



Towards an understanding of family travel decision-making processes in the context of youth sport tourism

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ABSTRACT

Youth sport tourism has grown into a distinct travel segment over the past decade. While communities have invested in sport tourism initiatives, building dedicated sports facilities and competing to host tournaments, little academic attention has been paid to understanding the travel planning and decision-making associated with youth sport families. Utilising an inductive approach, the purpose of this study was to examine the processes and decisions parents make in the context of youth sport tourism to facilitate their children's travel sport participation. In-depth interviews were conducted with youth sport parents from the two US states with significant investments in sport tourism: Indiana and Florida. ($n = 15$ FL; $n = 18$ IN). Three themes were identified in the parents' narratives using grounded theory methods, (1) Travel Logistics, (2) Flow-on Tourism, and (3) Tourn-agements. Travel logistics were dominated by decisions over accommodations and transportation with price and team bonding of consideration. A series of barriers and enablers to participation in flow-on tourism were identified including tournament schedules and proximity to tourist attractions. Decisions to create a mini-vacation out of the tournament trip (tourn-agation) were associated with novelty, distance from home, and timing such as tournaments scheduled around national holidays. A model outlining the family travel decision-making process in the context of youth sport tourism is proffered. Recommendations for DMOs leveraging the flow-on tourism associated with youth sport-events are discussed in addition to acknowledging the role of youth sport tourism in post Covid-19 tourism recovery.

1. Introduction

Globally youth sport has become a US\$24.9 billion industry and as more sports require travel to compete, youth sport tourism has grown in size and scope (Wintergreen Research, 2019). In the US, industry-based research has estimated the size of the youth sport travel industry to be more than US\$15 billion annually (Wintergreen Research Inc., 2019) with some parents spending around US\$20,000 to US\$30,000 per child per year (Gregory, 2017). Turco (1998) was one of the first to observe that families increasingly accompany their children when they travel to participate in youth sport, frequently creating vacations (holidays) out of these trips. Walt Disney World in Florida (US) saw the growing trend

in youth sport travel and opened Wide World of Sports in 1997 (now ESPN Wide World of Sports) packaging youth sport tournaments with theme park tickets. In the ensuing two decades as participation in youth sports has required more travel, the trend for families to combine vacations with their children's sport-event trips has also increased giving rise to an industry that includes specialist travel companies and cell phones apps (Gregory, 2017). Furthermore, the term tourn-agation (i.e. tournament vacation) was coined to describe these trips (Pathik, 2017). In our study, we define a tourn-agation as, family travel to small-scale youth sport-events in which the main purpose of the trip is the young athlete's participation in a tournament, but additional tourist activities are planned around the tournament schedule, or the trip is extended for

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a few days and turned into a family vacation, behavior known as 'flow-on tourism' (Faulkner et al., 2001).

As youth sport travel grew in the US and more communities recognized the economic development potential of sport tourism, they invested in facilities and hotels to host the increasing number of sport-events (Drape, 2018; Pathik, 2017). Indeed, sport tourism researchers have argued that hosting small-scale sport-events has a higher return on investment than mega or large-scale sport-events (Higham, 2002) and that implementing a small-scale sport-event portfolio could compensate for seasonality (Higham & Hinch, 2002), induce 'flow-on tourism' (Faulkner et al., 2001; Taks et al., 2009), and enhance destination image (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012). However, while many US communities have invested in sports facilities and established sport commissions to attract and manage youth sport-event portfolios, few researchers have focused on youth sport tourism. The extant research on youth sport travel has largely focused on visitor spending (e.g. Daniels & Norman, 2003; Turco, 1998), on destination development (Schnitzer et al., 2017) with a particular focus on small-scale events (Gibson et al., 2012; Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). Still, the touristic aspects of these trips, notably visitor (family) behaviour and decision-making within these travel contexts is largely unknown. The term small-scale sport-event (Higham, 1999) in this study and the youth sport context more broadly refers to minor events where competitors often outnumber spectators, receive little national media coverage, and generate relatively small economic impact, what Wilson (2006) calls Type E events. Moreover, the term youth sport in this study refers to "... athletic participation in competitive sport by children up to age 18" (Bremmer, 2012, p. 235) involving travel to compete accompanied by immediate and sometimes extended family members (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to explore the travel planning and decision-making associated with youth sport travel by parents. Our approach was inductive yet framed within the existing family decision-making literature with a view to extending this knowledge to the growing youth sport tourism industry.

2. Literature review

2.1. Youth sport and tourism

Youth sport has been described as "a way of life" for many families with multiple generations involved (Bremer, 2012, p. 245). Bremer argues that these sport spaces have become increasingly adult-structured, and many families devote a significant amount of money and time to facilitate their children's participation. Researchers have found that these families not only devote financial resources to facilitate their children's participation in youth sport, but other aspects of family life such as time, particularly for mothers (Trussell, 2009), family activities and dinners (Mirehie et al., 2019), and family vacations (Trussell, 2009; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005) are sacrificed in the facilitation of youth sport participation. Knight and Holt (2013 a) also note that as youth sport participants age, and if they engage in sport requiring higher levels of skill and competition the likelihood that they will need to travel to participate increases, which in turn intensifies family involvement and investment. In a study of indoor competition climbing, Garst et al. (2019) found that not only did families change or give up their family vacations, but their children's competitions took on the role of a family vacation.

The increased prevalence of youth sport travel is marked by a rise in event sport tourism (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010) particularly in the realm of small-scale participatory events (Gibson et al., 2012). Youth sport-events have been particularly attractive to communities as they tend to generate greater positive economic impact than other small-scale events (Daniels & Norman, 2003). Daniels and Norman's study of seven small-scale events found that youth events had the largest average travel party size and the highest economic impact. Scott and Turco (2007) found that relatives of youth sport participants who travel as event spectators tend to stay longer in the destination and spend more money

than other spectators. The extant research demonstrates variability in the economic impact generated based on factors such as type of sport (Daniels & Norman, 2003; Gibson et al., 2012), type of facilities available (Scott & Turco, 2007), and the tournament schedule (Daniels & Norman, 2003), with tournaments that had longer gaps between competitions facilitating more opportunities for taking part in flow-on tourism (Gibson et al., 2012).

Participation in flow-on tourism by sport tourists is inconsistent as researchers have found that particularly among fervent sports fans their focus is on sport and not on other activities (Gibson et al., 2003). However, when visiting somewhere new or when attractions or accommodations are accessible in adjacent communities (Yang & Wong, 2012) flow-on tourism potential increases (Faulkner et al., 2001). For example, Gibson et al. (2003) found that sightseeing or visiting parks and museums were high among first time destination visitors and casual spectators at a sport-event. Similarly, Taks et al. (2009) examined the likelihood of participating in flow-on tourism among athletes and spectators of an international youth track and field event, and found that dining out and shopping were consistent activities among all visitor groups, although with slightly different participation rates.

Kaplanidou and Gibson (2012) found that youth sport tourists are distinct from other types of tourists in their behavioral intentions in that their plans to attend a similar event or return to the destination for a vacation are not determined by past experiences and destination image perceptions. Still, the authors argue the paramount intent is to provide opportunities for their children. This likely explains youth sport-events' resiliency in times of economic recession, when adults cease their own sport-event participation because of rising prices but continue to support their children's participation (Gibson et al., 2012). Parents reported that they would never regain that time with their children, so they would sacrifice in other areas of life to provide experiences for their children's sport participation (Gibson et al., 2012). Also, research shows that developing an emotional connection to children's sport and the wider sport community are tangential benefits of supporting children's sport participation and travel for parents (Dorsch et al., 2009, 2014; Knight & Holt, 2013 b).

While youth sport travel research is limited, expansive work explaining how families make decisions around travel generally was used to frame our study.

2.2. Family travel decision-making

The intricacies of family travel decision-making and the influence of family members on destination choice, timing, lodging, and travel activities has been studied since the 1970s (e.g. Jenkins, 1978; Myers & Moncrief, 1978). Family travel decision-making is a complex process and while there are some general patterns, findings are not consistent across different samples and throughout time. In the early studies, male partners were found to dominate the important travel decisions such as destination, length, and expenditure (Dellaert et al., 1998; Jenkins, 1978), however, some sub-decisions (e.g. mode of transportation) were made jointly (Jenkins, 1978). Myers and Moncrief (1978) found that 70 % of choices over accommodation and destination were shared, however some decisions such as routes taken were made by the male partner. A couple of decades later, more of a consistent trend was evidenced in joint decision-making and explicit or implicit consensus within families (e.g. Kang et al., 2003; Mottiar & Quinn, 2004); disagreement-resolution strategies such as family discussions (Kang & Hsu, 2004) or "give-and-take-and-reach-a-compromise" (Bronner & De Hoog, 2008, p. 969) were evident. As time passed, women seemed to dominate decisions that were not shared (Wang et al., 2004).

Various factors have been found to affect the travel decision-making process, such as Family Life Cycle (FLC) stage (Cosenza & Davis, 1981), children's age (Cosenza & Davis, 1981), stage in the travel decision-making (Mottiar & Quinn, 2004), length of the trip (Dellaert et al., 1998), ethnic background and travel party composition (Nanda

et al., 2007), and couple's age difference (Nichols & Snepenger, 1988). Cosenza and Davis (1981) found that in the earlier stages of the married life decision-making was more syncretic. The authors explained as the couple acquired more experience in decision-making, husbands dominated the travel decisions; when the children were about to leave the parent's house and at the retirement stage, wives dominated the decisions.

The decision-making process and the influence-structure outlined above further impacts the family's travel behavior. For instance, Smith (1979) found men tend to choose more active outdoor pursuits for their family vacations, while joint decision-makers tend to participate in a broader range of tourism activities (Nichols & Snepenger, 1988). More recently, Stone (2016) found that many prefer to delegate the travel decisions to either formal (e.g. paid travel agents), or social (e.g. family, friends) surrogates. The former refers to business relationships while the latter refers to "an individual who is entrusted or delegated to make or facilitate decisions or purchases on behalf of another, without a formal or business-type agreement or arrangement" (p. 169); this individual is usually part of the trip themselves.

While many of the extant studies indicate that usually one of the parents acts as a travel-decision surrogate (Gram, 2007), children also have a role either indirectly through their needs or directly through negotiation of their wants (Thornton et al., 1997). For example, Curtale (2018) found that children can be quite influential in decisions over amenities found in a potential vacation destination, such as a swimming pool. Children's needs particularly affect the choice of destination and accommodation (Gram, 2007). However, the most influential actor within a family likely varies at different stages of travel decision-making, with women mostly dominant in the information search stage (Kang et al., 2003; Mottiar & Quinn, 2004; Smith, 1979).

Surprisingly, despite the considerable growth of youth sport tourism, the associated travel decision-making, planning, and behavior has received little attention from scholars. However, some recent developments in this area of study may have some relevance to family travel planning in youth sport contexts where shorter trips prevail. McCabe et al. (2016) in proposing a new approach to travel decision-making based on dual systems theory suggest that it is plausible accounting for factors such as the type of trip, differences in information processing, and time pressures that tourists engage in multiple approaches to decision-making.

Furthermore, as tourism researchers responded to changes in family life, studies on family reunions involving group decision-making (Kluin & Lehto, 2012; Yun & Lehto, 2009); 'multi-family travel' (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2017), and intergenerational family travel (Kang et al., 2003) emerged and may also provide insights on understanding youth sport tourism decision-making. Yun and Lehto (2009) found that three main choices were involved in planning a family reunion: destination, venue and lodging, and activities. In these choices often one family member was the dominant planner and made decisions for the rest of the family group. Under these conditions, Yun and Lehto found that individual motives and preferences were subsumed by those of the larger group, a finding confirmed by Kluin and Lehto (2012). Both studies also found that family togetherness and bonding are major motives for these extended family reunions. To facilitate the needs of these multi-generational family groups Pearlman (2018) found that they often sought family style suites in hotels and a range of activities.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore youth sport families planning and decision-making regarding travel where the primary purpose of a trip is for their children to participate in small-scale sport-events/tournaments. Two US states known for their youth sport specific tourism development strategies, Indiana and Florida provided the context for this study. The following research questions (RQ) guided the inquiry:

RQ1: What decisions and processes are involved in the planning associated with participation in sport-event travel for youth sport families?

RQ2a: Do these families engage in non-sport activities (flow-on tourism) during their youth sport trips? b: If so, what conditions influence their decisions to participate in flow-on tourism?

3. Methods

3.1. Data collection

Data were collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews with youth sport parents from two US states, Florida and Indiana. A sampling frame of youth sport parents/primary caregivers (e.g. grandparents) was created through a short online questionnaire distributed through emails to youth sports clubs, youth sport listserves, and club social media accounts located in Indiana and Florida. The survey requested information from parents or primary caregivers such as grandparents about the number of youth sport trips taken in the previous year, children's skill level, type of sport, and other demographic information. Potential interview participants were then selected through purposive sampling based on the type of the sport, the age of the children, the skill level of the competition, and gender of the children to assure representation from the various groups and state of residence. Subsequent interviews occurred via phone or in-person at a location of the interviewee's choosing and were all completed prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

The semi-structured interviews were directed by an interview guide containing major topics encouraging participants to talk freely in response to questions such as: Talk to us about the travel associated with your children's participation in sport? Followed by probes such as: What type of transportation do you use? In what type of accommodation do you stay? Who does the travel planning? The probes were used to encourage participants to elaborate on topics they had missed or to provide more details.

The average interview length was 1 h, ranging from 40 to 90 min. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim via a professional transcription service. Data collection ceased when further interviews did not yield any new information and themes were deemed to be saturated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To maintain confidentiality, interviewees are represented by pseudonyms herein.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Florida cohort (n = 15)

Five fathers and 10 mothers were interviewed ranging in age from 39 to 55 years old; the majority was in their 40s (n = 12). Education ranged from undergraduate to doctorate. Most of the interviewees were married (n = 13); one of the fathers and one of the mothers (n = 2) were divorced. All interviewees had either two (n = 9) or three (n = 6) children. The children who participated in youth sport travel ranged in age from 11 to 18 years (mean age 14 years). The youth sports included soccer, swimming, lacrosse, volleyball, and gymnastics.

3.2.2. Indiana cohort (n = 18)

Five fathers, 11 mothers, and two primary caregivers who were the children's grandparents were interviewed. Since the grandparents had assumed the parental role for their grandchildren they will subsequently be referred to as parents in this study. Several of the Indiana cohort also held leadership roles for their children's teams including four coaches, three officials, three team facilitators (i.e. Team mom), and one hotel coordinator. The interviewees ranged in age from 37 to 65 years old. Education ranged from undergraduate to doctorate. All interviewees had one to three children participating in youth sport travel. The children ranged in age from 8 to 17 years (mean age 13 years). The youth sports included cheerleading, football, basketball, soccer, softball, baseball, track and field, rugby, volleyball, martial arts, and tennis.

3.3. Data analysis

The primary data analysis steps were guided by grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006). Open and selective coding were used to acquire a general overview of the data. Initially, each of the researchers separately coded the data incident-by-incident manually. The open codes were then discussed by the research team and once they agreed upon how the data were coded, the most frequent and significant open codes were organized into a codebook. The three objective components of a tourism experience (i.e. accommodation, transportation, and attractions), and a prominent code (i.e. tourn-agation) that appeared in the selective coding stage were used to guide the more advanced stages of the analysis and frame the findings. The use of NVivo and Dedoose software allowed multiple researchers to work on the project simultaneously which facilitated the discussion among researchers throughout the process and enhanced the validity of the interpretations. Codes and interpretations were cross-checked several times throughout the process by the research team to ensure validity and trustworthiness. In the tradition of grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2006), we present our interpretation of the interrelationships among the themes in Fig. 1.

4. Findings and discussion

Three overarching themes were evident in the parents' accounts of their travel planning and decision-making: (1) *Travel Logistics* with two sub-themes, Accommodation and Transportation; (2) *Flow-on Tourism* with two sub-themes Enablers and Barriers to flow-on tourism; and (3) *Tourn-agation* with three sub-themes, Novelty, Distance, and Timing. Fig. 1 depicts our interpretations of the interrelations among the themes associated with the parents' youth sport travel-related decision-making around flow-on tourism and other trip-related decisions, yielding an

initial understanding of the processes involved in youth sport family travel decision-making.

4.1. Travel logistics

The first theme, *Travel Logistics* encompasses many of the early decisions about destination, accommodations and transportation and identifies the key decision-makers (Fig. 1). In contrast to the typical family travel decision-making process two decision makers: the youth sport team coach and the team coordinator (Team Mom) played major roles. The coach typically chose the tournament, and hence the destination, and associated dates. Thus, decisions integral to the family vacation decision process the where and the when (Yun & Lehto, 2009) were pre-determined. However, similar to family vacations, decisions over accommodations and transportation were the primary logistics involving the parents, but even here there were some differences compared to the general family travel decision-making processes as informal team roles such as Team Mom or Hotel Coordinator frequently shaped travel choices about where to stay (*Accommodation*) and how to get there (*Transportation*), a process similar to patterns identified in planning family reunions where one person may take a lead role in making these decisions (Kluin & Lehto, 2012; Yun & Lehto, 2009).

4.1.1. Accommodation

Decisions over *Accommodations* were identified as the first sub-theme in *Travel Logistics*. Almost all parents reported they would stay at the team's designated hotel motivated by a discounted price, booking convenience, and a preference to stay with the rest of the team. Occasionally, choice of hotel was a requirement of the tournament organizers known as "stay to play." Kirsten (Soccer, FL) explained, "their [her children's] tournaments are never close enough to [home] not to have a

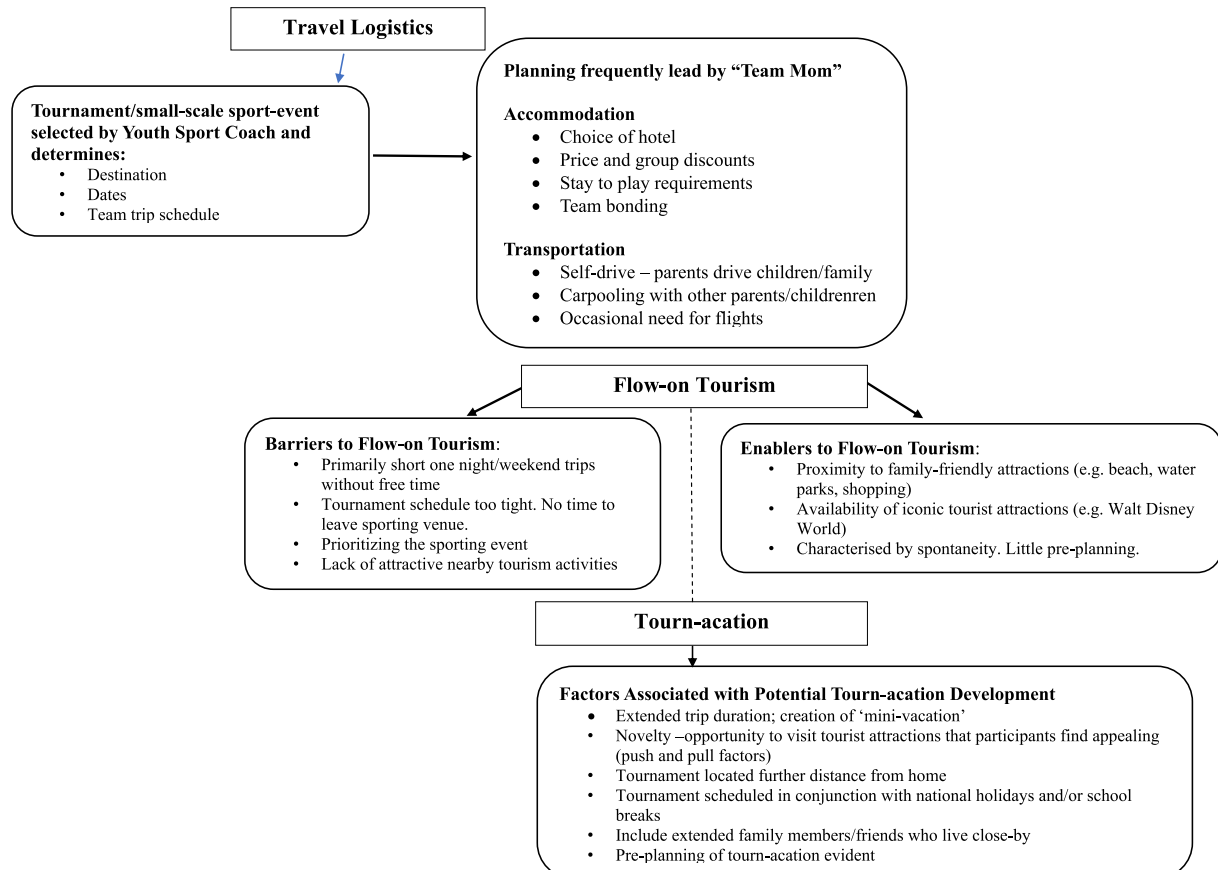


Fig. 1. Towards and understanding of the youth sport family travel decision-making processes: Tournament travel logistics, flow-on tourism and tourn-agements.

hotel at least one night on the weekend.” The logistics associated with the hotel choice were usually coordinated by one or a team of parents. As Josh (Soccer, FL) explained, “Well, for example, my daughter’s team, one of the parents on the team sets up all the hotels for tournaments.” Similarly, Greg (Soccer, FL) said, “usually I think it’s the team manager, well technically for [daughter’s name]’s team, my wife is the team manager ... they’ve split up the duties among three parents.” A similar story emerged from Indiana as described by Becca (Cheerleading, IN) who said, “Team mom or team manager. Somebody usually finds and books the hotel rooms, and we go.” Thus, among the youth sport parents there appears to be more of a collaborative process across the team families compared to the existing literature on family travel decision-making where most of the focus has been on the single family unit (e.g. Dellaert et al., 1998), with youth sport travel being more similar to the processes evident in planning family reunions (Kluin & Lehto, 2012; Yun & Lehto, 2009) where decisions are delegated to a social surrogate (Stone, 2016), in the youth sport context this was usually a mother.

The role of the mother is consistent with the family travel planning literature (e.g. Mottiar & Quinn, 2004). While the father’s voices are present in our data, mothers appear to take the lead in information search and making reservations. In terms of accommodation preferences, these youth sport families also epitomize the trend towards ‘multi-family travel’ (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2017) where families particularly with children of the same age or groups of nuclear families from one extended family arrange vacations together and prefer hotel rooms located close to one another and shared common space (Pearlman, 2018). Perhaps conceptualizing youth sport family travel in the context of ‘multi-family travel’ may help us further our understanding of this travel segment.

For the youth sport parents, price was a motivation for staying at the team hotel. Michele (Karate & Lacrosse, FL) explained, “a lot of the teams pick out a team hotel, and we get a special discount, so we stay at the team hotel.” Trevor (Soccer, FL) also remarked on the discounted price, noting “the teams have managers; one of their tasks is to identify hotels where the team can get rooms at a discounted rate, often but not always we’ll book rooms in those hotels.” Price was noted in narrations of Indiana parents as well, as explained by Ann (Soccer, IN) who said, “there’s always one mom on the team that’s like researching discounts. She’s really good about finding deals and things like that, so she usually takes the spearhead of that.” Lilly (Volleyball, FL) also noted that having a team coordinator was not just about price, but it was also convenient. She said, “the club tells us what hotels are the team hotels, and gives us the rate, what hotel, and stuff like that, so it’s just logging on, and actually booking the room.”

Many of the parents noted that they spend one or two nights away from home for these tournaments and this translates into hotel rooms, eating out, and other costs which add up across a sports season. Thus, it is not surprising that these parents look for discounted room nights and other strategies to cut travel costs.

Another motive for staying in the team hotel was a desire for team bonding. As Daisey (Basketball & Baseball, IN) said, “we had 100 % participation at the same hotel just because nobody wanted to be far away from anybody. They wanted the boys to stay together.” In addition to facilitating youth interaction, the parents also wanted to socialize with each other. As Sara (Swimming, FL) explained, she likes to spend time with the rest of the team, “the team stays in the same hotel so we can all have dinner together.” Kayla (Soccer & Basketball, FL) had a similar opinion, “we try to stay at the same hotel where the rest of the team is staying.” By booking the same hotel, players and parents are able to socialize outside of the sport venue. As Ann (Soccer, IN) explained, “... they had a pool at the hotel so all the kids got together and did something afterwards, which was super fun.” Youth sport researchers have frequently noted that due to the length of time per season/year these children and families spend together that they frequently develop a strong sense of community and staying in the same hotel, sharing meals and activities together would help to facilitate the strength of

these bonds (Dorsch et al., 2009, 2014; Knight & Holt, 2013 b). Once again, the desire to spend time together is also reflected in the family reunion research (Kluin & Lehto, 2012; Yun & Lehto, 2009) and reflects a desire for accommodations with rooms close together and a communal socializing space (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2017; Pearlman, 2018).

4.1.2. Transportation

Decisions over *Transportation* were identified as the second sub-theme in Travel Logistics. How to get there is an integral part of family travel (Jenkins, 1978) and the transportation-related logistics of travelling to these youth sport tournaments usually revolved around driving the family car or carpooling with parents of other athletes. Some higher-level athletes who participated in national level competitions had to fly to attend tournaments, but even here some families preferred to drive.

When asked how you get to the tournaments, Ryan shortly answered, “Drive. Always.” Similarly, Lilly (Volleyball, FL) said, “we all take our own cars, and we drive our children there.” Many of the parents were not available on every weekend, so to get all the children to the tournament, carpooling was another popular mode of transportation. Mike (Soccer, FL) explained, “Depends on what it is; you carpool with somebody else or drive yourself.” Kayla (Soccer & Basketball, IN) said, “We have not had a situation where the tournaments required air travel. We typically drive, and oftentimes meet the team somewhere, and drive other kids too, because, at least for basketball, most parents are not going to the tournaments.” Similarly, Karen (Karate, Soccer, Cross-country, & Track, IN) explained, “We can’t just assume that everyone can go, or that everyone has access. They said as a manager we offer some of these kids rides because we have parents that work weekends. Both my husband and I work weekends. The latter comment reflects back on the sense of community among the teams noted above whereby the parents work together to help one another by carpooling or making sure that the youth can still participate even if their parents cannot be there (e.g. Dorsch et al., 2014).

For higher profile events such as national competitions the youth were often required to travel by air which supports Knight and Holt (2013 a) finding about the growing intensity of travel as the athlete progresses. Annette (Soccer & Lacrosse, FL) explained, “So far, they have been driving, but next year that’s going to change. She [daughter] and lacrosse, and high school, they have to go to Virginia, Maryland, New York. So, she will be going on an airplane then.” Similarly, Rose (Soccer, Volleyball, Cross-country, FL) said, “If we’re going outside of the state, if we’re going to the Midwest or going out west, we’ll fly.” However, regardless of the distance and time, some still preferred to drive, Kirsten (Soccer, FL) explained, “I think the farthest tournament away that he’s [son] had was 9 h and we drove, so we’ve never flown, but we’ve driven a substantial distance for him to get to go.”

Thus, across the parents from the two US states, driving tends to be the main mode of transportation, with some carpooling to help alleviate the need for all parents to travel to every tournament and flying becomes necessary for some elite level and older athletes.

4.2. Flow-on tourism

The second theme in our findings is *Flow-on Tourism* where parents describe their decision-making about engaging in additional activities during a tournament trip (noted as *Enablers to Flow-on Tourism* in Fig. 1), and when they do not have the opportunity (*Barriers to Flow-on Tourism*).

In terms of *Barriers to Flow-on tourism*, parents from both states fundamentally lacked the time to leave the sporting venues to pursue other activities largely due to the competition schedules, short weekend trips, and lack of free time during the tournaments. As Daisey (Basketball & Baseball, IN) noted, “At this point in time, you play two or three games on Saturday, two or three games on Sunday. We’re just kind of resting in between.” Similarly, Lucy (Cheer & Basketball, IN) explained

that the competition is the real driver for travel:

I know we're there for one thing; so, I'm not really like, "Oh I wonder what's like around." I'm not going to go, I mean for us it's all about the competition so it doesn't really matter. It could be in the dumpiest place; we'll all still go.

Ann (Soccer, IN) further pushed this point as she said, "it's not a destination we're going to it's for the game." Among the parents from Indiana there seemed to be a sentiment that the purpose of their trip is the sport-event and in many respects, they just want to finish and go home. This is summarized by Andi (Cheer, Swimming, Tennis, IN), "It's just about the tournament. Everybody's kind of got that same mentality. It's not like, "Oh, now what can we go do? Or, let's go find something to do." It's more talking about the next event." Also, particularly during the school year, parents were aware they needed to balance school and sport obligations. Thus, a majority of the parents explained that they stayed at a tournament for a minimum of one night, with most of the trips taking place over the weekends due to school commitments. As Wendy (Cheerleading, IN) explained, "I prefer to come and stay Friday night, Saturday night, and then go home once we're done." These narratives support McCabe et al.'s (2016) suggestion that family travel planning should be contextualized by the type of trip. That not all family travel may be characterized as having agency over activity choices and how to use their time. These narratives show that the purpose of the trip is clearly to facilitate their children's sport participation and there is almost a sense of obligation in their voices. These sentiments are similarly described in extant family sport research using a leisure studies lens whereby Trussell (2009) and Mirehie et al. (2019) found that families frequently sacrifice other activities and that lack of time is often expressed by the parents, and as such may be a barrier to flow-on tourism.

In contrast, an enabler to flow-on tourism appears to be the availability of family-friendly activities close to the sports venue. In fact, proximity to tourist activities or iconic tourist attractions appears to explain a distinct difference when comparing flow-on tourism participation among the parents from the two states. While both Florida and Indiana are US states renowned for sport tourism, Florida is an internationally known destination for its beaches and theme parks. When asked if they participated in other activities during a tournament, many of the Indiana parents indicated they tended to stay in the sport venue and some even reported feeling bored between the games or competitions. For example, Leslie (Baseball, Cheer & Football, IN) noted that even though some downtime was available, due to the lack of activities nearby she often did not partake in other activities:

Bored! because there is nothing to do. If you leave the convention center, you are going to walk, walk, and walk. Your car is parked a zillion miles away. Unless it is a gorgeous day and you want to go walk around outside, there is nothing to do.

Likewise, Chris (Cheer, IN) also reported feeling bored at times, he said, "I talk to other parents. I mean, they're bored as well ... I don't have a choice. My wife entertains me, and we talk. Or I just go sit down inside, where they're performing ... it's a sacrifice." Occasionally, if a sport-event is hosted at a unique place then the Indiana parents take the opportunity presented to them. For example, Chris (Cheerleading, IN) explained that on one particular trip that took them to a tournament hosted at Notre Dame University a top US university with a famous (American) football team. Chris said "so it would be nice, afterwards, just to drive around and look at the university. The Golden Dome, Touchdown Jesus!" However, this example is more the exception than the norm. In contrast, the narratives of the Florida parents are very different and support our contention that proximity to tourist attractions is an influential factor in both acting as a barrier to and an enabler to flow-on tourism.

When asked if he participates in any additional activities at a tournament, Greg (Soccer, FL) said, "Usually beach, something beach related ... or Disney." Kirsten (Soccer, FL) articulated:

If we're close enough to the beach, I'm at least going to go sit in the

sand for 5 min. We'll go shopping when we're there and they're not playing. We'll go out to eat when they're not playing, or we'll go see another sporting event.

In Kirsten's words the time-condensed nature of these tournaments is evident as she talks about squeezing a quick trip to the beach followed by activities such as shopping and eating, the latter also noted by other sport tourism-related studies of flow-on tourism as being easy to fit into a sport-event trip (Taks et al., 2009). Mike (Soccer, FL) also discussed the difficulties of trying to squeeze fun activities around a sport-event especially if the tournament involved two or more children from the same family. He said:

When we can we do other stuff. Go to parks, go to beach, go to water park, we do it, we try and do it, but it's very hard to, it'd be easier if there was only one child. You played the game Sunday morning, you're done for the day, we're going some place cool, but when one played in the morning the other two had two more games today, we're just hanging out at the soccer field.

Similar to non-sport related family vacations, balancing the interests of multiple family members is evident in these parents' accounts of their participation in flow-on tourism (Yun & Lehto, 2009), but unlike a family vacation, tournament schedules appear to be an important factor influencing the time available for flow-on tourism participation (Daniels & Norman, 2003; Mirehie et al., 2019).

Spontaneity appears to characterize decisions to engage in flow-on tourism facilitated by proximity to appropriate activities or attractions. This appears to epitomize McCabe et al.'s (2016) ideas that sometimes travel decisions are made quickly and with little pre-planning among families, especially on short trips. Moreover, in discussing flow-on tourism with these parents, there appear to be two types or levels of engagement: 1) Participation in activities squeezed in among sport-related obligations facilitated by proximity to family-friendly attractions and iconic attractions, largely characterized by spontaneity and little pre-planning, and, 2). Participation in tourist activities when tournaments are located further from home and seem to involve more traditional family travel planning processes (e.g. Jenkins, 1978). This form of flow-on tourism is identified in our third theme Tourn-acations (Fig. 1).

4.3. Tourn-acation

Often, when tournaments were held in attractive destinations, parents would extend their trip by a couple of days and turn it into a 'tourn-acation' (Pathik, 2017) whereby families engage in a wider range of activities in a 'mini-vacation' setting rather than squeezing such activities in between tournament requirements. Indiana parents were less likely to think of regional trips as family vacations compared to Florida parents which was likely due to the availability of attractive destination attributes noted in the Flow-on tourism theme. When asked about making a family vacation out of soccer trips, Greg (Soccer, FL) said, "You kind of have to try to do those sorts of things and get creative." Similarly, Kayla (Soccer & Basketball, IN) said, "We have tried to combine it with, at least like a mini vacation before ... So, we'll all go together, and try to just do fun things when the games aren't being played."

These sentiments support the extant literature showing that sport families may not have the time to engage in separate family vacations (Garst et al., 2019; Mirehie et al., 2019; Trussell, 2009). In further analyzing the parents' narratives, several interconnected factors appeared to act as enablers underpinning decisions to turn a youth sport trip into a tourn-acation in both states, namely, a) novelty, b) distance from home, and c) time (Fig. 1).

4.3.1. Novelty

Crompton (1979) suggests a combination of push and pull factors draw visitors to a destination. The push factors are the internal drives and the pull factors are the characteristics of a destination. While Crompton identified novelty as a pull factor, push factors such as

stimulation and excitement imply novelty and are powerful in shaping tourist preferences. Novelty both as a push and pull factor is evident among the youth sport tourist families and relates back to the sentiments of the Indiana parents who expressed boredom when a tournament destination had little to offer. Michele (Karate & Lacrosse, FL) explained that when a tournament was in a known and attractive tourist destination it would act as an impetus to add extra days onto a tournament trip. She recounted:

A lot of [karate] tournaments were down in the Disney area ... so those were easy to turn into vacations, because those we would go a couple days early ... and do a park, or stay in a nice hotel, hang out there, and mix it all in, so we could make a vacation out of that.

Likewise, Greg (Soccer, FL) emphasized the role of tourist opportunities in a tournament destination. He said, "I mean, Orlando's fun, you've got lots of opportunities there. Yeah, destination and convenience. If you have to go somewhere you might as well, see if you can make a fun extra day of it or whatever." When tournaments were located outside of their home state, parents were likely to extend the trip due to the novelty of the destination and make it into a vacation. For example, Elina (Gymnastics & Dance, FL) recounted:

We were in Colorado, and we went to see some of the sights, Garden of the Gods We are in that city, we're not going to be there again, either I fly in a little bit earlier, or I stay a day later.

Thus, consistent with existing tourism and sport tourism literature, the novelty of the destination is important in stimulating these tourn-acations (e.g. Garst et al., 2019). Certainly the availability of attractive tourism resources such as beaches or theme parks, which are major components of the Florida tourism product (Yang & Wong, 2012) appear to have underpinned flow-on tourism behaviors generally, but also stimulated decisions to extend their trip and create a tourn-acation. Support for this contention can be found in Kaplanidou and Gibson's (2012) study on youth sport-events hosted by a semi-rural college town where the parents were largely non-committal about returning for a vacation to experience small town attractions, however, they would likely return for sport-related reasons namely future youth sport tournaments.

4.3.2. Distance

Distance from home also appeared to be relevant to destination novelty in acting as a catalyst to create a tourn-acation for these youth sport tourist families. In particular, the parents noted that when travelling to tournaments when they had to fly, they often spent a few more days engaged in flow-on tourism activities, which supports previous youth sport research (Garst et al., 2019) in that distance acted as a catalyst for planning a vacation around a tournament. Interestingly some of the Florida parents spoke about making tourn-acations out of trips to Indianapolis, IN which is over 1000 miles away. For example, Rose (Soccer, Volleyball, Cross-country, FL), explained "Occasionally, we'll go as a family, depending on where it is. If it's in a place we go to all the time, it's usually not worth the other two participant's [spouse & other children] time." She further explained, "A lot of times, if we're going faraway [like Indianapolis], we go as a family, even if it's just one child that's playing. We try to turn it into somewhat of a vacation in addition to just playing the sport." Similarly, Tom (Rugby, IN) said, "Two of my really good friends from college, who I played rugby with, went out as well because this tournament was all of the youth, it's huge ... we turned it into a little mini vacation for the six of us."

Florida was mentioned by many Indiana parents as a destination in which tournament trips could be extended to family vacations. Becca (Cheerleading, IN), "[Florida] seems to be a big family vacation, good or bad." Jonathan (Cheer, Soccer, Gymnastics, IN) also discussed the opportunity of a youth sport trip to Florida as an opportunity for a family vacation. He said:

You will get a lot of families that go [to Florida] especially with

younger kids because they can yank them out of school and both parents go because they're down in Florida. They get a nice resort type hotel and it's a vacation for a couple days that they're already having to pay for. So, they just bring the other kids.

Another important factor related to timing in the decision to create a tourn-acation is mentioned above by Chris. Timing as a facilitator of tourn-acations is crucial, particularly around national holidays and school breaks as these provide the time that enables families to spend additional days in and around a tournament destination, and to potentially include extended family members.

4.3.3. Timing

The overlap in the youth sport travel season and the school year was perceived as a barrier for parents in turning the youth sport trips into tourn-acations. Nonetheless, tournaments that were organized over national holidays and school breaks such as Thanksgiving and spring break were specifically noted as opportunities for extending trips. For example, Josh (Soccer, FL) noted this in talking about making a vacation out of a tournament in Sarasota (FL), "When we're on something like that for a Labor Day weekend we'll try to make a day and go to the beach together or whatever either in between games or after games." Likewise, Sherry (Soccer, FL) and her husband used the Thanksgiving tournament to spend time with his parents, she articulated:

Last year, we really struggled because there was a tournament on Thanksgiving and my husband's parents are older ... We ended up deciding to do the tournament. They drove with us down to Orlando, did the Disney Tournament. We stayed at a hotel with them, went out to eat with them

Another pattern appeared to be present in some of these tourn-acations, particularly when they coincided with national holidays where families take the opportunity to include extended family members. Bremmer (2012) noted that multiple generations are frequently involved in youth sport and which is likely enhanced when attending a national level tournament or one that is hosted by an attractive destination during a national holiday (Scott & Turco, 2007). Indeed, Jerry (Baseball, IN) explained, "We've had grandparents, cousins, and uncles come to the game before and meet us there. Both my cousins, all their kids travel for sports too." Similarly, Greg (Soccer, FL) explained how his parents joined the family for a Thanksgiving tournament, "my parents came up for two different Thanksgiving times, they've had a Disney tournament, so my parents just kind of came with that, and [wife]'s parents came once; and so it's a family vacation."

Spring break was another holiday period described as facilitating tourn-acations that incorporated extended family members. Sara (Swimming, FL) described this, "One of the soccer games that was around spring break we were able to meet my family up there. We stayed with them at the beach for a few days, and they were able to see my son play." Thus, a combination of destination and timing appears to be key factors in facilitating tourn-acations, particularly if extended family members are involved. Interestingly, the parents did not mention their children's opinions in these tourn-acations surprisingly, although the general tourism literature shows that parents are often influenced by their children's opinions when making vacation choices (Curtale, 2018; Gram, 2007). As such, a future line of research might explore the youth's role in travel decision-making process. However, the findings reinforce Thornton et al.'s (1997) proposition that children impact family travel decisions both directly and indirectly due to the need to accommodate their needs and their schedules.

5. Conclusion and implications

In terms of contribution to the body of knowledge, this study showcases the travel planning and decision-making processes undertaken by parents facilitating their children's travel sport participation.

Moreover, findings identify both barriers and facilitators of flow-on tourism and the conditions under which families may engage in tournaments. In the context of youth sport tourism, findings show some consistencies with the existing family travel-decision-making literature, particularly in the primary role of mothers in much of this planning and execution (Kang et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2004). However, further analysis of these decisions shows similarities with the extant literature on planning family reunions (Kluin & Lehto, 2012; Yun & Lehto, 2009) and 'multi-family travel' (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2017) which suggests that it is important to think beyond the family travel as a nuclear group planning one annual trip in line with McCabe et al.'s (2016) urging re-conceptualization of the existing family travel decision-making models. Notably, the type of trip does seem to influence the travel decision-making style. In the youth sport tourism context, the decisions made for the one-two day trips with the primary purpose of facilitating their children's sport participation are heuristic in that these time-starved families appear to make fast automatic decisions often led by a 'team mom' (McCabe et al., 2016). However, while decisions associated with flow-on tourism may be spontaneous, with tournaments, there seems to be more conscious pre-planning to maximize time and to take advantage of the opportunities provided by a destination or a national holiday. This again lends support to the idea of plurality in contemporary travel decision-making and warrants further investigation (McCabe et al., 2016). A such, the herein suggested model of travel-decision-making in youth sport tourism contexts provides insights into a specialized niche of family (travel) life and should be combined with newer conceptualizations of the family travel-decision-making process (e.g. McCabe et al., 2016).

Regarding the practical implications of this study, at the time of writing, global tourism has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2008 recession in the US, youth sport travel was found to be the most resilient form of sport tourism (Gibson et al., 2012). Reminiscent of 2008, during May 2020, in some cases six to eight weeks after stay-at-home policies were enacted, youth sport travel baseball tournaments were hosted (Allentuck, 2020; Berman, 2020). While opinions differ over the wisdom of this with public health on one side and economic impact on the other, the resilience youth sport travel in the US was once again evident during summer and fall 2020.

Over the long-term, our findings provide insights for DMOs and sports commissions responsible for attracting and managing youth sport tourism in their communities. The importance of negotiating a reasonable room-rate for these tournaments is underscored by the parents' decisions over where to stay. Hotels with amenities such as a pool and family-friendly restaurants either in the hotel or close-by is also emphasized, as well as hotels that can accommodate the entire team and their families with places to socialize. Indeed, major hotel companies such as Marriott International are partnering with youth sports complexes and are designing hotels with amenities such as rooms with bunkbeds for young athletes, laundry facilities for team apparel, and socializing spaces for parents (R. Blalock, CEO RADD Sports personal communication November 2nd, 2020). The results of this study both complement and add to the desired amenities for the ideal youth sport hotel. For DMOs, the timing and the tournament schedule are also identified as being important for communities wishing to encourage flow-on tourism. Finally, the importance of proximity to other tourist attractions such as beaches and shopping seems to be particularly important in encouraging tournaments. As such our findings provide insights as to which communities might be better able to leverage additional economic impact from youth sport tourism in the form of additional hotel-room nights, patronage at non-sport attractions, food, and retail establishments.

While findings of this study provide us with in-depth insights in the parents' own voices, a future research direction might be to expand the scope of this study to include more (US) states using quantitative methods to test the generalizability of the proposed model of the family travel-related decision-making processes in youth sport tourism.

Moreover, while the youth 'travel sport' as described in this study is a particularly US phenomenon, youth sport tourism exists in outside of the US (e.g. Schnitzer et al., 2017-Austria; Taks et al., 2009-Canada) and so another future line of research would be to investigate the similarities and differences associated with youth sport tourism in other countries particularly in terms of parental involvement whereby parents may not always accompany their children. Certainly, much of what is known is destination focused rather than family focused, and so there is room for more investigation into the latter.

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