthened our family bonds	Lehto et al. (2009)
	Tension within my family was more relaxed while traveling together	Lehto et al. (2009)
	Family members feel close to each other after these holidays	Lehto et al. (2009)
	These holidays helped to discover new ways of dealing with each other	Minnaert (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013), Minnaert et al. (2009), Minnaert et al. (2010), Wigfall (2004) and Kim (2010)
	These holidays contributed to get tired of being with each other	Gram (2005)
	These holidays gave us the opportunity for fun and happy memories	McCabe et al. (2010)
Environment	These holidays contributed for reducing health expenditure of the household (eg: Stress medication)	INATEL (2009)
	These holidays contributed for improving the financial situation of the family	WHO (2004), Smith and Hughes (1999)
	These holidays contributed to increase our access to information	McCabe et al. (2010)
	These holidays gave us the opportunity to experience new places and different activities	McCabe et al. (2010)
	These holidays contributed to increase our opportunities of meeting new and different people	Minnaert (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013), Minnaert et al. (2009) and Minnaert et al. (2010)

Legend: ^aThe items were created, adapted or translated from the results obtained in the studies mentioned in this column

face unexpected expenses, ability to pay for one week's annual holiday away from home, existence of arrears, capacity to have a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day, capacity to keep home adequately warm, possession of a washing machine, a colour TV, a telephone or a personal car (Wolff 2009).

T-tests and Chi-square tests were applied to test the differences in travelling behaviour and perception of QOL effects of family tourism between the two groups of families. All assumptions of these statistical tests were analysed.

14.4 Results and Discussion

14.4.1 Sociodemographic Profile

The 825 households surveyed, comprising 3024 individuals, were residents in the districts of Aveiro, Covilhã, Fundão and Ílhavo.

When asked about their living conditions, particularly in relation to material deprivation, the responses of the surveyed families permit the conclusion that 18.7% of these families were materially deprived, meaning that 18.7% of surveyed households suffered the forced absence of at least three of nine items that comprise the material deprivation rate (Fig. 14.1). In this study, as mentioned in the previous section, these households will be considered the group of “deprived families” (N = 154) and the families that do not suffer material deprivation will be designated as “other families” (N = 669).

In terms of the household’s average net monthly income, it is observed that the majority of respondents reported incomes below 2000 euros (74.8%) (Table 14.3). Most of the sample has relatively low income, since 71.4% reported a level of *per capita* monthly income lower or equal to 500 euros and 60.0% of respondents indicated *per capita* net monthly income below or equal to 375 euros, well below the monthly value of the poverty line for the year 2011 – 416 euros (INE 2012).

In terms of gender, 22.6% of the respondents are male and 77.4% are female. It was observed that the average age of respondents is 43 years – individuals aged between 35 and 45 represent 60.5% of the sample, corresponding to what was expected, since the population of the study were families with school-age children (6–17 years). The sample includes mostly couples (married or unmarried – 81.5%),

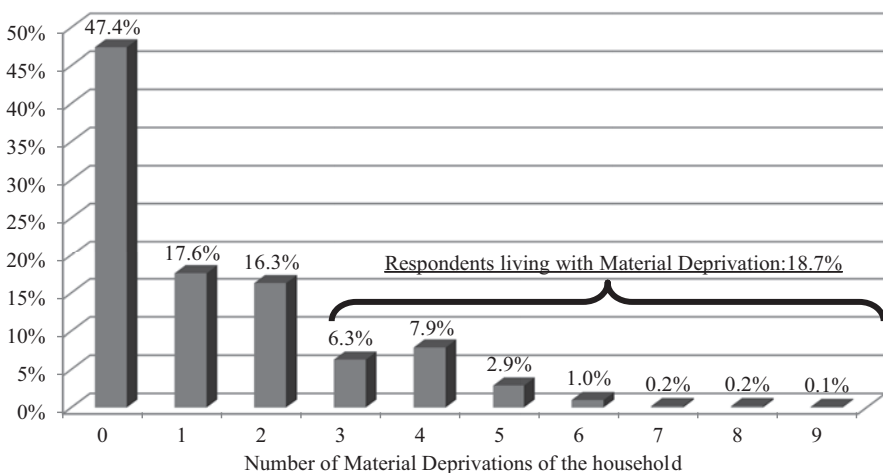


Fig. 14.1 Material deprivation of the households (number of deprivations)

Table 14.3 Sociodemographic profile of families who took holidays in the last 4 years

Sociodemographic variables for the respondents and their families	Other families (N = 669)	Deprived families (N = 154)	All families (N = 823)	χ^2	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Municipality of residence				15.87	0.001*	–	–
Aveiro	21.20%	9.10%	19.00%				
Fundão	31.60%	28.50%	31.00%				
Covilhã	20.90%	28.60%	22.40%				
Ílhavo	26.30%	33.80%	27.60%				
Gender				1.328	0.249	–	–
Feminine	76.60%	80.90%	77.40%				
Masculine	23.40%	19.10%	22.60%				
Marital status				16.6	0.001*	–	–
Single	5.10%	6.50%	5.40%				
Couple (married or not)	83.90%	70.60%	81.40%				
Divorced/ separated	10.10%	20.90%	12.10%				
Other	0.90%	2.00%	1.10%				
Situation regarding employment				33.04	0.000*	–	–
Unemployed	8.00%	23.80%	10.90%				
Retired	0.80%	1.40%	0.90%				
Employes	73.90%	60.90%	71.50%				
Entrepreneurs or self employed	11.60%	7.90%	10.90%				
Other	5.70%	6.00%	5.80%				
Level of formal education				47.87	0.000*	–	–
Higher education	46.20%	15.40%	40.60%				
Lower	53.80%	84.60%	59.40%				
Occupation				45.42	0.000*	–	–
Experts in intellectual professions & technicians and associate professionals	45.50%	12.90%	39.80%				
Other	54.50%	87.10%	60.20%				
Household's average net monthly income				183.5	0.000*	–	–
0–500€	3.2%	30.8%	8.2%				
501–1000€	18.5%	41.1%	22.7%				
1001–2000€	48.4%	23.3%	43.8%				
2001€ or more	29.9%	4.8%	25.3%				
Age	42.18	41.34	42.04	–	–	1.227	0.220

(continued)

Table 14.3 (continued)

Sociodemographic variables for the respondents and their families	Other families (N = 669)	Deprived families (N = 154)	All families (N = 823)	χ^2	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Number of elements of the household (share housing and general expenditures) aged <18 years	1.66	1.59	1.65	–	–	1.005	0.315
Number of elements of the household (share housing and general expenditures)	3.76	3.53	3.72	–	–	2.358	0.019*

Legend: % by column; In the dichotomous variables, we only present the values for the “Yes” category.

Legend: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.1$.

but also includes a relatively high proportion of divorced parents (12.1%), a result that is also a consequence of the country’s social structure (INE, 2013) (Table 14.3).

Most respondents (40.6%) hold higher education and, the situation regarding employment and occupation is related to their level of qualifications: the majority of respondents are employed (71.4%); 32.1% are experts in intellectual professions and 27.8% are employees of personal services, protection and security (according to the CPP/2010 (INE 2011)). Included in the group of respondents who do not perform a professional activity, the unemployed (10.9%) are a significant segment, a result that reflects the economic situation faced by the country.

14.4.1.1 Differences Between the Families According to Their Economic Status

In relation to differences in the socio-demographic profile between the two segments of families analysed, some differences were observed (Table 14.3). The “deprived families” group includes more families living in Covilhã and Ílhavo, more respondents whose marital status is divorced/separated, smaller families and with net monthly incomes up to €1000. This segment also tends to concentrate more respondents with a level of education below higher education, whose professional situation is unemployed and with a different occupation from “experts in intellectual professions & technicians and associate professionals”. The “other families” segment includes relatively more couples, with higher education, entrepreneurs or self-employed than the “deprived families” (Table 14.3).

Despite not having found statistically significant differences in terms of gender, age and number of household members aged under 18 years, the segment “deprived families” has a slightly higher concentration of female respondents, when compared to the totals (Table 14.3).

14.4.2 Travel Behaviour and Experiences During the Last Family Holiday

Regarding travel behaviour, 57.4% of the respondents had a family holiday (minimum of 4 nights out of the place of residence with the family) once a year for the last 4 years (Table 14.4). For 67.7% of the respondents these holidays happened in 2013 and the destination of the last family holiday was Portugal for 81.2% of the respondents, with the “other countries” that were mentioned being, particularly, Spain (6.6%), France (4.2%) and England/UK (1.3%) (Table 14.4).

The majority (66.1%) of the respondents were part of a travel party with a maximum of 4 elements. Regarding the composition of the travel group, in most cases (85.4%) this group comprised one to two children aged under 18 years. The average duration of the last family holiday of the respondents was 9.05 days, the 8-day stay being the most common. The most popular type of accommodation at the destination was the “Hotel or similar” for 30.7% of the respondents, followed by “house of friends or family” (28.0%) and “rented house” (27.2%). The means of transport most used during these family holidays were private car (89.0%), a result that can be justified by the fact that the car allows greater freedom of movement during the visit, particularly for families with children (Table 14.4).

14.4.2.1 Differences Between the Families According to Their Economic Status

There were also statistically significant differences observed between the two segments in terms of characteristics of the last family holiday. The “deprived families”, when compared with the total number of families, concentrate relatively more families who had Portugal as the destination (90.9%), using the train as a means of transportation to the destination (5.9%) and who chose home of friends or family (36.0%) and camping (14.7%) as a means of accommodation. This group also includes relatively more families who made the last holiday more than a year and a half ago, are part of larger family groups when travelling and had a shorter duration of trip, when compared with the “other families” (Table 14.4). On the other hand, the “other families” concentrates more families who visited international destinations (21.1%), which are different environments from their usual environment, and consequently used the aircraft as a means of transportation to the destination (16.70%) and stayed overnight at “hotel or similar” (33.2%) (Table 14.4). These differences in the characteristics of travel behaviour of families show that the “other families” have holidays with more features contrasting with their everyday environment, eventually contributing to the existence of differences in the effects on families' QOL.

Table 14.4 Characteristics of the last family holiday between the two groups of families

Travel behaviour	Other families (N = 669)	Deprived families (N = 154)	All families (N = 813)	χ^2	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Frequency of family holidays in the last 4 years				43.313	0.000*	–	–
Less than 1 holiday/year	9.90%	26.00%	13.00%				
1 holiday/year	56.50%	61.00%	57.30%				
2–3 holidays/year	26.50%	11.00%	23.60%				
4 or more holidays/year	7.10%	1.90%	6.10%				
Last family holidays:							
Visited country				11.859	0.001*	–	–
Portugal	78.90%	90.90%	81.10%				
Other	21.10%	9.10%	18.90%				
Means of transportation to the destination [#]						–	–
Plane	16.70%	7.80%	15.10%	7.697	0.006*		
Bus	3.00%	5.90%	3.50%	3.062	0.080**		
Private car	89.40%	86.90%	88.90%	0.765	0.382		
Train	2.20%	5.90%	2.90%	a)			
Main accommodation				22.353	0.000*	–	–
Hotel or similar	33.20%	19.30%	30.70%				
2nd residence (own)	5.70%	2.70%	5.20%				
House of friends or family	26.30%	36.00%	28.10%				
Camping	7.10%	14.70%	8.50%				
Other	27.70%	27.30%	27.60%				
How many years ago was the last family holiday?	1.16	1.70	1.34	–	–	–4.017	0.000*
Total number of the travel party	10.06	5.24	9.17	–	–	0.425	0.671
Nº of family members in the travel party	2.37	2.64	2.42	–	–	–2.358	0.019*
Nº of family members aged <18 years in the travel party	1.83	1.82	1.83	–	–	0.141	0.888
Duration of the holiday (days)	9.26	8.14	9.05	–	–	1.964	0.050*

Legend: [#]In the dichotomous variables, we only present the values for the “Yes” category

Note: % by column

Legend: * p≤0.05; ** p≤0.1.

14.4.3 *Effects of the Family Holiday on QOL*

Looking at “all families”, the respondents mentioned that the last family holiday was, above all, an opportunity for the family to create good memories and/or fun, to strengthen emotional bonds, to experience new places and activities and for the family members to feel more union between them (Table 14.5). These results confirm findings from previous studies, such as the ones undertaken by Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010), Minnaert (2006, 2012) and Minnaert et al. (2009). On the other hand, the effects that respondents generally disagreed were a result from their last family holiday are improvements in the financial situation of the family (financial dimension of the QOL) and becoming tired of being with each other (negative effect on the family relationship domain of QOL) (Table 14.5).

However, three results appear behind the average values presented in Table 14.5:

- (i) 40.3% of the respondents agreed (4.0 or more, on a scale from 1 ‘totally disagree’ to 7 ‘totally agree’) that the last family holiday contributed to improving the financial situation of the family, an effect also identified in the study undertaken by McCabe et al. (2010);
- (ii) 56.3% of the respondents agreed (4.0 or more, on a scale from 1 ‘totally disagree’ to 7 ‘totally agree’) with the fact that those family holidays contributed to reducing household expenditure on health (e.g., medication to combat stress), an effect also identified for the senior population in the study undertaken by INATEL (2009);
- (iii) all other items regarding the positive effects, which sought to measure the occurrence of certain effects of family holidays on the dimension of QOL, had more than 70% of the respondents agreeing with the existence of these effects’ (agreement level greater than or equal to 4.0, on a scale from 1 ‘totally disagree’ to 7 ‘totally agree’), a result that corroborates the conclusions of Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010), Minnaert (2006, 2012) and Minnaert et al. (2009).

Also noteworthy is the fact that 20.2% of the respondents agreed (4.0 or more, on a scale from 1 ‘totally disagree’ to 7 ‘totally agree’) that those holidays contributed to them getting tired of the other members of the family, a negative effect advocated by Gram (2005) that brings the attention to the importance of considering both the needs of the parents and the children for the family holidays to have more positive effects on the family.

14.4.3.1 **Differences Between the Families According to Their Economic Profile**

Regarding overall QOL, there were no differences between the two family segments, both of which reported high levels (average above 5.5) of satisfaction with life after the holiday (Table 14.5). It is, however, worth mentioning the relatively

Table 14.5 Effects of the last family holiday on the family's QOL

Effects on the Family's QOL		All families (N = 823)		Other families (N = 669)		Deprived families (N = 154)		t	Sig.
		N	AVG	AVG	AVG				
Overall QOL	All in all, I feel that these holidays have enriched my life	808	5.54	5.57	5.41	1.013	0.312		
	I felt much better about life after these holidays	806	5.58	5.56	5.63	-0.467	0.641		
Family relationship	Traveling together strengthened our family bonds	805	5.93	5.96	5.82	1.011	0.313		
	Tension within my family was more relaxed while traveling together	803	4.93	4.86	5.25	-2.214	0.027*		
	Family members feel close to each other after these holidays	803	5.67	5.68	5.60	0.586	0.558		
	These holidays helped to discover new ways of dealing with each other	797	4.77	4.73	4.94	-1.294	0.196		
Environment	These holidays contributed to get tired of being with each other	803	2.09	2.03	2.34	-1.776	0.077**		
	These holidays gave us the opportunity for fun and happy memories	804	6.15	6.18	6.00	1.477	0.141		
	These holidays contributed for reducing health expenditure of the household (eg: Stress medication)	798	3.76	3.66	4.20	-2.686	0.007*		
	These holidays contributed for improving the financial situation of the family	798	2.99	2.93	3.27	-1.791	0.075**		
	These holidays contributed to increase our access to information	803	4.61	4.6	4.66	-0.333	0.739		
	These holidays gave us the opportunity to experience new places and different activities	803	5.89	5.91	5.80	0.77	0.442		
	These holidays contributed to increase our opportunities of meeting new and different people	794	4.55	4.54	4.61	-0.463	0.644		

Legend: AVG Average; * $p \leq 0,05$; ** $p \leq 0,1$

higher intensity reported by the “deprived families” regarding the item “I felt much better about life after these holidays” (Table 14.5). These results corroborate Neal et al.’s (1999) findings about tourism helping to increase overall life satisfaction and clearly illustrate the increased importance tourism may have in improving the overall QOL of economically disadvantaged families, as evidenced, for example, in the studies conducted by McCabe et al. (2010) and Smith and Hughes (1999).

Comparing the effects that the last family holiday had on the two groups of families (materially deprived families and other families), significant differences were found in the contribution of the holidays to improving “the financial situation of the family”, to reducing “health expenditure of the household” (e.g. stress medication) and for relaxing “tension within my family”, noting that the “deprived families” are those who report a more intense perception of these effects (Table 14.5). These results confirm previous studies, such as those of Lehto et al. (2009), McCabe et al. (2010) and Minnaert et al. (2009), and show, clearly, the importance that a family holiday may have, particularly for this family segment, in the families’ QOL.

It is also worth mentioning the fact that “deprived families” agreed relatively more with the effect “I felt much better about life after this trip” (Table 14.5). These results corroborate Neal et al.’s (1999) findings about tourism helping to increase overall life satisfaction and the increased importance of family tourism in increasing the QOL of economically disadvantaged families, as evidenced, for example, in the studies of McCabe et al. (2010) and Smith and Hughes (1999).

14.5 Conclusions and Implications

The obtained results confirm the relevance of family holidays for the family’s QOL (McCabe et al. 2010; Minnaert et al. 2009; Smith and Hughes 1999), clearly indicating the existence of the effects of family tourism on families’ QOL and that these effects differ according to the economic status of the families.

The sample was divided into two segments of families: “deprived families” and “other families”, which were analysed separately, in order to observe differences in sociodemographic characteristics, travel behaviour and in the effects of family tourism on families’ QOL. In terms of socio-demographic and economic characteristics, the results confirm the fact that the segment of “deprived families” are more exposed to contexts of poverty and social exclusion due to their sociodemographic characteristics and living conditions, while the “other families” have opposite characteristics.

Analysing the last family holiday, results clearly demonstrate the existence of differences in terms of travel behaviour of the two groups of families. Results show that the “Other families” have tourism practices with more contrasting features with their everyday environment, which could influence the type of experiences that families have during the holidays and the effects on the holidays on the families’ QOL.

Considering the results of the effects of family holidays on families' QOL, it can be observed that the "deprived families" are those who feel the effects on the health and financial dimensions of the QOL with greater intensity. Regarding the effects on QOL more related with the family relationship – strengthening the emotional bonds among family members – the "deprived families" reported a less intense perception of these effects, except for the item regarding the relaxing of tension within the family. This result is contrary to previous studies about the increased intensity of the effects of tourism in the segments of disadvantaged population. It may be justified by the different travel behaviour observed, resulting in different experiences during the holidays and different effects on the families' QOL. This may indicate that the "deprived families" aren't having the type of family holidays that will maximize the effects on their QOL. Recognizing that family tourism can bring important contributions in terms of promoting socialization and the possible creation of social networks outside the usual circles for "deprived families" are key aspects that should be considered when designing tourism experiences as instrument for improving QOL, particularly for economically disadvantaged families.

Although there are no significant differences, "deprived families" agreed relatively more with the effect "I felt much better about life after this trip", confirming the results obtained in previous studies about the increased intensity of the effects of tourism in the segments of disadvantaged population (Neal et al. 1999; McCabe et al. 2010; Smith and Hughes 1999).

This study is exploratory in nature, but from the results presented above, it can be concluded that respondents perceive important effects of family tourism and that these effects are differentiated according to a series of factors, particularly the socioeconomic status of the family: there exists an increased importance of family tourism in increasing the QOL of economically disadvantaged families. Some other tendencies appear to exist regarding variables that may influence the perceptions of the effects of family holidays on the family's QOL. The features of a specific holiday and sociodemographic features seem to influence the perception of the effects family tourism may have on families' QOL. Tourism practices which contrast more with the families' everyday environment seem to contribute to a higher perception of the positive effects of family holidays on families' QOL and this also should be considered when designing tourism experiences, particularly when one of the aims is to improve the QOL of "deprived families".

In this context, social tourism programmes directed at economically disadvantaged families seem to be necessary as a strategy to promote what is nowadays considered a basic right of individuals and a dimension that characterizes modern society and QOL – access to tourism. Thus, results along with the literature review, make us believe that the activities to be integrated into social tourism programmes for families will be a key feature of these social tourism programmes, as a factor that will influence the type of experiences they have during the holidays and determine the effects of these holidays and their intensity. Also, the results permit the conclusion for the need to adapt the type of vacation to each kind of family (for example, there are different needs for different family members – children *vs.* adults, own time *vs.* socializing – when the objective is to maximize the effects that family

tourism can bring to families' QOL. However, we recognize the need for more research on this issue in order to identify what kind of activities should be promoted for each type of family.

Although the results of this study are largely consistent with the relatively rare previous research, this study is only exploratory and limited in geographical terms of the considered sample. Therefore, further research is required in order to understand the real and complete effects and potential of family tourism as an instrument to enhance family QOL and well-being, particularly for materially deprived families. In a context where new approaches to enhancing family QOL, well-being and social inclusion are being sought (Lehto et al. 2009; Minnaert et al. 2009), the following types of studies are particularly pertinent: (i) studies that analyse/compare the effects of tourism reported by families in each phase of the tourist experience (before, during and after the holiday); (ii) research on the determinants of the effects of family tourism on family's QOL; and (iii) studies that analyse in-depth the tourism practices of disadvantaged families and the resulting benefits.

These types of studies would contribute decisively to understanding how to design family holiday programmes that maximize the positive effects for families, contributing to increasing the families' QOL, particularly those with material deprivation.

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