

## Pass, Present, and Future: World Leisure and Recreation

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### Introduction

Leisure is “important social, cultural, and economic force that has great influence on the happiness, well-being, and life satisfaction of all individuals” (Edginton, Degraaf, Dieser, and Edginton, 2006, p. 2). However, leisure is different historically in different societies. Leisure class is a notable concept in history of leisure and recreation. In ancient Greece, male citizens had some privileges (leisure class) because they controlled slaves’ systems and women had limited rights of enjoying their leisure. In the U.S., the first leisure class came from Southern plantations owners who had their own properties and controlled slaves. After the Civil War, many people such as owners of factories became rich so they sought “extravagance in entertainments and amusements” (Godbey, 2008). In 1899, American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen published a book titled the *Theory of the Leisure Class* which attacked “extravagance in entertainments and amusements” (the leisure class). The phenomenon of the leisure class actually repeatedly appeared in other countries such as Japanese consumers in “economic bubble” in 1980s and Chinese tourists’ Bakugai in 2010s. Therefore, Veblen’s criticism can be used to understand the leisure class in other nations.

U.S. has been the leader of world leisure and recreation since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many infrastructures such as national parks, inter-state highways, amusement parks, sports facilities create tremendous leisure and recreation opportunities. At the same time, these leisure and recreation’s new concepts greatly influence rest of the world.

After Veblen’s book was published in 1899, leisure was first studied by North American scholars. The main research topics were studies of the family, communities or the lives of people in specific occupations (Roberts, 2012). Since then, the scope of leisure studies is broaden to leisure and society, leisure and health, leisure and happiness, leisure and the environment, leisure and the economy, leisure and technology, leisure and tourism, leisure and management, leisure and education, leisure and theme parks, leisure and playgrounds, leisure and culture and so on.

However, leisure research is still relatively new discipline compared with other traditional disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and geography. In fact, National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), which is basically an association of parks and recreation in the U.S., launched America’s first leisure research journal- *Journal of Leisure Research* in 1968. In the U.K, first leisure research journal- *leisure studies* was published in 1982. Although other countries launched new journals related to leisure and recreation, only three leisure journals including *Leisure Sciences*, *Leisure Studies*, and *Journal of Leisure Research* are influential in the field.

### World Leisure

As we have indicated above, leisure studies is centered in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries. We can not agree that Anglophone-oriented leisure can represent trend of world leisure and recreation. To solve this problem, World Leisure Organization (WLO) has been promoting leisure and recreation globally. Founded in 1952, WLO is “A world-wide, non-governmental association dedicated to discovering and fostering those conditions best permitting leisure to serve as a force for human growth, development and well-being” (WLO, 2016). WLO emphasizes meaningful leisure experience, education, and improving quality of life which we think these three aspects apply for all nations. Since 1952, WLO had become an important forum for promoting

leisure globally. WLO has regular congresses every two years. Every congress has its main theme. In order to better understand how theme fits in each host city and country, we summarized recent 7 congress main theme (table 1).

Table 1: World Leisure Congress and Themes

Year	World Leisure Congress	Location	Theme
2006	10 <sup>th</sup>	Hangzhou (China)	Leisure-integral to social, cultural and economic development
2008	11 <sup>th</sup>	Quebec City (Canada)	How do communities adapt leisure to their development?
2010	12 <sup>th</sup>	Chunchoen (Korea)	Leisure and identity
2012	13 <sup>th</sup>	Rimini (Italy)	Transforming city, transforming leisure
2014	14 <sup>th</sup>	Mobile (USA)	Leisure: Enhancing the human condition
2016	15 <sup>th</sup>	Durban (South Africa)	Challenges, Choices and Consequences
2018	16 <sup>th</sup>	Sao Paulo (Brazil)	Leisure beyond constraints

In table 1, we can find each theme is right fit for each country. For example, leisure-integral to social, cultural and economic development is 2006 Hangzhou's congress's main theme. A decade ago, it was China's fast growth time. Chinese government has been eager to know how to use leisure to be integral to social, cultural, and economic development. As a result, host G20 summit Hangzhou reflects one of positive outcomes of this theme. Challenges, Choices and Consequences is the main theme of 2016 Durban congress. As we all know that Africa faces a variety of problems. Leisure is an important way to help South Africans to face challenges, have right choices, and gain positive consequences.

#### Future of leisure research

Based on leisure research development and world leisure Congress' theme, we recommend four major themes for future of leisure research and development.

##### 1. Leisure and health

Study of Parks is primary research interest in North America and sport is the central interest in the U.K. Although parks and sport research are linked to health. There are not many research on leisure and health from broader scope of leisure activities. As an example, health tourism in Okinawa is an innovative way to study leisure and health. Researchers should pay attention to it.

##### 2. Leisure and technology

Technology is changing every day. Leisure researchers are lack of knowledge how to integrate new technology into leisure. New technology such as Pokemon Go and smartphones influence people's daily. Researchers should conduct research on how these new technologies can positively influence people's leisure lifestyle.

##### 3. Leisure and culture

Leisure and culture is not a new research topic. However, cross-cultural research on leisure is extremely rare in the leisure research. This is partially because leisure has its different meaning in different cultures. Also, leisure has been traditionally centered in North America. Cross-cultural leisure research will contribute theoretical development in leisure research.

##### 4. Leisure and theory

Although leisure studies has been researched and written about 80 years, most of theories came from sociology and psychology. The notable leisure theory is leisure constraints theory which is only about two decades. Lack of leisure theories has already hampered leisure research development. More leisure theories are needed to be established by leisure scholars.

In closing, 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games helped Japan building infrastructure for Japanese leisure and recreation and creating new middle class. Tokyo will host Olympic Games again in 2020. We look forward to seeing Japan use Olympic Games again for its future leisure development. Nowadays, global modernization simultaneously creates new middle classes. We hope Japanese leisure will influence future of world leisure and recreation.