

Understanding Parents' Perspectives of Youth Summer Hockey Camps using Importance-
Performance Analysis: A Consideration of Value Equity Drivers

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Abstract

Given the move towards sport specialization, hockey has become subject to year-round participation. Summer hockey camps provide an outlet for children to continue to work on their skills and stay on the ice during the off-season. As there are numerous hockey camps operating during the summer months, camps compete against each other for consumers. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was twofold. First, the aim was to understand what value equity factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp; second, the researcher hoped to ascertain if summer hockey camp operators are performing to the deemed level of importance of those factors as determined by the parents, and assist the camps in identifying and closing any perception gaps in their offering. Surveys were used in order to complete an importance-performance analysis; 148 parents who registered their child in a summer hockey camp in the Niagara Region in 2019 completed the survey. Through the findings it is clear that factors of quality were of utmost importance to parents; all but one factor of convenience and price were over-delivered. Overall, parents are generally satisfied with the performance of summer hockey camps in the Niagara Region.

Keywords: Hockey, Summer Camp, Customer Equity, Value Equity, Importance-Performance Analysis

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List of Acronyms

ACA: American Camp Association

CCA: Canadian Camping Association

CE: Customer Equity

CPQA: Camp Program Quality Assessment

IIHF: International Ice Hockey Federation

IPA: Importance Performance Analysis

NBA: National Basketball Association

NHL: National Hockey League

OHF: Ontario Hockey Federation

TAM: Team Association Model

TBAS: Team Brand Association Scale

VE: Value Equity

Chapter One – Introduction

Summer camps have a long history, dating back to the industrial revolution of the 18th century where youth attended camp to take a break from their daily life and to promote development (Omelan, et al., 2018). To this day, millions of children attend summer camps for similar reasons. Summer camps help to promote development, foster friendship, aid in goal setting, and allow children an opportunity to take a break from the pace of modern life (Omelan et al., 2018). As research has shown a decline in fitness levels for children during their summer break, summer camps can provide an outlet for children to remain physically active (Beets, et al., 2013).

North American Camp Landscape

The Canadian Camping Association (CCA) is the national federation dedicated to summer camps in Canada. The association provides information (e.g. camp benefits, accreditation, and research) for parents/guardians and camp directors; further, it supports camp research. Here, studies conducted by the CCA include topics such as “youth development, enhancement of the quality of life, creating and enabling the experience, and the role of ‘camp’ in its social, political and physical environment” (CCA, 2018, p.1). In the United States of America (USA), the American Camp Association (ACA) accredits summer camps across the country. The ACA provides camp news and publications for both parents and camp staff. They also provide accreditation for summer camps across the USA and have a searchable database containing 10,889 camp programs.

Every three years the ACA conducts research to uncover emerging issues that camps are facing. Most recently, the top seven emerging issues were:

#1 – Health and safety: mental, emotional, and social health. [and] increased medical needs

#2 – Staff training & recruitment: recruiting qualified staff

#3 – Parent communication: registration, health and safety. [and] messages, etc.

#4 – Diversity and inclusion: recruiting diverse campers and staff, catering to diverse needs, and program design, etc.

#5 – Revenue generation: identifying new revenue sources and being fiscally responsible

#6 – Marketing: competing with other youth programs, innovative marketing tactics, and promoting the value of camp

#7 – Evaluation of camper outcomes: measuring camper growth (Wilson, 2017)

With over 14 million children participating in camps each year in America (Barnett, et al., 2018), the base of potential consumers is evident. And, given the myriad offerings that exist for parents/kids to choose from, camp organizers need to determine how to make their programs stand out to their existing and potential consumers; here, differentiation is an important element for organizers to be mindful of. Indeed, issue #6 from the most recent ACA report specifically touches on this. In this context, Wilson (2017) notes the existing concerns and challenges facing camp management on how to make their camp be more noticeable in such competitive markets. While the ability to differentiate one's product is commonplace in mainstream management literature (Aaker, 1991; Berry, 1994; Smith, 1956) and has garnered attention more recently for service firms as well (Berry, 2000; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010; O'Cass & Grace, 2003), similar attention in the traditional camp space, generally, and for sport camps more specifically, is needed. Here, traditional camps are defined as those that provide established offerings and "cluster around the thing we think of first, whenever we think of camp: watersports, sailing, arts

and crafts, canoe tripping, singing songs, and natural science” (OurKids, 2019, p.14). These traditional camps are the most abundant offering within the camp marketplace; the second most prolific offering is sport-focused camps (Herbert & Hoffmann, 2019; Kotikova & Schwartzhoffova, 2016; Omelan et al., 2018). Sports camps are those that are taught by proficient coaches, where children learn specific skills, in specific sports (OurKids, 2019). For the current investigation, the focus will be on one sector of the sport camp marketplace; specifically, the researcher will concentrate on better understanding hockey camp deliverables within the Niagara Region in Ontario, Canada. Hockey was selected because of its fundamental centrality in Canada; this will be discussed further in the coming section.

Role of Hockey in Canada

Not only is ice hockey Canada’s national winter sport, but it is also a part of the fabric of the country’s culture (SportsNet, 2015). Indeed, MacGregor (2006) argues that “it is impossible to know a people until you know the game they play” (p. ix). In this case, you cannot know Canadians unless you know hockey. A study funded by Scotiabank found that 90% of Canadians consider hockey to be a cultural characteristic that defines Canada (O’Reilly et al., 2015). Indeed, in the province of Ontario, there are more hockey arenas than there are municipalities (Ontario MAH, n.d.; O’Reilly et al., 2015). These myriad arenas facilitated over 626,090 people to become registered to play hockey in Canada, in the 2017-18 season (Hockey Canada, 2018). In addition, Canadians who may not play hockey can still be involved with the sport through volunteerism, spectatorship, and fandom. For example, it has been noted that 150,000 people volunteer for hockey organizations annually in Canada (O’Reilly et al., 2015), and during the 2018 National Hockey League (NHL) playoffs, 24.6 million Canadians tuned in to watch the broadcasted series on television (Rody-Mantha, 2018).

Not only is there a large following and cultural interest for hockey in Canada, but there is also significant economic impact derived from the sport. O'Reilly et al. (2015) found the Canadian hockey industry to have a \$2.6 billion direct economic impact on communities nationwide. Much of the impact (47.1%) came from community and international tourism. Hockey Canada – the national governing body for hockey in the country – stated in their annual report that legacies of more than \$400,000 were left in Canadian communities during the 2017-2018 hockey season because of hosting events (Hockey Canada, 2018). To be sure, the game is important to the cultural, social and economic fabric of Canada (i.e., Allain, 2008; Boyd, 1998; Cuthbert & Russell, 1997; Dryden & MacGregor, 1989; Edwards & Kulczycki, 2018; Gruneau & Whitson, 1993; Landsberg, 2000; Oviden, 1999; Robinson, 1998; Scherer & Jackson, 2004). And, while the importance of hockey is routinely evidenced through viewership and spectator support at the highest levels of competition (i.e. Winter Olympic Games, World Championships, World Junior Championships), its significance is comparably noted at the amateur and grassroots level as well (Chard, Edwards, & Potwarka, 2015; Edwards & Kulczycki, 2018; Mason & Duquette, 2008).

North American Hockey Landscape

At the elite level, the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) ranks Canada's men's hockey team as number one in the world, and the women's team at number two (Hockey Canada, 2018). Canada's national team consist of players who have been trained and developed almost exclusively through the minor hockey system within the country. Here, Hockey Canada is divided into 13 branches that represent the varying geographic locations in Canada. The Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF) is the largest governing body with 215,120 registrants followed by Hockey Quebec with 94,391 (Hockey Canada, 2018). The geographic location of this research

falls within the OHF territory. All branches of Hockey Canada follow the same age categories; placing hockey registrants into eight age categories. These age categories, titles, and participant numbers of Hockey Canada can be seen in *Table 1*.

Table 1

Hockey Canada - Division Participants

Division	Age	Total Participants (2017-2018)	Total Participants (2018-2019)
Initiation	5 & 6	45,470	54,422
Tyke/Pre-Novice	7	22,002	22,378
Novice	8	72,419	69,504
Atom	9 & 10	85,171	88,091
Peewee	11 & 12	82,369	85,503
Bantam	13 & 14	72,117	72,596
Midget	15, 16 & 17	73,426	74,885
Juvenile	18 & 19	7,790	8,090

Statistics retrieved from Hockey Canada (2019).

While hockey is publicly accepted as “Canada’s game” (Holman, 2009), the continued development and importance of the game in the United States is increasing. For example, Silverman (2017) notes that, although Canada still has 90,000 more hockey players than the USA, the gap is continually closing. He believes that the increased participation in the USA is a result of Gary Bettman’s (National Hockey League [NHL] commissioner) expansion into non-traditional hockey markets in the States with warmer climates such as North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Arizona. These states have seen a 122%-213% rise in hockey participation from the 1998 to 2016 season (Silverman, 2017).

Here, USA Hockey is the governing body for hockey in the United States and is the benefactor of this noted expansion strategy in the world's top league; governance for the sport is divided into 12 districts. In the 12 districts, 34 affiliates provide support and governance (USA Hockey, 2018). Player classifications differ between Hockey Canada and USA Hockey. For example, in the USA, typical names such as Atom, Peewee and Bantam are replaced with U10, U12, and U14; players above the age of 18 are classified as junior which is broken down into Tier I (the most competitive), Tier II, and Tier III. A breakdown of age categories, titles, and participation numbers of USA Hockey can be seen in *Table 2*. Players make up a total of 562,145 people with membership to USA Hockey. Outside of the participants themselves, USA Hockey has membership for 58,645 coaches, 25,330 officials, and 532,591 volunteers (USA Hockey, 2018).

Table 2

USA Hockey - Division Participants

Division	Age	Total Participants (2017-2018)
U8 (including 6 & under)	5, 6, 7 & 8	122,962
U10	9 & 10	64,530
U12	11 & 12	62,960
U14	13 & 14	59,106
U16	15 & 16	43,994
U18	17 & 18	28,962
Junior	19 & 20	179,631

Statistics retrieved from USA Hockey (2018).

Hockey Camps

Hockey, like many sports in the twenty-first century, has become subject to year-round participation given the move towards sport specialization that is prevalent today (Sheppard, et al., 2020). To be sure, summer hockey camps provide children with a great opportunity to improve their skills during the off-season and to keep busy while out of school (USA Hockey, 2016). Within this milieu, and because of the consistent demand for development by players and parents, numerous hockey camps have emerged and operate during the summer months (Strashin, 2017). This emergence has created a competitive landscape, where players/parents have many options in hockey camp offerings, from which to choose. Of interest, although there is a wide collection of hockey camps in North America, the ACA only accredits 26 camps that offer ice-hockey as an activity; none, intriguingly, are hockey specific. USA Hockey offers an annual camp guide that has a list of youth summer hockey camps. Here, they list 52 camps, with one located in the Niagara Region – *Can/Am Hockey Camps* (USA Hockey Magazine, 2018). When one considers the landscape north of the border, *Our Kids* is the leading Canadian source for summer camp information. The Our Kids database of camps includes 14 hockey-specific camps, one of which is in the Niagara Region – *Ridley College Advanced Performance Hockey Camp*. While these accreditation sources are valuable, their list of offerings are wildly incomplete. Indeed, numerous other hockey camps, operating in this geographic locale, exist. Here, when one does a Google search, no less than ten hockey camps are advertised and run in the summer months in the Niagara Region. The Niagara Region was chosen for this study due to access and existing relationships between the researcher and the camps.

Given the myriad offerings, differentiating and becoming the “camp of choice” is a challenge for camp operators. Compounding the challenge is the consideration of the actual

consumer; while youth are the attendees of summer sports (hockey) camps, it is the parents who are also consumers in this exchange transaction. Indeed, when examining youth programs, parents have often been referred to as the decision makers (Chard et al., 2015; Costa, et al., 2004; Walsh, et al., 2017; Wigfield & Chard, 2018). Thus, if parents are the ones making the decision to register their child for youth sports events/participation, management should have a focus on the parents' perception of the experience too, not just the child's (Chard et al., 2015). One theoretical paradigm that has been used in the past, to better understand consumption decisions, is the Customer Equity framework; this will be introduced briefly next.

Customer Equity

Customer equity (CE) has been described as a great approach for organizations to determine which factors are most important in their industry and to employ metrics in order to contend with competitors (Rust, et al., 2000). The concept of customer equity management is geared towards acquisition and retention (Bayon, et al., 2002; Hanssens, et al., 2008). Indeed, in order to grow a business, organizational managers must first acquire customers; then, the organizational leaders must deliver against expectations to retain them and/or encourage future repeat purchases thereby increasing the value of the customer base (Blattberg & Deighton, 1996). In this respect, Wilson (2017) found that camp operators struggle to make their camps stand out in a competitive market; thus, it is proposed that utilization of the customer equity framework can be applied to the camp context to help directors determine where they should focus their resources. Here, CE is driven by three components: value equity, brand equity, and retention equity; each, individually and in concert contributing to a create a sum of CE in the minds of consumers. Each component will be explained in detail in the literature review.

In the context of camp management, not only must camp operators try and make their camp stand out, to acquire customers in a competitive market (Wilson, 2017), they must also be able to deliver against customers' expectations in order to create consumer satisfaction. Here, it has been noted that quality, in the service industry, has a positive link with customer satisfaction, which in turn influences consumer loyalty (Carranza, et al., 2018). Thus, in order for camp management to deliver upon customers' expectations, they must understand what parents want, and perceive to be a 'quality' offering when considering camp attendance for their children; this aligns nicely with the CE framework. And, if camp management have a thorough understanding of parent's expectations regarding this component of CE, they can then use that knowledge to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, increase acquisitions, and ultimately increase retention and word-of-mouth marketing.

Thus, when considering CE in the Canadian context of hockey camps, the purpose of this study was twofold. First, the aim was to understand what value equity factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp; second, the researcher hoped to ascertain if summer hockey camp operators are performing to the deemed level of importance of those factors as determined by the parents, and assist the camps in identifying and closing any perception gaps in their offering.

Research Questions

- i) What value equity factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp?
- ii) How are summer hockey camps, in the Niagara Region, performing on these same factors, as determined by the parents?

The value of this research is two-fold. First, this study contributes to the field of research on customer equity in sport organizations; the literature review will provide evidence of the research gap on this topic. Here, it is a goal of the researcher to spark further insight into the area of customer equity in youth sports, as most of the current literature on this matter focuses on professional and intercollegiate sport. Second, the practical implications of this study are noteworthy; indeed, the findings should contribute to practitioners and provide hockey camp organizations in the Niagara Region with results and recommendations that they can use to increase their customer equity.

Chapter Breakdown

The following sections of this thesis include a thorough review of the literature on the topics of interest, as well as a breakdown of the methodology that will be used for the study. Specifically, the customer equity framework in general (value equity, brand equity, and retention equity), is introduced. Particularly, how and where this framework has been used in sport, as well as how summer camps have been evaluated in the past will be further discussed in the literature review. Here, given the centrality of value equity (VE) drivers as the major focus of this research, literature on VE elements including quality, price, and convenience will be reviewed in detail. Second, the methodology section will break down the method of data collection, research sample, recruiting procedures, and data analysis processes. The data is then analyzed and discussed in the following sections, ending with recommendations to industry practitioners, limitations from the study, as well as ideas for future research.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background on the foundation of knowledge presently available in relation to the current investigation. Here, literature is discussed to provide context to the current study and discuss its contributions to facilitate understanding, and to situate the current investigation within a broader context relative to the problem at hand. Specifically, the current study will be framed using the customer equity theoretical perspective; here, given the exploratory nature of the investigation and the primary nature of the value equity dimension in the CE process, where value equity drivers are foundational for a customer's relationship and exchange with an organization, this dimension provides the focus of the current study. Indeed, "if the customer does not receive value from the firm, the best brand strategy and the strongest retention strategies will have little effect" (Rust et al., 2000, p.69).

Customer Equity

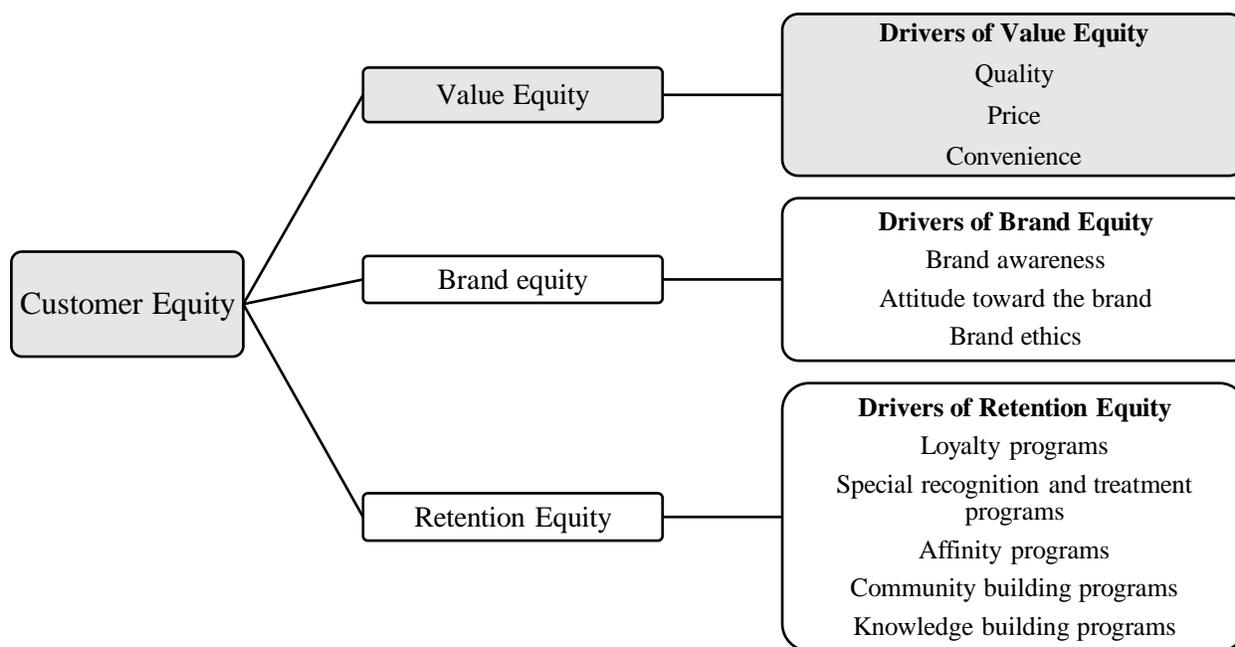
Rust et al. (2000) established the customer equity framework as an approach to "understanding the business of the firm that is based upon the key asset that separates one firm in an industry from another – its customers" (p.77). It is also an approach used by management to achieve acquisition and retention goals (Bayon et al., 2002; Hanssens et al., 2008). Balancing the costs of customer acquisition and retention initiatives are important tasks when it comes to marketing and growing a business. According to Blattberg and Deighton (1996) the balance of acquisition and retention is at its greatest when customer equity is maximized.

The CE framework shows that customer equity is caused by, or derived from, three main drivers: brand, retention, and value (see *Figure 1*). Here, the framework allows managers to identify drivers that are most important to consumers when they are making a purchase decision, specific to any industry and/or organization. By knowing which drivers are most important to

consumers, organizational leaders can then identify their “critical strengths and hidden vulnerabilities” (Lemon, Rust, & Zeithaml, 2001, p.1). By knowing which drivers have the greatest impact, managers can then focus their resources more efficiently and strategically into those areas (Rust, Lemon, & Zeithaml, 2001; Keller, 1993). A detailed analysis of each of the customer equity drivers follows with specific attention given to value equity and each of its sub-dimensions.

Figure 1

Customer Equity Framework (Rust, et al., 2000)



Brand Equity

Numerous organizations carry significant assets on their balance sheet including cash, investments, property, plant, and equipment; while these assets are undeniably valuable, it has been argued that the most significant asset of an organization is its brand (Kaynak, et al., 2007). To better understand and manage this intangible asset, Keller (1993) created a conceptual framework for customer-based brand equity (CBBE) to assist managers when developing and

managing their brands. In his framework, brand knowledge is conceptualized to include brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is “the starting point in developing equity, providing the anchor to which other associations can be attached” (Gladden, et al., 1998, p.2). Brand awareness entails brand recognition – when a consumer can confirm a brand, once given a clue – and brand recall – the ability to produce a brand from memory (Keller, 1993). Brand image examines the type, favourability, strength and uniqueness of brand associations (Keller, 1993).

A brand association is anything one links to a brand from their memory (Aaker, 1991). Keller (1993) identifies three types of brand associations: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Attributes are descriptive characteristics of the product/service that are either product, or non-product related. The non-product related attributes are price information, packaging or product appearance information, user imagery, and usage imagery (Keller, 1993). Often, attribute-related brand associations are developed before associations that are benefit related (Daniels, et al., 2019). Benefits are the personal value attached to the product/service; they can be functional, experiential, or symbolic. Functional benefits are related to features of a product. Experiential benefits are how it feels to use the product/service. Lastly, symbolic benefits relate to extrinsic benefits of consuming a product/service (Keller, 1993). The third type of brand associations are brand attitudes, which can be defined as “consumers’ overall evaluations of a brand” (Keller, 1993, p.4).

Branding is important to firms as it is a way to attract new consumers. Brand equity can be defined as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (Aaker, 1991, p.27). The five categories of assets and liabilities that make up Aaker’s

(1991) brand equity concept are brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets. This focus on brand equity is the most used form of brand management in sports (Suckow, 2009). Brand management in sport allows managers to communicate their brand's value and benefits to their consumers (Wear, et al., 2018).

Historically, there are two ways that brand equity can be conceptualized: financial-based and consumer-based. Financial-based brand equity is the “value that the brand creates for the firm for accounting or merger-and-acquisition purposes” (Maderer, et al., 2018, p.321). Consumer-based brand equity is “the value that customers recognize in a brand” (Mills & Williams, 2016, p.121). It is important to understand that brand equity can be positive or negative. When brand equity is positive, the brand holds a marketing advantage over competitors, whereas negative brand equity means that an organization is at a disadvantage in terms of marketing (Berry, 2000; Keller, 1993).

Rust et al. (2000) identify three drivers of brand equity in their customer equity framework: customer-based awareness, customer attitude toward the brand, and customer perception of brand ethics. The framework identifies four situations when brand equity matters most: low involvement purchases with simple decision processes, when the product is highly visible to others, and when experiences associated with the product can be passed from one individual to the next. The fourth, when it is difficult to evaluate the quality of a service prior to consumption, is the most relatable to summer hockey camps. Berry (2000) states “strong brands are the surrogates when the company offers no fabric to touch, no trousers to try on, no watermelons or apples to scrutinize, no automobile to test drive” (p.128). This focus on service branding applies to the current investigation where customers are not able to test hockey camps before signing their children up, the first time; they must pay the \$500+ registration fee before

the child can partake in any of the organized activities. Therefore, parents must rely on their subjective evaluation of various hockey camp brands in order to decide which camp to send their child to.

Branding in the service industry is crucial as it is inherently difficult to differentiate one brand from another based on physical characteristics. “A strong service brand is essentially a promise of future satisfaction. It is a blend of what the company says the brand is, what others say, and how the company performs the service – all from the consumer’s perspective” (Berry, 2000, p.129). Essentially, organizations can market a company as much as they want, but the customers’ experience with the service is the most powerful when it comes to brand equity. Service quality has a direct influence on satisfaction, which in turn also affects future intentions with the service brand (Murray & Howat, 2002).

Retention Equity

The next driver of customer equity in Rust et al.’s (2000) model is retention equity. Here, retention equity is defined as “the customer’s tendency to stick with the brand, above and beyond objective and subjective assessments of the brand” (Rust, et al. 2000, p.95). Indeed, retention equity requires more than just a subjective evaluation (Holehonnur, et al., 2009). According to Rust, et al., (2000) retention equity matters most when:

The benefits the customer associates with the loyalty program are significantly greater than the actual benefits. . . the community associated with the product or service is as important as the product or service. . . the learning relationship created between the firm and the customer becomes as important as the provision of the product. . . customer action is required to discontinue the service. (p.98-99)

In some situations, loyalty programs can create high retention rates even when competitors offer very similar products and services (Blattberg, et al., 2001). Loyalty programs link usage with rewards in order to generate retention. Loyalty rewards may include rebates, discounts, points, additional services etc.; all are designed to influence customers by building a long-term relationship with the brand (Chahal & Bala, 2017).

Loyalty rewards, to create retention, do not always have to be monetary in value. In fact, Rust et al. (2000) found that customers often value other benefits over monetary rewards, such as increased customer service, recognition, and priority access. It is essential that companies understand how they can retain their customers and what retention strategies have the most impact on their customers. As acquiring new customers is costly for companies, it is important to implement retention strategies, which are typically inexpensive (Chahal & Bala, 2017).

Retention equity is most important when a continued relationship and repeat purchases are commonplace. Given summer hockey camps typically run for one to four weeks of the year, and there is no ongoing community associated with the camps throughout the year outside of these weeks, there is little retention-based factors identified in the literature in this context.

Value Equity

Value is typically known as the perception of what is given up for what is being received by a consumer (Gladden et al., 1998; Murray & Howat, 2002; Rust, et al., 2000). Value can be defined by customers in four ways: the price is low, what they want in a product, quality versus price, and what is given up for what they get (Rust et al., 2000). A rule of social exchange theory is that a relationship must be a mutual commitment containing reciprocity during a transaction/exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976). This is very important as consumers will, often, only exchange with organizations if they are pleased with what they get in

return for their investment/purchase (Suckow, 2009). Through the customer equity framework, scholars propose that the three drivers of value equity are quality, price, and convenience (Lemon et al., 2001). It should be noted that quality, price, and convenience do not define value, rather the value of a product/service is influenced by those factors (Holehonnur et al., 2009).

Value equity matters the most when:

There are or can be differences between competing products. . . purchases with complex decision processes. . . business-to-business purchases. . . innovative products and services. . . (Rust et al. 2000, p.72-73)

Given that summer hockey camp operators, in specific geographic regions, generally compete for a finite consumer base, if camp operators better understood the value drivers deemed most important to their customers, they could differentiate themselves and stand out from each other. As the American Camp Association (ACA) identified, one of the top issues facing camp management is that they do not know how to differentiate themselves from competitors in the market (Wilson, 2017); clearly, better understanding of value drivers would seem to be of utility. Through better understanding the value drivers, a goal of this study was to help summer hockey camp management understand how they can stand out in a competitive market by evaluating their value equity. In order to better understand VE drivers (i.e., quality, price, and convenience) each are closely examined next.

Quality

Quality is based on what the customer perceives (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality is formed by four components: service delivery, service product, service environment, and the physical product (when it exists) (Holehonnur et al., 2009). The physical product is a tangible good sold by a company while the service product is a service that is delivered (i.e. hockey

camp). Service delivery refers to how a company delivers their service product in terms of dimensions such as responsiveness and assurance (Lemon et al., 2000). Lastly, the service environment is the area surrounding where a service takes place, including the provided facilities.

The quality of sport and recreation is often examined from a service perspective (Chelladurai & Chang, 2000; Ko & Pastore, 2005; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008). Service quality can be defined as “the difference between what is expected from each of the service dimensions and what a consumer perceives he or she receives from them” (MacKay & Crompton, 1988, p.46). Many scales exist to measure service quality, e.g. the Retail Service Quality Scale (Dabholkar, et al., 1996), E-S-Qual (Parasuraman, et al., 2005), and SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Some of the more known scales of quality and quality of youth programs are the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, et al., 1988) and Program Quality Assessment in Youth (Bean, et al., 2018).

SERVQUAL is an instrument used to measure perceived service quality (Kaura, et al., 2015). This 22-item scale was developed to measure consumers’ opinions around perceived quality of services offered by firms (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). Here, there are five dimensions that consumers use when evaluating services: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Berry et al., 1990). Prior to its creation, though there were scales to measure ‘product’ quality, Parasuraman et al. (1988) wanted to create SERVQUAL recognizing services had/have their own unique characteristics such as: intangibility, simultaneity, heterogeneity, perishability, and imitability (Chelladurai & Chang, 2000; Tatikonda & Zeithaml, 2001).

As each service has their own unique characteristics, it is important to note a scale specially aimed at youth sports. In order to determine if children are gaining developmental

experiences from sporting programs, the Program Quality Assessment in Youth Sport was developed. Here, the following ten elements are measured:

- (a) Physical Safety; (b) Psychological Safety; (c) Appropriate Structure; (d) Supportive Relationships; (e) Opportunities to Belong; (f) Positive Social Norms; (g) Support for Efficacy and Mattering; (h) Opportunities for Physical and Sport Skill-Building; (i) Opportunities for Like Skill-Building; (j) Integration of Family, School, and Community Efforts. (Bean, et al., 2018, p.460-461)

Through use of this assessment tool, it was found that youth who participated in high quality sport programs were more likely to have their psychological needs, satisfaction, and experiences met, over counterparts who attended low quality programs (Bean et al., 2018). Those in high quality programs also reported fewer negative experiences (Bean et al., 2018).

The second driver of value equity is price, which is discussed next.

Price

Price can be defined as what a consumer must give up in order to receive a product or service (Zeithaml, 1988). An economic phenomenon around pricing was created in 1776 by Adam Smith; here, it was determined that price is established by the supply and demand relationship (Zimmer, 2017). In order for companies to achieve their business strategy, they must look at supply and demand and use applicable pricing strategies. For example, companies can be competitive with their pricing by offering everyday low prices, having discounts and sales, as well as by having payment plan options (Holehonnur et al., 2009; Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2000). By offering everyday low prices, a vendor chooses to sell their product at a single low price that matches their expected demand (Ozer & Zheng, 2016; Tom & Ruiz, 1997; White & Yuan, 2012). Other sellers may choose to have low prices through use of a markdown strategy;

here, sellers will sell their product at one price during one period and then lower it in another period, creating a temporary bargain (Ozer & Zheng, 2016; Rust et al., 2000). Another low-price strategy is price matching; here, a seller promises to match the lowest price guaranteed (White & Yuan, 2012). A downfall of everyday low-pricing, discounts, and price matching is the perceived relationship between price and quality. Some people argue that a low price represents a low-quality product or service and that customers 'get what they pay for' (Gneezy, et al., 2014; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2013). To navigate this spectrum of lowering prices to attract consumers, company managers can implement payment plans, while maintaining higher prices, in order to stay competitive (Rust et al., 2000; Holehonnur et al., 2009). A payment plan may include paying small increments at a time or having a promotion such as no interest until a certain date.

When examining price from a sport marketing context, there are four factors that should be considered: the consumer's demographics and what they value, competitors offerings and prices, costs involved for the company to produce the product or to offer a service, and the external climate (Armstrong, 2014; Pitts & Stotlar, 2007). Most of the literature on pricing sport services and goods has had a focus on strategies for game tickets (Chang, et al., 2016; Kobritz, & Palmer, 2011; Parris, et al., 2012). Price in the context of this study will be focused on summer hockey camp registration.

Pricing occurs when there is more than one party; here, price is essentially a part, or component, of a transaction with two sides. In the context of a summer hockey camp, the two sides would be the parents and the hockey camp management. This two-sided transaction is part of the social exchange theory, involving mutually contingent and rewarding interactions that produce obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976). When considering what the consumer in an exchange must give up in order to receive a product/service, the most typical

sacrifice is monetary (Rust et al., 2000); the monetary value is characteristically the stated or negotiated price. Though price is typically viewed as an economic value, in the exchange relationship there are many other resources: love, status, information, money, goods and services (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Another resource consumers' may trade off is their time, associated with convenience.

Convenience

Convenience of a product/service is typically associated with the location of a company, its accessibility, and/or the ease of use (Rust et al., 2000; Holehonnur et al., 2009). Convenience can be defined as “the ability to reduce consumers’ non-monetary costs (i.e. time, energy and effort) when purchasing or using goods and services” (Chang & Polonsky, 2012, p. 107).

Seiders, Berry, and Gresham (2000) came up with four types of convenience: access, search, possession, and transaction. Berry, Seiders, and Grewal (2002) expanded on these pillars by proposing five types of convenience: decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post benefit. *Decision convenience* relates to the time and effort it takes to make the purchase decision; *transaction convenience* refers to the time and effort of completing a transaction; *access convenience* is how much time and effort are spent getting to the location of the service; *benefit convenience* relates to receiving the actual service; lastly, *post-benefit convenience* relates to contact with a service provider after the purchase has been completed. Several scholars have examined the impact of service convenience on organizations and consumers by using the above five types of convenience (Chang & Polonsky, 2012; Garcia-Fernandez et al., 2018; Roy, et al., 2018).

Service convenience is also prevalent in sport. In the fitness sector, Garcia-Fernandez et al. (2018) determined service convenience affects the value perceived by clients based on “time

invested in getting to the facility, effort, wait time, and orientation of product to the market” (p. 257). In youth sports, when understanding characteristics of preferred hockey tournaments, time management and travel requirements were important to parents (Wigfield & Chard, 2018). These characteristics relate to access convenience as parents consider how far they must travel to tournaments from their home as well as how far the arena is to other facilities such as hotels and restaurants (Wigfield & Chard, 2018). Time of day is also important; this included how early the first game of a tournament was as well as the wait time between games (Wigfield & Chard, 2018). Now that quality, price, and convenience have been discussed, studies examining customer equity directly in sport will be reviewed next.

Customer Equity in Sport

As “sport fulfills higher order needs of social expression and personal fulfillment” (Gladden & Funk, 2002, p.74), it is important for sport marketers to focus on the customers’ experience – and their own customer equity – to capitalize on acquisition and retention benefits. Williams and Pedersen (2012) “set the foundation” for research on brand equity in the North American participatory sector of sport (Mills & Williams, 2016, p.122). However, a majority of the research related to customer equity in sport often concentrates on professional and intercollegiate sports (Gladden et al., 1998; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Kaynak et al., 2007; Ross, 2006; Ross, et al., 2007; Ross, et al., 2009; Suckow, 2009; Wear et al., 2018).

Yoshida and Gordon (2012) expanded on the focus in professional sports by investigating how the three drivers of customer equity influenced behavioural intentions of people attending a professional soccer game in Japan. They found that brand and relationship equity had a positive effect on behavioural intentions, however, value equity did not have a large impact. Indeed, early on in customer relationships, perceived value is most prevalent; once a consumer has developed

a strong relationship, their attitude towards the brand then overcomes the effect of value (Johnson, et al., 2006). Of interest, in the Yoshida and Gordon (2012) study, the effects of relationship and brand equity were stronger for males rather than females and, similarly stronger for younger consumers (Yoshida & Gordon, 2012). The current study will contribute to the field of knowledge by expanding understanding in customer equity for youth participatory sport organizations. To best frame the current investigation, existing models and scales focused on brand equity in professional and intercollegiate sport will be discussed first, followed by a focus on customer equity in youth sport.

When examining brand equity, brand associations are often referred to; these are the perceptions that people hold of a specific product or service (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Gladden and Funk (2002) created the Team Association Model (TAM) which provides support for 16 constructs that sport brands are associated with. These brand associations are meant to capture the experiences and emotions that go along with consuming sport. As the sport product is unpredictable, it must be managed accordingly (Gladden & Funk, 2002). TAM was created from Keller's (1993) three classifications of brand associations: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. In Gladden and Funk's (2002) TAM, attributes are measured by "product delivery, logo, stadium, success, head coach, management, tradition, and star player" (p.63). Benefits are measured by "escape, nostalgia, pride in place, peer group acceptance, and identification" (p.64), and attitude is measured by "knowledge, importance and affect" (p.64). By conducting a confirmatory analysis, Gladden and Funk (2002) established that their 16 constructs underlay brand associations in team sports. As sport is largely intangible, it is said that functional benefits are not very applicable to sports brand associations, thus, Gladden and Funk (2002) focused on symbolic and experiential benefits.

Gladden et al. (1998) created their own conceptual framework to assess brand equity in intercollegiate athletics. The factors they used were very similar to the TAM and are broken up into three categories. The first, team related antecedents, consist of elements such as: success, head coach, and star player. University related antecedents is the second category made up of items such as: reputation and tradition, conference and schedule, and entertainment package/product delivery. Lastly, market related antecedents consist of elements such as local/regional media arrangements, geographic location, competitive forces, and support (Gladden et al., 1998). They found that successful competition is the most powerful when it comes to perceived quality, however, it is acknowledged that success is hard to control (Gladden et al., 1998). By grouping the antecedents into three categories, one can see where the different forms of brand equity originate in the case of intercollegiate athletics, most of which are controllable.

Kaynak et al. (2007) also created a framework, inspired by Gladden and Funk's work. Consistent with the literature, their framework included product related attributes – success, star player, head coach, and management, and non-product related attributes – logo, stadium, product delivery, and tradition. Their framework also included functional benefits – escape, symbolic benefits – fan identification and peer group acceptance, and experiential benefits – nostalgia and pride. The purpose of the study was to link brand loyalty to brand associations. Brand loyalty is an important dimension as it cannot be established prior to purchase and it indicates a consumer's preference (Kaynak et al., 2007; Mills & Williams, 2016). Brand loyalty is a consequence of brand equity (Mills & Williams, 2016; Wear et al., 2018). The elements of loyalty compared to brand associations included by Kaynak et al. (2007) were behavioural

loyalty – attendance, involvement with the team, and involvement with the club, and attitudinal loyalty – attitudinal and intentional.

The first study to introduce a brand equity model specifically to the sport of hockey was done by Ross et al., (2009). The purpose of their study was to “examine the relationship that team identification has upon the consumers of an intercollegiate ice hockey brand” (p.198). Ross et al. (2009) used surveys as it allowed them to collect a high number of responses (349 were useable) from sports fans. The associations that Ross et al., (2009) identify are helpful for marketers to know where they should focus their resources on, from a fan (intercollegiate) perspective. This study relied on the existing TBAS which examines 11 brand associations: non-player personnel, team success, team history, stadium community, team-play, brand mark, organizational attribute, concessions, social interaction, rivalry, and commitment (Ross, 2006; Ross et al., 2007). Ross et al. (2009) asserted that brand management research had mainly focused on professional sport organizations; here they felt a future study would be to examine brand in a youth league setting. The current study will help to fill this gap as it addresses youth hockey camps, rather than a youth hockey league specifically.

Customer Equity and Youth Sports

For managers of hockey organizations to create strong perceptions of their brand, they need to promote the uniqueness of their hockey offering (Suckow, 2009) and understand consumers’ desires. For example, Wigfield and Chard (2018) interviewed representative (rep) hockey parents to understand brand associations of minor hockey tournaments. Four attributes were found to have an influence on the brand of minor hockey tournaments: “competition, tournament operations, accommodations, and travel requirements” (Wigfield & Chard, 2018, p.183). By understanding these brand associations, managers can operate their tournaments with

the associations that are most important to their consumers. Similarly, hockey camps are service brands like hockey tournaments; they also attract the same consumers: parents of children in youth hockey. In the same vein, Chard et al. (2015) conducted interviews with parents to reveal the attributes and consequences that are perceived to accompany youth rep hockey participation. They found that the structure of rep hockey, the competition/challenge derived from this setting, and team environment were the most compelling factors of rep youth hockey.

Youth hockey camps fall under the umbrella designation of sports camps, which is the most common camp focus after traditional camps (Kotikova & Schwartzhoffova, 2016; Omelan et al., 2018). Omelan et al. (2018) believe that the popularity of the sport focused camps is due to the fact that camps are trying to place importance on an active and healthy lifestyle. Costa et al. (2004) evaluated the service quality of youth sports camps in Greece. They did this by surveying both the children who attended camps as well as their parents. Through analysis of the survey results, Costa et al. (2004) found five factors affected the participants when they evaluated the service of sport camps, and four factors affected parents. The factors resulting from the children were the training program, contentment-intention, safety and convenience in the facilities, tangibles, and relations with the coaches. The four factors influencing parents were accommodation installations, coaches, contentment-intention, and access-communication. It is evident that the parents and children use different factors to evaluate athletic camp service quality as the only item they both mentioned was contentment-intention. Contentment-intention means that they were content with the camp experience and would attend again and/or recommend the camp to others (Costa, et al., 2004).

Due to increased participation numbers and the demand of investment that parents place on children's sports, Walsh et al. (2017) suggest that more research should take a marketing

perspective towards youth sports (i.e. what marketing initiatives work well to meet short- and long-term goals of youth participatory sport programs). In their study they explored how children's participation in a National Basketball Association (NBA) youth camp, can increase their parents' identification with that specific NBA team. They found that parents' team identification with the NBA team did increase after their child participated in a team's youth camp. Walsh et al. (2017) identified that additional research needs to be done to determine what elements of the camps influence the consumers' behaviour (i.e., purchase intention, re-purchase, affinity, etc.) most. It is evident that a sport program can benefit a child, as the participant, and also provide utility to the parent, as a consumer as well; thus, parents' perspectives should be understood.

To be sure, this perspective has been taken before; when examining youth sport participation from a brand perspective, parents are often the ones being interviewed and surveyed (Chard et al., 2015; Costa et al., 2004; Walsh et al., 2017; Wigfield & Chard, 2018). Although children are the ones using the sports service, parents are the ones who are making the actual purchase (Wigfield & Chard, 2018). As parents are the ones making the decision to register their child for youth sports, management should have a focus on the parents' perception of the experience too, not just the child's (Chard et al., 2015).

Summer Camp Evaluation

The American Camp Association (ACA) provides a Camp Program Quality Assessment (CPQA), which is a short form survey that helps summer camp organizations' management assess the quality of their camps. The CPQA contains five subscales: "staff behaviour; emotional safety; camper choice, planning, and reflection; learning at camp; and nature" (Bennett, 2018). Bennett (2018) developed a study to pilot test the CPQA; here the CPQA questions were found

to be reliable after testing. Bennett (2018) also found that all subscales on the CPQA were closely correlated, meaning if a respondent ranked one area as high, the rest of the areas were ranked considerably close.

Most of the camp research has focused on youth development outcomes (Bialeschki, 2008; Bialeschki, et al., 2007; Henderson, 2018; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018). Henderson (2018) criticizes that past camp research is generic; historically, the sentiment was that “a camp is a camp. Yet, as more is learned about camp experiences, different groups clearly have distinctive experiences and some additional specific outcomes” (Henderson, 2018, p.319). Thus, research on camp experiences can be improved upon by recognizing distinctive groups and their wants and needs.

Omelan et al. (2018) researched summer camps from the children’s and organizer’s perspective, in Poland. Results showed that the children paid least attention to “the price, the camp location, and the standard of camp facilities” whereas they ranked the following factors of great importance: “atmosphere in the group, presence of friends, friendly instructors and animators, friendly educators, and an interesting programme” (Omelan, et al., 2018, p.34-35). Although participants were the ones surveyed, Omelan et al. (2018) recognized that parents are the ones who make the purchasing decision. After interviewing camp organizers, who gave their input on what is most important to parents, it was found that items of importance to parents when choosing a camp have little significance to their children, such as price, facilities, and safety (Omelan et al., 2018). Another interesting finding from this study was that qualifications of camp staff are often ignored by children and parents; however, camp organizers know that their camps success is dependent on their staff’s qualifications (Omelan et al., 2018).

From a North American perspective, Krotish, Krotish, and Bowers (2005) outlined different factors that need to be implemented when designing a strength and conditioning summer camp for youth. Though these factors were specifically used to design a strength and conditioning camp, they can be applied to other summer youth sports camps. When designing a camp of this manner, the following factors need to be considered:

facilities, participants, staff members, length and duration of the camp, a schedule outline, provisions for meals, camp topics, fitness assessments, guest lectures, camp fees, camp budget, parental involvement, and concluding the camp. (Krotish, et al., 2005, p.83)

Lehto, Fu, Kirillova, and Bi (2017) used the push pull framework to understand what Chinese parents look for when they send their children to a summer camp in the USA. Push factors in this study, which are the benefits sought from going to camp generally, were social benefits, personal growth, educational benefits and cultural benefits. Pull factors for summer camps included the destination of the camp as well as the camp program itself. Pull factors used were educational resources, supporting facilities and services, destination attractions, program structure, staff quality, program image, and accommodation and dining (Lehto et al., 2017). Other attributes from Henderson et al.'s (2007) research can also be considered pull factors, "camp session length, staff training, staff-camper ratio, developmental activities, physical safety, staff supervision level, and cultural sensitivity and competence" (Lehto et al., 2017, p.5). This study reveals that summer camp managers can capitalize upon myriad pull factors in order to cultivate an efficient marketing campaign.

Choosing a Hockey Camp

When deciding on a summer hockey camp, USA Hockey (2016) identifies five important items to consider: location, coach to player ratio, playing ability, time spent on ice, and

references. Hockey Canada has also released a list of criteria that should be considered when choosing a summer hockey camp. Hockey Canada's (2007) list includes 24 items:

Ads and promotional literature, direct inquiries, previous attendance, fees, safety, the head instructor, the staff of instructors, staff screening process, hours per day of on ice instruction, skills, tactics and team play taught, scrimmage time and games, classroom instruction, dryland training, videotape, other instructional activities, grouping players of similar skills and needs, on-ice pupil/instructor ratio, amount of individual instruction, report card, meal menus, sleeping accommodations, off-ice supervision, skate sharpening facilities, and medical and first aid facilities.

When choosing a hockey camp, all of the factors above are considered pull factors. This study is underpinned using Push-Pull theory. Here, the conceptualization is that parents want to send their kid(s) to camp – a Push factor. Next, they must decide, amongst a range of offerings (i.e., traditional, educational, sports, etc.) that present myriad attributes and benefits that influence the specific camp choice – Pull factors. This theoretical framework is explained in more detail below.

Push-Pull Framework

The push-pull framework has been a useful framework for understanding the perceived appeal of summer camps (Lehto et al., 2017). The push-pull framework explains the behaviours of people making two separate decisions (Klenosky, 2002). Although these decisions are technically separate, conceptually, they can be simultaneous; frequently the pull factors will reinforce the push factors (Klenosky, 2002; Newland & Aicher, 2018). Push factors have been found to be mainly intrinsic in nature (Newland & Aicher, 2018) and can aptly be defined as forces that lead people to make a decision (Klenosky, 2002). For example, the desire to travel

away from one's home environment is a push factor for booking a vacation (Klenosky, 2002). On the other hand, pull factors are typically extrinsic (Newland & Aicher, 2018) and refer to the attributes of the offering. For example, a tourism study might consider the destination, climate, atmosphere, and historic and cultural attractions (Klenosky, 2002); in the case of the current investigation, the destination would be a hockey camp.

Wigfield and Chard (2018) used the push-pull framework to help understand the motivations of parents when discussing their preferred choice of hockey tournaments. In their case, push factors related to the reasons why a team enters a tournament; pull factors were related to the attributes of the tournaments themselves. Similarly, the push-pull framework can be used to understand why parents sign their children up for summer hockey camp and what attributes of the camp are most appealing. Newland and Aicher (2018) also found the push-pull framework to be useful in a sporting context as sport motivations have an important role in the decisions of destination choices made by athletes.

Decision Making

Decisions are something that people make every day, essentially, everything we do is the result of a decision that was made. The majority of everyday decisions that people make typically have small risks attached to them (Buchanan & O'Connell, 2016). However, even those small risk decisions still require people to make trade-offs. An example of a small risk decision is getting an iced coffee in the morning; with trade-offs such as time, money, and potentially even moral obligation involved. It takes more time to make an iced coffee at home versus buying from a shoppe, however, it is cheaper, and you can avoid the single-use plastic cups. If you decide to go to a shoppe, do you go to a chain that is cheaper and faster, or to a locally owned café that may be of better quality and is supporting local? This is just one example of the many

small risk decisions one must make each day. These types of decisions often require us to trade-off intangibles, which according to Saaty (2008), defies human understanding. Theories on decision making come from a variety of disciplines such as mathematics, psychology, and economics, thus there is a wide array of literature on the topic (Edwards, 1954).

Technology and the internet play a large roll in decision making. When companies went to the internet to sell their products, they thought this would give them an advantage, however, this allowed consumers more power to decide who to purchase from (Buchanan & O'Connell, 2016). For example, parents have myriad online sources available to help them choose which camp is best for their child; they also have lots of criteria they can use to sort through their choices (Galotti & Tinkelenberg, 2009). Indeed, Buchanan and O'Connell (2016) found that 59% of people shopping online investigate competitor sites to compare costs. When searching online, customer searches tend to be goal directed; this means that customers are searching for the strengths of items and basing their decisions to purchase (or not) off of that, even though negative information can have a greater impact on the results of one's consumption decision (Halevy & Chou, 2014). As parents search for and decide on the best camp for their child, ideally, they would have factors in mind that are most important to them, which leads to the decision to use important performance analysis for this study.

Importance Performance Analysis (IPA)

The purpose of this study was to understand what factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp and, secondly, to better grasp if summer hockey camp operators are performing to the deemed level of importance of those factors as determined by the parents. As such, the importance-performance analysis (IPA) method was used to fulfill the objective.

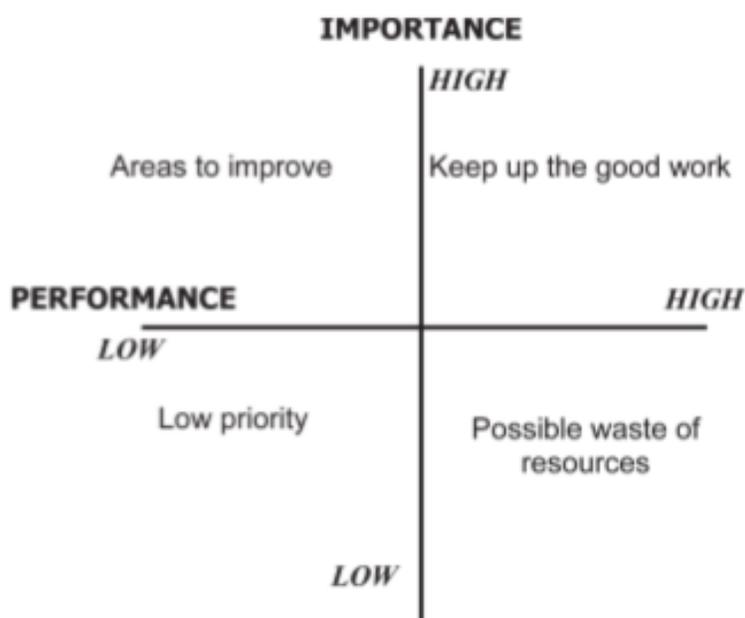
Organizations often use surveys to measure the satisfaction levels of consumers. For example, a sports team could survey fans on their satisfaction of fan experience during a game (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012; Lee & Hur, 2019; Martin, et al., 2012; Wakefield, et al., 1996). This type of study, and the use of traditional Likert-Scales to measure satisfaction, is quite commonplace; however, the results can only tell organizational leaders this one facet: satisfaction level. Here, understanding how important that factor is, in conjunction with the satisfaction of the provision, is indeterminable. Thus, Martilla and James (1977) argued that “consumer satisfaction is a function of both expectations related to certain important attributes and judgements of attribute performance” (p.77). As such, they created the IPA determining that it would be a great tool to evaluate these elements by questioning how important a feature is in conjunction with how well the organization performed on the same feature. The original research using IPA utilized the tool on the automobile service industry (Martilla & James, 1977). Since then, the use of IPA has been employed in numerous business contexts including: tourism (Boley, et al., 2017; Joppe, et al., 2001), education (Anderson, et al., 2016; Ford, et al., 1999), hospitality (Somkeatkun & Wongsurawat, 2017), and has been accepted as a useful tool for sport managers (Chard, et al., 2013; Rial, et al., 2008; Yildiz, 2011; Zhand, 2011).

Importance performance analysis is a great tool to measure customer satisfaction and equity (Rust et al., 2001). By analyzing customer equity on an IP map, managers can determine where they need to shift their resources to best meet customers’ expectations. To accomplish this task, importance-performance analysis begins with the researcher assessing a list of attributes associated with a product or service delivery; typically, this list is gained from an exhaustive literature review and feedback from individuals knowledgeable about the context under investigation (Chard et al., 2013). Next, respondents are sought to provide feedback on the

identified attributes; typically, surveys in-person or through online tools are utilized at this stage. The results of the surveys are then plotted against each other on a grid. The importance-performance grid, created by Martilla and James (1977), plotted respondents' feedback on the attributes into four equal quadrants. When interpreting the results, quadrants were named *areas to improve*, *keep up the good work*, *low priority*, and *possible waste of resources*. A graphical representation of Martilla and James' IPA (1977) can be seen in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2

Original IPA Grid (Martilla & James, 1977)



Over the years, the original IPA was subject to controversy because of “a) the position of the axis determining the quadrants and its interpretation, and b) the measurement of both the importance and the performance of the elements which constitute the service being assessed” (Rial et al., 2008, p.180). Abalo, Varela, and Manzano (2007) created an updated IPA method to resolve controversies of the quadrant design and presentation of the diagnostic tool. This revised IPA diagram has been favoured by academics such as Rial et al. (2008) who used it to apply IPA

to sport centres. This revised IPA diagram can be seen in *Figure 3*. Here, a diagonal line to visually highlight discrepancy is incorporated. To interpret this revised visualization, anything above the discrepancy line can be deemed as an area to improve. Below the diagonal line are three sections regarding the service: *Keep up the good work*, *low priority*, and *possible overkill*. *Keep up the good work* yields a high response of performance as well as importance. *Low priority* resembles low performance and low importance. Lastly, *possible overkill* means respondents have identified a factor as performing highly, but the importance of it is deemed to be relatively low.

Figure 3

Revised IPA Graph (Abalo, et al., 2007)



Rial et al. (2008) and Chard et al. (2013) both used this revised IPA when evaluating sport services: sports centres and a university athletic department, respectively. As hockey camps are typically operated out of sports centres or arenas with similar attributes, the results of Rial et al's (2008) IPA of sport centres prove instructive to the customer equity analysis of hockey camps. Out of their elements measured, the largest negative discrepancies came from 'dressing

rooms, toilets and showers’, and ‘hygiene and cleanliness’. The only element with a large positive discrepancy was ‘interest showed by staff for your comeback’ (Rial et al., 2008). All brand attributes in Chard et al.’s (2013) study of intercollegiate athletes were deemed more important than how the athletic department was performing based on the perceptions of student athletes. Items with the largest negative discrepancies included ‘scholarship support’, ‘spectator support at varsity contests’, ‘special treatment’, ‘recognition given to varsity athletes’, and ‘quality of athletic facilities’ (Chard et al., 2013). How importance-performance analysis was used in the current study and the method of data collection follows in chapter three.

Chapter Three – Methodology

When considering CE in the Canadian context of hockey camps, the purpose of this study was twofold. First, the aim was to understand what value equity factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp; second, the researcher hoped to ascertain if summer hockey camp operators are performing to the deemed level of importance of those factors as determined by the parents, and assist the camps in identifying and closing any perception gaps in their offering.

In order to accomplish these goals and facilitate in the analysis designed to answers the study's RQs, the current investigation was completed using a post-positivist paradigmatic lens. Post-positivists see knowledge as something that is socially constructed (Creswell, 2007). As knowledge is socially constructed, post-positivists "argue against rigid rules for enquiry methodology and one single approach to truth" (Lawal, 2009, p.55). The argument means that observation from this lens is only an approximation of the truth; nothing can be a certainty (Gray, 2014; Lawal, 2009). The post-positivist approach often relies on quantitative methods (Tracey, 2013). In keeping with the quantitative tradition, electronic surveys (see *Appendix A*) were sent, by email, to collect data from parents who had chosen to send their child(ren) to a summer hockey camp in the Niagara Region.

Data Collection

Recruitment Strategies

Gatekeepers are defined by Neuman and Robson (2015) as individuals "with the formal or informal authority to control access to a site" (p.288); here, the gatekeepers in the current study are camp directors. Camp directors were approached via email with an introductory contact email explaining the purpose and value of the research. Here, a request was included inviting

camp directors to take part in the research by emailing a survey link to all parents whose children attended their summer camp (See *Appendix B* for the letter of invitation). Invitational emails were sent out to seven camp directors in September after the completion of the summer camps. Out of those seven, six individuals chose to participate and sent out the survey link between September and October 2019 to the parents whose children had attended their summer camp. Reminder emails were sent two weeks after the initial survey, reminding parents of their invitation to take part in the study. Once all follow up emails were sent, the survey links were closed in November.

Sample

The sample used for this study was purposively selected. The aim of purposive sampling is “less to generalize to a larger population than it is to gain a deeper understanding of types” (Neuman & Robson, 2015, p.136). The goal of this research was not to generalize to larger populations (i.e., all hockey camps in North America), rather it was to get a deeper understanding of the perceptions of parents who registered their children for summer hockey camp in the Niagara Region, specifically. Participants who contributed to this study came from a purposive sample, who have been self-selected. Here, the sample becomes self-selected as not all parents may be opening their emails from the camps, and if they do, it is up to them to willingly click the link and participate (Neuman & Robson, 2015).

This study had a focus on parents who had registered their child/children for a summer hockey camp in the Niagara Region. Past research on children’s camp and sport participation have also used parents as the research sample as they are the ultimate decision makers and, usually, those paying the required fees (Chard et al., 2015; Costa et al., 2004; Lehto et al., 2017;

Wigfield & Chard, 2018). Thus, the criteria for survey participation was simply that they must have had a child registered in a 2019 summer hockey camp in the Niagara Region.

The camps in the study were located in one of the twelve municipalities of the Niagara Region: Lincoln, Fort Erie, Grimsby, Niagara Falls, Niagara-On-The-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet, Welland, and/or West Lincoln and meet the following criteria:

1. The child must be on the ice for a minimum of two hours per day.

This ice-time minimum is to ensure that the camp is a hockey camp, not a traditional, or more general sports camp, that happens to offer hockey as an activity.

2. The camp must be four to seven days in length

The reason for this duration is to ensure that the child is attending a summer hockey camp, not just a summer skate program that may be offered for one day a week.

3. The child of the participant must be in the division of Novice to Midget (or the USA Hockey equivalent).

The minimum age group for the study was parents of players in the Novice division; this is typically the entry age for summer hockey camps. The child must not have been over the level of Midget as then they would no longer be a minor and the decision making to attend camp may not be from the parents.

Surveys

Surveys were the primary form of data collection as they are a great technique for descriptive research (Neuman & Robson, 2015). Surveys have been utilized in the past for describing relationships in brand equity (Costa et al., 2004; Mills & Williams, 2016; Ross et al., 2007; Ross et al., 2009; Walsh et al., 2016; Wear et al., 2018) and specifically, when completing

Importance-Performance analyses in the sport sector (Chard et al., 2013; Rial et al., 2008). In the case of this study, electronic surveys were used. Electronic surveys provide advantages as they are time and cost effective. Electronic surveys also eliminate social desirability and interviewer bias (Neuman & Robson, 2015).

The questions asked on the survey were posed using Likert scales to measure parents' thoughts and feelings of the importance of certain hockey camp factors, and how the camps were performing on these same factors. Likert scales are very common for survey research (Neuman & Robson, 2015); here, there were six categories used when measuring importance ranging from 'Very Strongly unimportant' to 'Very Strongly important'. The performance of camps was also measured using a six-point Likert-scale ranging from 'Very Poor Performance' to 'Very Strong Performance'. A six-point Likert-scale was chosen as it forces the respondent to make a choice rather than allowing them to stay neutral (Hartley, 2013), thus, this format minimizes social desirability bias (Asun, Rdz-Navarro, & Alvarado, 2016; Garland, 1991). The survey for this research can be found in *Appendix A*.

The first section of the survey consisted of general demographic questions regarding factors such as gender, education, playing level, and country of residence. Section two required respondents to rank the importance of each factor based on their "ideal" hockey camp, not necessarily the one their child was attending. Lastly, in section three, participants were asked to rank how the camp that their child is attended had "performed" on each factor.

Factor Generation

The factors used on the survey instrument came from myriad sources. First, factors identified within literature on customer equity in youth sports contexts (i.e., Wigfield & Chard, 2018) and summer camps more generally (Lehto et al., 2017; Omelan et. al, 2018; Rial et al.,

2008) were captured. Second, factors were taken from USA Hockey (2016) and Hockey Canada's (2007) list of items to consider when choosing a summer hockey camp. All of the factors and their utilization in previous literature can be seen in *Table 3*.

Table 3

Summer Hockey Cam Factors (Literature Review)

Factor	Literature
Coach to player ratio	USA Hockey (2016); Hockey Canada (2007); Lehto et al. (2017)
Players grouped by skill level	USA Hockey (2016); Hockey Canada (2007); Wigfield & Chard (2018)
Hours on ice per day	USA Hockey (2016); Hockey Canada (2007); Wigfield & Chard (2018)
Off-ice activities	Hockey Canada (2007); Lehto et al. (2017)
Coaching staff	Hockey Canada (2007); Rial et al. (2008); Omelan et al. (2018); Lehto et al. (2017); Krotish et al. (2005)
Counsellors	Hockey Canada (2007); Rial et al. (2008); Omelan et al. (2018); Lehto et al. (2017); Krotish et al. (2005)
Facilities	Hockey Canada (2007); Rial et al. (2008); Wigfield & Chard (2018); Omelan et al. (2018); Lehto et al. (2017); Krotish et al. (2005)
Cost of camp registration	Hockey Canada (2007); Lehto et al. (2017); Omelan et al. (2018); Krotish et al. (2005)
Location	USA Hockey (2016); Wigfield & Chard (2018)
Time of day	Wigfield & Chard (2018); Krotish et al. (2005)
Meals provided	Hockey Canada (2007); Omelan et al. (2018); Lehto et al. (2017); Krotish et al. (2005)

To augment this preliminary list and try to determine the most salient hockey camp specific factors, a content analysis of hockey camp brochures, found online, was completed to determine variables deemed important in camp advertising. The factors in *Table 3* (above) were all identified in the hockey camp brochures; in addition, three supplementary factors were discovered: scholarship/funding available, refund policy, and inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey. This list of factors was sent to experts, or individuals with experience in the field of hockey camps; this stage constituted of what is commonly referred to as a pilot test. Here, five people (consisting of hockey camp management [2], coaching staff [1], and parents from a hockey camp

[2]), participated in the pilot study and added two additional factors: 1) quality of the on-ice curriculum, and 2) whether the camp has an overnight lodging option. After consideration of all the identified factors, each was placed within the value equity dimension (quality, price, and convenience) that best fit their utility. The comprehensive list of factors can be seen below:

Quality

- a) Low coach to player ratio
- b) Players grouped on-ice by skill level
- c) Minimum 3-hours on ice per day
- d) Challenging and fun off-ice activities
- e) Quality coaching staff (i.e., Pro/Jr./College experience)
- f) Capable (i.e., skilled) counsellors
- g) Quality facilities (arena, changerooms, etc.)
- h) Quality of on-ice curriculum

Price

- i) Refund policy
- j) Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes
- k) Scholarships/funding available
- l) Reasonable cost of camp registration

Convenience

- m) Convenient location of arena
- n) Convenient drop-off and pick-up time
- o) Meals (i.e., lunch) provided in camp cost
- p) Camp has overnight lodging option

Validity and Reliability

Validity can be defined as “the extent to which any measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure” (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p.2). Content validity addresses whether all content, its ideas, and concepts, are represented (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; Neuman & Robson, 2015). In this study, academic literature as well as hockey camp brochures were thoroughly explored in order to gain an understanding of the content and gather enough constructs reflecting the value equity of summer hockey camps in the Niagara Region.

Reliability ensures accuracy, as well as consistency on repeated trials (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). In order to increase reliability, a pilot test was conducted. A pilot test is “the pre-testing or ‘trying out’ of a particular research instrument (Van Teijlingen, 2002). Five people from a hockey camp, consisting of management, coaches, and parents, were asked to complete the survey. These participants were also asked to note any areas that were unclear, complicated, and/or if there were any factors that they thought were irrelevant or should be added. Through these pilot tests, two more factors were added to the survey: quality of on-ice curriculum and camp has an overnight lodging option. No factors were considered irrelevant to the participants. The survey used clear and fluent language so that questions were understood how they were intended to be.

Data Analysis

Surveys were administered using an online survey software, surveymethods, and data was then exported into a Microsoft Excel document. Once the data were uploaded into Excel, the mean scores of each factor were calculated. Second, the mean of all importance means was calculated along with the mean of all performance means. These “grand means” (Chard et al., 2013) were then used to determine where the axes for overall importance and performance on the

IPA graph was housed (Rial et al., 2008). Each of the importance factors were then plotted on the vertical axis and performance factors on the horizontal axis; completing this step allowed the researchers to visually compare the factors on the two-dimensional grid (Chard, et al., 2013).

In order to enhance the IPA method, Abalo, et al., (2007) incorporated a discrepancy line which was used in this study to convey the findings. This discrepancy line shows the “incongruity between importance and performance scores” (Chard et al., 2013). Factors that sit above the discrepancy line represent a negative relationship (performance < importance); those factors that sat below the discrepancy line represent a positive relationship (performance > importance), and those that are on the line are neutral (no discrepancy, i.e. importance and performance are ranked the same) (Chard et al., 2013; Rial, et al., 2008). The higher a factor is above the discrepancy line, the greater cause for concern, yet also room for opportunity, it has. Likewise, the farther below the discrepancy line a factor is, the more satisfaction it has.

The IPA map was created for results overall, as well as an IPA map was created for each demographic (i.e. gender, country played, level of hockey, etc.) to see if there were any major differences.

Chapter 4 – Findings

In total, the survey was sent to 624 people, yielding a 24% response rate (148 participants). Out of those who completed the survey, 55% were male and 44% were female. Most participants had a child playing representative hockey (84%) whereas only 16% played house league. Parents whose children played hockey in Canada made up 62% of the sample, followed by the USA with 36%; the remaining responses represented those playing in an ‘other’ country. *Table 4* provides a profile of the participants.

Table 4

Sample Profile (n=148)

Demographic	Total
Gender	
Male	82
Female	66
Country	
Canada	92
USA	54
Other	2
Parent’s Category of Hockey Played	
Did not play	83
House League	19
Representative	44
Did not Answer	2
Child’s Category of Hockey	
Representative	125
House League	23
Child’s Hockey Division (Age Group)	
Tyke	8
Novice	21
Atom	33
Pewee	36
Bantam	36
Midget	14

The IPA scores for the overall means (out of six) of importance and performance for each hockey camp factor can be seen in *Table 5*; overall discrepancy is also shown. It is apparent that parents perceived the importance of seven of 16 factors to be greater than the deemed performance (negative discrepancy). Of interest, there are nine out of 16 factors (56.25%) with a greater deemed performance than importance (positive discrepancy). Similarly, factors of quality had the greatest scores on both importance and performance. Indeed, these results show that parents are generally satisfied with the performance of hockey camps in the Niagara Region.

Table 5

Mean Scores for Overall Importance and Performance, with Discrepancy

Item	Description	Overall		
		Imp.	Perf.	Disc.
	Quality Factors			
A	Low coach to player ratio	5.50	5.30	-0.20
B	Players grouped on ice by skill level	5.35	5.20	-0.15
C	Minimum 3-hours on ice per day	5.54	5.65	0.11
D	Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.26	5.13	-0.13
E	Quality coaching staff (i.e., Pro/Jr./College experience)	5.80	5.70	-0.10
F	Capable (i.e., skilled) counsellors	5.75	5.43	-0.32
G	Quality facilities (arena, changerooms, etc.)	5.15	5.50	0.35
H	Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.82	5.67	-0.15
	Mean quality factors scores	5.50	5.45	-0.07
	Price Factors			
I	Refund policy	4.14	4.95	0.81
J	Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	4.01	5.35	1.34
K	Scholarship/funding available	3.12	4.02	0.90
L	Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.19	5.03	-0.16
	Mean price factors scores	4.12	4.84	0.72
	Convenience Factors			
M	Convenient location of arena	4.88	5.50	0.62
N	Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.69	5.37	0.68
O	Meals (i.e., lunch) provided in camp cost	4.51	5.00	0.49
P	Camp has overnight lodging option	2.71	4.40	1.69
	Mean convenience factors scores	4.20	5.07	0.87
	Grand Means	4.61	5.12	0.51

Research Question #1

RQ1: What value equity factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp?

After determining the means of each importance score (out of six) overall, factors listed in descending order of importance are shown in *Table 6*. Clearly, CE factors related to “quality” were deemed to be the most important; indeed, the top seven factors, when ranked on importance, were “quality” components of value equity. All items had some importance to parents, except for “camp has overnight lodging option” and “scholarship/funding available”

Table 6

Value Equity Factors - Order of Importance

VE Dimension	Factor	Importance Score
Quality	Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.82
Quality	Quality coaching staff	5.80
Quality	Capable Counsellors	5.75
Quality	Minimum 3-hours on ice per day	5.54
Quality	Low coach to player ratio	5.50
Quality	Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.35
Quality	Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.26
Price	Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.19
Quality	Quality facilities	5.15
Convenience	Convenient location of arena	4.88
Convenience	Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.69
Convenience	Meals provided in camp cost	4.51
Price	Refund policy	4.14
Price	Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	4.01
Price	Scholarship/funding available	3.12
Convenience	Camp has overnight lodging option	2.71

Research Question #2

RQ2: How are summer hockey camps, in the Niagara Region, performing on these same factors, as determined by the parents?

After determining the means of each performance score (out of six) overall, factors are listed in descending order of performance in *Table 7*.

Table 7

Value Equity Factors - Order of Performance

VE Dimension	Factor	Importance Score
Quality	Quality coaching staff	5.70
Quality	Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.67
Quality	Minimum 3-3 hours on ice per day	5.65
Quality	Quality Facilities	5.50
Convenience	Convenient location of arena	5.50
Quality	Capable counsellors	5.43
Convenience	Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	5.37
Price	Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	5.35
Quality	Low coach to player ratio	5.30
Quality	Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.20
Quality	Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.13
Price	Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.03
Convenience	Meals provided in camp cost	5.00
Price	Refund policy	4.95
Convenience	Camp has overnight lodging option	4.40
Price	Scholarship/funding available	4.02

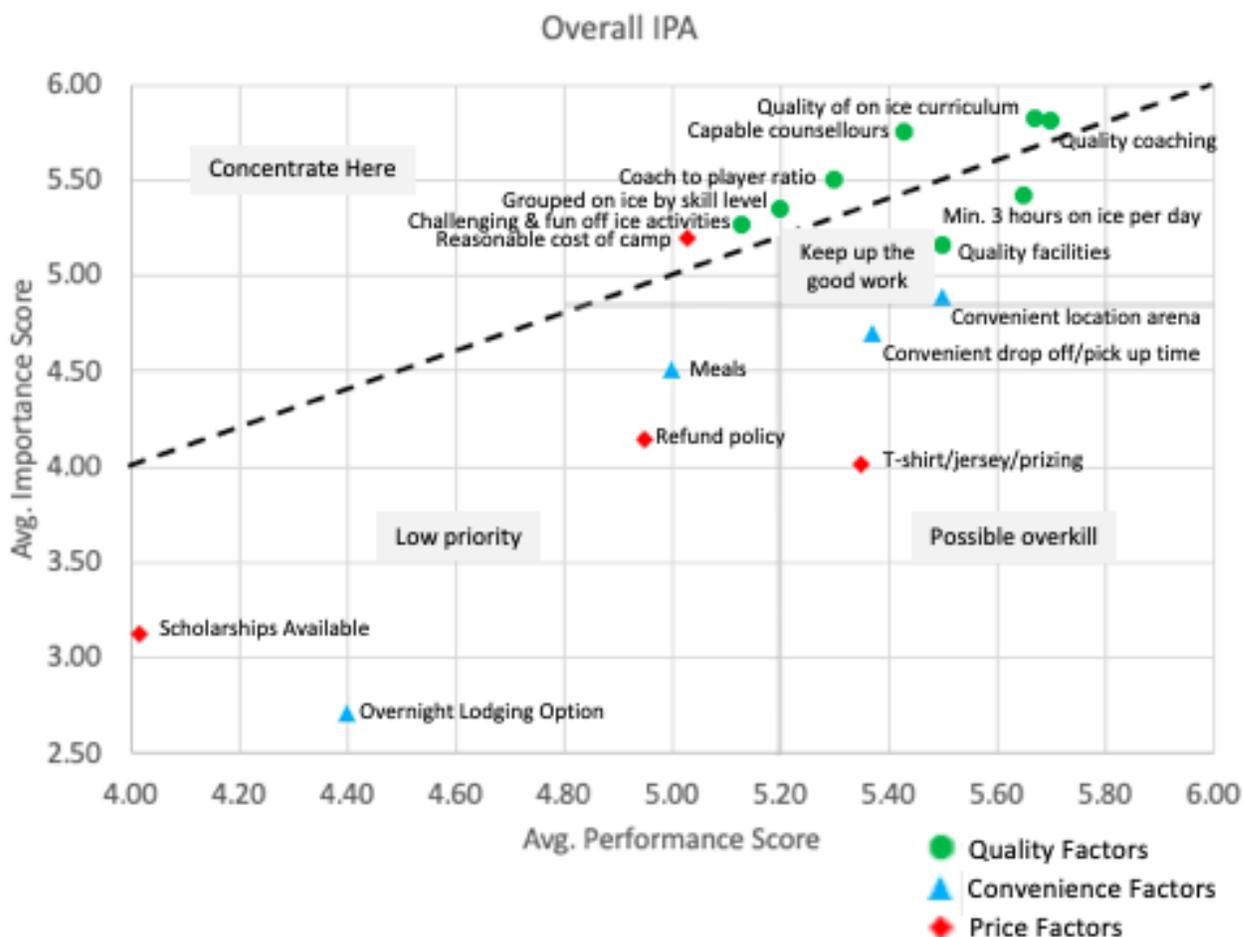
Again, factors of quality make up the top four factors of performance, and factors of convenience and price are scattered throughout the list. The camps performed very well in this study, as all 16 factors were deemed by parents to have at least a somewhat strong performance.

Figure 4 shows the results when plotted onto an IPA grid which portrays the overall deemed level of importance and performance of each factor. This grid clearly shows that quality factors are of most importance for hockey camp managers to focus on; here, it is evident that six of the seven factors with a perceived negative discrepancy were VE items related to “quality”. The one additional factor with a negative perception was a price-related factor: reasonable cost of camp.

Four factors (25%) were deemed to be in the *Low Priority* segment: “Meals,” “Refund policy,” “Scholarships available,” and “Overnight lodging option.” Overall, parents ranked their perceived level of importance *and* performance of these items to be low.

Figure 4

Overall Parents Perceptions of Summer Hockey Camps in the Niagara Region



Seven factors (43.75%) sat above the discrepancy line, signifying that they are in need of the most managerial attention. In order of discrepancy, these factors are “Capable counsellors,” “Coach-to-player ratio,” “Reasonable cost of camp registration,” “Players grouped on-ice by skill level,” “Quality of on-ice curriculum,” “Challenging and fun off-ice activities,” and “Quality coaching staff.” These factors were ranked higher on importance than performance.

This quadrant represents areas that camp directors should concentrate and use more resources on. All these factors had a negative discrepancy, meaning these items were more important to parents than camps were performing on them.

Three factors (18.75%) were in the *Keep up the good work* segment. These factors in order of discrepancy are “Convenient location of arena,” “Quality facilities,” and “Minimum 3 hours on ice per day.” There is still room for improvement in these areas, however, it is implied by the above average performance scores that camp directors are performing well in these areas.

Lastly, only two factors (12.5%) were identified as *Possible overkill* in the bottom right segment. In order of discrepancy, these factors were “Convenient drop-off and pick-up time,” and “Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes.” These factors were ranked above average on performance and below average on importance, meaning, camp directors may be using more resources than necessary on these factors.

Gender Breakdown

This study had 82 male respondents and 66 female respondents. The IPA results for these demographics can be seen in *Table 8*. Overall, when results were broken down by gender, the results were similar; however, there are some differences. “Minimum 3 hours on-ice per day” was *Keep it Up* for female respondents and *Concentrate Here* for male respondents. Likewise, “Location of arena” and “Convenient drop-off and pick-up time” were *Keep it Up* for female respondents but, *Overkill* for male respondents. All items were on the same side of the discrepancy line as one another, except for “Minimum 3-hours on ice per day which was below the line for females and above for males.

Table 8*IPA Results by Gender*

Item	Gender					
	Male			Female		
	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc
Factors of Quality						
Low coach to player ratio	5.54	5.27	-0.27	5.45	5.31	-0.14
Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.33	5.24	-0.09	5.37	5.13	-0.24
Minimum 3 hours on ice per day	5.62	5.61	-0.01	5.43	5.7	0.27
Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.16	5	-0.16	5.4	5.3	-0.1
Quality coaching staff	5.83	5.71	-0.12	5.77	5.67	-0.1
Capable counsellors	5.7	5.47	-0.23	5.8	5.39	-0.41
Quality facilities	5.09	5.51	0.42	5.25	5.47	0.22
Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.82	5.68	-0.14	5.83	5.66	-0.17
Factors of Price						
Refund policy	3.89	4.95	1.06	4.42	4.97	0.55
Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	3.99	5.23	1.24	4.05	5.52	1.47
Scholarships/funding available	2.84	4.09	1.25	3.45	3.95	0.5
Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.05	5.04	-0.01	5.36	5.02	-0.34
Factors of Convenience						
Convenient location of arena	4.73	5.48	0.75	5.06	5.53	0.47
Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.33	5.35	1.02	5.12	5.41	0.29
Meals provided in camp cost	4.46	4.89	0.43	4.54	5.14	0.6
Camp has overnight lodging option	2.68	4.42	1.74	2.71	4.36	1.65

Country Breakdown

Results have further been broken down into which country the child played hockey in, which can be seen in *Table 9*. Ninety-two participants stated their child played in Canada, 54 in the USA, and 2 in an ‘other’ country. Results were not shown for the ‘other’ category as the number would not be significant.

Table 9*IPA Results by Country*

Item	Country					
	Canada			USA		
	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc
Factors of Quality						
Low coach to player ratio	5.43	5.24	-0.19	5.61	5.38	-0.23
Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.25	5.1	-0.15	5.52	5.36	-0.16
Minimum 3 hours on ice per day	5.45	5.62	0.17	5.69	5.72	0.03
Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.2	5.2	0	5.33	5.17	-0.16
Quality coaching staff	5.75	5.65	-0.1	5.91	5.77	-0.14
Capable counsellors	5.73	5.42	-0.31	5.8	5.48	-0.32
Quality facilities	4.97	5.55	0.58	5.43	5.45	0.02
Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.78	5.59	-0.19	5.89	5.81	-0.08
Factors of Price						
Refund policy	4.14	4.94	0.8	4.19	4.98	0.79
Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	3.96	5.4	1.44	4.19	5.28	1.09
Scholarships/funding available	3.02	3.94	0.92	3.31	4.11	0.8
Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.19	4.9	-0.29	5.17	5.23	0.06
Factors of Convenience						
Convenient location of arena	4.8	5.49	0.69	5.02	5.33	0.31
Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.79	5.34	0.55	4.57	5.42	0.85
Meals provided in camp cost	4.37	4.96	0.59	4.72	5.11	0.39
Camp has overnight lodging option	2.16	4.1	1.94	3.69	4.88	1.19

When results are broken down by country, there are a few differences. When it came to “Challenging and fun-off activities” for players in Canada there was no discrepancy, whereas this factor, for parents in the USA had a negative discrepancy. Additionally, the “Reasonable cost of camp registration” had a negative discrepancy for Canadian parents versus a positive discrepancy for USA parents.

When looking at factors of quality, American parents ranked every factor with greater importance than Canadians. This may be because, if they need to spend the money and time travelling to Canada, the quality better be worth it! Camp has overnight lodging option was also

much more important to American parents, this make sense, as they are more likely to require a place to stay based on geographic location.

Breakdown of Parent's Category of Hockey Played

Table 10

IPA Results by Parent's Category of Hockey Played

Item	Parent's Category of Hockey Played								
	Did not Play			House league			Representative		
	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc
Factors of Quality									
Low coach to player ratio	5.54	5.43	-0.11	5.47	5.32	-0.15	5.45	5.05	-0.4
Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.4	5.28	-0.12	5.16	5.26	0.1	5.43	5.02	-0.41
Minimum 3 hours on ice per day	5.55	5.7	0.15	5.26	5.47	0.21	5.68	5.68	0
Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.39	5.26	-0.13	5.11	4.68	-0.43	5.09	5.09	0
Quality coaching staff	5.81	5.76	-0.05	5.74	5.53	-0.21	5.84	5.68	-0.16
Capable counsellors	5.76	5.5	-0.26	5.68	5.44	-0.24	5.77	5.3	-0.47
Quality facilities	5.27	5.55	0.28	4.95	5.47	0.52	5.02	5.43	0.41
Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.86	5.73	-0.13	5.68	5.58	-0.1	5.84	5.63	-0.21
Factors of Price									
Refund policy	4.25	4.95	0.7	4	5.06	1.06	4.02	4.88	0.86
Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	3.91	5.43	1.52	4.53	5.16	0.63	4	5.3	1.3
Scholarships/funding available	3.27	3.99	0.72	2.42	4.07	1.65	3.2	4.08	0.88
Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.2	5.02	-0.18	5.26	5	-0.26	5.16	5.05	-0.11
Factors of Convenience									
Convenient location of arena	5	5.57	0.57	5	5.68	0.68	4.59	5.3	0.71
Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.83	5.43	0.6	4.42	5.16	0.74	4.52	5.35	0.83
Meals provided in camp cost	4.45	5.06	0.61	4.58	4.89	0.31	4.66	4.95	0.29
Camp has overnight lodging option	2.94	4.49	1.55	2.26	3.88	1.62	2.52	4.48	1.96

When asked which level of hockey respondents played, 83 did not play, 19 played house league and 44 played representative hockey. The IPA results for these categories are shown in *Table 10*. When looking at the results, there were a few differences between these demographics. “Players grouped on-ice by skill level” was shown in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant for parents who never played hockey or played representative, whereas parents who played house league

hockey ranked this factor as *Keep it Up*. Parents who had played hockey seemed to have greater expectations when it came to having a “Minimum 3 hours on-ice per day” as the factor was in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant for them but *Keep it Up* for parents who had never played hockey. “Quality facilities” was once again *Concentrate Here* for house league parents but, *Keep it Up* for parents who never played or played representative. Parents who did not play and parents who played house league, had very similar results. Indeed, all of the factors are in the same quadrants in each. However, “players grouped on-ice by skill level” had a negative discrepancy for parents who did not play hockey, and a positive discrepancy for parents who played house league.

Breakdown of Child's Category of Hockey Played

Table 11

IPA Results by Child's Category of Hockey Played

Item	Child's Category of Hockey Played					
	House league			Representative		
	IMP Scores	Perf Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	Perf Scores	Disc
Factors of Quality						
Low coach to player ratio	5.39	5.13	-0.26	5.52	5.32	-0.2
Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.13	5.22	0.09	5.39	5.19	-0.2
Minimum 3 hours on ice per day	5.35	5.35	0	5.58	5.71	0.13
Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.17	4.91	-0.26	5.27	5.17	-0.1
Quality coaching staff	5.78	5.7	-0.08	5.81	5.69	-0.12
Capable counsellors	5.77	5.35	-0.42	5.74	5.45	-0.29
Quality facilities	5.3	5.57	0.27	5.12	5.48	0.36
Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.74	5.57	-0.17	5.84	5.69	-0.15
Factors of Price						
Refund policy	4.3	5	0.7	4.1	4.94	0.84
Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	4.61	5.17	0.56	3.96	5.4	1.44
Scholarships/funding available	3.3	3.85	0.55	3.08	4.06	0.98
Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.45	4.96	-0.49	5.14	5.04	-0.1
Factors of Convenience						
Convenient location of arena	4.96	5.52	0.56	4.86	5.5	0.64
Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.96	5.39	0.43	4.64	5.37	0.73
Meals provided in camp cost	4.65	5.13	0.48	4.48	4.98	0.5
Camp has overnight lodging option	2.65	4.1	1.45	2.72	4.47	1.75

Most participants' (n=125) children played representative hockey, whereas only 23 played in house leagues. There were not many differences between these two categories when it came to positive versus negative discrepancies. This may be because the participant numbers of these categories are very uneven. The results for these categories are shown in *Table 11*. There were two differences that had significance: "Players grouped on ice by skill level" had a positive discrepancy for house league parents, but a negative discrepancy for representative parents.

Secondly, “Minimum 3 hours on ice per day” had a no discrepancy for house league parents and a positive discrepancy for representative parents.

Of interest, when looking at the importance of factors, parents of children who played representative hockey ranked six of eight factors of quality with a greater level of importance than those with children in house league did. On the other hand, those with children in house league ranked all price and convenience factors, except for overnight lodging option, with more importance than representative parents did. In essence, quality is more important to representative parents, and price and convenience is more important to house league parents.

Breakdown of Child’s Hockey Division (Age Group)

Table 12 portrays the IPA results broken down by the division of hockey participants children played. Eight played Tyke, 21 were in Novice, 33 for Atom, 36 in both Peewee and Bantam, and lastly 14 played Midget.

Table 12*IPA Results by Child's Hockey Division*

Item	Child's Hockey Division								
	Tyke			Novice			Atom		
	IMP Scores	Perf Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	Perf Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	Perf Scores	Disc
Factors of Quality									
Low coach to player ratio	5.25	5.5	0.25	5.76	5.14	-0.62	5.39	5.36	-0.03
Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.25	5	-0.25	5.38	5.38	0	5.36	5.03	-0.33
Minimum 3 hours on ice per day	5.38	6	0.62	5.57	5.24	-0.33	5.67	5.79	0.12
Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.25	4.63	-0.62	5.33	5.14	-0.19	5.03	5.24	0.21
Quality coaching staff	5.88	6	0.12	5.86	5.43	-0.43	5.7	5.61	-0.09
Capable counsellors	5.88	5.63	-0.25	5.86	5.19	-0.67	5.76	5.36	-0.4
Quality facilities	5	6	1	5.24	5.57	0.33	5.18	5.52	0.34
Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.88	6	0.12	5.9	5.57	-0.33	5.82	5.67	-0.15
Factors of Price									
Refund policy	4.13	4.5	0.37	4.62	4.89	0.27	4.18	5.1	0.92
Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	3.71	5.63	1.92	4.86	5.29	0.43	3.97	5.42	1.45
Scholarships/funding available	2.88	4	1.12	3.19	3.94	0.75	3.33	4.24	0.91
Reasonable cost of camp registration	5	5.13	0.13	5.52	5	-0.52	5.33	4.85	-0.48
Factors of Convenience									
Convenient location of arena	4.5	5.63	1.13	5.29	5.57	0.28	5	5.36	0.36
Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.13	5.38	1.25	5	5.48	0.48	4.76	5.36	0.6
Meals provided in camp cost	4.5	5.5	1	4.48	4.86	0.38	4.24	5.03	0.79
Camp has overnight lodging option	3	4.75	1.75	2.52	4.61	2.09	2.64	4.48	1.84

Item	Peewee			Bantam			Midget		
	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc	IMP Scores	PERF Scores	Disc
Factors of Quality									
Low coach to player ratio	5.36	5.22	-0.14	5.58	5.19	-0.39	5.64	5.69	0.05
Players grouped on-ice by skill level	5.39	5.33	-0.06	5.31	5.14	-0.17	5.36	5.23	-0.13
Minimum 3 hours on ice per day	5.44	5.72	0.28	5.58	5.58	0	5.43	5.77	0.34
Challenging and fun off-ice activities	5.28	5.28	0	5.33	5.03	-0.3	5.43	5	-0.43
Quality coaching staff	5.86	5.78	-0.08	5.78	5.69	-0.09	5.86	5.92	0.06
Capable counsellors	5.67	5.46	-0.21	5.74	5.61	-0.13	5.71	5.31	-0.4
Quality facilities	5.03	5.5	0.47	5.11	5.28	0.17	5.43	5.62	0.19
Quality of on-ice curriculum	5.81	5.58	-0.23	5.78	5.66	-0.12	5.86	5.92	0.06
Factors of Price									
Refund policy	3.83	5.15	1.32	4.06	4.72	0.66	4.29	5	0.71
Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes	4.14	5.28	1.14	3.53	5.22	1.69	3.93	5.69	1.76
Scholarships/funding available	3.19	3.8	0.61	2.69	3.97	1.28	3.5	4.4	0.9
Reasonable cost of camp registration	5.11	5.14	0.03	4.94	5	0.06	5.29	5.23	-0.06
Factors of Convenience									
Convenient location of arena	4.86	5.5	0.64	4.75	5.53	0.78	4.57	5.62	1.05
Convenient drop-off and pick-up time	4.67	5.44	0.77	4.67	5.17	0.5	4.5	5.58	1.08
Meals provided in camp cost	4.64	4.94	0.3	4.5	5.09	0.59	4.86	4.83	-0.03
Camp has overnight lodging option	2.67	4.12	1.45	2.44	4.43	1.99	3.79	4.42	0.63

When results were broken down by the division of hockey that the participants children played, there were many similarities as well as differences. Starting with price factors, “Scholarship/funding available” and “Refund policy” had a positive discrepancy and were in the *low priority* quadrant for all divisions. “Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes” also had a positive discrepancy for all divisions but was consistently in the *overkill* quadrant. The only price factor that had a difference in discrepancy between age groups was “Reasonable cost of camp registration.” This factor had a positive discrepancy for Tyke, Peewee, and Bantam parents, but negative for Novice, Atom, and Midget Parents.

As there were more differences in results for items of quality and convenience, the discussion of results for each of those factors is broken down below.

Low coach to player ratio

This factor was below the discrepancy line in the *Keep it Up* quadrant for Tyke and Midget, but above the discrepancy line as *Concentrate Here* for all of the other age groups.

Players grouped on-ice by skill level

This item was consistently above the discrepancy line for all age groups except Novice where there was no discrepancy. Thus, this is an item that camp management should concentrate on.

Minimum 3-hours on ice per day

This factor was mostly in the *Keep it Up* quadrant, except for Novice and Bantam parents. “Minimum 3 hours on ice per day was in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant for Novice parents and had no discrepancy for Bantam parents.

Challenging and fun off-ice activities

This factor had a negative discrepancy and was in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant for Tyke, Novice, Bantam, and Midget parents, but *Keep it Up* for Atom (positive discrepancy) and Pee wee parents (no discrepancy).

Quality coaching staff (i.e., Pro/Jr./College experience)

Quality coaching staff was in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant for Novice, Atom, Pee wee and Bantam parents. However, there was a positive discrepancy for Tyke and Midget parents for this factor.

Capable (i.e., skilled) counsellors

“Capable counsellors” was *Concentrate Here* for all age groups. Indeed, this factor was always above the discrepancy line.

Quality facilities (arena, changerooms, etc.,)

This is another factor that was consistently in the *Keep it Up* quadrant, and below the discrepancy line.

Quality of on-ice curriculum

Quality of on-ice curriculum was in the *Keep it Up* quadrant for Tyke and Midget parents. On the other hand, this factor was above the discrepancy line for all of the other age categories.

Convenient location of arena

This factor was located in the *Keep It Up* quadrant for Novice, Atom, Peewee, and Bantam parents, but was *Overkill* for Novice and Midget parents. This factor had a positive discrepancy for all age groups.

Convenient drop-off and pick-up time

This factor was *Overkill* for all age groups except Novice where it was located in the *Keep It Up* quadrant. Indeed, it consistently had a positive discrepancy.

Meals (i.e., lunch) provided in camp cost

Meals provided in camp cost was *Overkill* for Tyke parents but *Low Priority* for Novice, Atom, Peewee, and Bantam. Midget parents were the only grouping where meals had a negative discrepancy, all other divisions were positive.

Camp has overnight lodging option

Lodging was constantly in the *Low Priority* quadrant with positive discrepancy.

Overall Results

In conclusion, when looking at the overall results, overwhelmingly, factors that had negative discrepancies fell under the value equity dimension of quality. Thus, out of the value equity dimensions, camp directors need to concentrate on the area of quality the most. No factors of quality were located in the *Low Priority* or *Overkill* quadrant. The only factors of quality that did not have a negative discrepancy were “Minimum 3-hours on ice per day,” and “Quality facilities.” Overall, “Capable counsellors” was the furthest factor above the discrepancy line, which means it has the most opportunity for improvement. Interestingly, all factors under the value equity dimension of price had a positive discrepancy except the price of the camp itself, which was located in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant. All other factors of price were in the *Overkill* and *Low Priority* quadrants. Lastly, convenience factors have the least room for improvement, as none of them are located in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant. Indeed, when looking at convenience factors as a whole, camps are satisfying parents and may even be spending more resources than necessary on convenience. Even when breaking down the results by demographics, convenience factors never appear in the *Concentrate Here* quadrant. These results will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand what factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp and, secondly, to better grasp if summer hockey camp operators are performing to the deemed level of importance of those factors, as determined by the parents. Throughout this chapter, the discussion is based off of the overall results, rather than by the different demographics. Given the number of survey participants in each demographic segment is relatively small, there is no critical mass for significance. Indeed, the point of this study was not to generalize to the myriad hockey camps operating in Canada; rather, it was to understand the perspectives of the parents who are sending their child to a summer hockey camp in the Niagara Region

The parental decision to send a child to camp may be, in the grand scheme of life, a relatively innocuous decision with minimal life-changing risks attached; however, such a decision happens hundreds of thousands of times each year and influences the livelihood of every camp operator and their employees, and provides a developmental and social outlet for the numerous kids participating annually. To be sure, even the simplest decisions still require trade-offs to be made i.e., cost versus quality versus convenience (Buchanan & O’Connell, 2016; Saaty, 2008), and take effort and energy on the decision-makers behalf.

The results of the current investigation indicate that hockey camps in the Niagara Region have performed strongly on the factors of delivery when compared to what was perceived as most important to parents. Indeed, the top two factors with the greatest level of importance placed by parents, were also the top two highest ranked factors for level of performance. These factors were “quality of on-ice curriculum” and “quality coaching staff.” The two factors with

the lowest score on importance, were also the two lowest performance scores: “camp has overnight lodging option” and “scholarship/funding available.”

Overall, the perceived performance was greater than perceived importance on nine of 16 factors (56.25%). These results show that parents seem, generally, satisfied with the performance of summer hockey camps in the Niagara Region. This could mean that parents either have low expectations for the camps, or, that camps in the Niagara Region are performing very well/exceeding expectations. This is an interesting finding when one considers the myriad other IPA research studies that have been conducted; historically, when comparing “ideal” states with “actual” performance on a variety of factors, the results skew toward negative discrepancies. For example, in the Chard et al. (2013) study on varsity athletes, Boley et al. (2017) investigation of community-based tourism, and Anderson et al. (2016) research on experiential learning, *every* items’ perceived importance exceeded the deemed level of performance. Further, in both the Rial et al. (2008) investigation of sport centres and Yildiz’s (2011) study on fitness centres, negative discrepancies were noted on more than 60% of the assessed items. Intuitively, this makes sense; indeed, when consumers are being asked to compare the performance of an existing product or service to their “ideal” product or service in the same space, it is understandable that there would be some deficiency when compared to the exemplar offering. The results of the current investigation, thus, are somewhat unique in the context of IPA studies, given the largely satisfactory nature of the responses.

Quality Factors

Out of all the value equity (VE) dimensions considered in the investigation, those related to *quality* seemed to have the greatest room for managerial improvement based on the parents’ feedback. First off, camp staff play a big role at camps as they help accomplish the mission of

the camp both on and off the ice. Indeed, “human resources are the most important asset in the structure of a sports club” (Mihaela, et al., 2014, p.1). In the current study, two factors were associated with the competencies and capabilities of camp employees: “Quality coaching staff (i.e., Pro/Jr./College experience),” and “Capable counsellors.” Both factors were of utmost importance to parents residing in the top three factors of perceived importance. This is an interesting finding as in Omelan et al.’s (2018) study they found that qualifications of their camp staff are often ignored by parents. This finding from Omelan et al. (2018) is opposite of what was found in this study, however, Omelan et al. (2018) only interviewed the camp organizers and campers, not parents directly. Here, it is possible, that the organizers did not recognize the importance of qualifications to the parental consumers. Of interest, the children in their study did however rank the instructors of their camp with great importance. Like the results of the current investigation, Costa et al. (2004) surveyed parents directly and found that coaches are of importance to parents when they evaluate a sports camp. Often, there is a “reflected glory effect” on parents, where they want their children associated with coaches that have been successful (Sutcliffe, et al., 2019, p.84). Hockey Canada (2007) also lists staff as an important item to consider when choosing a hockey camp; here, qualifications and experience are key components in the creation of positive customer equity. Indeed, parents often want their child to have the top qualified coaches in order to optimize their development (Sutcliffe, et al., 2019); the current investigation shows there is some room for improvement.

While the qualifications of coaches are highly important to parents, another human resource group is also considered vital: camp counsellors. Often, camp managers hire counsellors who have little to no experience and are usually not that much older than the campers themselves (Baker, 2018; Waskul, 1998). In line with this assertion, the value equity factor of “capable camp

counsellor”, in the current investigation, had the largest level of negative discrepancy. As such, there is definitely room for improvement. Waskul (1998) notes that many counsellors, who work at camps, are previous campers; however, working at a camp is very different than attending one. Camp counsellors are the front-line employees of camps; they are the individuals that campers spend all their time with, thus, if counsellors are not performing well, it will be noticed. Previous studies have shown that counsellors often are ill-prepared for the task at hand and receive no formal training prior to their first day; typically, they do not know any routines or procedures until they arrive on site (Waskul 1998; Wahl-Alexander, et al., 2017). With training taking place at the last minute, and in a short period of time, the performance levels, as perceived by parents, can be affected. Indeed, camp counsellors must act as a “friend, parent, therapist, and teacher” (Baker, 2018, p.29). With all of these roles in place, and minimal preparation and/or training, it is no surprise that this factor emerged as the one needing most improvement. Here, it is essential that camp administrators spend the time necessary in order to provide better training for their counsellors. As Alter (2017) has said, “take care of your employees and your marketing will virtually take care of itself” (p. 39).

In addition to the absolute quality of the coaches and counsellors, the ratio of coaches/instructors to players on the ice is also important to parents; this was identified as another area that camps could improve on given the negative discrepancy. Just as reduced class sizes improve academic performance (Finn, et al., 2003; Filges, et al., 2015), the same can be said for sports performance (Wang & Ye, 2016; Kanters, et al., 2015). USA hockey is leading the way with this change as they have divided the ice surface in half in order to allow more players and coaches onto the ice at one time. The divisions on ice allow the players to move through different stations, gaining individual attention for feedback and development (Kanters, et

al., 2015). Having too many players on the ice compared to coaching staff also leads to time standing around and not engaging in the drills (Berg, et al., 2015). Here, given the cost of ice time, and in this case the camp registration fees, it is important to make the most use out of the ice.

While on the ice, players are sometimes split into groups by their skill level. As in physical education class, grouping by ability allows for better safety as well as less intimidation; on the other hand, students may feel discouraged if they are in the group designed to have the lower ability (Fletcher, 2008). For camps in this study, “players grouped on-ice by skill level” was a factor on which camps should focus. If players are grouped by age, like in many sports, typically those who are born at the beginning of the year excel best (Ashworth & Heyndels, 2007); alternatively, if they are grouped by ability, players are able to receive appropriate training that is player-centered based on their own capacity or proficiency (Machado, et al., 2019). Grouping by ability also allows for even competition; this is important as youth hockey should be about parity and equity (Wigfield & Chard, 2018).

In order for hockey players to achieve their peak performance levels, they must also be following a high quality on-ice curriculum. As the most effective learning comes through a highly structured practice with achievable goals (Soberlak & Cote, 2003), “Quality of on-ice curriculum” was unsurprisingly the most important factor as ranked by parents in this study. In order to achieve the best curriculum, one must look at stakeholders’ considerations and what students/players need in order to achieve (Hrivnak, 2019). The redesigning of the previously mentioned USA Hockey’s split ice model is a great example of curating a curriculum with performance and achievement at the forefront. USA Hockey management realized how expensive and valuable ice time was and resigned their practice curriculum towards small area

games to encourage more game like scenarios (Kanters, et al., 2015). Another stakeholder that camps should keep in mind when creating their curriculum is the children themselves. For example, Gleddie et al. (2013) asked minor hockey players how they thought practice could become more challenging. Their responses indicated that they want skating drills to become more game like, rather than being taught in the boring format of isolation (Gleddie, et al., 2013). Indeed, if players are not experiencing fun, this may lead to disengagement from the game and even dropouts (Gleddie, et al., 2013; Wall & Cote, 2007).

The drop out of players in hockey typically comes around the age of 12 from those who began off-ice training at a young age (Newin, et al., 2008; Wall & Cote, 2007). This does not mean all off-ice training is bad, rather, it should have a focus on fun and enjoyment instead of intense routine at a young age (Wall & Cote, 2017). Fun and challenging off-ice activities in this study had a negative discrepancy of -0.13. It is important for coaches to understand what skills can be built off the ice that translate to on-ice success (Bracko & George, 2001; Haukali & Tjelta, 2015). Due to the limited amount of ice time available, practices tend to focus on game specifics (e.g. plays, special teams, passing and skating technique); coaches have realized they can place less priority on speed and strength on the ice, as they can improve those skills with dryland training (Haukali & Tjelta, 2015). However, off-ice activities in a camp environment differ from a team setting. To be sure, off-ice activities do not always have to be intense training, they can focus on team building skills too. Given that the biggest dropout age for hockey players tends to center around the age of 12, among the time where competing interests emerge, it has been noted that this is also a critical time in their life to develop social skills and self-esteem (Newin, et al., 2008). As such, coaches can use off-ice time to allow players to bond with others, and to acquire other life skills.

Only two VE factors under the umbrella of quality had positive discrepancy: “minimum 3-hours on ice per day” and “quality facilities.” Indeed, ice-time is very valuable due to the high demand (Kanters, 2015; Bracko & George, 2001; Haukali & Tjelta, 2015; Kaida & Kitchen, 2020). A big complaint from parents on youth hockey programs is the cost they are paying versus the amount of ice time available (Armentrout & Kamphoff, 2011). Hockey Canada (2007) and USA Hockey (2016) also list ‘time spent on-ice’ as an important factor to consider when choosing a hockey camp. From this study, it is evident that hockey camps in the Niagara Region have been able to please their consumers with the amount of ice-time that they offer.

The second quality factor achieving a positive discrepancy, facilities, is often an important factor when it comes to the service environment of sporting facilities (Garcia-Fernandez, et al., 2018; Kaida & Kitchen, 2020; Rial, et al., 2008; Roul, et al., 2014). Indeed, the aesthetic appeal of the facility can even be a motivating factor for people to attend the building (Roul, et al., 2014; Kim, et al., 2015). Camps in the Niagara Region were able to please the parents with the quality of the facilities used in this study, as there was a positive discrepancy of 0.35; the largest absolute discrepancy of all the factors of quality

Price Factors

All factors of price had a positive discrepancy except for, perhaps unsurprisingly, the cost of the camps. Given that sport camps are the second most expensive type of camp (OurKids, 2019), dealing with ‘high’ prices may be a natural outcome of hockey camp registration. Omelan et al. (2018) similarly found that price was one of the most important factors to parents when choosing a summer camp. As parents deemed the performance of this item lower than performance, there is a sense that prices of the camps might be high; however high prices are often synonymous with high quality (Gneezy et al., 2014; Olbrich et al., 2014).

The price tag attached to minor hockey can often be a barrier for parents (Armentrout & Kamphoff, 2011; Todd & Edwards, 2020). However, for some families, price is not an issue. Many parents see minor hockey as an investment and will do whatever is required to see their children succeed in this environment (Bean, et al., 2019; Coakley, 2006; Dorsch, et al., 2018; Todd & Edwards, 2020; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). An example that paints a clear picture of how much parents are willing to spend on their child's hockey development comes from Matt Duchene, whose father estimated that he spent over \$300,000 investing in his son's hockey career (Todd & Edwards, 2020). It is apparent, that even if camps have a high price tag attached, there will be parents willing to pay the price. Secondly, it shows that a lot of hockey families have the money to spend on their child's development; or, perhaps more importantly, are willing to alter family budgets to afford hockey (Bean, et al., 2019; Coakley, 2006). Here, Armentrout and Kamphoff (2011), note however, that there is a limit to some parents' appetite to spend, and believe that more financial assistance is necessary. Of interest, this finding did not materialize in the current investigation; here, scholarships and availability of funding was deemed to be the least important to parents out of all of the price factors.

Hockey camps always sell their camps in advance to summer, sometimes even a full year ahead of time. In monopoly environments there can be profitability with refunds/partial refunds, however, in advance selling competitive markets like hockey camps, there is a lack of ubiquity when it comes to refunds (Guo, 2009). In the service environment, such as a hockey camp, refunds would typically be triggered before the service is used, as after the fact, there is nothing to be returned (Huang & Zhang, 2020). Parents in this study were pleased with refund policy of camps as the factor was considerably below the discrepancy line (0.81). However, we do not know how many parents have actually had to utilize this factor. Sporting events have had

different policies for how they handled refunds when they have been cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. For example, when the NBA went into a lockout in 2012, their league policy was to refund everyone on a monthly basis plus 1% interest (Ianello & Cloud, 2012). At the other end of the spectrum, sits the Two Ocean Marathon that was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Management of this road race decided not to offer any refunds as they had already spent most of their budget and would not be getting any money back; this caused legal action against the organization (Swart & Maralack, 2020). It would be interesting to survey parents again this year on the refund factor, as all of the camps in this study were cancelled because of Covid-19 for summer 2020.

The inclusion of a camp t-shirt/prize/jersey had the second highest positive discrepancy after 'camp has overnight lodging option'. This means that camps were outperforming the desired importance level of these items to parents. Thus, camp directors could be using these resources somewhere potentially more beneficial. For example, camps could spend less on t-shirts, jerseys, and prizes, and use the offsetting budgetary savings to reduce the camp registration costs. This, in turn, could increase the CE of the camp as greater value may be perceived; here, value is determined by what the customer must give up in order to receive the product/service (Rust et al., 2000). On the other hand, camps may not want to spend less on camp t-shirts and jerseys as they are beneficial to the camps themselves, as often campers will then wear those said jerseys to practice which acts as a form of advertisement.

Convenience Factors

As far as convenience goes, none of the factors were located above the discrepancy line or perceived as negative in relation to deemed importance. Thus, in this study, parents are satisfied with the convenience factors of the camps. One of the factors, "camp has overnight

lodging option,” even had a score that was in the Strongly Unimportant range (2.71). However, this may be because most families live close enough to the camp that they do not need overnight accommodations, or, possibly that parents would prefer to find their own accommodation. The performance score of “camp has overnight lodging option” was 4.40 putting it in the Somewhat Strong Performance range. This is interesting as only one of the camps in the study had a residential option for campers. For the rest of the camps, it would make sense that the performance would be at zero because there was not an option to stay at the camp overnight. However, as summer hockey camps in the Niagara Region have historically attracted participants from the USA, some of them have links directing consumers to host hotels on their websites. As the deemed performance of this factor did so well, considering the limited number of overnight camps, it is possible that parents may have considered the hotel options communicated on camp websites to be a part of the “camp has overnight lodging option.”

Hockey camps in the Niagara Region also performed greater than the deemed level of importance, determined by parents, for the “convenient location of arena” and “drop-off and pick-up times”. Both of these factors can be related to time management. The importance of travel distance, i.e. the time it takes to get to the arena, has been noted as being important before (Armentrout & Kamphoff, 2011; Cardwell; 2000; Dorsch, et al., 2018; Kaida & Kitchen, 2020; Todd & Edwards, 2020); in the context of a hockey tournament for example, it is also important that the arena is convenient to other facilities such as hotels, restaurants, etc. (Wigfield & Chard, 2018). Cardwell (2000) identified that from the 1960’s to 2000’s, convenience of facilities, specifically related to their location, has had a high level of importance; “facility developers and potential customer have realized the convenience associated with these downtown locations” (p.422). Indeed, the hockey arenas used by the camps in this study were all in close proximity to

a downtown core. Convenient locations are central to aiding parents in their busy lives; specifically, convenient arenas provide a valuable resource to parents: time!

A complaint from minor hockey parents is that there is too much time involved with hockey (Armentrout & Kamphoff; Bean, et al., 2019; Todd & Edwards, 2020). To be more specific, parents felt that their families had to eat at odd times of the day and that their schedule was constantly changing (Bean, et al., 2019) as a result of their child's hockey participation; some parents even felt like a taxi driver having to constantly drop-off and pick-up at different times and locations (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). In the current study, parents did not see the drop-off and pick-up times as an issue. This may be because camps typically have a set weekly schedule, starting and finishing at the same time every day, compared to hockey leagues where the time can differ drastically day to day.

Timing can also play a role in healthy eating. Thus, the convenience of meals being included at camp is important. Research on parents highlight the challenges of running a household with busy, active children often describing making meals as “stressful”, or that they simply struggle to find enough time for these essential parenting responsibilities (Kannam, et al., 2019; Caswell & Hanning, 2018). Without a proper amount of time to prepare a meal, often people can fall into unhealthy eating habits such as grab and go or fast food due to the ease of access (Lucas, et al., 2017). The convenience of fast foods for athletes is definitely problematic (Caswell & Hanning, 2018; Stokes, et al., 2018; Nelson, et al., 2011). For example, “players described limiting the amount of fast food they ate because they played hockey. Paradoxically, players reported that if they were not playing hockey, they would eat less fast-food and restaurant meals as they would not be travelling” (Caswell & Hanning, 2018, p.1258). Thus, by camps providing meals, it takes the stress off of the parents, and may allow for meals of better

quality. Also, for campers residing in residence, or staying at hotel facilities without a kitchenette, included meals at camp would be crucial.

Many parents from this study are not from the Niagara Region but still decide to send their kids to camp in the area. Similarly, local parents have decided to keep their children in Niagara for hockey camp, rather than sending them elsewhere. When looking at pull factors of summer camps, there are two general overarching types: camp destination and camp program (Lehto, et al., 2018). Indeed, all parents in this study were pulled towards the Niagara Region as their child's summer camp destination. Though this study did not look at pull factors directly related to the Niagara Region from a destination perspective, all of the 16 factors included in the analysis were pull factors related to the summer camp "program". In this respect, the most important pull factors to parents in this study were "Quality of on-ice curriculum," "Quality Coaching Staff," "Capable Counsellors," and "Coach to player ratio." All of these factors were very similar to the important pull factors found from Lehto et al.'s (2017) study where the top three items were: quality staff, program structure, and dining and accommodations. Quality staff directly correlates with coaching staff and capable counsellors, whereas program structure correlates with on-ice curriculum and coach to player ratio. Summer camp directors can capitalize on these pull factors when creating a marketing campaign in order to differentiate themselves and attract consumers. Dining and accommodations were most likely more important in the study by Lehto et al.' as they were specifically looking at Chinese parents sending their children to camps overseas, making accommodations and dining essential; such a focus is not as prevalent in the current study.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion, Recommendations, Limitations, & Future Research

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to understand what factors are most important to parents when deciding to register their child for a summer hockey camp, as well as how summer hockey camps, in the Niagara Region, are performing on these same factors, as determined by parents. Parents were the ones being surveyed as they are the people who ultimately decide what camp their child attends. Thus, it is important that their needs and expectations are met when registering for a camp. By completing an importance-performance analysis, this study was able to better grasp how summer hockey camp operators in the Niagara Region are performing in comparison to the deemed level of importance of factors by parents. Subsequently, identifying the areas that hockey camp operators should focus on.

The customer equity framework was used in this study as it can help directors determine where they should focus their resources. This study specifically focused on the value equity component; comprised of quality, price, and convenience. Overall, this study showed that quality is of utmost importance. Indeed, the majority of factors of quality were above the discrepancy line. All factors of convenience and price, with one exception, were over-delivered. Through this research, the results show that parents are generally satisfied with the performance of summer hockey camps in the Niagara Region.

Ultimately, this study contributes to filling the research gap on customer equity in sport organizations, specifically in youth sports. The findings and recommendations shall also support hockey camp organizations in the Niagara Region in order to increase their customer equity and to help them stand out as the “camp of choice” in a competitive market.

Recommendations for Industry Practitioners

Based on the IPA grid that portrays the overall deemed level of importance and performance of each factor, seven items were located above the discrepancy line: “Players grouped on-ice by skill level,” “Challenging and fun off-ice activities,” “Reasonable cost of camp registration,” “Coach-to-player ratio,” “Capable counsellors,” “Quality coaching staff,” and “Quality on-ice curriculum.” These are the factors that need the most managerial attention of which camp directors have room to improve on and should consider investing more resources into.

Players grouped on-ice by skill level helps create an even level of competition. Here, competition in the youth hockey space is about parity and equity (Wigfield & Chard, 2018). If a player is substantially better than the others in the group, they may not be challenged to improve. Likewise, if a child is of a poorer calibre, it would not be fun for them to lose all the drills and games. For camps that have enough campers, they could run different ice sessions based on level of hockey played. If camps lack the number of campers and funding, they can still split players by their skill level on the ice in order to create and promote a level of competition. In order to determine the skill level of players, camps could require that information on their registration form, and/or coaches could do an assessment on the first day.

Challenging and fun off-ice activities are also important to improve on. Hockey Canada (2007) stated the following while discussing off-ice activities at camps: “Much can be learned, and great improvements can be made away from the ice surface. These components help develop life skills which will help your player succeed not only in hockey, but in many other situations they may encounter” (para.3). Camp administrators should take into consideration the developmental aspects of off-ice activities and put a focus on those. The importance of off-ice

activities (5.26) is very close to the importance of the on-ice curriculum (5.82); camp directors need to recognize this when planning their programming.

The third factor that was above the discrepancy line was “Reasonable cost of camp registration.” Yes, the importance placed by parents on this factor outweighs the performance, however, the performance is still scored at 5.03 indicating a strong performance. There is no recommendation to make substantial adjustments to price, but there is still room for some improvement to move resources around. For example, “inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey/prizes” was in the *Overkill* quadrant. The performance of this item greatly outweighs the deemed level of importance by parents. “Scholarships/funding available” was also somewhat unimportant to parents. These are both factors where camps could shift resources from in order to improve the cost of camp registration.

“Coach to player ratio” also had a negative discrepancy. The importance score was 5.35, with a performance of 5.20. Though the performance was ranked strong by parents, there is still room for improvement. Hockey camps could look at the split-ice practice model that USA Hockey has introduced which allows more people to be on the ice at the same time, but with small area games (Kanters et al., 2015). Creating these types of small area games will create additional individual attention for players.

It is also important that camps are offering a high quality on-ice curriculum. Indeed, this factor was the most important to parents in this study. Hrivnak (2019) identified that conversations with stakeholders are key for curriculum designers. In the case of hockey camps, directors should be having conversations or surveying their stakeholders; i.e. parents, campers, and coaches. It is important for directors to have coaches involved in the conversation as they are the ones who are actually implementing and teaching the curriculum.

When hiring coaching staff, camps should continue to hire those with professional, junior, and college experience, especially ones who have a proven successful track record. Indeed, parents want their children to be taught by the best in order to improve their development (Sutcliffe et al., 2019). Hiring or having guest celebrity coaches also allows players and parents to experience a reflected glory effect (Sutcliffe et al., 2019). There is only a small negative discrepancy in these results (-0.10). Indeed, hockey camps top performing factor as deemed by parents in this study was their quality coaching staff.

Another part of the human resources of a camp are the camp counsellors. This factor had the largest negative discrepancy, acquiring the need for the most managerial attention. As mentioned in the discussion, training for camp counsellors is crucial (Wahl-Alexander et al., 2012). As such, it is recommended that camp directors spend more resources on developing a training plan for their counsellors. Training resources should be sent out to counsellors before they arrive at camp so that they have some knowledge of what they are getting into. Many counsellors also often feel undervalued (Baker, 2018). Camps should recognize their counsellors hard work and contributions, and make sure that their efforts do not go unnoticed. This could be done by having a rewards program, or even with just a simple conversation of gratitude.

Limitations

As with all studies, there are limitations that need to be reported. First, this study was looking at hockey camps in the Niagara Region, specifically. Thus, the results are not generalizable outside of this area. The location of this research was chosen by the researcher due to ease of access and existing relationships with the camps. The location of this research also sits on the border of the USA; hence, the population includes several Americans. If camps were

located further north in Canada for example, the sample population may have less Americans which could lead to different results.

The results of the convenience factors are also limited since participants should have been asked whether their child was a residential or day camper. It would have been useful to breakdown the convenience results between residential and day campers, as day camp parents may have skewed the results for items such as “camp has overnight lodging option.” For example, lodging in the Niagara Region would most likely be more important for someone flying in from the Southern States than it would be for someone who lives within close proximity to the camp.

The methodology of this study also had limitations. Indeed, the time frame of this study may be a limitation on the performance results. All of the camps occurred during the months of July and August, but the survey was sent out to parents between September and November. This could potentially lead to parents forgetting some aspects of the camps. On the other hand, this time frame may have allowed parents the opportunity to watch their child in-season to see if they developed from camp. As the surveys were sent out after the camp, they had to be sent out via email in order to reach all the participants. Online surveys present limitations as the researcher cannot control the environment where the respondent completes the survey; the researcher cannot clarify any questions, and lastly, online surveys draw a low response rate (Neuman et al., 2015).

Considering the limitations from this study, there is plenty of opportunity for further research on the topic. Directions for future research are presented below.

Future Research

The results from this study come from just a small portion of all parents who send their children to summer hockey camps. These results look at what is important to parents and how camps are performing but does not dig deep into reasoning. As there is limited research on customer equity in youth sports, and no existing research specifically on summer hockey camps, the factors from this study were drawn from the literature review and content analysis of hockey camp brochures and websites. Thus, it would be interesting to do a qualitative study to interview parents and see if any other factors of importance emerge.

One of the goals of this study was to be able to contribute to hockey camp directors by providing them with results and recommendations to increase their customer equity. From this study we can see what factors are most important to parents, but we do not understand what about them makes them important. There is also not a clear understanding of how camps can improve on their performance. Qualitative research could be done to determine ‘why’ factors are important to parents and ‘how’ camps can improve their performance on the factors. For example, qualitative research could show that quality coaching is important to parents because it provides their child with references for the future and that coaching can be improved upon by having coaches who have coached at multiple levels. Indeed, a qualitative analysis would provide a deeper understanding of what parents look for in camps, which would create more in-depth recommendations for camp directors.

Another opportunity for future research is to do a content analysis of hockey camp websites and brochures to see if camps are advertising what is most important to parents when they are choosing a camp. As many consumers compare competitor sites before making a

purchasing decision, it is important for companies to advertise on their platforms what the consumers find important (Buchanan et al., 2016).

Parents were the sample in this study as they are the ones who make the actual purchasing decision (Chard et al., 2015; Costa et al., 2004; Walsh et al., 2017; Wigfield & Chard, 2018). Future research on this topic could survey children to determine what they find important in a hockey camp and how camps are performing to their standards. A study of this manner could also lead to a comparison between children and parents when it comes to choosing a hockey camp.

Lastly, if one wanted to make the results more generalizable, a broader study could be done to look at more hockey specific summer camps. For example, the geographic location could be expanded to all of Ontario, or Canada. One could also explore this study with all USA summer hockey camps. The USA has a more collective database of hockey specific camps than Canada, which would make it easier to gather data and participants.

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Appendix A

Parent Survey

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. What is your highest level of education completed?

- Secondary School or lower
- Diploma or Certificate
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

3. Did you play representative hockey as a child?

- Yes
- No

4. What is your child's gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

5. What age division does your child play hockey in?

- Tyke
- Novice
- Atom
- Peewee
- Bantam
- Midget
- Under 8
- Under 10
- Under 12
- Under 14
- Under 16
- Under 18

6. What level of hockey does your child play?

- House league
- Representative (Rep)

7. What country is your child registered to play hockey in? _____

8. How many years has your child played hockey?

- 1 or less
- 2-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10 + years

9. Has your child attended this specific camp in a previous year?

- Yes
- No

On each scale of 1-6, please rank the **IMPORTANCE** of each item based on your **IDEAL SUMMER HOCKEY CAMP** (not necessarily the camp your child is currently attending). Indicate the importance of each item by **CIRCLING** the number that best represents your point of view. The chart below shows what each number represents.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Unimportant	Strongly Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Strongly Important	Very Strongly Important

Quality

1. Coach to player ratio	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Players grouped by skill level	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Hours on ice per day	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Off-ice activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Coaching staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Counsellors	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Quality of on-ice curriculum	1	2	3	4	5	6

Price

9. Scholarships/funding available	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Cost of camp registration	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Refund policy	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey	1	2	3	4	5	6

Convenience

13. Location	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Time of day	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Meals provided	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Camp has overnight lodging option	1	2	3	4	5	6

On each scale of 1-6, please rank how the **CAMP YOUR CHILD IS ATTENDING** is **PERFORMING** on each item. Indicate the performance of each item by **CIRCLING** the number that best represents your point of view. The chart below shows what each number represents.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor Performance	Poor Performance	Somewhat Poor Performance	Somewhat Strong Performance	Strong Performance	Very Strong Performance

Quality

1. Coach to player ratio	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Players grouped by skill level	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Hours on ice per day	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Off-ice activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Coaching staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Counsellors	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Quality of on-ice curriculum	1	2	3	4	5	6

Price

9. Scholarships/funding available	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Cost of camp registration	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Refund policy	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Inclusion of camp t-shirt/jersey	1	2	3	4	5	6

Convenience

13. Location	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Time of day	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Meals provided	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Camp has overnight lodging option	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix B

Letter of Invitation

Title: Understanding Parents' Perspectives of Youth Summer Hockey Camps using Importance-Performance Analysis: A Consideration of Value Equity Drivers

Date: May 7th, 2019

Principal Student Investigator: Raiven de Souza, Graduate Student, Sport Management, Brock University
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Chris Chard, Associate Professor, Sport Management, Brock University

Your organization is invited to participate in a research project called "Understanding Parents' Perspectives of Youth Summer Hockey Camps using Importance-Performance Analysis: A Consideration of Value Equity Drivers". The purpose of this research is to explore what factors are most important to parents when they sign their children up for a summer hockey camp as well as to understand how camps are performing on those factors.

At the bottom of this email is a link to a survey. If you choose to participate, can you please send the survey link out to the parents of children who attended your summer hockey camp. The survey will take participants approximately 15 minutes to complete. Questions will be asked using a 6-point scale.

The results of this study would have the potential to benefit hockey camp directors as areas will be identified as to where they need to shift their resources to as well as areas where they are performing well. The results will show what factors parents look for when choosing a summer hockey camp for their child as well as their satisfaction level of particular attributes of the camps. If camp directors decide to shift their resources to improve the areas of low satisfaction, this will in turn benefit parents as there would be more potential for their wants to be met. There are no known or anticipated risks that would be caused by participating in this research.

The information provided by parents from your camp will be kept confidential and anonymous. Only the investigators will have access to the data. If you have any questions regarding ethics or research participants' rights, please contact the Research Ethics Office at reb@brocku.ca or 905-688-5550. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the REB (file #18-322)

After data analysis has been completed, approximately five months after data collection has finished, I will send you a report with findings from the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Raiven de Souza
Graduate Student
rd14fw@brocku.ca

Dr. Chris Chard
Faculty Supervisor
Associate Professor
Email: cchard@brocku.ca
Phone: 905-688-5550 x5875

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Title: Understanding Parents' Perspectives of Youth Summer Hockey Camps using Importance-Performance Analysis: A Consideration of Value Equity Drivers

Date: May 7th, 2019

Principal Student Investigator: Raiven de Souza, Graduate Student, Sport Management, Brock University
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Chris Chard, Associate Professor, Sport Management, Brock University

Invitation

You are invited to partake in a study involving quantitative research on attributes of value related to summer hockey camps. The purpose of this research is to explore what factors are most important to parents when they sign their children up for a summer hockey camp as well as to understand how camps are performing on those factors.

What is Required

As a participant you will be asked to fill out a three-page survey, this should take approximately 15 minutes. On page one you will be asked to answer basic demographic information. Page two of the survey you will be asked to rate on a six-point scale the importance of attributes related to an ideal summer hockey camp. On page three of the study you will be asked to rate on a six-point scale how the camp your child is attending has performed on the specified attributes.

Potential Risks and Benefits

There are no known or anticipated risks that would be caused by participating in this research.

The results of this study have the potential to benefit camp directors as areas will be identified as to where they need to shift their resources to as well as areas where they are performing well. The results will show what factors parents look for when choosing a summer hockey camp for their child as well as their satisfaction level of particular attributes of the camps. If camp directors decide to shift their resources to improve the areas of low satisfaction, this will in turn benefit parents as there would be more potential for their wants to be met.

Confidentiality

The information you provide during this study will be kept anonymous and considered confidential. Your name will not be associated with your survey. The surveys collected from this study will be securely stored and destroyed after two years. Data will be inputted into a computer that is password protected and deleted after two years. Access to this data will be restricted to the research team.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any point from this study. If you decide to withdraw, any part of the survey you have filled out will not be used and will be destroyed. Once you submit your survey, you will not be able to withdraw. If you refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any point, there will be no penalty. You may decide to decline any question on the survey without penalty as well. No compensation will be provided for participation.

Publication of Results

The results of this study may be published in academic journals and/or presented at conferences. Results from the study will be available approximately five months after data collection has been completed. If you would like to receive the results once available, please contact Raiven de Souza (see contact information below).

Ethics Clearance

If you have any questions regarding ethics and/or research participants' rights, please contact the Research Ethics Office at reb@brocku.a or (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the REB (file #18-322).

Consent

By signing this consent form you agree to free consent to participate in the study justified above and have read and understand the relevant information. You may ask questions at any point now or during the future. You may withdrawal your consent at any time.

Thank you for your assistance with this study. Please keep a copy of this consent form for your personal record.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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