

**WHY QUALIFIED PROSPECTS DECLINE
TIMESHARE SALES PRESENTATIONS:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Mafalda Gonçalves Johannsen

Master in Hospitality and Tourism Management

Orientador:

Prof. Doutor Sandro Mendonça, Prof. Auxiliar, ISCTE Business School, Departamento
de Economia

Coorientadora:

Dr. Amy Gregory, Assistant Professor, University of Central Florida, Departamento de
Foodservice & Lodging Management

October 2013

Acknowledgements

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my supervisor Professor Sandro Mendonça for all his useful advice and guidelines. Without his guidance and availability this dissertation would not have the same quality. In addition, a special thank you to Professor Amy Gregory, who introduced and engaged me to the vacation ownership industry, and also provided relevant comments to improve the value of this thesis. Also, I would like to thank Professor José Maria Duarte who demonstrated support and availability since the beginning of the whole project.

Additionally, I would like to thank the Spanish reviewer (Alex), and the participants in my interviews who have willingly shared their precious time during the process of interviewing.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Olga and Otto, and the rest of my family for their financially unconditional support. Last but not least, I want to thank Daniela, Marta, John, Mary, 王优, Kleisy, 巫聿耿, and the rest of my friends in Orlando for their indescribable friendship and support throughout my degree.

Index

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Index.....	iii
List of Tables.....	iv
Abstract	v
Sinopse	v
Executive Summary.....	vi
1. Introduction	8
2. Conceptual framework.....	11
2.1 An emergent literature stream	11
2.2 Deciding to attend a timeshare sales presentation.....	12
2.3 Understanding prepurchasing.....	13
2.4 Reaching propositions.....	19
2.5 Preliminary conclusions	21
3. Methodology.....	22
3.1 Field of focus.....	22
3.2 Data acquisition.....	22
3.3 Measures	23
3.4 Preliminary conclusions	24
4. Results and Discussion	25
4.1 Results.....	25
4.2 Portuguese Native Speakers	25
4.3 Spanish Native Speakers	27
4.4 English Speakers	28
4.5 Discussion	29
4.6 Preliminary Conclusions	31
5. Conclusion.....	32
5.1 Study findings	32
5.2 Contribution of the study.....	34
5.3 Limitations	35
5.4 Future Research.....	35
References.....	36

List of Tables

Table 1: Managers' roles and experience.....14

Table 2: OPCs' roles and experience.....14

Abstract

This dissertation is a qualitative study about why qualified prospects decline timeshare sales presentation even though they earn a small incentive for doing so. The Hoffman and Bateson's decision process model is used as a broad theoretical framework. On this basis and the inputs of managers and off-premise contact (OPC) representatives of a Marketing company located in Orlando, Florida, USA, five main likely reasons are suggested for understanding prospect behavior. Families from different countries who declined the timeshare tour were interviewed in order to assess the rationale supporting their decision. After comparing the three perspectives (Managers, OPCs, and qualified prospects), it was found that past experience is the heaviest factor in the decision making process, since most of the families who decline the tour have had a bad experience in the past regarding the timeshare industry. This is in line with Hoffman and Bateson. Our findings provide fresh information about qualified prospects' perspectives and renew the call for innovative practices regarding this segment of the vacation ownership industry. As it is a qualitative study implemented in Orlando area only, our results should be read as exploratory and uncritical generalization is not recommended. We outline avenues for further research that may consolidate this area of tourism and hospitality service marketing analysis.

Sinopse

Esta dissertação é um estudo qualitativo sobre as razões que levam potenciais consumidores de timeshare a recusar sessões de venda nos *resorts*, mesmo ganhando um prêmio em troca. O modelo do processo de decisão de Hoffman e Bateson é usado na revisão de literatura e cinco prováveis razões que sustentam a recusa são sugeridas pelos gestores e pelos representantes de uma empresa de marketing localizada em Orlando, Florida, EUA. Famílias de diferentes países que se negaram a ir à sessão de vendas foram entrevistadas com o intuito de descobrir quais as razões de tal recusa. Depois de comparadas as três perspectivas (gestores, representantes e os potenciais consumidores), foi possível detectar que a experiência passada é a principal razão que emerge, dado que anteriormente a maior parte das famílias já tinha passado por uma má experiência numa sessão de vendas. Estes resultados fornecem informação sobre a perspectiva dos potenciais consumidores e, conseqüentemente, é possível sugerir algumas práticas inovadoras neste campo da indústria de *timeshare*. Como se trata de um estudo qualitativo conduzido apenas na cidade de Orlando, não é recomendada a generalização do mesmo. Assim sendo, é sugerido um estudo quantitativo como pesquisa futura.

Keywords: vacation ownership; marketing; qualified prospects; off-premise contact.

JEL codes: L83; M31.

Executive Summary

In the vacation ownership industry, the process of attracting potential vacation ownership buyers is very costly because resorts have to invest in incentives to convince families to attend a sales presentation. Most of that investment does not have any return since most of the potential consumers do not purchase anything.

This task of identifying and driving qualified prospects, the individuals who fulfill the requirements of a timeshare buyer, to the resorts is performed by the Off-Premise Contact (OPC) representatives. The OPCs work in touristic areas (such as shopping malls, main attractions, etc.) where they can find those families who are more likely to purchase a timeshare unit. After approaching the families, they convince them to attend a timeshare presentation through a valuable gift (money, discounts, free tickets to attractions, etc.).

Although it seems an easy job, the OPC's tasks are not difficult: there are still many qualified prospects who refuse to go on a timeshare sales presentation. Hence, the research question of this dissertation is: What are the main reasons that support the decision of declining the timeshare sales presentation, even with a valuable incentive?

To answer the research question, the Hoffman and Bateson (2010) decision process model was used as a guiding reference. The authors address the steps of the prepurchase stage that can be implemented in the vacation ownership industry. This necessity of using a general model has to do with the limited academic literature in the vacation ownership industry. For instance, in the case of the OPCs' role and consumers' behavior, academic literature is found to be inexistent.

The empirical data is drawn from Orlando (Florida, USA) because many well-known timeshare resorts are located there (Marriott, Hilton, Westgate, Wyndham, etc.). The Chief Operating Officer, the OPC's field manager, the field trainer, and the three best OPC representatives of a marketing company were interviewed in the preliminary research in order to state the propositions. That company does the marketing for Westgate resorts. The data acquisition was conducted through semi-structure interviews during the month of July because it is high season in Orlando. After reviewing the six interviews, five propositions were built: according to the management and OPC's stand point, Past Experience, Word-of-mouth, Presence of Children, Time, and the value of

the Gift can be the main reasons that influence people negatively towards a timeshare sales presentation.

In order to assess the qualified prospects' perspectives about timeshare sales presentation, and to validate the propositions stated in the conceptual framework, three Portuguese native speakers, three Spanish native speakers, and three English speakers were interviewed, after declining a timeshare tour. Those are the languages spoken during the timeshare tour. In summary, it was asked the reasons that support such refusing.

The results show that qualified prospects decline the timeshare presentation mainly because of bad experiences in the past. Bad word-of-mouth is also a relevant factor that makes families refusing the tour. Consequently, the importance of the OPC's role is quite obvious in convincing families to attend the visit at the resort. The short time in Orlando and the presence of children did not influence the decision, in other words, such propositions did not verify. Finally, some interviewees stated that they would not go on a timeshare sales presentation even if they would earn a very valuable prize.

As the bad experience is the main reason for declining the timeshare sales presentation, it is suggested a special tour for those who already went on one. This measure could change consumers' conception about this industry as well as improve the vacation ownership's image.

The main limitation of this dissertation is the lack of quantitative analysis. Thus, for future research it is advised a quantitative study in order to find some patterns and correlations in terms of targets.

1. Introduction

In the vacation ownership industry, lead generation is a very costly component of a resort's marketing strategy (ARDA, 2010, 53). In other words, in order to attract potential vacation ownership buyers, resort companies must give an incentive (money, free tickets, discount in room nights, and so on) to convince them to visit the resort, and, sometimes, make them purchase a week there. However, most of the families who attend a vacation ownership presentation do not buy anything in the resort, they just earn the prize and leave: industry conversion rates are about 1 in 10, and the sales and marketing costs amount to approximately 40 to 60 percent of a resort project's overall costs (Upchurch and Lashley, 2006). Due to this low conversion rates, it is very important to select qualified prospects, the families who fulfill certain requirements and, consequently, are more likely to purchase a timeshare unit; therefore, the return on investment of the company is more likely to happen. This task of identifying and driving qualified prospects to the resorts is performed by the Off-Premise Contact (OPC) representatives, the individuals who work in touristic locations, where they can find many qualified families, such as information centers, shopping malls, main attractions, etc. (ARDA, 2010). One of the most known cities for this practices is Orlando (Florida, USA) since it is where the largest percentage of timeshare resorts in actives sales in the United States are located at (Schreier, 2005). Every day in Orlando OPCs are trying to convince as much as they can all the families that fulfill the requirements (nationality, income, age...) in order to generate a decent amount of potential buyers. However, this task is not easy: there are still many qualified prospects who refuse to go on a timeshare sales presentation, even though they earn a prize on doing that.

On the basis of the backdrop the key research question of this dissertation is: why is that? What are the main reasons that support qualified prospects' decision? As the interaction with the OPC representative is the first step of the whole process of selling a timeshare unit, it is also considered the person's first impression of the resort (Kaufman et al., 2009), which makes this part of the business a very relevant one.

This dissertation is a qualitative study that has the main purpose of understanding what motivates qualified prospects on declining or accepting a timeshare tour. So far, no

research was made about this topic. Actually, the academic work about the timeshare industry is very little: previous studies about the timeshare industry focus on the timeshare unit buyers' profile (Crotts and Ragatz, 2002), on vacation ownership as a valuable investment (Hovey, 2002), on economic analysis of the timeshare ownership (Powanga and Powanga, 2008), and other topics that are not related with the OPC's role in the business. The only research study that begins to approach this area is a study by Gregory (2011) that investigated the various components of the timeshare sales and usage processes that effect consumers' overall satisfaction with the product. However, this study does not address the pre-purchase lead generation component.

In order to answer the research question three main actors are interviewed: the managers of a marketing company located in Orlando (who performed OPC tasks in the past); the three best OPC representatives of that company; and the qualified prospects who decline to go on the timeshare presentation. The perceptions of the managers and OPCs are part of the preliminary research, which means that they are interviewed before the qualified prospects. Their perspectives serve as a base for the propositions of this dissertation. After the propositions were built, qualified prospects who declined the timeshare presentation were interviewed in order to understand why did they refuse the tour. As a result, the three perspectives together will not only indicate what are the main factors that influence families in the decision process on going or not to the resort presentation, but also if there are gaps among the three main actors' perspectives. Those gaps will reveal what aspects can be improved from the OPC and management side, and, consequently, this knowledge may increase the number of tours to the resorts.

Qualified prospects are consumers that meet predetermined criteria of a successful timeshare buyer. These criteria refer to nationality, age, income, etc. Normally, they tend to come in pairs, typically "husband and wife" within a certain age range (ARDA, 2010). Nationality is also a very important since people from certain countries seem more willing to buy a vacation ownership unit than from others. Finally, a good credit score can be also a very important characteristic of the prospect, since it demonstrates the capability of affording the purchase (ARDA, 2010). In this sense, a successful OPC needs to perform his job in a location with heavy pedestrian traffic (such as shopping malls, main attractions, etc.) that is frequented by the consumers who fit the resort's marketing profile (Schreier, 2005). The most common locations are visitor's information centers, convenience food stores, swap meets, shopping malls, hotel

lobbies, casinos, and important local attractions (Kaufman et al., 2009). After acquiring a strategic location, the timeshare companies need to hire people with a specific profile in order to perform the OPC job in the right way, which means offering discounted tickets to attractions, discounted meals at local restaurants, and other relevant enticements that he or she has at hand in order to qualify the prospect and arrange a tour of the resort (ARDA, 2010). The specific profile that normally companies look for an OPC is a person who has a proven sales record, sociable, possesses strong oral and written communication skills, and demonstrates good relationship skills (ARDA, 2010). As it is possible to notice, there are two main sides in this process: the OPCs' ability to convince and the qualified prospect's motivation. In this dissertation we are able to understand that past experience and bad word-of-mouth are the heaviest factors when it is time to decide to tour the resort. On the other hand, OPCs must have the right skills to revert the situation, which means giving the correct gift and explaining all that will occur in the resort in order to remove bad surprises.

As stated above, many families complaint about their bad experiences in the timeshare presentations. So, it is demonstrated the importance of managing their experiences and changing qualified prospects' mind through trust and valuable gifts. Our findings show that OPCs have a relevant role since they are the ones who are able to perform this task. In this sense, vacation ownership industry should pay more attention to the recruitment and training process of the OPC representatives in order to generate more qualified tours. Also, this dissertation indicates that timeshare industry still has to work on their image because it is a factor that blows families away.

This dissertation is organized as follows: first, in the introduction, it is stated the topic and main research question, and an overview of the adopted procedures to reach the results. In addition to that, the OPC's part of the vacation ownership industry is also explained. After a short overview of the problem, there is a conceptual framework that aggregates the literature review and the preliminary research. In this section, it is addressed all the literature that supports the topic as well as the first portion of the interviews. In other words, through the managers and OPC's answers, it is possible to build the dissertation's propositions. Then it starts the methodology chapter to assess the propositions. It is explained the sample and the procedures. In the next chapter, data is analyzed and results are found. Those results are discussed in the last chapter, where implications for the industry, limitations, and future research are also addressed.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1 An emergent literature stream

Hospitality and tourism marketing is very unique because it has the four characteristics of services: intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability (Kotler et al., 2010). Moreover, the marketing executed particularly by the timeshare resorts is even more unique when compared to the hotel business (Woodside et al., 1986). According to Hyde and Laesser (2008), vacation is a travel experience involving overnight stay away from home, with leisure purposes. Hence, the vacation ownership's concept is based on the fact that the family has a home far from home because the person actually owns the property where he/she is staying at, for a certain period of time, usually a week (Woodside et al., 1986).

Academic literature is not abundant in the vacation ownership industry. Zhu (2012) believes that in the early stages of timeshare research, customer needs and expectations were not identified or not paid attention to. In addition, Brey (2011) said that the existing literature on resort marketing can be described as diverse and somewhat inconsistent. For instance, certain actors in the organization set-up of the industry have not been studied satisfactorily. This is certainly the case of OPCs since the academic literature is inexistent regarding the OPC's role and qualified prospects behavior. The only research study that begins to approach this area is a study by Gregory (2011) that investigated the various components of the timeshare sales and usage processes that effect consumers' overall satisfaction with the product. However, this study does not address the pre-purchase lead generation component. There are a number of other gaps in the literature having to do with the motivations and decision-making processes of the market participants. An illustration of such a type of lacunae is mentioned by Kaufman and Upchurch (2007) who, in their paper about gender position in the vacation ownership industry that gender differences, noted that very little is known about gender differences concerning the timeshare product for a variety of hospitality and tourism segments. Acknowledging these weaknesses, our literature review adapts the Hoffman and Bateson (2010) decision process model to the decision on going or not to the timeshare presentation. Due to this need to rebuild a theoretical background from a fragmented conceptual landscape a preliminary research is also needed to build the propositions of this dissertation.

2.2 Deciding to attend a timeshare sales presentation

When an individual makes a decision, he or she experiences the consumer decision process. According to Hoffman and Bateson (2010), that process is divided by three stages: the prepurchase choice among alternatives, the consumer's reaction during consumption, and the postpurchase evaluation of satisfaction.

Regarding the OPC job, only the first stage is applicable, since the others are related to the experience during the sales presentation in the resort. In this sense, the prepurchase stage of the consumer decision process refers to "all consumer activities occurring before the acquisition of the service" (Hoffman and Bateson, 2010, 87). This stage begins when an individual receives a stimulus (commercial cue, social cue, or physical cue) that incites a consumer to consider a purchase (Hoffman and Bateson, 2010). The authors define commercial cue as an "event or motivation that provides a stimulus to the consumer and is a promotional effort on the part of the company". In the case of the vacation ownership industry, the commercial cues are translated onto the gifts that the OPC representative offer to the qualified prospect in order to convince him/her to attend a timeshare presentation. On the other hand, social cue can be described as "an event or motivation that provides a stimulus to the consumer, obtained from the individual's peer group or from significant others" (Hoffman and Bateson, 2010, 87). Here, the OPC representative's ability to persuade is crucial. Finally, physical cue is the "motivation, such as thirst, hunger, or another biological cue that provides a stimulus to the consumer" (Hoffman and Bateson, 2010, 87). Applied to the OPC representative's job, the cue is not biological, it is financial instead. Attending a timeshare tour allows tourists to save money in their holidays, since the most common gifts are discounted or free tickets to attractions, discounted or free meals at local restaurants, and even cash (ARDA, 2010).

Another very important step of the prepurchase stage is the information search which is the phase in which the consumer collects information pertaining to possible alternatives (Hoffman and Bateson, 2010). The OPC representative has an important role in this step since is her/his job to show to the qualified prospect that the offered gift is valuable and that the deal cannot be find anywhere else. To assess the OPC's gift, the qualified

prospect will compare it with what he or she would pay without going on a timeshare presentation, and also with what the competition offers, in other words, the prospect compares the different gifts of the different vacation ownership resorts. Those alternatives are called “awareness set”. Awareness set is the set of alternatives of which a consumer is aware of. The less the prospect is aware, the better for the OPC representative since he or she can be the only source of information and take advantage of that to persuade the qualified guest. Besides the awareness set, there are also the “evoked set” and the “consideration set”. The first one are alternatives that the consumer actually remembers at the time of decision making (Hoffman and Bateson, 2010), and the second one are the remaining alternatives of the evoked set (Hoffman and Bateson 2010). The OPC representative must try to only evoke the alternative of buying the tickets on the gate of the park or the meal directly in the restaurant, so the qualified prospect does not try to search for a better deal and closes with the OPC right away. The prospects will decide if the time spent in the resort is worthy, in other words, they will assess the quality of the gift based on what they have to do to get it. In this sense, the “consideration set” is very important.

2.3 Understanding prepurchasing

Our agenda is geared at describing the assessment components and explaining the mechanisms behind the refusals phenomena in the timesharing business, that, why indeed qualified prospects decide not to go on a timeshare sales presentation.

First of all, it is important to understand the factors that affect the prepurchasing stage described in the literature review. Preliminary research led to the production of a conceptual framework that identifies major factors that influence the qualified prospects’ decision. In order to determine those factors, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the Chief Operating Officer (COO), the field manager, the field trainer, and the three best OPCs of a company that does the marketing for Westgate Resorts. It was asked their perceptions about what motivate people’s decision on going or not to the timeshare presentation, and what techniques do they apply to book the tour. In addition to that, they shared personal experiences in the field in order to prove their opinion.

Why Qualified Prospects Decline Timeshare Sales Presentations

Table 1. Managers' roles and experience

	Chief Operating Officer	Field Manager	Field Trainer
Responsibilities	Oversees all different aspects of marketing, operations, finance, legal and business development	In charge of hiring employees, and managing/pushing/motivating them in order to produce numbers (tours) for the company.	In charge of human resources: recruiting, training, maintaining relationships with their contracts in the marketing firm, as well as maintaining relationships with the schools that they offer internships with.
Experience as an OPC	7 years	2 years	3 and a half years

Table 2. OPCs' roles and experience

	OPC #1	OPC #2	OPC #3
Responsibilities	Drive qualified tours to Westgate resort	Drive qualified tours to Westgate resort	Drive qualified tours to Westgate resort
Experience as an OPC	10 months	6 months	5 months

Before asking the main question (“Why qualified prospects decline the timeshare tour?”), it was asked to the COO, field manager, and field trainer what are the most important characteristics of a successful OPC. According to the Field Manager, to be a successful OPC representative, people have to work hard, be disciplined, persistent, and hungry for money. On the other hand, the field trainer states that:

“When I recruit, first I look for people’s skills, such as ability to be fearless, brave, to initiate and sustain a conversation with any person about any topic. Also, someone who has a certain degree of charisma”.

Finally, the COO believes that a good OPC must:

“Be self-motivated, confident, creative, professional, energetic with outgoing personality, competitive, goal oriented, and persuasive. Ability to communicate and strong listening skills are also crucial as well as strong sales experience, and strong knowledge of the Vacation Ownership industry”.

Why Qualified Prospects Decline Timeshare Sales Presentations

Although the six respondents have different responsibilities and years of experience, most of them agree that a previous bad experience is a heavy factor when qualified prospects refuse to tour.

OPC#3 states that is hard to convince people who spent too much time on a sales presentation:

“People hard to convince are the ones who went already to a timeshare presentation before, and spent like four hours or more there.”

OPC#2 believes that the qualified prospects who had the worse experiences come from USA and UK:

“Americans and people from UK are very hard to convince because most of them had a very bad experience in the past. They like the prices in the beginning, but when they figure out that it is a timeshare presentation, they just run away.”

OPC#1 also says that is not easy to convince people to attend the presentation when they had a bad experience before:

“It is hard to convince people who had a bad experience in a timeshare presentation.”

The field manager agrees with the three OPC representatives regarding the fact that is hard to convince the qualified prospects who already went on a timeshare presentation, and he even states that some of the people are “traumatized”:

“The past experience influences a lot the decision of not going to the timeshare presentation, many families are traumatized.”

Finally, the field trainer states three main reasons that support the decision of not attending the sales presentation, and one of them is bad experience:

“Generally, the most popular rebottle is time, then children, and, of course, previous negative experience.”

Not only had the field trainer stated time as an important factor to decline the tour. Other respondents also highlight this issue as a relevant one. The OPC#3 agrees that time is a common reason for declining the tour:

“People sometimes don’t go because they leave in the next day or something like that, so they don’t have available time to do it.”

Why Qualified Prospects Decline Timeshare Sales Presentations

OPC#2 not only believes that people do not want to trade their vacation time for gifts, but also states that families want to rest during their holidays:

“The main reason to decline the timeshare tour is that most of the families don’t want to waste time from their vacation, and also they don’t want to wake up early.”

OPC#1 speaks about time in a different standpoint. She addresses the fact that people value their time a lot, and they do not want to spend it in something that is not worthy.

“Families also don’t go when they feel that they are wasting time for nothing”

The field manager describes two perspectives about time: the people do not have time because they are leaving, and the people who still have some days left in Orlando, but they do not want to use the time to attend a sales presentation:

“In my opinion, people decline the timeshare tour because they don’t want take time of their vacation, in other words, waste time of their holidays. Also, many of them leave in the next day, or they are not interested at all in timeshare.”

Finally, the COO believes that people would refuse the timeshare sales presentation because of no available time. According to his opinion, the OPC’s role is to make the time in the resort worthy through selling techniques:

“Except from external factors that really cause the families to refuse to take the tour, such as a sick child, or leaving the next day (no time), etc., I think the first reason has to do with the OPC’s sales pitch and techniques.”

Bad word-of-mouth is another reason addressed by most of the respondents. OPC#3 states that the bad word-of-mouth is about the time that the presentation lasts:

“People don’t want to go because they heard that it lasts a lot of time”

OPC#1 is less specific about what type of word-of-mouth people heard about the vacation ownership industry:

“It is also hard to convince people who heard bad things about timeshare”

Finally, the field trainer agrees that bad word-of-mouth could be a reason for declining the sales presentation, but that is not a very difficult objection to work with:

“When people know someone who had a previous bad experience, it’s easy to work them around than people who actually experienced the negative experience”

Finally, it was also questioned if there are differences in terms of target (nationality, household, etc.), and how can an OPC revert a situation. In other words, how can an OPC convince a family to go when they do not want to. Here, there are great differences in respondents' perspectives. OPC#3 highlights again the fact that people who come from United Kingdom are almost impossible to convince to attend the tour. Also, her most common selling technique is to show the amount of money people save when buying the tickets through a timeshare sales presentation:

“In my opinion, people from UK are very hard to convince because of they heard about timeshare, and because of their culture. Europeans have a very bad image about timeshare. I convince people to tour by showing the money that they are saving, and I show the saving in their own currency. For example, you need more Venezuelan currency then Colombian one to buy dollars, so I convert the money that they save in their currency, which shows them that their time will be rewarded and worthy. I don't have any specific story to share, but I can assure that this job requires innovation, and mood.”

OPC#2 agrees with OPC#3 about the fact that people from United Kingdom are the toughest ones to convince. However, unlike the OPC#3, OPC#2's favorite selling technique is building a good, but realistic, image about the timeshare sales presentation:

“Americans and people from UK are very hard to convince. In order to convince them, I try to tell them that our experience will be different from the other that they had, and that the company tries to do its best for them to enjoy the experience. However, you have to be very honest, explain what will happen. Removing surprises is very important, and many families are thankful because of that. Actually, timeshare is a good way to save money.”

OPC#1 not only talks about nationalities, but also states differences among distinct household composition. In terms of selling techniques, this OPC tries to understand the customer's needs in order to give him what he wants:

“People from Latin America and Brazil usually don't go because they heard bad experiences about it, so you have to offer something great in order to convince them. A couple is easier to convince than a big group because one person is enough to ruin everything. So, having the attention of two people and managing their motivations is easier than talking and managing eight people. In order to convince people, you have to give something that they really want, spending time with them talking and finding out things that they like or value.”

Unlike the OPC representatives, the field manager believes that there are not significant differences among the targets. He joins the savings and the good image about timeshare together in order to convince the qualified prospect to go on the tour:

“All the people have the same reasons on declining, no differences among nationalities. I convince families to tour by showing how much money they save, I say that they will visit a beautiful resort, and, the next time they come, they can stay there with an awesome rate. I also highlight the free breakfast for all the family. I had a family who didn’t want to go to the tour at all, I convinced them, and when they came back to me, they said “thank you”, and they actually bought the timeshare.”

The field trainer agrees with the field manager regarding the fact that there is not a great difference among the diverse qualified prospects. He highlights trust as a very important aspect in the convincing process. In addition to that, as the OPC#2, he explains what will happen in the sales presentation:

“In general, we are all humans, in vacation we all tend to do the same things, so I don’t think that the reasons to decline to go on a timeshare tour differ significantly from target to target. To convince the family to go, you have to put yourself in their shoes, and you have to immediately begin building trust with them, kind of a sense that “this is something that I would like my family to do”, “I am a very good person, I don’t want you to miss out this”. In addition, removing surprises and explaining what will happen in the resort generally makes an easier experience for them. I struggle with certain rebottles, I prefer certain people than others, because they are tailored to my skills. For instance, people who use the excuse of the children are harder for me to convince because I don’t have children, so I cannot relate to any personal experience. On the other hand, people who had bad experiences are my favorite because I can relate them to my own family and say that this is something that I would like them to do.”

The COO believes that people who do not travel very often to U.S. are less likely to attend the timeshare sales presentation. He states that the OPC’s role is the most important aspect of the whole process:

“Nationality influences a lot the decision since some countries’ citizens do not come much to the U.S., and they will never purchase a timeshare here, so they are not willing to go on a tour. However, getting the family to agree to go on a tour is more emotional than rational. Yes, we offer the families incentives to go on a tour; but, it is not enough. A good OPC must tap on their emotions and create a great relationship with them while doing the warm-up, the chance to sell oneself to be trusted by the family. This is proven because we can put two OPC’s together at the same location, same shift, same tools, yet one OPC surpasses the other’s production by far. One must be patient and take time to help family, not try to book them immediately. One must mostly listen to their

needs and develop a relationship prior to the final pitch. After completing every step of the process, a family's chance of saying no decreases significantly. Of course, the closing percentage will never be 100%, however, it will be somewhere around 60% to 75%."

2.4 Reaching propositions

According to the preliminary research, five different possible reasons that influence people to decline the timeshare presentation are found. Hoffman and Bateson (2010) highlight the past experiences ("the previous service encounters a consumer has had with a service provider") and the cultural background as a strong influence factor on the consideration set. In addition to that, Ariely and Zakay (2001) stated that experiences such as vacations unfold overtime through a stream of transient states and episodes that vary in intensity over time. People evaluate overall goodness or badness of those episodes in order to make a decision (Ariely and Zakay, 2001). Mattilla (2003) believes that unsatisfying experiences can have a profound impact on future behavior. Finally, Schreier (2005) and Woods (2001) agree that high pressure sales tactics contribute to the bad experience in a timeshare sales presentation as well as to the bad image of the vacation ownership industry. Therefore, it is possible that qualified prospects refuse to attend a timeshare tour because they did it in the past, and they do not consider that a good experience:

P1: *Qualified Prospects decline the timeshare tour when they have had a bad experience in a timeshare presentation in the past.*

Based on Hoffman and Bateson (2010)'s research, another very important factor in the consumer decision process is the word-of-mouth communications. Word-of-mouth communications are unbiased information from someone who has been through the service experience, such as friends, family, or consultants (Hoffman and Bateson, 2010). According to the authors, customers tend to rely more on personal sources of information than on nonpersonal ones when choosing among alternatives. In addition, according to the Shared Vacation Ownership Owners report (AIF, 2012), word-of-mouth is most common form of awareness about timeshare. Therefore, if the qualified prospects know someone who had a bad experience in a timeshare presentation, they might be less willing to go on one:

P2: *Qualified Prospects decline the timeshare tour when they hear about bad experiences from their friends and relatives.*

Leclerc et al. (1995) state that time is a resource. Consumers have to make decisions regarding their use of time in the purchase and consumption of goods and services, consequently, the value of consumers' time is not constant but depends on contextual characteristics of the decision situation (Leclerc et al., 1995). Also, Okada and Hoch (2004) argue that people can more easily adjust the value of their time to the particulars of the situation.

P3: *Qualified Prospects decline the timeshare tour when they stay for a short time (less than two days) in Orlando.*

According to Nickerson and Jurowski (2001), the role of the child in purchase decisions is very important in family vacation trips because working parents with more expendable income and less time to spend with their children use the vacation as a time to reconnect as a family. On the other hand, Gram (2007) states that older children have the most influence on shopping relevant for children (e.g. breakfast, toys and clothes), moderate influence on family activities (e.g. holidays and restaurants) and the least influence on durable consumer goods and expensive goods.

P4: *Qualified Prospects decline the timeshare tour when they travel with children.*

According to Dodson et al (1978), only certain types of deals are likely to be appropriate given particular objectives with regard to the management of demand. On the other hand, Montgomery (1971) states that the targeting of consumer deals would be enhanced by knowledge of what consumer characteristics relate systematically to deal purchasing activities in a product market. Thus, consumers are likely to be more adaptable in what they believe their time is worth (Okada and Hoch, 2004).

P5: *Consumers decline the timeshare tour when they consider that the offered gift is not valuable enough.*

2.5 Preliminary conclusions

After reviewing all the testimonials, it is possible to notice some agreements and disagreements between managers and OPCs. The six interviewees agree that past experiences influence families' decision significantly. On the other hand, managers think that there is not a great difference among nationalities, while OPCs find some contrast among distinct countries. Both agree that word-of-mouth can be an important factor when qualified prospects decline timeshare presentations, however, they also believe that it is an easier objection to manage. The propositions that have more agreement out of the five are more likely to be confirmed than the others, which means that past experience and bad word-of-mouth would be the main reasons to decline a timeshare sales presentation. The less likely are presence of children and short time in Orlando.

3. Methodology

3.1 Field of focus

Eighty two percent of all timeshare properties owned are located in the U.S., and one-in-five own an Orlando-based resort (AIF, 2012). Therefore, OPCs are abundant in the Orlando area (Kaufman et al., 2009). According to Schreier (2005), many qualified buyers have their first interaction with the timeshare industry in Orlando. Some of the most famous timeshares in the United States, such as Orange Lake Country Club, Westgate Resorts, Wyndham, Marriott, Starwood, and Disney Vacation Club are located in the Orlando area as well (Schreier, 2005).

Icon Prospects is a marketing company which does the marketing for the Westgate Resorts. Its main location is in Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets where the OPC representatives approach the families in order to drive qualified tours to Westgate Resorts. The location is privileged since it has a heavy pedestrian traffic, and many of the families who shop there fulfill all the basic requirements needed to tour the resort. The data collection was made in July because it is considered high season in Orlando.

3.2 Data acquisition

In order to understand what makes people refuse touring the resort, semi-structure interviews were conducted, and the Judgment (non-probability) sampling technique was used (Zikmund, 2010). The Chief operating officer of Icon Prospects, the OPC's field manager, the field trainer, and the three OPC representatives who book more tours on average per week were interviewed in the preliminary research in order to state the propositions. All the six interviewees have a significant experience as OPC representatives, and all of them have or had a good ratio of qualified tours per week. They were interviewed in the first week of July of 2013 in the Orlando Premium Outlets.

The data acquisition was conducted through semi-structure interviews, therefore, the elementary questions were: how many years of experience as an OPC, why do they think that qualified prospects refuse to go on a timeshare tour, if there was any

difference among distinct nationalities/targets, and how do they convince a family to go. In the third week of July of 2013, qualified prospects who refuse to attend the timeshare tour were interviewed as well. The interviewer waited for the families to decline completely the timeshare presentation, and interviewed them when it was impossible for the OPC to revert the situation. It was asked with whom they were travelling with, if they had their tickets already, how many days they had left in Orlando, if they attended a timeshare tour before, why they declined the tour, and what could be done to convince them to go. The interviews were conducted in English, Portuguese and Spanish since most of the qualified prospects were native speakers of one of those three languages.

The biases that may occur are: interviewer bias (there is the possibility of the interviewer conduct the interview in a way to get the answers that he/she wants), acquiescence bias (interviewee may agree with the interviewer's opinion), respondent error (some qualified prospects may not accept being interviewed), and social desirability bias (OPC representatives and the directors might answer what they think is right to say). The first two biases can be mitigated through objective questions. In other words, the interviewer must ask questions without showing his/her opinion, and avoid leading questions. For the respondent error, the interviewer has to show that the interview is quick and crucial for the research, and can also offer a prize such as discounts coupons for the shops in the outlet. The last error is the most difficult to deal with. However, asking the same content in different formats during the interview is a good procedure to reach real and valuable information. Also, as the interviewer is fluent in Portuguese and in English, but not in Spanish, it was asked a Spanish native speaker to translate the questions to Spanish.

3.3 Measures

The assessment components are Past Experience, Word-of-mouth, Presence of Children, Time, and the value of the Gift. The outcome is the willingness to attend a timeshare tour.

3.4 Preliminary conclusions

This method will allow us to compare the three different perspectives, and finally understand the qualified prospects' behavior. In addition to that, it is possible to notice whether the OPC representatives and the managers are aware of their guests' motivations or not.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Westgate resorts hosts sales presentations in three different languages such as English, Portuguese, and Spanish. Therefore, we intend to interview three families per language. In other words, three Portuguese native speakers, three Spanish native speakers, and three English speakers. Regarding the English language, it does not have to be native speaker as long as the person speaks English fluently. As stated before, all the families were interviewed in their native languages, excepting the Saudi Arabian one.

The next sub-chapters are divided by language in order to organize the testimonials by target. After the qualified prospects' answers, there is a discussion that compares the initial propositions with the results. In other words, it will be possible to notice gaps among the three different perspectives (managers, OPCs, and qualified prospects). Through this process, answers to the research question will be found.

4.2 Portuguese Native Speakers

The three families who are Portuguese native speakers are from Brazil. All of them attended a timeshare sales presentation in the past, but such experience was different from family to family.

The first testimonial shows that the person had a very bad experience and, according to him, there is nothing that could be offered in order to convince him to go again on a timeshare sales presentation:

Male, Brazil, 51-60, 5 days left in Orlando.

"I am on holidays in Orlando with my wife and my daughter. Although we did not purchase any ticket yet, we don't want to go to the timeshare presentation. I attended one in the past, and the experience was terrible. I went there to get tickets with discount, but I was not interested on buying timeshare. However, they kept me there beyond the 90 minutes. After the 90 minutes presentation, they tried to sell me the timeshare for one extra hour, so I stayed there around 3 hours in total. The most annoying part was that I said "no" too many times. I said "no" once, then they called another person to talk to me, I said "no" again, then they called a different person again. This happened like five times in a row! I know people who experienced the same thing, and they also hated it. That's why I don't want to do this again; I prefer to pay the full price and don't experience this. Nothing that can be offered worth my time, not even free tickets to Disney. I would only go to a timeshare presentation again if I decide that I have interested to buy a timeshare unit, otherwise no way."

The second interviewee also complained about the sales presentation, however, it was not the main problem. In this case, the issue was the hassle that he passed through in order to get the gift. Like the first testimonial, he would only attend the timeshare presentation again if he wants to be informed about the vacation ownership industry or buy a timeshare unit.

Male, Brazil, 41-50, 3 days left in Orlando.

“I am in Orlando with my wife, my kids, and some friends. We did not buy tickets to the parks, however, we don’t want to buy them through a timeshare company because we did that before and it was a bad experience. It happened some years ago in Bahamas, I can’t remember the name of the company. First, it was more than 90 minutes, and second, they did not want to give us the gift. We had to struggle to get our gift after the presentation. I have some friends who experienced more or less about the same, they had a terrible experience as well. I can’t think about anything that can be offered that make me go again on this type of event. Of course, if I did not have this experience in the past, probably discount tickets would be enough to convince me, as it was before. But, now that I know how things work, I prefer to not accept any gift. The only way to make me go to a timeshare presentation is if I become interested to buy one unit or if I am looking for some sort of information regarding this industry. In other words, I go if I have interested on timeshare, however, I doubt that it happens because I think that nowadays this business does not make sense for me.”

Finally, the last testimonial describes a better experience than the others, but still do not want to go on a timeshare tour. The person considers the experience neutral instead of terrible, however, the gifts that would convince her to attend a timeshare presentation are unrealistic. In other words, the gifts are not good enough for the time spent at the resort.

Female, Brazil, 41-50, 5 days left in Orlando.

“I am traveling with my husband and my parents. It is not our first time in USA, and I have attended a timeshare presentation before in Las Vegas. It was not good, but it was not bad either. I consider the experience neutral. Plus, I don’t know anyone who went to a timeshare tour in the past. I don’t want to go again because I think that what offered me does not worth my time. I would go if I could stay a night for free in the resort, or Disney tickets for free, however, I know that it is impossible, they can’t offer this kind of gifts to people.”

4.3 Spanish Native Speakers

All countries from Latin America are qualified prospects. The three families who decline the timeshare sales presentation are either from Venezuela or Colombia. Unlike the Brazilian families, they do not consider the experience terrible, instead, they are not willing to attend the timeshare tours because of the time that they last.

The first family, for instance, does not complain about the sales presentation itself, but about the time that it lasts. The person would attend again the timeshare presentation if he was sure about the advertised time (90 minutes).

Male, Venezuela, 31-40, 7 days left in Orlando.

“I am traveling in USA with my wife and children, and we want to buy tickets to Disney. This time I don’t want to get the tickets through a timeshare sales presentation because I know how it is since I have attended one a year ago. The presentation was good, but it was too long. Believe me, it is not 90 minutes, it is half a day! That’s why I don’t want to do it again, it is too long. I would go if I was interested on buying a timeshare unit or if it would last less time. I can give 90 minutes of my time, but not the whole day.”

The second testimonial highlights the fact that he does not trust on timeshare companies because when he attended one sales presentation in the past, he did not get the gift. Again, here the issue is not the sales presentation itself, but the follow up.

Male, Colombia, 41-50, 4 days left in Orlando.

“Me and my wife got some tickets already, we have SeaWorld left. They offered me a good price to those tickets, however, I prefer to pay at the gate because I got my tickets through a timeshare company some years ago and I don’t want to do it again. The sales presentation was not that bad, actually, I consider it good, but the problem was that they did not give me the prize. In other words, they did not keep what was promised. I don’t want to go again without being sure that I really get the tickets for the advertised price.”

The last interviewee also complained about the time of the sales presentation, though she also highlighted a bad experience with the sales representative. Like the first family, she would not decline a timeshare sales presentation if there was a guarantee that it would not be more than 90 minutes.

Female, Venezuela, 41-50, 8 days left in Orlando.

“I am in Orlando with my husband and friends. We are looking for good price on tickets to the amusement parks, but we don’t want to buy them through the timeshare presentation. I did that once and it was a bad experience because it was more than 90 minutes. I am from Venezuela and we have some bank restrictions because our Government, so I could not fulfill some requirements when buying a timeshare. I tried to explain it to the sales representative, I said “no” many times, and he did not understand, he kept trying to sell me the timeshare unit, even though I was not interested and I could not meet some requirements. I was there like 5 hours! It happened a similar situation to some people that I know, they also consider this a bad experience. I really would not mind to go again if it is just 90 minutes. If the person guarantees me that after 90 minutes I can get my tickets without any extra hassle, I would go. The problem is that nobody can assure that, especially because it will not happen.”

4.4 English Speakers

Regarding this last set of testimonials, only two of them are English native speakers. Unlike the other two sets, here there is a significant difference among the three testimonials in terms of perspective about timeshare presentations.

The first person describes the sales presentation as neutral, however, the reason that supports the decision of declining it is the time that it lasts. In her opinion, she would trade only 90 minutes of her life for a gift, but not more than that.

Female, USA, 51-60, more than 8 days left in Orlando.

“Me and my children are spending holidays in Orlando, and, of course, we want to go to the parks, though we did not buy any ticket yet. The price of the tickets that the company offered me is very attractive, but I prefer to pay the regular price and not going on the tour. I attended a timeshare presentation some years ago and I don’t want to do it again. The presentation itself was ok, not bad at all. The problem is that is more than 90 minutes, and I don’t want to waste my vacation time there. At this point, time is more valuable than money. If the sales presentation lasts one hour (no more!), I would go. However, 90 minutes plus, plus, plus... no, thank you.”

The second testimonial also highlights the fact that she would attend a timeshare sales presentation if there was a certain guarantee that it would not last more than 90 minutes. In addition to that, she addresses the fact that she is afraid of having a bad time during her honey moon.

Female, England, 25-30, 4 days left in Orlando.

“This is my first time in Orlando with my husband, we are in honey moon. We got some of our tickets in England, but we decided to visit more parks, so we need to buy more tickets. I went to a timeshare sales presentation in California two years ago to get some discounts. The experience itself was neutral, it was ok, but we don’t want to do it this time. I know people who had a terrible experience with very pushy sellers and we are afraid of that because it is our honey moon. We prefer to pay more and not having any hassle. I would go if there was some way to assure me that it would be just a 90 minutes sales presentation. Any discount is worthy without this type of commitment.”

Finally, the family from Saudi Arabia is the only one who never attended a timeshare sales presentation before. The testimonial shows that bad word-of-mouth is the main reason that makes the qualified prospect decline the sales presentation. The person is afraid of having a bad time there as well as not getting the ticket in the end of the presentation.

Male, Saudi Arabia, 31-40, 5 days left in Orlando.

“I got some tickets already, but I would like to go to Epcot with my wife and daughter. The price of the ticket was very attractive, but I don’t want to do the timeshare tour. I never did one before, and I don’t know anyone who did. However, I read on the internet about scams that resorts don’t want to give the tickets. Of course, not every resort acts like this, but all have the same in common: it is more than 90 minutes and they insist a lot for people to buy a timeshare. I don’t want that. Even though they give me the tickets, we have to experience a hard time there first to get them. So, I don’t want to lose my time, and I am never sure if they will really give me the tickets. I probably would go if they give me one ticket at the booth, and the others after the presentation, just to make sure that I would have at least one guaranteed, like a proof to trust the company.”

4.5 Discussion

According to the results, it is possible to notice that most of the qualified prospects who were interviewed attended already a timeshare sales presentation. Excepting the COO, managers and OPC representatives stated that is very hard to convince people who went on a timeshare tour in the past. Therefore, the proposition 1 is verified. In addition to that, they also stated that some citizens had worse experiences than others, however, the results show that there was not a great difference among the diverse nationalities.

Why Qualified Prospects Decline Timeshare Sales Presentations

The field trainer stated that presence of children, proposition 4, was a common reason to reject the timeshare sales presentation, but none of the interviewees highlighted such issue.

Also, regarding proposition 2, bad word-of-mouth was a reason stated both from OPCs and managers, and the qualified prospects confirmed that. The COO believes that the OPC's role is crucial to increase the likelihood of closing the deal, in other words, convincing the qualified prospect to attend the sales presentation. In fact, the qualified prospects addressed topics such as trust and reliability since most of them were afraid of not getting what was promised. Therefore, as the COO stated before, the OPC needs to talk with the guest, show him a reliable deal, and remove all the question marks that the person could have. Again, the OPC#1 said that she listens to the guest and tries to understand what he wants as well as the field trainer who said that to convince the qualified prospects he tries to put his feet in the guests' shoes.

Another issue addressed by the OPCs and managers was the time, proposition 3. However, there are two perspectives of time: the first one is that people do not have time at all to go on a tour (they leave Orlando in the next day); the second one is that people still have enough time in Orlando to attend the sales presentation, but they are not willing to trade some of their vacation time. Although the first one is stated by the OPCs and managers, the second one is highly confirmed by the qualified prospects.

When complaining about the timeshare sales presentation, most of the qualified prospects did not criticize the presentation itself, but the time that it lasts. OPCs are aware of this problem since they stated in their testimonials the same issue. Again, it is important that the OPC representative removes as much as he can all the surprises, so the qualified prospect do not have a wrong idea about the vacation ownership industry. During this process, the OPC must show that the time that they will spend in the resort is worthy (for instance, the field manager stated that he always say that the family will visit a beautiful resort), and that after the promised time the person is allowed to leave and get the gift. In this sense, proposition 5 is also confirmed because families would only attend the timeshare sales presentation if they value the gift.

4.6 Preliminary Conclusions

The results show that OPC representatives must highlight the financial cue at the same time that they manage the social cue. In other words, they have to offer a gift that is valuable for the qualified prospect, but such procedure by itself is not enough: as poor experiences and bad word-of-mouth are the main reasons for declining the timeshare sales presentation, managing the social stimulus is crucial to convince the family to attend the vacation ownership sales presentation. In addition to that, the OPC representative needs to know as much as he can about the awareness set of the consumer in order to manage the available options. This knowledge will help him/her to influence the evoked and consideration set of the family, and, consequently, book the sales presentation in the resort.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Study findings

The research question that supports this dissertation is “why qualified prospects decline timeshare tours?”. To answer the question, it was needed to understand what the components of any decision were. The Hoffman and Bateson (2010)’s model demonstrates what steps a consumer goes through when he or she makes a decision, and it can be applied in the timeshare industry, more specifically when the person decides to attend or not the timeshare sales presentation. Through semi-structured interviews, it was possible to build likely answers for the research question. In other words, propositions were built in order to be verified or not by the qualified prospects’ testimonials.

The results show that the proposition 1 is very significant. Qualified prospects decline the timeshare presentation because they had a poor experience in the past. Indeed, some of them stated that they would go on a tour if they did not have passed through a bad experience before. Schreier (2005) and Woods (2001) already stated in their past studies that the vacation ownership industry has a bad image because of what families experience during the sales presentations, and this study verifies that fact.

Bad word-of-mouth is also a heavy factor, since some of them did not experience themselves a bad situation, but they heard about it. Again, the power of word-of-mouth is proven by the testimonials. Also, “timeshare” is a word that sometimes has a negative association since the industry is not perceived in a good way by many consumers. In this sense, the word-of-mouth is not only caused by the friends and relatives, but also by the preconception that the person already has about it. Hence, proposition 2 is correct.

There is not a great difference among nationalities in the sense that all of the qualified prospects want their time worthy. Thus, the OPC’s role is quite important in order to revert the situation, not only by offering a very good gift, but also by being someone who is trustful. It is also possible to notice that the best OPCs are aware of the importance of their role, which explains their great number of tours per week. The coherence of the process is very important as well: people agree to trade 90 minutes for

the discounted tickets, so when the sales presentation lasts more than 90 minutes, they feel betrayed because they don't think that it was a fair trade anymore.

The proposition 3 does not verify in the sense that the problem is not how much time do they have in Orlando, but that they do not want to use any time of their vacation to go on a timeshare presentation. All respondents were plenty of time to go on a timeshare tour, but they were not willing to give away some of their vacation time. Again, the OPC must make the time in the tour worthy by offering something valuable for the guest. To do this, it is relevant listening to the guests and understanding their needs.

The presence of children did not influence the decision, since there were qualified prospects who travelled with children and others who did not, and none of those highlighted that fact as a reason to decline the sales presentation. None of the children stated their opinion about not going on a vacation ownership tour, and none of the parents said that they would not go because they did not have a person to take care of the children during the presentation. Consequently, the proposition 4 does not verify.

Finally, proposition 5 is also confirmed, despite some testimonials. In other words, some interviewees would not go even if they would get something that they really desired. However, overall it is crucial to offer a valuable incentive and play with the emotional part of the human beings, as stated by the COO. Listening to the guest's needs is an efficient way to offer him what he is looking for. Of course, the gifts are limited, it is not possible to please all the guests, however, the resorts sell the most important and valuable gifts in order to reach as many families as they can.

Applying the Hoffman and Bateson' model, the social cue is very relevant when accepting or refusing the sales presentation, since the word-of-mouth and the ability of the OPC to convince are the heaviest factors during the decision process. In this sense, the qualified prospects' evoked set includes their past bad experience and/or bad word-of-mouth. On the other hand, short stay in Orlando and presence of children do not belong to such set. Therefore, the OPC's role is to influence the awareness, evoked and consideration set using the cues: financial, social, and commercial.

5.2 Contribution of the study

It is confirmed that the vacation ownership industry still has a bad image, and that such fact is the main factor that influences the qualified prospect's decision process. This dissertation shows the importance of changing some marketing tactics during the sales presentation in order to increase the chances of a qualified prospect to attend again a timeshare sales presentation and/or not to spread a poor image of the industry to their friends and relatives.

As the main reason to decline the timeshare presentation is the bad experience in the past, it is suggested to create a different presentation for those who already had a bad experience, in other words, it could be created a presentation for qualified prospects who did not want to go at all, but were convinced by the OPC to go on one. The OPC would have a special invite, where she/he would write down the basic data (name, nationality, gift, etc.), but also some key-words that identify what were the factors of the bad experience, so the sales representative would know what not to do. Also, the sales presentation linked to that invite would not last more than what would be stated on the invite. Of course, there would be limited space available for this type of tour, and the OPC would be allowed to do only four of this kind of tours per week, for example. Otherwise, the temptation to book only these tours would be great. In addition to that, it cannot be obvious to the qualified prospect that he/she has a different presentation because of their bad experience, otherwise, people who never went to a timeshare presentation could lie in order to get this special tour. This measure can be a competitive advantage to the resort for different reasons: first, the sales representative will have a little more information about the target, which is useful in the selling process; second, the resort would build a better image for the guest that can lead to a sell or to a good word-of-mouth. For instance, Lam et al. (2009) states that knowledge of how word-of-mouth works in groups with similar cultural values can help companies create an environment that produces additional customer referrals/higher diffusion rates; and third, it could be created innovative selling process based on this "new" target.

Another very important aspect is training. A structured and intense training program tailored for OPC representatives may improve their performance. With the report's findings, it will be possible to start an academic literature that can be used a theoretical background for the field workers. When OPCs know what to expect and how to manage

the objections, it will be easier and more efficient for them to drive qualified tours since their first day of work.

5.3 Limitations

This study has some limitations. First, this paper is limited to one company and one single location. If the data collection was implemented in different resorts and in distinct areas of United States, the results would be more accurate. In addition to that, it would be possible to notice diverse trends in distinct locations. With that type of information, it would be possible to implement different strategies regarding the characteristics of each location. Second, a wider sample would be preferable to discover similarities and differences among distinct targets. Due to the small sample of this study, it was not possible to perceive significant dissimilarities among nationalities. Third, it was not implemented a statistical analysis. The statistical analysis would be a very useful method to discover the characteristics of each target market. In order to reach that goal, data mining is also recommended.

5.4 Future Research

For future research it is advised a quantitative study in order to find some patterns and correlations. With those findings it would be possible to create different strategies for each target according to nationality, age, household composition, etc. It is imperative to conduct the study in different cities of United States in order to get more accurate data. In addition to that, different OPC representatives of all over the country could be interviewed to compare their answers with the results of the qualified prospects. In other words, it could be done a study like this but in a larger scale. As stated before, it is important to create academic literature that supports the learning process of the OPC representatives and also other workers in the field.

References

- ARDA. (2010). *The timeshare industry: resource manual* (2nd edition). Washington, D.C.: American Resort Development Association, c2010.
- Brey, E. T. (2011). Developing a Better Understanding of Resort Management: An Inquiry into Industry Practices. *Journal Of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 20(1), 79-102. doi:10.1080/19368623.2011.530188
- Crotts, J. C., & Ragatz, R. L. (2002). Recent US timeshare purchasers: Who are they, what are they buying, and how can they be reached?. *International Journal Of Hospitality Management*, 21(3), 227.
- Dan, A., & Dan, Z. (2001). A timely account of the role of duration in decision making. *Acta Psychologica*, 108(Time, Judgement and Decision Making), 187-207. doi:10.1016/S0001-6918(01)00034-8
- Dodson, J. A., Tybout, A. M., & Sternthal, B. (1978). Impact of Deals and Deal Retraction on Brand Switching. *Journal Of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 15(1), 72-81.
- Ernst & Young. (2012). *State of vacation ownership industry: U.S. study 2012*. Washington, DC: AIF.
- Gram, M. (2007). Children as co-decision makers in the family? The case of family holidays. *Young Consumers*, 8(1), 19-28. doi:10.1108/17473610710733749
- Gregory, A. M. (2011). *Assessment of product and service attributes and consumers' willingness to pay in the vacation ownership industry using the Kano Model and conjoint analysis*. Orlando, FL: University of Central Florida
- Hyde, K., & Laesser, C. (2008). A structural theory of the vacation. *Tourism Management*, 30(2), 240-248
- Hoffman, K., & Bateson, J. G. (2010). *Essentials of services marketing / K. Douglas Hoffman, John E. G. Bateson*. Fort Worth : Harcourt College Publishers, c2010.
- Hovey, Martin (2002) Is timeshare ownership an investment product? *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 7 (2). pp. 141-160. ISSN 1363-0539
- Kaufman, T. J., & Upchurch, R. (2007). Vacation ownership: Gender positioning. *Journal Of Retail & Leisure Property*, 6(1), 8-14. doi:10.1057/palgrave.rlp.5100038
- Kaufman, T. J., Lashley, C., & Schreier, L. (2009). *Timeshare management : the key issues for hospitality managers / Tammie J. Kaufman, Conrad Lashley, Lisa Ann Schreier*. Oxford ; Burlington, MA : Elsevier/ Butterworth-Heinemann, c2009
- Kotler, P., Bowen, J.T., & Makens, J.C. (2010). *Marketing for hospitality and tourism (5th ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Lam, D., Lee, A., & Mizerski, R. (2009). The Effects of Cultural Values in Word-of-Mouth Communication. *Journal Of International Marketing*, 17(3), 55-70. doi:10.1509/jimk.17.3.55

Leclerc, F., Schmitt, B. H., & Dubé, L. (1995). Waiting Time and Decision Making: Is Time like Money?. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 110-119.

Mattila, Anna S. (2003), "The Impact of Cognitive Inertia on Postconsumption Evaluation Processes," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31 (3), 287–99.

Montgomery, D. B. (1971). Consumer Characteristics Associated With Dealing: An Empirical Example. *Journal Of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 8(1), 118-120.

Nickerson, N. P., & Jurowski, C. (2001). The influence of children on vacation travel patterns. *Journal Of Vacation Marketing*, 7(1), 19.

Okada, E., & Hoch, S. J. (2004). Spending Time versus Spending Money. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, 31(2), 313-323

Powanga, A., & Powanga, L. (2008). An economic analysis of a timeshare ownership. *Journal Of Retail & Leisure Property*, 7(1), 69-83. doi:10.1057/palgrave.rlp.5100082

Schreier, L. (2005). *Timeshare vacations for dummies / by Lisa Ann Schreier*. Hoboken, NJ : Wiley, c2005.

Upchurch, R. S., Upchurch, R. S., & Lashley, C. (2006). *Timeshare resort operations : a guide to management practice / Randall Upchurch, Conrad Lashley*. Amsterdam ; Boston : Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, c2006

Woods, R.H. (2001). Important issues for a growing timeshare industry. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 42(1) 71-81.

Woodside, A., Moore, E., Bonn, M., & Wizeman, D. (1986). Segmenting the timeshare resort market. *Journal Of Travel Research*, 24(3), 6.

Zhu, Yan, "Comparing Service Qualities/Gaps between Hospitality Industry and Timeshare Industry" (2012). *UNLV Theses/Dissertations/Professional Papers/Capstones*. Paper 1372.

Zikmund, W. G. (2010). *Business research methods / William G. Zikmund ... [et al.]*. Mason, OH : South-Western, c2010.

.