A General Model Of Traveler Destination Choice

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Substantial evidence exists to support the proposition that consumer perceptions and preferences should be the basis for tourism marketing and consumer policy. Some of this evidence is reviewed, and a general model of traveler destination awareness and choice is presented. Results of an empirical test of the model provide some support for the hypotheses presented in the model.

The proposition that tourism marketing and research policy should be based on consumer perceptions and preferences (van Raaij 1986) has received substantial support. This article presents a review of some of this evidence and a model of traveler destination awareness and choice, as well as the results of an empirical test of the model.

THE MODEL

Figure 1 presents a general model of traveler leisure destination awareness and choice. The model shows eight variables and nine relationships; two exogenous variables, traveler characteristics and marketing variables, influence traveler destination awareness.

As the figure shows, destination awareness includes four categories: consideration set, inert set, unavailable and aware set, and inept set. Each of these mental categories is described in the next section of the article.

Affective associations in the figure are the specific feelings (positive and negative) linked with a specific destination considered by a traveler. For example, "sun, beaches, and fun" may be associated by some travelers with Spain, while pageantry and theatre may be linked with London by the same travelers. The mental category a traveler assigns to a destination influences the linking of positive or negative associations with that destination. That is, the affective associations are usually positive for destinations a consumer would consider visiting and negative for destinations a consumer has decided definitely not to visit (a destination in the consumer's inept set).

The learning of the associations between specific affective concepts (e.g., "breath-taking scenery," "too expensive," and "I have ancestors from there") and a specific destination indicates how the destination is positioned in the consumer's mind. Positioning a destination (i.e., categorizing) may occur simultaneously with how it is associated because most individuals find it impossible to make category judgments without also making evaluation judgments (Brunner, Goodnow, and Austin 1959).

In the figure, however, categorization in the destination awareness set appears as a one-way directional influence on

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affective associations because some minimal amount of destination recognition, memory recall, and categorization may be necessary to activate positive, neutral, or negative affective associations.

For example, a nationwide research study (Taylor 1986) on Americans by the Canadian federal government concluded that most Americans had neutral or weakly positive affection associations about Canada as a vacation destination. When asked what first came to mind when thinking about a vacation trip to Canada, most Americans reported that they did not really think about Canada as a vacation destination. The major finding of the study was that Canada is not actively considered by most Americans as a vacation destination; the destination would be classified in most American travelers' inert sets.

Travelers construct their preferences for alternatives from destination awareness (cf. Michie 1986; van Raaij 1986) and affective associations. Preferences are the rankings assigned to destinations by relative attitude strength, i.e., the ordering a consumer assigns alternative destinations from most liked to least liked. Thus, the figure shows preferences to be influenced by destination awareness categorizations and affective associations.

Intention to visit is the traveler's perceived likelihood of visiting a specific destination within a specific time period, such as the summer of 1988. Intention to visit has been found to be associated strongly with traveler preferences (Woodside and Carr 1988; Muhlbacher and Woodside 1987). This relationship is illustrated in the figure.

In the model actual destination choice is predicted to be affected by both intention to visit and situational variables. Intention to act has been found to be significantly associated with actual behavior provided that the intention question is posed concretely and related to a specific time period and situation (Belk 1974).

Perceptions Applied to Destination Awareness

Perceptions include at least three processes: awareness, categorizing, and associating. Awareness includes unaided recall from long-term memory and aided recognitions. Consumer responses to unaided awareness questions have been found to be associated strongly with positive attitudes, intentions to buy, and actual purchase (e.g., Axelrod 1968; Bronner and de Hoog 1974; Woodside and Carr 1988).

Thus, to encourage a traveler's preference for a specific destination, an effective tourism marketing strategy is to gain a large share of first mentions among such travelers who are considering competing travel destinations. The shares of first mentions would be estimated by using responses to the question, "Of all the vacation-holiday destinations that would be available for you to visit in 1988, what destination first comes to your mind?" The destination responses are henceforth referred to as the consideration set.

Unaided awareness response measures are one of only two measures found to be associated strongly with sales. Such measures are easier and faster to measure than sales response in travel destination marketing. Axelrod (1968; 1986) concluded that unaided awareness measures are excellent "intermediate criteria" for judging the effectiveness of marketing strategies.
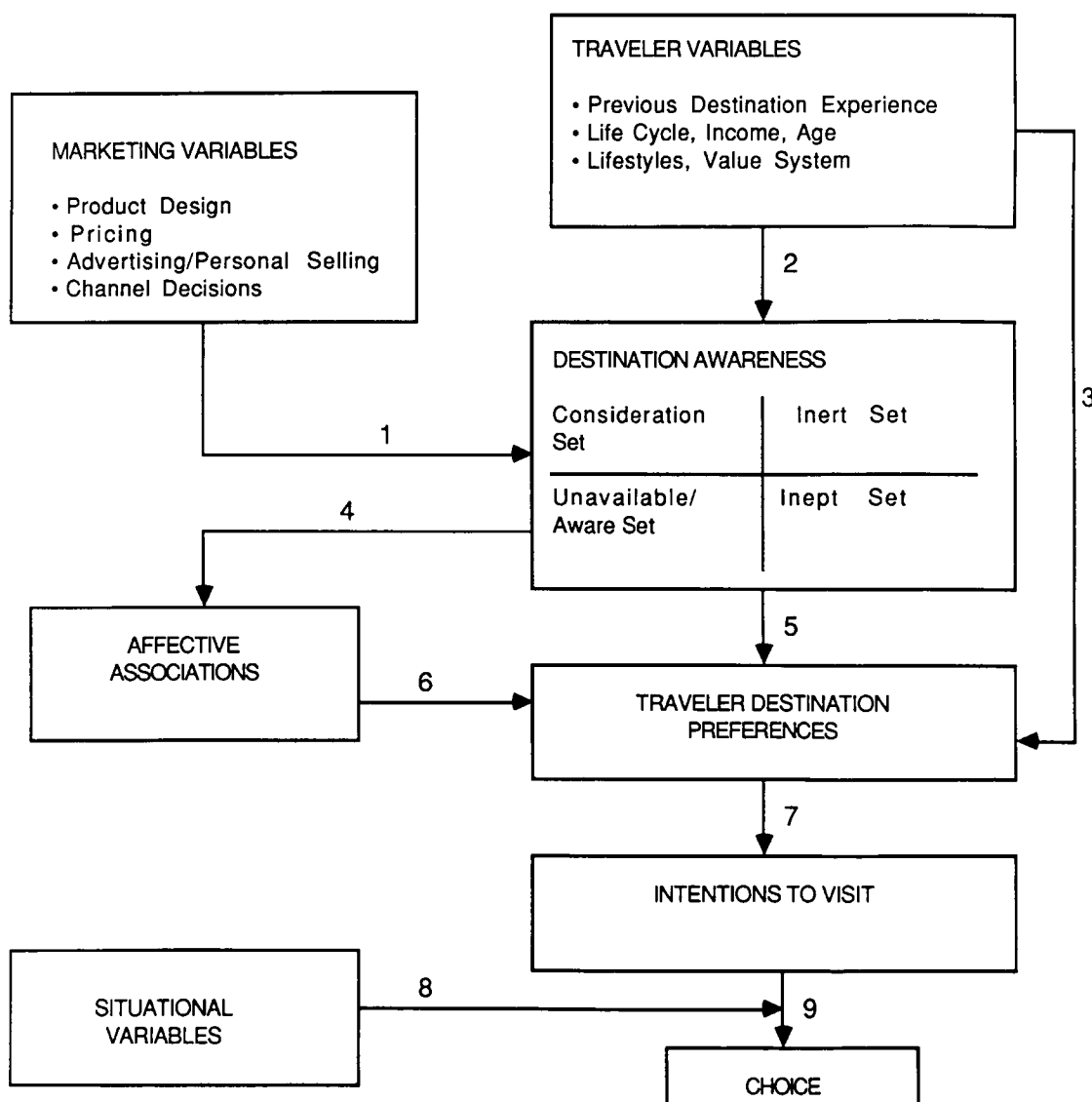
Research on Mental Categorization Processes

Basic psychological processes also appear to include categorizing constructs, e.g., names of destinations, into the mental equivalent of file drawers (Brunner, Goodnow, and Austin 1959; Woodside and Sherrell 1977). The categorization process applied to consumer behavior originated with the work of Howard (1963, p. 84) and Howard and Sheth (1969, p. 98) on evoked sets of brands. Howard (1977, p. 306) defined the evoked set of brands as "the subset of brands that a consumer considers buying out of the set of brands that he or she is aware of in a given product class." This definition would suggest the likelihood of a counterpart mental category of brands that a consumer would not consider buying, namely a reject set.

Narayana and Markin (1975) defined this reject set of brands, or "inept set," as those brands the consumer has rejected from his or her purchase consideration, either because s/he has had unpleasant experiences or because s/he has heard negative comments from other information sources, such as friends. Narayana and Markin (1975) also proposed an "inert set" of brands as a product category for which the consumer has neither a positive nor negative evaluation. In effect, the consumer is aware of them but does not have sufficient information to evaluate them one way or another.

FIGURE 1
GENERAL MODEL OF TRAVELER LEISURE
DESTINATION AWARENESS AND CHOICE

More complex views of consumer brand categorization processes have been proposed (cf. Church, Laroche, and Rosenblatt 1985; Spiggle and Sewall 1987). In addition to using an unaided awareness set, Church et al. (1985) also include an "aided awareness set" of brands that is measured by asking the consumer to indicate which brands he or she recognizes" from a list supplied by the reseacher. Although Church uses a reject set, she also proposes a "hold set" and a "foggy set." The hold set is measured by asking, "Of those brands which you know, are there any about which you have an opinion but cannot say whether or not you would accept or reject?" The foggy set is measured by asking, "Of those brands which you know, are there any which you cannot say whether or not you would be willing to buy as you have not really formed an opinion of those brands?"

Spiggle and Sewall (1987) provide useful additions to consumer categorization processes. These authors divide the evoked set into an "action set" of alternatives toward which a consumer takes some action, e.g., in travel behavior s/he has requested some information from a particular destination, and an "inaction set" analogous to Church et al.'s hold set.

Associating is the process of linking specific attributes and benefits to specific alternatives, such as destinations, and "positioning" is a strategy used to encourage particular associations to develop. Promoting Nova Scotia as a foreign, culturally unique, vacation destination close to home to Americans (Woodside 1982) illustrates the use of positioning.

Some of these perceptual constructs (e.g., consideration set, affective associations) have been applied to travel research.

For example, in studying travel to the U.S. by Mexican families, Michie (1986) found that the degree of awareness of specific destination sites in New Mexico was associated more with actual visits than all other travel variables, e.g., distance and perceptions of barriers to travel and the availability of "Spanish heritage" service features (language, restaurants, medical care). Michie warned, however, that awareness may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition to stimulate travel.

Thompson and Cooper (1979) and Woodside and Sherrell (1977) demonstrated empirically a strong link between destinations most memorable (and accessible) in consumers' minds (measured by unaided awareness questioning) as places to visit and attitudes and intentions toward actually visiting these destinations.

In a study of Dutch families, Bronner and de Hoog (1985) found that their subjects' relative levels of preferences for competing vacation destinations varied directly with the order in which the destinations were mentioned prior unaided awareness testing.

Davidson (1985) provides valuable examples of destination categorization processes (without referring to the categorization process by name). One of these examples was based on research for the state of Montana. Davidson (1985) reported, "We did some work for the State of Montana and found people thought it was a nice place up there, lots of mountains, good terrain [positive affective associations], but nobody ever thought of it in terms of a vacation. Nobody was planning to go there, nobody was considering it, nobody was thinking about it." In effect, such a result indicates that Montana may be a destinaton in the inert set of many travelers.

Research by the New Zealand Tourist Bureau on target market consumers in Japan identified the same problem for New Zealand as found by Canada and Montana for target customers. In a study on a cross-section of three Japanese cities, less than 5% of the 600 survey respondents were able to identify Auckland as a city located in New Zealand (Auckland is New Zealand's largest populated city and major entry point), even though 65% claimed to be aware of Auckland. Among the few Japanese respondents who perceived New Zealand as a vacation destination, most placed the country in their inept sets and provided more negative than positive affective associations about visiting New Zealand.

There's little thought of New Zealand as having good restaurants or shops, which as far as tourism is concerned is negative. Apart from looking at scenery, there's a feeling there isn't much for tourists to do, which is maybe why we get so many honey-mooners. Another negative is that New Zealand is "difficult" to get to in terms of travel time, even though the trip is shorter for the Japanese than a flight to Europe. [This categorization is shown in the figure as the unavailable-aware set location of destination awareness.] There's also a feeling that New Zealand is not a place for the timid traveller, that it's somewhere for the bolder traveller (Williams 1987, pp. 20-21).

HYPOTHESES

The general model described and the findings from the literature led to development of the following specific hypotheses for testing. The research hypotheses are stated according to the predictions associated with the proposed model and not as null hypotheses.

H_1: Consumers are able to retrieve and categorize specific destinations from their long-term memories into the four destination categories described in the model: consideration set, inert set, unavailable-aware set, and inept set. Previously reported empirical results (e.g., Woodside and Sherrell 1977; Thompson and Cooper 1979) and the insights of travel researchers (Davidson 1985; Taylor 1986) are rationales for this hypothesis.

H_2: The average sizes of each of the destination categories in the mind are small, that is, five plus or minus two for the consideration set and even fewer on average for the other sets. The evidence from decision and travel research is that search, including internal memory search, is limited, directed to solving a problem, and ends quickly when a satisfactory solution is found (Miller 1956; Simon 1957; Woodside and Sherrell 1977; Thompson and Cooper 1979; Wallace 1969; Michie 1986).

H_3: Previous travel to a destination relates positively to inclusion of the destination in a consumer's consideration set versus other mental categories of vacation destinations (arrow 2 in the figure). Bennett and Mandell (1969) found that positively reinforced past automobile brand choices, measured in aggregate or in sequence, decreased prepurchase information-seeking in which consumers engaged.

For vacation travel behavior, positive reinforcement (i.e., being rewarded, feelings of satisfaction) is likely to occur following most destination visits because the prior expectations of enjoying specific activities at the destinations are likely to match the actual experiences encountered.

H_4: A well designed marketing mix directed at a specific target market by the management of a specific tourist destination influences mental categorizations of destinations by increasing the destination's likelihood of being included in the target customers' consideration sets (arrow 1 in Figure 1). For example, channel decisions regarding airline routes may influence a consumer's placement of a destination in the consideration or unavailable-aware set, depending on whether the consumer perceives travel to the destination to be non-stop, one-stop, convenient but several stops, or impossible. Unique product designs for target markets, such as a travel package for Japanese honeymooners to Hawaii that includes

hotel room and air travel for four nights, are developed so that the members of the target market will classify the destination in their consideration set.

H_5: Destinations in consumers' consideration sets are linked more with positive associations than are destinations found in other mental categories; destinations found in consumers' inept sets are most likely to be linked with negative associations (arrow 4 in Figure 1). Such associations may be used by consumers to justify the categorization of specific destinations into specific mental sets.

H_6: Consumers' preference for specific destinations is associated positively with the rank order mention of destinations in consumers' consideration sets (arrow 5 in Figure 1). On average, the destination mentioned first is preferred more than that mentioned second, and the second is preferred more than the third. This is the accessibility hypothesis applied to travel research.

H_7: Intention to visit a specific destination is influenced positively by the consumer's preference toward the destination (arrow 9 in Figure 1). While this preference-intention hypothesis may appear self-evident, the link between preference and intention may be stronger for some destinations than for others. The management need exists to test the strength of the relationship for specific destinations and for specific target markets.

Not all the relationships shown in the figure were examined in the study reported in the next section. The strength of the relationships depicted as arrows 3, 6, 8, and 9 in the figure were not tested. Several of the travel variables listed in the figure were not included in the empirical study, such as a traveler's system of values.

If supported empirically, the general model depicted in the figure is useful for planning tourism marketing decisions and measuring performance in implementing such decisions for specific destinations. The general model suggests that answering the following questions is important in planning and evaluating tourism marketing strategies: What is our destination's share-of-mind among target customers? That is, what proportion of travelers place our destination in their consideration set? What percent mention our destination first among the destinations considered? What affective association is made most often by targeted customers for a specific destination? Is the affective association positive, neutral, or negative? What competing destinations are included in the consideration sets of target customers? What is our destination's strength of preference compared to competing destinations?

While the model intuitively appears to be valid, the strategic usefulness of measuring target consumer awareness of competing destinations must be demonstrated. Consumers' affective associations need to be actually learned. The empirical study reported next is one step taken to demonstrate the model's usefulness for planning and evaluating destination tourism strategies.

METHOD

An exploratory field study tested the hypotheses with a 20-minute survey of convenience sample. The sample consisted of 92 young adults 20 to 35 years old who were New Zealand residents and had traveled overnight away from home for seven days or longer during the previous 12 months. All members of the sample were students at the University of Canterbury during 1987.

Selection of the sample assumed that most university students in New Zealand are interested in international travel

to overseas destinations, given that New Zealand is isolated geographically from all other countries and education is likely to broaden interest in visiting other countries. The majority of the respondents did report having experienced some international travel before their participation in the study.

Operationalizations and the Survey Instrument

The following questions measured the respondents' consideration sets of leisure destinations for international travel and the order of mention of destinations in the consideration sets:

When you think about countries to visit on a holiday/vacation, what country first comes to mind? What other countries come to mind as places to visit for a holiday/vacation?

To measure the respondents' inert set the following questions were used:

Of all the countries in the world, what countries could you most easily visit but you never really think about going there? If other countries come to mind that you could easily visit but never really think about visiting, please name them.

To measure the respondents' unavailable-aware sets, the following questions were used:

What countries come to mind that for one reason or another you would find it difficult to go to for a vacation/holiday travel? What other countries might come to mind that you would find it difficult to go to for a vacation/holiday trip?

To measure the respondents' inept sets the following questions were used:

What countries would you not be interested in visiting, in particular, for a vacation/holiday trip? What other countries might come to mind that you would not be interested in visiting for a vacation/holiday trip?

Face-to-face interviews were used to collect the data. The subjects were not shown the questions during the interviews to encourage top-of-mind responses. The fours sets of categorization questions were asked in the order shown to measure the order in which the destinations were mentioned in the consideration sets with as little contamination from other questions as possible. The subjects were requested to record their answers to all the questions on one page of blank paper. No provisions were made to prevent respondents from listing a given country in more than one category; however, only seven subjects listed the same country in two categories (the inept and unavailable-aware sets for all seven subjects).

The following procedure was used to measure preferences for the different destinations mentioned by the respondents. Following the categorization questions, each subject was asked,

Assume you have 30 days for a holiday/vacation away from home. How many days would you spend at each of the destinations you have listed on the page before you? You may assign the 30 days in any amount you like to the destinations: all 30 to one destination, zero days to a destination, divide up the 30 days among several destinations if you prefer; just so the total days assigned equals 30. Write the number of days next to each destination you select.

This constant-sum approach has been found to be a valid measurement of preference and highly predictive of intentions to buy and actual choice (cf. Axelrod 1968, 1986; Hughes 1971; Wilson 1981). The subjects were told that they could assign the 30 days to any of the destinations they had listed in any set.

To measure experience, the subjects were instructed to place a large letter "Y" for yes and "N" for no next to each

destination listed to indicate whether they personally had ever visited the destination, and to do this for all the destinations listed on the page.

To learn whether preferences measured by constant-sum were associated with choice and intention to visit, the following two questions were asked:

> Please circle the one country on the page that you think you are most likely to visit within the next two years. Then, using a scale of 0 to 100, what is the likelihood of your visiting the country you have circled within the next two years? Zero is no chance at all of visiting and 100 is absolute certainty that you will visit.

Finally, to provide some measures of affective associations for each mental categorization, subjects were requested to select one destination from each of the four categories of initial questions and write the words or phrases that they believe would best describe each country. The subjects' descriptions were written on a different sheet of paper from their responses to the earlier questions.

FINDINGS

For the combined four mental categories, the subjects mentioned Australia, Fiji Islands, and the United States most often. Given that Australia is New Zealand's closest large neighbor and shares the same British Commonwealth heritage, this result is not surprising and helps to provide construct validity to measures used to learn the contents of subjects' mental categories.

The Fiji Islands is New Zealand's closest neighbor geographically. The Fiji Islands was mentioned often in New Zealand news in 1987 because of two government coups, violence among Indian residents and native Polynesians, the creation of a military dictatorship, and the declaration by its new military leader to terminate the country's membership in the British Commonwealth and the founding of a republic form of federal government. Given the unstable political and social environments, the Fiji Islands would not be expected to be included in most subjects' consideration sets.

In fact, more subjects (38%) placed the Fiji Islands in their inert sets than in any other mental category measured in the study. Surprisingly, only 14% of the subjects identified the Fiji Islands as being unavailable-aware; only 5% placed the Fiji Islands in the inept set category. Among New Zealanders the Fiji Islands appears to suffer a fate similar to Canada in attracting Americans: relatively close proximity may decrease consideration to visit.

The specific destinations mentioned most frequently by the respondents in the four mental categories are summarized in Table 1. A big three of consideration destinations according to share of mentions can be observed in Table 1 to include the United Kingdom (57%), the United States (55%), and Australia (51%).

Within the subjects' inert sets, the Fiji Islands gained 38% of mentions, more than any other destination. Australia was in second place in inert set share of minds with 22% of mentions. This may suggest that relatively close proximity may be related strongly to reduced consideration for visiting. "I can always go there, so I won't consider it now" may capture this categorization process. Such a process may result in low actual visitation rates.

Notice in Table 1 that Germany was mentioned by nearly one-fourth of the subjects as a country that comes to mind as a place to visit for a vacation or holiday. Thus, even though a country may be relatively small in population (New Zealand's 1987 population is 3.4 million), a sizeable target market of

TABLE 1
SHARES OF SUBJECTS' MINDS (N=92)
AMONG FOUR DESTINATION CATEGORIES
FOR EIGHT COUNTRIES MENTIONED MOST OFTEN

| Country | Mental Categories | | | |
	Consid-eration	Inert	Unavail-able-Aware	Inept
United Kingdom	57%	3%	1%	0%
United States	55	2	4	9
Australia	51	22	0	2
Germany	24	0	4	0
Fiji Islands	13	38	14	5
USSR	3	1	35	7
South Africa	3	3	34	22
Iran	0	1	12	17

potential travelers may exist based on share of consideration assigned (in this case to Germany). A large-scale, representative survey may confirm New Zealand travelers as a viable target market for some portion of Germany's tourism marketing efforts.

The U.S.S.R. was mentioned by a substantial share (46%) of subjects. Among the subjects who did mention Russia, most (32 of 42, or 76%) categorized the country as an unavailable-aware destination. Only 7% of the subjects mentioning Russia classified the country in their consideration sets.

Substantial proportions of subjects viewed South Africa as part of their unavailable-aware (34%) and inept set (22%) mental categories than any other countries. A speculative comment would be that these findings may be related to perception of South Africa's apartheid laws as unacceptable behavior by a federal government.

The current Iran-Iraq War may be part of the reason Iran was mentioned often by the subjects (17%) as an inept country destination. Iran, a major importer of New Zealand lamb, is often in New Zealand news. Therefore, Iran might be expected to be mentioned by at least some subjects in a study on international travel. Some subjects did mention Iran but none identified the country as part of the consideration set.

Examining the Hypotheses

H_1 and H_2. The first two hypotheses were supported. All the respondents were able to identify specific destinations by country names for the four proposed mental categories of vacation or holiday destinations. The average number of countries in the respondents' consideration set was 4.2, similar to that size found by Woodside and Sherrell (1977) for respondents asked to name the locations or cities they would have some likelihood of visiting. Woodside and Sherrell (1977) found an average consideration set of 3.4 among visitors to South Carolina. Using the same questioning procedure as Woodside and Sherrell (1977) and a different sample base (visitors to the state of Tennessee), Thompson and Cooper (1979) found an average consideration set of 2.7. The key finding here is that the sizes of the respondents' consideration sets are quite small, similar in size to research on evoked sets of brands of nondurables being considered for purchase by consumers (cf. Church, Laroche, and Rosenblatt 1985).

The average size of the respondents' consideration sets was significantly greater than the average number of countries

mentioned in the respondents' inert, unavailable-aware, and inept sets. Details are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
MENTAL CATEGORY SET SIZES FOR
INTERNATIONAL VACATION/HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS

Destination Category	Average Size	S.D.	Range
Consideration	4.2[a]	0.97	7
Inert	1.7	0.99	4
Unavailable-aware	2.2	1.08	6
Inept	1.6	1.38	8

[a] For comparisons between the mean of the consideration set and mean for each of the other destination set categories, $t > 2.50$, $p < .01$; other comparisons were not significant statistically.

Two points are relevant to the findings presented in Table 2. First, the average consideration set is substantially larger than the other mental categories of vacation or holiday destinations. The respondents may have, in their long-term memories, destinations more easily retrievable which they would consider visiting in comparison to destinations they have not thought much about and may have lost the means of retrieval. Second, achieving a mention in a consumer's consideration set is likely to represent very valuable mental space, given that most mentioned only three to five overseas destinations that they would consider visiting.

H_3. The third hypothesis was not supported. Experience via previous visits to a travel destination was not associated significantly with subjects' categorizing destinations in their consideration set. Dummy variable coding (0,1) was used to code whether (1) or not (0) subjects had been to the destinations mentioned in each of the four mental categories. Dummy variable coding was also used to classify whether or not a country was mentioned in the relevant mental categories. Pearson product-moment and phi correlations were used to test the associations between the variables (experience and mental category destination placement). The same levels of statistical significance were found with Pearson product-moment and phi coefficients; the product-moment correlations are reported here. The r^2s varied between 0 and .23 between experience and consideration set mentions; none of the associations was significant.

Given the young age group making up the sample in the present study, the lack of association between previous country visits and consideration for future visits may not be surprising. Additional research with a sample from an older population of travelers is warranted for further testing of H_3.

H_4. The fourth hypothesis is supported weakly by the fact that three of the four country destinations mentioned most often in the subjects' consideration sets have direct airline connections to New Zealand (Australia, the U.K., and the U.S.), while countries mentioned most often in other mental categories do not have direct airline connections to New Zealand.

The Fiji Islands does not have an international airline to countries 1,000 kilometers or further. The relatively high share of consideration set mentions of Germany may suggest an untapped potential for creating a direct air route by Lufthansa to New Zealand. However, additional, large, non-student survey research is needed to confirm this speculation.

A real test of H_4 is only possible using true or quasi-experimental designs. Is the creation of a new airline route the

cause or result of consideration set categorization by a target market? Most likely the answer is both. Consequently, the relative strength of the direction of marketing variables and mental categorization can only be learned by varying marketing variables using control and test group treatments.

H_5: The fifth hypothesis was supported. Positive associations were made most of the time (88% of all concepts—words and phrases used by the subjects for describing the destinations) with the destinations included by subjects in their consideration sets versus associations which are neutral (4%) or negative (8%). For the destinations in the subjects' inept sets, negative associations were made most often (86%); few positive (9%) and neutral (5%) associations were made. These results for H_5 provide support for the nomological validity of the hypothesis—a specific pattern of predictions was confirmed by the findings.

The fifth hypothesis was tested by classifying each concept associated by subjects with the four destinations that were mentioned most often in each of the four mental categorizations. The classifications of concepts may be biased in that only one judge made the assignment of words and word-phrases as being positive, neutral, or negative. However, the classification of concepts did appear to have high face validity when reviewed by a second judge. Additional research on the validity of classifying affective associations made by travelers into positive, neutral, and negative categories before concluding that H_5 is confirmed.

Here is an example of how one subject provided descriptions for four countries, one country for each mental category:

> *Consideration set:* "U.K.—interesting, history, family ties, highly populated in comparison to N.Z. Excellent base for further European travel."
> *Inert set:* "Rarotonga—island, tropical, quiet holiday spot."
> *Unavailable-aware:* "Turkey—inequalities toward women, vast, barren, religion awareness, political problems."
> *Inept set:* "U.S.S.R.—communist, cold, few freedom rights for people, huge."

Another subject who also mentioned the U.K. but included the country in the inert set provides quite a different mental picture of the country: "Conservative, expensive, overpopulated, cold."

H_6. The sixth hypothesis was confirmed; the r^2s for the individual countries mentioned most often in their consideration sets and the consumers' preference (measured by constant-sum responses) averaged .36 and ranged from .28 for the Fiji Islands to .47 for Germany. All the relationships tested were significant ($p < .05$). The results provide additional evidence that consideration is associated strongly with preference, and that unaided awareness measurement is useful in learning how well a destination is performing in building a "consumer franchise," i.e., preference against competing destinations.

H_7. The seventh hypothesis was confirmed partially. Positive and statistically significant relationships were found between preference and choice for the U.K., Australia, Canada, and Germany (r^2s all above .28). For the Fiji Islands and the U.S., the associations between preference and choice were low (r^2s of .00 and .08, respectively). Possibly the 1987 political unrest and violence occurring in the Fiji Islands is the reason for the low preference-choice association for the country among the subjects. For the U.S., the low association may represent an unfulfilled target market for the U.S., i.e., many New Zealanders may prefer to visit the U.S. but this preference needs to be stimulated into planned action.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The reported empirical study and tests of the hypotheses are based on a small-scale, cross-sectional survey with students as respondents. Longitudinal research, using large samples of representative nonstudent populations, is needed before the hypotheses may be generalized. The empirical study reported here is intended only as an exploratory examination of some of the proposed hypotheses presented in the model.

The model of traveler destination choice may be a simple and useful description of traveler awareness, preference, and choice of competing destinations. The model builds on the work of several propositions and research findings from cognitive and behavioral psychology, marketing, and travel and tourism.

While not a direct test of Davidson's (1985), van Raaij's (1986), and Michie's (1986) proposal that the study of demographics and psychographics is not enough—we must learn about travelers' decision processes—the model and empirical evidence in the present article do support the basic accessibility hypothesis. The service or product that a consumer transfers from long-term memory into working memory in response to awareness is likely to be considered, and possibly chosen, for purchase. If the hypotheses supported by the present study are confirmed in future research, tracking target market populations' awareness and preference of competing destinations should be recognized as a wise investment for measuring marketing performance and planning marketing actions.

Affective associations made most often by target customers may also be useful to track annually or quarterly. The affective associations actually made by potential customers may represent both what the customers perceive to be true and relevant about the destination, as well as a global attitude concerning whether they like, dislike, or have no opinion about the destination.

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