**The Future of Family-Operated-Resort-Destinations**

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Social Studies Senior Thesis

Bemidji State University

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April 2022

Abstract

The tourism industry, one of the largest in the world, is arguably one of the most volatile industries we look at. Through the varying sub-sectors of tourism, we narrow in on the family resort industry, predominately in the upper Midwest. You may hear me refer to them as Family-Operated-Resort-Destinations, but they serve unique clientele in a unique way. This industry faces immense pressure from mild tax code changes, politicians, DNR regulations, fishing quality, climate change, gas prices, foreign affairs and more. During this paper, I will examine the future of Family-Operated-Resort-Destinations.

**The Future of Family-Operated-Resort-Destinations**

The family-oriented resort destination business is an aspect of the tourism business that has been around for years. A resort owner interviewed for this paper described the beginning of resort history as such “When “resorts” in Northern Minnesota first became a destination, somewhere between 1910 and 1920, it was all about fishing! People would take a train from say, Chicago, to Deer River Minnesota. Then, the resorts owner would pick them up at the train station in a horse drawn carriage, after a two-day ride to the resort they would many times spend two weeks. Then the long trip back. While this was about entertainment […] Families from all over the world have participated in attending places like these resorts, giving them a period where they can escape reality, relax away from the rest of the world, and encompass their family’s needs. Numerous distinct factors drive the operation of these businesses, most of which are outside of said businesses control. Outside factors like changing family dynamics, destination image and place attachment, multigenerational travel limits, invasive species, climate change, trends, and politics (tax and environmental) all play a pivotal role in not only our world, but our family resort world. These businesses are solely meant to serve you, the people. There most important goal is making you, and your family, happy.

Inside of tourism, there are many subsectors that make up the entire tourism market. Odds are, if you are from the upper Midwest or if you have ever spent any time in the upper Midwest, you are familiar with the concept of family-oriented resort destinations. These attractions pop up in popular tourist hubs, in wooded areas and on the beaches of lakes. Resorts like these have occupied beautiful chunks of land for the clientele to relish, contributed numerous benefits to there communities such as tax revenue, and bringing tourists into the area, spending money at local stores, restaurants, and other businesses. Some communities without the aid of resorts during tourist season would be thwarted.

A hundred years ago, odds are every business like these resorts would be owned and operated by a family, making it their entire livelihood. Fast forward a hundred years, you may still find that ma and pa ran family resort, or you very well might dive in and find yourself staying under the roof of a half-a-billion-dollar investment company. Its no mystery, times have changed, people have changed, technology has changed, politics have changed, and what people enjoy is hitting new heights every year. “After two straight years of record sales of historic resort properties […] In 2020 we saw what is believed to be the largest in state history –the nearly $15 million deal that closed when Ontario-based North Shore Resort Co. bought Superior Shores in Two Harbors from longtime owner Joe Re” (Anne Bretts, Finance&Commerce) Factors like changing family dynamics, talked about in my analysis of ‘Changing Family Dynamics: A Force of Change for The Family-Resort Industry?’ drastically change a families travel needs. Whereas a family of 4 might of drove north to head to there favorite Minnesota resort, a family of 6 may now be flying to Cancun to stay in their Condo. Politics, taxation, Department of Natural Resources regulations, expansion opportunities, climate change, invasive species and so much more go into determining the future of these family-oriented-resort-destinations, what will there place in our future be?

# Literature Review

**The Slow Demise**

Time continues to move on, and as time moves on so do our surroundings, our habits, and the way of life. Nothing but change would be expected in the tourism industry. As people seem to become more materialistic, what does this mean for the future of tourism? Family resorts, or family-oriented resort destinations, have been around for decades and remain prevalent in the northern Midwest. In 2019, Kaysey Price authored an article which stated, “In the last 16 years, Minnesota has lost 317 resorts and 191 private campgrounds.” Through the whirlwinds of life between economic recessions, the threat of terrorism, or even a global pandemic, family resorts have still found a way to hang on and be a stable revenue generator for local communities. Post WWII brought on the new generations of travelers and wealth. Resorts in the upper Midwest started to pop up everywhere, while Lutsen Resort being the first resort in Minnesota, had been established since 1885. Where there just too many resorts built and not enough clientele? Did the clientele find elsewhere to go to, or did the operators of these resorts not provide a unique enough experience for recommendations or a return? “Families have traditionally played a significant role in the success of destination resorts […] The family-orientated destination resort sector, in particular has built its business upon serving families.” (Changing Family Dynamics, Porter, 2006) Porter also goes on to note that there are five forces of change, “the threat of new entrants, the threat of new substitution, the bargaining powers of customers, the bargaining power of suppliers, and the rivalry among current competitors”. Even dating back to 2006, there were studies like Porters included that talk about the American family and its changing dynamics. How long people are living with their parents, how the sizes are getting smaller, but more people are living in a house. The younger generations are waiting longer to have kids as they put their careers first, which can lead to higher traveling budgets. Destination image and place attachment are a form of thought that humans have been feeling for thousands of years, with the changing family sizes, travel budgets and longevity of how long people are waiting to have kids, could this impact family resort? It’s worth noting that many family resorts make a large amount of their revenue off returning clientele. If place attachment is getting the younger generations before they have a family and are sitting on a secluded island in Bora Bora, will that prevent them from finding a vacation home in the northern Midwest? Using Taylors article in 2020 to infer, ‘U.S. Travel: Last 10 Years Have Been Comeback Decade for the Industry. It was pieced together the increase of families traveling, as well as budgets, to aid the argument that invasive species, travel restrictions, economic downturns, pandemics, tax’s, family orientation changes, increase in international travel and much more dwells on the operations of family-oriented resort destinations.

**Negative External Forces, Driven by Tourism**

The tourism industry is an industry that has been around for the better part of human’s time on earth. As we, as humans, become more civilized, more technologically advanced, and continue to grow, so does the tourism industry. Family oriented resort destinations have been a sector that has captivated the hearts of families and anglers all around the country, heck the world. Throughout the booms of WWII, and the busts of recessions and pandemics, family resorts have been with us along the rollercoaster of life. Family resorts often make a living off some psychological terminology like destination image and place attachment, the emotional/philosophical attachment that a family might feel towards a place that they have been to or visited before. As mentioned before, many acts have occurred that have hindered, or tried to hinder these businesses. Invasive species like Zebra Muscles are actively attacking water in the Northern Midwest, completely changing the landscape and the vegetation available to each lake. Cooperate greed, or the advancement of society have tried to ingulf these resorts. Many family resorts find out that their land and lake shore is worth more than the business itself, when big corporations or rich retiree’s throw a big enough offer to the owners, that’s its refusable. Although invasive species have been a hindrance on these businesses, according to an article published in 2015 called “The Role of Tourism and recreation in the Spread of Non-Native Species: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis”, tourism is a huge reason that these species like Zebra Muscles are making their way to non-native habitats. “Non-native species were overwhelmingly found in more abundance in areas of the ground disrupted by tourism.” (Anderson Lucy, 2015) Although these things can negatively affect tourism, a scientometric review using a visualization software on Java, developed by Dr. Chaomei Chen, it determined that in 2017, the tourism industry equated to 10.4% of the entire worlds gross domestic product. May 27th, 2009. A congressional hearing is being held in Minnesota, it notes that in Minnesota, tourism is the 5th largest industry at the time. One of every 8 Americans are employed in the tourism industry. This hearing goes on to talk about the loss of resorts in a county and statewide. Some struggles of evolving family resorts/campgrounds with the times and demands, while noting the tourism industry’s worth to the state. A book, The Lure of the North Woods: Cultivating Tourism in the Upper Midwest although provides some amazing themes that are particularly important and determining the future of the family resort business, does provide some great insight on what is referred to as flyover country (and north). Once (or still is) often thought of a place to just flyover, the book starts out on focusing how the abundance of tourism came to be to a place considered flyover country. Themes like conservation measures, reforestation, fish and game management, recreational planning and recreational zoning are commonly discussed in this book, give us an insight of what got us to where we are today, and how these themes continue to affect the future of the family resort industry. The world has evolved and will continue to evolve until the end of time. This makes tourism no different, an industry that is rapidly evolving to the new needs of the world, but what does it leave behind? Contrary to rudimentary numbers presented in findings such as the one presented in Minnesota’s One Hundred Eleventh Congress, first session on May 27, 2009: “In the last 16 years, Minnesota has lost 317 resorts and 191 private campgrounds” (SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION. 56.) The family resort sector is something that is alive and well. Although many businesses alike have been lost over the past few decades, the ones that remain have evolved with the rest of the world and its times to continue a vital part of our economy. A resort in northern Minnesota noted in a Star Tribune article the amenities needed to continue to stay afloat, as well as catering to more than just the families. (Anderson: Resort life is declining; some wouldn’t have it any other way—StarTribune.com.) I believe there is a place for everything, and the family resort industry in the upper Midwest is no different. Even through economic downturns like the pandemic, these resorts managed to transpire great seasons, some of which are record years for their respective businesses, as noted in Anderson: Resort life is declining; some wouldn’t have it any other way—StarTribune.com. Many things still dwell over these businesses’ heads though. Many, like Kris Johnson, the president of the Association of Washington Business, the state’s chamber of commerce and manufacturing association. Making several notes of the business-and-occupation tax, and capital gains taxes. He states that many of these are used to tax the wealthy, but the small businesses bear the burden of these, many of which are vital to small town economies. (Johnson, K. (2017). Taxing “wealthy” hurts small business. Journal of Business) Global factors like climate change is something many people expect to take a toll on the tourism industry, why would you continue to go back somewhere if the weather changes its beauty and inhibits actives? A study done on Minnesota’s north shore proves otherwise. “[…] Table 3 reveals that contingent travel behavior was not significantly different than past travel behavior given any of the future climate scenario’s” (Research note: Climate change and the demand for summer tourism on Minnesota’s North Shore. Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, 24) Factors like emotional connections, age, ethnicity, place destinations, income and more were used in these studies to determine the findings.

**Research Question**

The continued change in the world is something that every business, every sector, and every person must adapt too. The family resort business has been a unique sector to the tourism industry, one that often carries local economies. As the world adapts, many of these businesses have been left behind, and some have prospered. Family resorts is something that truly inspires place destination, a psychological feeling that connects you to a place. Numerous factors hinder the operations of family resorts, while some boast it. I do believe that the family resort industry will always have a place to operate, and a special place in people’s hearts.

**Argument**

These factors discussed in the literature review are what these current and former resort owner and operators must adapt to and overcome. Why does a changing family dynamic effect tourism, more specifically family-oriented-resort-destinations? Anything that effects their clientele effects that resort. For example, a guest at a resort gets diagnosed with Lung Cancer, they can no longer make it. The family doesn’t continue the trip without the guest that has become ill, the whole group no longer returns. So, if a family’s interests, size, and budget are all changing, this will affect smaller resorts on a larger scale, due to a lack of funding to enhance the stay and provide new facilities compared to that of larger resorts, which tend to generate a lot more cash flow. The more the size of the families change, the more the interests of the family change, the more change that continues to happen the more change that is required to adapt to the change. In 1990, children might have been way more willing to swim on a beach. In 2022, there is an exceptionally large amount of the youth that does not want to swim with weeds, with turtles, with fish or anything else, they would prefer a pool. If daughter A grows up to refuse to swim in the lake, then family A might be on the search for a new family vacation. What did that resort do wrong? They didn’t change, and there could be several reasons for that! First off, resort A didn’t want to change, maybe they are financially comfortable, or they adhere to a certain clientele. Resort A simply doesn’t have the land to fit a pool in, there lot is landlocked, and they simply have no room for expansion. Are what if (the) the resort doesn’t have enough money to be able to justify the addition of a pool. What happens to resort A? If families follow a certain path of adaptation, and resort A can’t afford the expense, then resort A may be on their way out. You might be hard-pressed to find a business that is as affected by the most miniscule, or the most intrusive changes the world can offer. Tiny generational changes can completely shell an entire business or area. Research in the tourism field has led to the discovery of terms like Place-Oriented or People-Oriented concepts, portraying to destination loyalty and place attachment. In the article ‘Place-Oriented or People-Oriented Concepts for Destination Loyalty: Destination Image and Place Attachment versus Perceived Distances and Emotional Solidarity’ Tasci states:

“Tourism research has generated several place-oriented and people-oriented concepts to explain tourist behavior in visiting, revisiting, and willing to revisit a place, typically referred to as destination loyalty ([Tasci 2017](https://journals-sagepub-com.bsuproxy.mnpals.net/doi/10.1177/0047287520982377)). To understand what makes or breaks destination loyalty, many different place-oriented factors have been investigated in relation to destination loyalty including satisfaction, motivation, image, quality, value, involvement, commitment, novelty-seeking, risk perception, and place attachment […] Some of these place-oriented concepts include traces of human factors as important destination dimensions. Destination image, for example, includes predominantly place-oriented aspects such as attractions, climate, and facilities, while some studies also include a few aspects of the locals or hosts such as helpful or friendly attitudes of locals (e.g., [Ross 1993](https://journals-sagepub-com.bsuproxy.mnpals.net/doi/10.1177/0047287520982377); [Tasci 2009](https://journals-sagepub-com.bsuproxy.mnpals.net/doi/10.1177/0047287520982377)). Nonetheless, research concerning people-oriented factors and their influence on destination loyalty has been minimally undertaken.”

Beyond peer-reviewed articles, sciencemetric studies, java scripts running simulations and other measurables of the family resort business, I wanted to get nitty and gritty and see what the resort owners think about the future of family-oriented-resort-destinations. A resort owner of 22 years in Minnesota was asked about the changing demographics of the world, and how so many present obstacles to tourism. In his time as a resort owner, what are the biggest challenges in keeping business alive and ready for what’s to come?

“When “resorts” in Northern Minnesota first became a destination, somewhere between 1910 and 1920, it was all about fishing! People would take a train from say, Chicago, to Deer River Minnesota. Then, the resorts owner would pick them up at the train station in a horse drawn carriage, after a two-day ride to the resort they would many times spend two weeks. Then the long trip back. While this was about entertainment it was also about sustenance. Catch fish, hunt, then take your meat home. Over the years the desire for a resort vacation has changed. When we bought in 2001, fishing was still particularly important but playgrounds, volleyball courts, basketball courts and arcade games were what families were looking for. By the time we sold in 2020, scheduled kid’s activities, zip lines, live entertainment and exercise rooms were the thing. Arcades faded as personal gaming devices became more popular, but this brought the challenge of providing Wi-Fi for your guests. While fishing is still a pastime, no longer were 14’ aluminum boats acceptable. The transition to more comfortable, 18’ boats with cushioned seats, live-wells, depth finders and trolling motors became a necessity. The popularity of Pontoon boats is a huge draw for a resort. Families learned that a pontoon boat was an effective way to allow young children to be able to move around and is also a lot of fun for a sunset cruise with multiple people on board. From a resort standpoint, this all heavily weighed on the expense line. The more amenities people desire, the higher the rental rates became. You asked about challenges the largest challenges to the survival of a small family-owned resort are government, laws, and new regulations. Taxes are taxes! But the new push of “Green,” will eventually drive smaller resorts out of business. Setbacks, open space, impervious surface, water gardens, septic’s, run off mitigation, building codes, permitting, visual aesthetics etc. will eventually be the end of this family business industry. I find this sad and troubling! While we must preserve nature and natural resources there no longer seems to be any common sense applied or a happy middle ground pursued by the extremists that seem to have taken control. In our area, without tourism tax dollars, roads will not be plowed or graded, you will drive 20 miles to the nearest grocery store, MANY employees will lose their jobs, many children will grow up without the great experience that resorts offer. Many of the people that live around our resort grew up vacationing at a resort and therefore developed a love for the area and eventually bought a home/cabin. Without the resort influence this might not have occurred. The amount of people in a geographic area drive entrepreneurship and employment opportunity as well as tax income for the city, county, and state.

During these interview questions, I tried to draw this question towards a more specific direction, backing of the article ‘Changing Family Dynamics’, I asked the follow up question ‘What are the biggest changes that you have noticed about families (size, length of stay, interests etc) – and what do you have to do to cater towards these changes?’

After relaying a little bit of information back from the first question, he stated “We always said if the kids are happy, then Mom is happy, if Mom is happy then Dad is happy (if he gets a couple hours per day to fish). As a resort owner it was always our job to satisfy the above. Over the years we saw increasingly of families using a resort as a true family vacation, meaning, 10, 20 or 30 family members all getting together which we found to be cool. The downside to this is there were Grandparents involved. When a grandparent passed the group, many times, dissolved if you were not keeping up with the times and requirements of younger generations.”

I believe that multigenerational travel and its ability to grow (as well as the distances that people will travel) is something that can help family-oriented-resort-destinations. Many of these places see a local clientele, and by local, I mean same state and border states. I noted earlier that these types of resorts may run into cash flow problems when owned by a family, as compared to a corporate entity might have the slush fund to expand and adapt to what they may need. If more family members are traveling to farther distances, what is the draw to Bemidji, Minnesota over let’s say, Florida? Family, family is the reason one resort owner believes in: Being that our resort was in Northern Minnesota, most of our guests came from Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Then on a smaller scale, the Dakota’s, Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois, and Ohio would follow. The only state that I can recall as to not having a guest from would be Delaware. Yes, to Hawaii. Yes, to Alaska. But beyond the states we had guests from Venezuela, Peurto Rico, Japan, England, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and South Africa. Again, keep in mind we were a family-owned resort operation and still drew interest and guests from all around the globe.”

When asked about the future of, well anything on this earth, I think that you must consider everything happening on the planet. Dissecting current events around the globe might be one of the best attributes a resort owner can have, to build a better understanding of how people are feeling and how people are thinking, it might just give you an insider scoop on how people are spending. Trying to piggyback scientific data off on-hand experience, I went to the article ‘U.S. Travel: 10 Years Have Been “Comeback Decade” for the industry’ which begins to talk about how the early 2000’s (2000-2010) was one of the worst decades of travel in the books, but the decade that followed it saw over a 10% increase in domestic trips. Fast forward 20 years after September 11th, 2001, and you have another situation that causes mass panic, Covid-19. Well, where does a family-oriented-resort-destination sit when global issues arise? Astonishingly, they could exceed the expectations of that year before the event happened. I asked a resort owner:

“There was an article published in 2021 that stated “U.S. Travel: 10 years have been “comeback decade” for the industry. The 10 years before people endured situations around the world including September 11th, 2001. As a resort owner/operator, what control do you have over industry swings of this magnitude? Is there anything you can do to better prepare yourself for situations like this?” His response is important to ponder. He states “Yes, Historic events affect the tourism industry in many ways. The ways it affects Disney World is different than how it affects a small family resort in Northern Minnesota. For example, after 9/11 people were scared to travel so they vacationed closer to home, within driving distances. Covid caused the same reaction. Recessions also cause the same reaction. On the flip side, when all is good and stable, people are willing to travel further distances. While we have zero control over Historic events what we can control is creating a vacation environment that draws as many people as possible no matter what is going on with the economy and Historic events. Be aware, ask your customers and then act by providing them with the amenities that are important to them. Lastly, there will be peaks and valleys in tourism. When there are peaks you must put some money away as there will absolutely be valleys.”

As one resort owner stated, “We just have to adjust and adapt until there is a resolution.” (Appendix, 5) Just as the rest of the world operates with its own changes, industries, people, even animals adjust and adapt, and that is exactly what the family resort industry will do. Adjust and adapt.

**Conclusion**

An article published in 2019 called ‘As Resorts, Campgrounds Continue to Disappear, Minnesota Tourism Industry Could Take a Hit” dives into the plunder of resorts and campgrounds in Minnesota, where in the 16 years before the publish date, it had lost 317 resorts and 191 private campgrounds. In an interview process, the same resort owner that stated “Adjust and adapt” provided his reasoning to why so many had disappeared, and what made their business different:

“[…] The largest problem as I see it is many people have bought resorts as a semi-retirement. They knew they were only going to operate the resort for 5 to 8 years then sell. Many of these owners operated their resort as a hobby, not as a business or career. They put cash in their pocket. They put band aids on problematic situations instead of spending the money and fixing it right. They were not involved politically to sustain the stability of the industry. Then after three or four or five owners operating as described above the land becomes more valuable than the business. That is when you see corporations, churches and well to do individuals buying what used to be a resort. I always hate to see any small business disappear, especially when a large corporation takes over. In this situation you could see it coming for a few years prior to. The largest struggle for us was trying to compete with big money for guests. They put in a water park, and I could only afford to put in a swim raft. They put in a golf course, and I could only afford to put in volleyball, basketball etc. The struggle was to stay relevant. While we made many changes over the years, I stand by my statement that as an owner, if you show your face, visit your guests at their campfire, ask them pertinent questions and act on the answers you receive, strong relationships develop and strong relationships bring guests back.

This answer relays into the conclusion that I have developed throughout my research on family resorts, primarily family-operated-resort-destinations in the upper Midwest. The world is an ever-changing phenomenon, people change, industries change, technology changes. We live in the world where countries name changes, borders change, and now the creation of new land. Life, for the entirety of it, will always be a revolving cycle of change. This doesn’t make any difference for the tourism industry, or the family resort sub-industry. These businesses operate in an extremely volatile market, with a more perplex tax code and no benefits (such as health, dental, etc). On top of that, they also operate in a highly competitive market, a market which each businesses intent is to get better, be better, and therefore produce better business. For resort A to show growth in their business, resort B, or C, D etc. could be on the negative side of it.

Small resorts will fight corporate resorts. Together, they will fight politics. Together, they will adjust to climate change, changing family dynamics, invasive species and the host of changes and difficulties brought on this industry. At the end of the day when your coats hung up and your dinner is on the table, we care about ourselves and the ones we love. For many, the family-operated-resort-destination provides that. A wise man once said, “It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive, but those who can best manage change.” – Leon C. Megginson. Anne Frank once said, “The weak die out and the strong will survive and will live on forever.”

“The law of evolution is that the strongest survives! Yes, and the strongest, in the existence of any social species, are those who are the most social.” – Ursula K. Le Guin

Fast forward to 2022, a random resort owner in Minnesota stated a few of these quotes during an interview about his business’s future:

“The struggle was to stay relevant. While we made many changes over the years, I stand by my statement that as an owner, if you show your face, visit your guests at their campfire, ask them pertinent questions and act on the answers you receive, strong relationships develop and strong relationships bring guests back.”

“We just have to adjust and adapt until there is a resolution.”

There are some remarkably similar messages sent from these quotes, some resonating vaguely about survival of the fittest, some more focused on the family resort sub industry and the families own person property. To determine the future of family-operated-resort-destinations, you must determine if they are fit for survival, “The weak die out and the strong will survive and will live on forever.” – Anne Frank

**Appendix**

1. **There are many changing demographics among the world, many of which present obstacles for the tourism industry. During your time as a resort owner/operator, what are the \*biggest\* challenges in keeping your business alive and ready for what’s to come? When “resorts” in Northern Minnesota first became a destination, somewhere between 1910 and 1920, it was all about fishing! People would take a train from say, Chicago, to Deer River Minnesota. Then, the resorts owner would pick them up at the train station in a horse drawn carriage, after a two-day ride to the resort they would many times spend two weeks. Then the long trip back. While this was about entertainment it was also about sustenance. Catch fish, maybe hunt, then take your meat home. Over the years the desire for a resort vacation has changed. When we bought in 2001, fishing was still very important but playgrounds, volleyball courts, basketball courts and arcade games were what families were looking for. By the time we sold in 2020, scheduled kid’s activities, zip lines, live entertainment and exercise rooms were the thing. Arcades kind of faded as personal gaming devices became more popular but this brought the challenge of providing Wi-Fi for your guests. While fishing is still a pastime, no longer were 14’ aluminum boats acceptable. The transition to more comfortable, 18’ boats with cushioned sets, live wells, depth finders and trolling motors became a necessity. The popularity of Pontoon boats was a huge draw for a resort. Families learned that a pontoon boat was a good way to allow young children to be able to move around and is also a lot of fun for a sunset cruise with multiple people on board. From a resort standpoint, this all heavily weighed on the expense line. The more amenities people desire, the higher the rental rates became. You asked about challenges, in my opinion, the largest challenges to the survival of a small family-owned resort are government, laws, and new regulations. Taxes are taxes! But the new push of “Green,” in my opinion will eventually drive smaller resorts out of business. Setbacks, open space, impervious surface, water gardens, septic’s, run off mitigation, building codes, permitting, visual aesthetics etc. will eventually be the end of this family business industry. I find this sad and troubling! While we must preserve nature and natural resources there no longer seems to be any common sense applied or a happy middle ground pursued by the extremists that seem to have taken control. In our area, without tourism tax dollars, roads will not be plowed or graded, you will drive 20 miles to the nearest grocery store, MANY employees will lose their jobs, many children will grow up without the great experience that resorts offer. Many of the people that live around our resort grew up vacationing at a resort and therefore developed a love for the area and eventually bought a home/cabin. Without the resort influence this might not have occurred. The amount of people in a geographic area drive entrepreneurship and employment opportunity as well as tax income for the city, county, and state.**
2. **I read an article that was all about the changing of family dynamics, titled “Changing Family Dynamics: A Force of change for The Family-Resort Industry?” – In your time as a resort owner/inside the tourism industry, what are the biggest changes that you have noticed about families (size, length of stay, interests etc.) – and what do you have to do to cater towards these changes? As stated in #1, it is no longer just about fishing, it is about “Families”. We always said if the kids are happy, then Mom is happy, if Mom is happy then Dad is happy (as long as he gets a couple hours per day to fish). As a resort owner it was always our job to satisfy the above. Over the years we saw more and more of families using a resort as a true family vacation, meaning, 10, 20 or 30 family members all getting together which we found to be pretty cool. The downside to this is there were generally Grandparents involved. When a grandparent passed the group, many times, dissolved if you were not keeping up with the times and requirements of younger generations.**
3. **Studies have indicated that multigenerational travel has grown, so has the distances people are willing to travel, and WHAT they are willing to travel too. As your time as a resort owner/operator, where are some of the farthest, or most unique places, that you have had a guest come from? Being that our resort was in Northern Minnesota, the majority of our guests came from Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Then on a smaller scale, the Dakota’s, Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois, and Ohio would follow. The only state that I can recall as to not having a guest from would be Delaware. Yes, to Hawaii. Yes, to Alaska. But beyond the states we had guests from Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Japan, England, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and South Africa. Again, keep in mind we were a family-owned resort operation and still drew interest and guests from all around the globe.**
4. **\* There was an article published in 2021 that stated “U.S. Travel: 10 years have been “comeback decade” for the industry. The 10 years before that were plagued by situations around the world, like September 11th, 2001. As a resort owner/operator, what control do you have over industry swings of this magnitude? Is there anything you can do to better prepare yourself for situations like this? Yes, Historic events affect the tourism industry in many ways. The ways it affects Disney World is different than how it affects a small family resort in Northern Minnesota. For example, after 9/11 people were scared to travel so they vacationed closer to home, within driving distances. Covid caused the same reaction. Recessions also cause the same reaction. On the flip side, when all is good and stable, people are willing to travel further distances. While we have zero control over Historic events what we can control is creating a vacation environment that draws as many people as possible no matter what is going on with the economy and Historic events. Be aware, ask your customers and then act by providing them with the amenities that are important to them. Lastly, there will be peaks and valleys in tourism. When there are peaks you must put some money away as there will absolutely be valleys.**
5. **I read an article that had a lot to do with resort sales in Minnesota over the last few years, and the data portrayed that family-owned businesses are selling to larger corporations (that can meet the cashflow requirement to expand and adapt) as someone that owns a family-owned business, why is this something you continue to do? What makes it \*special\* enough to fight for, when many are taking the easy road out and selling? First and foremost, you have to love what you do. Second, I believe many people prefer to see and talk with the owner’s, the people that have a vested interest in the resort, not just manager’s put in place by an off-site, hands-off owner. The largest problem as I see it is many people have bought resorts as a semi-retirement. They knew they were only going to operate the resort for 5 to 8 years then sell. Many of these owners operated their resort as a hobby, not as a business or career. They put cash in their pocket. They put band aids on problematic situations instead of spending the money and fixing it right. They were not involved politically to sustain the stability of the industry. Then after three or four or five owners operating as described above the land becomes more valuable than the business. That is when you see corporations, churches and well to do individuals buying what used to be a resort.**
6. **In my opinion, resorts in the upper Midwest really have two distinct attractions, fishing, and family. Some resorts may operate primarily based off one attraction all year, some resorts may always intertwine both, and some may be more seasonal. Regardless, the ‘outdoors’ is the unique draw towards these types of businesses. Invasive species have wandered their way around the country and around the world, causing issues of varying types for decades. Zebra Mussels have been a detriment to Minnesota waters. Firsthand, how has this invasive species changed your business, what challenges has it created? What you mentioned first is part of what originally drew us to the resort industry. When we decided to go into business for ourselves, we looked into several different industries, business models and franchises. For us, resort ownership was the answer as we are able to help families enjoy their precious family/vacation time together. It also allowed us to make our own decisions and not be dictated to by a larger corporation. We controlled our time, our costs, our sell/rental prices by what we saw in the industry. In the beginning of our resort career, we were only open Spring, Summer, and Fall. It was all weather driven as our cabins were built in the 1920’s and 30’s. Water lines were not deep. Cabins were not insulated well. So, in 2006 we basically removed all our old cabins and built new from the ground up. When this large expansion project was complete, we were able to be open in the winter, so year-round. But we were able to make the choice to only keep a few cabins open in the winter even though we built all the new cabins able to be used year-round. Again, OUR CHOICE. The second part of your question is invasive species. There are many types of invasives that negatively affect water and land, that’s why they are called invasive. The only invasive we had to work thru were Zebra Mussels. I do not remember the exact year that they showed up in our lake, but I think it was around 2014. Prior to then, our lake was mostly a Walleye Lake meaning somewhat dark water, depth variations, good weed beds etc. When the Zeeb’s showed up the water started getting clearer. While this generally does not affect the fish population as a whole, over time it will affect the population of particular species of fish. Lakes have a carrying capacity meaning the lake does not care what species are present, just that only so many fish can survive in that lake do to size, oxygen etc. So, for an example, when the Zeeb’s showed up and started clearing up the water there became less places for walleye to hide as they do not like sunlight. However, Bass and Panfish do like clearer water, so they began to flourish. Our crawfish population exploded as they eat the escrament from Zebra Mussel. Crawfish are a staple food for Bass. Prior to say 2017 we might have one to three Bass fisherman on our lake. From then on, we were forced to start marketing to Bass fisherman as our species population was changing. The other hurdle with Zeeb’s was our beach/swim area. The Mussels are pretty small and have sharp shells that can cut your feet. They like to attach themselves to things like the steps on our water slide, the water raft etc. It became a common chore to remove them from these type of entertainment items. There are some chemicals that help deter them but there is a permit and fee involved with this treatment. The best way is to get your swim area and water toys as far away from weeds as possible. This again is a permit and fee process. Every three years, which is what the DNR would allow via their permit, we would put 15 dump truck loads of sand on the ice. Then when the ice melted the sand would fall and create a nice blanket which would suffocate out the weeds. Another difficulty Zeeb’s presented was they can get into the water suction holes on the lower unit of a boat motor. If this occurs and you are not aware it can overheat your motor and cause major damage. The education of us, then guests became important. When your boat is parked on the dock lift your motor out of the water. This is about the only way to ensure your motor safety. While the DNR has been working on methods to control and/or eliminate Zebra Mussels they have yet to find an answer. They tested a chemical on Christmas Lake that was supposed to kill off all Zeeb’s. This failed. It killed most but must have missed a few as they soon came back. Plus, this was a small lake. How would you distribute a chemical like this on extremely large lakes? They have also been working on a chemical that would destroy the Zeeb’s reproduction systems. We just have to adjust and adapt until there is a resolution.**
7. **\* An article published in 2019 focused on family resorts in Minnesota (more specifically, Becker County). The article states “Minnesota has lost 317 resorts and 191 private campgrounds) as an owner of a tourism business during these times, what was it like firsthand watching similar businesses disappear? What struggles did it produce? What changes did you make to stay around? As I stated in #5, The largest problem as I see it is many people have bought resorts as a semi-retirement. They knew they were only going to operate the resort for 5 to 8 years then sell. Many of these owners operated their resort as a hobby, not as a business or career. They put cash in their pocket. They put band aids on problematic situations instead of spending the money and fixing it right. They were not involved politically to sustain the stability of the industry. Then after three or four or five owners operating as described above the land becomes more valuable than the business. That is when you see corporations, churches and well to do individuals buying what used to be a resort. I always hate to see any small business disappear, especially when a large corporation takes over. In this situation you could see it coming for a few years prior to. The largest struggle for us was trying to compete with big money for guests. They put in a water park, and I could only afford to put in a swim raft. They put in a golf course, and I could only afford to put in volleyball, basketball etc. The struggle was to stay relevant. While we made many changes over the years, I stand by my statement that as an owner, if you show your face, visit your guests at their campfire, ask them pertinent questions and act on the answers you receive, strong relationships develop and strong relationships bring guests back.**
8. **Studies of tourism have given us terms like Destination Image, Place Attachment, Destination Loyalty, which are cognitive, cultural, or social attachments to a certain attraction. As a resort owner/operator, what does your business do special that will create these kinds of behaviors in clienteles’ heads? I have touched on this in other answers and to me it is pretty basic, CARE! Be the face of your business! Ask pertinent questions. Act on the answers. Build relationships by caring. Caring for them, their kids, their lives, their needs, their desires. Build strong relationships. First you may be richer in life by building these relationships and from a business standpoint it is harder for a guest to change their vacation destination if they feel like they would be leaving a friend. You must love what you do. If you don’t, guests will know! You must love to deal with people! People are People! Many personalities. Many attitudes. Many different wants and needs. You must love doing all you can to satisfy everyone. Yes, it is true, you cannot make everyone happy! You must try, sometimes your efforts pay off. It might take a couple years with certain guests but eventually some will notice your efforts and relax a bit. There are also times that an honest discussion with a certain guest may end in a statement such as “maybe this resort and how we operate is just not the best fit for you or for us.” This is a last option, but you always need to remember that you are not there to satisfy JUST that guest, you have another hundred guests that need your attention as well. You must be willing to change. Change yourself. Change your resort. Change policies. Change amenities. You cannot get stuck in a rut!**

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Footnotes

1[Add footnotes, if any, on their own page following references. For APA formatting requirements, it’s easy to just type your own footnote references and notes. To format a footnote reference, select the number and then, on the Home tab, in the Styles gallery, click Footnote Reference. The body of a footnote, such as this example, uses the Normal text style. (Note: If you delete this sample footnote, don’t forget to delete its in-text reference as well. That’s at the end of the sample Heading 2 paragraph on the first page of body content in this template.)]