STRUCTURE OF VACATION DESTINATION CHOICE SETS

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Abstract: The variety of choice sets that have been described in the consumer behavior decision process literature are integrated into a structure and related to the context of tourism. To be selected as the vacation destination when a nonroutine, high-involvement type of decision process is used, destinations are conceptualized to be included in an individual's initial consideration set, late consideration set, action set and interaction set. The sets are described and operationally defined. Implications are discussed of using the choice structure taxonomy as an analytical tool for destinations to ascertain their relative strengths and weaknesses at different transition points in prospective visitors' selection processes. Keywords: awareness set, initial consideration set, late consideration set, choice sets, vacation destination decisions, choice set operationalization.

INTRODUCTION

Marketers from a large number of competing locations strive to communicate to potential tourists the benefits that their destinations offer. The resulting mass of information to which potential tourists are exposed is beyond their capacity to assimilate and process. Yet, somehow, from this large number of alternatives and mass of information, a destination is selected. Several models of the pleasure traveler's
destination choice process describing how the destination decision is formulated have been proposed. The most recent are those suggested by Moutinho (1986), Woodside and Lysonski (1989), and Um and Crompton (1990). Central to these models is the concept of choice sets.

Choice sets are most likely to be applicable when the purchase task is a new or modified one in which individuals typically seek information and evaluate alternatives, and when the purchase entails some degree of high risk (Spiggle and Sewell 1987). It seems likely that many vacation destination selection decisions will meet these two criteria, and it is in these high-involvement situations that the choice sets structure described in this article is likely to be most useful. However, in some situations (e.g., a vacation that is relatively short, close to home, and low cost) destination selection is likely to be a low-involvement decision. Such decisions are characterized by a relative lack of active information seeking about alternative destinations, little comparative evaluation between alternatives, a perception that the alternative destinations are similar, and the individual's having no special preference for a particular destination (Zaichkowsky 1985). In these situations, selection decisions do not follow an extended problem-solving approach, and the concept of a choice sets structure is unlikely to be useful.

Many investigators have reported that the choice processes used by consumers involving nonroutinized, high-involvement purchases are phased (Bettman and Park 1980; Payne 1976; Wright and Barbour 1977). In the context of tourism, there appears to be some agreement that selection of a vacation destination goes through three central core stages (Figure 1): development of an initial set of destinations that has traditionally been called the awareness set, a discarding of some of

![Figure 1. Structure of Destination Choice Sets](image-url)
those destinations to form a smaller late consideration or evoked set, and a final destination selected from those in the late consideration set (Thompson and Cooper 1979; Woodside and Lysonski 1989; Woodside and Sherrell 1977; Um and Crompton 1990).

Although there is relatively little understanding of how internal processes and external influences interact and contribute to formulating particular choice sets, the studies cited earlier offer sufficient evidence to support their existence in high-involvement tourism decisions. Concern in this article is limited to describing the structure of the choice sets that have been conceptualized as likely to occur, and considering the implications of the sets, because they are viewed as key decision points in the destination selection process. The actual processes that determine the composition of the sets at each stage in the decision process are not considered here.

The initial set consists of all the locations that might be considered as potential destinations for a vacation before any decision process about a trip has been activated. The subjective beliefs about destination attributes that are responsible for locations being included in this initial set are formulated from passive information catching or incidental learning. Once a decision has been made to go on a vacation, then the second stage is launched. This involves undertaking an initial active search to acquire information that will enable the relative utility of destinations in the initial set to be evaluated and reduced to a small number of probable destinations. The final stage involves a more thorough active search to determine which of those probable alternatives will be selected as the final destination.

STRUCTURE OF DESTINATION CHOICE SETS

Conceptualization of the decision process as a narrowing down of alternatives was articulated by Nicosia (1966), who, in his theory of buyer behavior, presented the final purchase act as “emerging from a funneling process.” However, he offered no explanation for this process. The notion of choice sets provided an explanation. It was first introduced into the consumer behavior literature by Howard (1963) and later elaborated upon by Howard and Sheth (1969). It offers a conceptualization of how potential tourists narrow down the number of destinations considered and reach a final decision. The process explains how the decision is simplified so a potential tourist is required to process only a fraction of the destination-related information to which he or she could be exposed. The approach assumes that individuals seek information and evaluate the destination alternatives that are available to them.

Extensions of Howard's original conceptualization of awareness and evoked sets have been suggested by Narayana and Markin (1975), Brisoux and Laroche (1980), and Spiggle and Sewall (1987). The purpose of this article is to integrate these conceptualizations, adapt them to the context of tourism decision making by formulating a structure of destination choice sets, and to suggest marketing implications that emerge from the choice sets structure. The structure taxonomy is shown in Figure 1. As a destination moves from right to left through
this structure, the probability increases that it will emerge as the final destination selected.

The sets are shaped by both internal and external forces. Internally, potential tourists' motives, and the criteria emerging from them that are used to evaluate destinations, contribute to determining set structures. Externally, previous experience, prior knowledge, information passively and actively obtained from friends, advertisements, and other sources, similarly contribute to shape each individual's structure of choice sets (Spiggle and Sewall 1987).

The first stage of Howard's (1963) original paradigm suggested that all destinations can be categorized as belonging either in an individual's awareness set or in his or her unawareness set. The awareness set is defined as being composed of all the destinations of which an individual may be aware at any given time. The unawareness set consists of all the destinations of which individuals are unaware.

The concept of awareness and unawareness sets was originally developed and tested on products such as toothpaste, automobiles, and beers where the number of brands is limited. It is effective in those contexts, but operationalizing it in the context of tourism is challenging. In contrast to a product category of consumer goods, there are likely to be a prodigious number of destinations of which tourists are aware. Conceivably, each individual's list could consist of hundreds of such destinations. The notion of an unawareness set seems even more inappropriate to tourist decision making given that there are an infinite number of potentially unknown destinations. To address this problem, Woodside and Sherrell (1977: 15) discarded the notion of an unawareness set and suggested that it should be divided into an awareness-available set and an awareness-unavailable set: "The available set includes the travel destinations which the traveler believes he or she has the ability to visit within some period, for example, a year. Determining travelers' available sets may be more reasonable because of the infinite number of destinations possible in awareness sets." The introduction of the phrase, "the ability to visit," substantially modifies and narrows the original definition of awareness set.

However, the phrase, "ability to visit," may be ambiguous. Some may interpret it to mean all those places travelers have the resources to visit irrespective of whether or not they have any inherent appeal for them as a vacation destination. An alternative operationalization of this set would be "the destinations which a traveler is considering as possible vacation destinations within some period, e.g., a year." Given this definition, an appropriate descriptive nomenclature for this set is the initial consideration set (Woodside and Lysonski 1989). Those destinations of which an individual is aware, but is not considering as possible destinations within a given period constitute the excluded set (Figure 1).

The second stage of Howard's (1963) original paradigm was formulation of an evoked set of destinations, which consisted of those remaining from an initial awareness set after some reduction process has been implemented. Howard borrowed the term evoked set from March and Simon (1958), who had introduced it earlier to the field of organization theory and rather crudely defined it as "the part of the memory that is influencing behavior at a particular time." According to Howard and
Sheth's (1969:26) operationalization, "The brands that become alternatives to the buyer's choice decision are generally a small number, collectively called his evoked set." In the context of tourism, this stage could be defined as "the destinations which a traveler is considering as probable destinations within some period of time," and should be termed the late consideration set. A key conceptual differentiating element between the initial and late consideration sets is that a period of time elapses between them that is sufficiently long to enable individuals to evaluate and reduce their list of destinations from a broad set of possibles to a narrower set of probables.

No attention was given by Howard (1963) to brands in the awareness set that did not become part of the evoked set. Silk and Urban (1978), Sibley (1976), and Narayana and Markin (1975) pointed out that the evoked set description was not a complete explanation of the choice alternatives and extended Howard's conceptualization. Silk and Urban (1978:175) introduced the term relevant set, which they stated was "akin to Howard and Sheth's concept of evoked set." However, relevant set consists of familiar alternatives irrespective of how favorably (or unfavorably) they are evaluated. In contrast, evoked set generally has been interpreted to include only "acceptable alternatives." Silk and Urban's operationalization of relevant set, adapted to the tourism context, was those destinations an individual has visited, would seriously consider visiting, or definitely would not visit. Although this concept is broader than late consideration set, it is not as broad as awareness set. Hauser and Wernerfelt (1989:393), who used the relevant set concept, pointed out that unaided awareness refers to all those destinations an individual could name without prompting by an interviewer, and that relevant set was "a much stronger requirement than awareness." Sibley's (1976) contribution to the conceptual vacuum left by Howard was to introduce the term subvoked set, to describe alternatives that were known, but which were unacceptable for inclusion in the evoked set. However, neither the relevant set nor the subvoked set have been widely embraced, because they are not as well conceptually delineated as Narayana and Markin's (1975) notions of inert set and reject or inept set.

Narayana and Markin (1975) acknowledge that their conceptualization is very similar to the trichotomy of acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment proposed in the context of attitude change by Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall (1965). The inert set is composed of destinations that individuals are aware of, but towards which they are disinterested. They have neither a positive nor a negative predisposition toward these destinations, and the lack of affect toward them causes them to be excluded from the initial consideration set. The reject or inept set is comprised of destinations that have been rejected from purchase consideration because they are perceived negatively. The negative perception may be the result of either an unpleasant personal experience or negative feedback from external sources.

A refinement of the Narayana and Markin (1975) extension was proposed by Brisoux and Laroche (1980) and Church, Laroche, and Rosenblatt (1985). In the context of tourism, their work can be adapted
to suggest that the inert set could be subdivided into a foggy and a hold set. The *foggy set* is comprised of destinations for which individuals lack sufficient information to form a positive or negative evaluation. The *hold set* consists of destinations toward which the individual is indifferent, even though he or she is knowledgeable about it.

An individual may have a positive, negative, or neutral predisposition to destinations in the hold set, but remain indifferent toward them because of the particular context in which they are viewed. They may have a positive attitude toward a destination, but not include it in the consideration sets because it is not perceived to be optimum for meeting the specific motives which are the underlying stimulus for this particular vacation; no one in the reference group has been to it, so it is perceived as being too high risk; or situational constraints make it unattainable (e.g., the price is too high, or it takes too long to get there). Conversely, an individual may have a somewhat negative attitude toward a destination in the hold set, but may not reject it because its price is very low. Finally, an individual may be truly neutral toward some destinations and consequently place them in the hold set. They are judged not to possess attributes that are equal to those of destinations included in the consideration sets (Brisoux and Laroche 1980).

The third stage in the decision process is to select a final destination from the late consideration set. Spiggle and Sewall (1987) have suggested that the outcome is strongly influenced by whether a destination falls within an individual's action, rather than inaction, set, and his or her interaction, rather than quiet set (Figure 1).

The *inaction set* of destinations are those in the late consideration set on which no further information is sought. The *action set* is composed of all destinations toward which a potential tourist contacts the destination's marketers or their representative (e.g., travel agents). Such action involves the investment of effort and resources. The bigger this investment, the more likely it is that an individual will make a commitment to the destination. Support for this notion is suggested by the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), contrast and assimilation theories (Anderson 1973), and attribution theory (Calder 1979).

The *interaction set* is a subset of the action set. It includes all destinations to which potential tourists permit themselves to be exposed to a representative who can engage them in personally selling a destination. Destinations in the interaction set have an opportunity to "sell" that is not shared by other destinations included in the action set, because they are able to use the persuasiveness of personal selling.

Destinations in an individual's action and especially interaction sets have an opportunity to overcome many of the barriers of communication and inertia. Thus, they have a greatly increased probability of being chosen among those in the late consideration set:

[Destinations] included in the action and interaction sets are able to communicate with consumers by more persuasive means, such as printed promotional materials (produced for serious prospects) and personal selling, than for those that remain merely in the evoked
set. These means give the [destination marketer] more control in
overcoming the barriers that create selective perceptions than is possi-
ble with advertising and other means used by marketers to communi-
cate with potential customers who have not been identified as pros-
psects (Spiggle and Sewall 1987:101).

Destinations on which further information is sought without any per-
sonal interaction with a representative of the destination are in the quiet
set (Figure 1). Spiggle and Sewall (1987:101) observe “The inaction
and quiet sets are similar in that consumers originally considered the
[destinations] positively but failed to choose them.”

The serrated lines on Figure 1 indicate that as individuals reduce
the number of alternatives and make transitions from one choice set to
the next, many destinations are rejected. In moving from the initial
consideration set to the late consideration set, discarded destinations
may enter the reject set if feedback from the initial search process was
negative, or the hold set if the feedback led to feelings of ambivalence.
In the more thorough search process that characterizes the transition
from late consideration set to final selection, destinations may be as-
signed to the reject or hold sets at all three transition points (Figure 1).
This may occur when the evaluation of destinations that were in the
late consideration, action, or interaction sets changes from positive to
negative or ambivalence.

Destinations that are discarded after being included in the initial
consideration set are conceptually different from those assigned to one
of the excluded sets at the outset: “The latter lack the opportunity to
persuade the consumer pursuing a particular purchase task to choose
them. The former have opportunities, but create negative evaluations,
even though consumers who purchase elsewhere actively considered
them” (Spiggle and Sewall 1987:101).

The choice set structure framework in Figure 1 reflects a rational
approach to decision making that is characteristic of high-involvement
decisions. However, the linearity of the progression from Stage 1 to
Stage 3 assumes that situational factors remain reasonably constant
throughout the time period of the decision process. Belk (1974:157)
defined situational factors as “all those factors particular to a time
and place of observation which do not follow from a knowledge of per-
sonal [intra-individual] and stimulus [choice alternative] attributes,
and which have a demonstrable and systematic effect on current
behavior.”

Given that the external environment is dynamic, there will be occa-
sions when the linear progression is disrupted, causing previous choice
set decisions to be reviewed, and perhaps revised, in response to a
substantial new situational factor that has emerged. For example, a
decision to visit Yosemite National Park may be revised and another
alternative selected if major forest fires were to occur there. Alterna-
tively, the sudden availability of discounted airfares, which were unan-
ticipated when earlier choice sets were formulated and evaluated, may
cause some destinations that were discarded at an earlier stage to be-
come attractive alternatives.
OPERATIONALIZATION OF SETS

The sets shown in Figure 1 are conceptualized as being exhaustive and mutually exclusive. However, the operational definitions assigned to them by different researchers have not been consistent, even within the consumer behavior literature. The definitional challenge is compounded when transitions are attempted to the field of tourism. This inconsistency makes comparison of results difficult and inhibits subsequent generalization. Standardized operationalization is a prerequisite to maximizing the contribution of choice sets to managerial effectiveness, to facilitating development of a cumulative body of knowledge in relation to choice sets, and to furthering understanding of their role in the tourist's overall decision process.

It seems likely that most researchers and managers will use questionnaires to solicit sets information and that the instruments will have to be self-explanatory. Thus, it is assumed in this section that there will be no opportunity to explain or elicit supplementary information by directly interacting on a person-to-person basis.

At Stage 1 (Figure 1), the initial consideration set of destinations is defined as places that a traveler is considering as possible vacation destinations within some time period. This was effectively operationalized by Um and Crompton (1990) by asking, "Please list the names of all places which you are considering as possible destinations for a pleasure trip this summer."

At Stage 2, the late consideration set of destinations is defined as places which a traveler is considering as probable destinations within some time period. If the study is longitudinal, so that information is being solicited from the same sample that provided the Stage 1 list, then the operationalization used by Um and Crompton (1990) is appropriate: "Please list the names of all places which you are still considering as potential destinations for a pleasure trip this summer." Their respondents were asked the Stage 1 question in early February and the Stage 2 question in mid-May. When the sample's mean set sizes from both stages were compared, the Stage 2 mean was significantly lower (.002 level), demonstrating the existence of a funneling process. If a cross-sectional design is used, so Stage 1 responses are not available, then an alternative operationalization for the late consideration set, which was successfully used by Ankormah (1991), is, "Name the places you will definitely consider visiting on your next vacation."

The early and late consideration sets can be operationalized using the open-ended question format cited in the previous three paragraphs, because the number of alternatives that individuals consider is relatively small. Indeed, a major conclusion of the empirical work on choice sets undertaken in tourism is that for any given vacation, potential tourists are likely to consider no more than an average of four destinations in their late consideration set (Bronner and de Hoog 1985; Thompson and Cooper 1979; Um and Crompton 1990; Woodside, Ronkainen and Reid 1977; Woodside and Sherrell 1977). In contrast, the number of places that may be assigned to the inert or inept sets could be prodigious. For meaningful responses to be solicited for these
sets, qualifying parameters have to be integrated into the operationalization that delineate, more tightly define, and effectively reduce the number of possible alternatives. These parameters can be introduced into the open-ended formats and be descriptive, numerical, or both. Alternatively, a closed list format can be adopted.

Fakeye (1989) used a descriptive qualifier by delineating his focus as the long-stay winter visitor market. By requiring respondents to think within that parameter, the number of potential destination options in the inert and inept sets was reduced. The alternative open-ended qualifier approach is to use a numerical parameter to limit the alternatives. For example, Ankomah (1991) operationalized the inert set by requesting respondents to “List five places you would definitely not consider visiting.” The descriptive and numerical qualifiers could be combined to further narrow the parameters: “List five places where people go for a long stay in the winter, that you would definitely not consider visiting.”

The closed list format alternative restricts the universe of alternative destinations that is given to respondents. This approach is appropriate in situations where a particular destination has a clearly defined set of known destinations with whom it is in competition. A destination can assess how it is positioned relative to competitors in potential tourists’ minds, by presenting respondents with the defined list of alternatives and asking them to assign the alternatives to choice sets on the basis of the operational definitions offered in this article.

The inert set conceptually can be subdivided into foggy and hold sets. The foggy set consists of destinations toward which respondents “do not feel confident enough to be able to emit a judgment” (Brisoux and Laroche 1980:112), because they lack sufficient knowledge about them. They can be operationalized in the same ways as the inept set. With the use of the same descriptor and numerical qualifiers, for example, respondents could be asked, “There are some places people are aware of that they might consider visiting if they had more information about them. List five places you have never visited, but which you might consider visiting for a long stay in the winter, if you had more information about them.”

The hold set consists of destinations toward which individuals are indifferent, even though they are knowledgeable about them. An operational definition is, “Are there any destinations towards which you feel neither positive nor negative about visiting, even though you feel you know quite a lot about them.” Again, this operationalization is not likely to be useful; it is an unqualified open-ended format because of the very large number of destinations likely to be cited. Its usefulness is likely to be dependent on the inclusion of descriptive or numerical qualifiers, or the use of a closed list format.

The two subsets of the inept set (Figure 1) could be operationalized by asking respondents: “Was your reason for definitely not considering each place a result of an unpleasant personal experience or negative feedback from other sources?” If further probing was thought likely to be useful, then supplementary open-ended questions, asking respondents to further explain their answer, could be incorporated.
The probability of being the final selection is likely to be substantially enhanced if a destination is in the action rather than the inaction set (Figure 1). Spiggle and Sewall (1987) point out that merely considering a destination is a cognitive process that entails no costs to an individual, but expenditure of effort and resources to find out more about a destination reflects a different level of commitment. The action set is comprised of those destinations in the late consideration set for which an effort was made to acquire further information. After deriving the late consideration set by asking respondents to name five places they would definitely consider visiting in their next vacation, Ankomah (1991) operationalized which of them qualified for the action set by asking in an adjacent column a yes/no question: “Have you sought information on this place, for example, from friends, relatives, chambers of commerce, or other sources.”

The interaction set can be operationalized by using another yes/no question with those who responded affirmatively to the action set question: “When acquiring this additional information, did you speak either directly or by telephone with representatives of the destination, for example, individuals at chambers of commerce, tourist information agencies, or resorts?” Destinations for which the response to this question is negative would be assigned to the quiet set.

CONCLUSIONS

Recognition of the choice sets structure has implications for those concerned with understanding tourists' behavior and forecasting demand. The most widely accepted model of consumer decision making for nonroutinized purchases is usually presented as a five-stage process: problem recognition, search, evaluation, purchase, and postpurchase evaluation. Authors may present the stages using slightly different names, but this model is well accepted (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1985).

Acceptance of the choice sets structure recognizes there is an initial active search to reduce the number of alternative destinations in the initial consideration set to a smaller number of destinations that constitute the late consideration set. This approach then recognizes that a second search is undertaken to select a final destination from the late consideration set. Le Blanc (1989) pointed out that this two-phase search process suggests that the five-stage model should be expanded to a six-stage model, to accommodate the notion of choice sets. The core of this six-stage model (stages 3-5) consists of the three central stages that, it is agreed in the tourism literature, constitute the core of the choice process used by potential tourists (Thompson and Cooper 1979; Um and Crompton 1990; Woodside and Lyonski 1989; Woodside and Sherrell 1977).

In the context of tourism the six stages of the tourist's destination selection decision process are: problem recognition, passive internal search, formulation of an initial consideration set, active external search to evaluate destinations in the initial consideration set leading
to formulation of a late consideration set, active external search to evaluate destinations in the late consideration set leading to selection of a destination, and postpurchase evaluation. A number of process related implications emerge from recognition of this six-stage model. A key implication revolves around whether the process used to formulate the late consideration set of destinations from the early consideration set is similar to that used to make a final choice from the late set. Le Blanc (1989) offered empirical evidence that indicated the processes were different. He concluded that decision models based on the assumption that only one process is used in selecting a final destination are likely to have low predictive accuracy.

Given that there are differences in processes at each stage, there are three secondary questions to be addressed that have implications for the types of information that are likely to be effective in influencing individuals at each stage. First, are the criteria used to evaluate destination alternatives different at each stage? The evidence presented by Um and Crompton (1992) suggests they are. Second, are the sources and types of information sought and used to assist in making these evaluations different? The general destination choice models specify that they are (Moutinho 1986; Um and Crompton 1990; Woodside and Lyonski 1989). They show the influence of passive information decreasing and the influence of active information search increasing as the decision process progresses. Third, are the decision rules used to discard alternatives at each stage different? No work has been reported on this in tourism. There is a reasonably substantial empirical literature that addresses this issue in consumer behavior, but it is characterized by contradictory findings and the lack of a discernable pattern.

The choice sets concept directs that awareness of a place as a possible vacation destination is a necessary but insufficient condition for assuring that tourists visit it. Successful marketing implies having the destination included first in the initial consideration set, and then in the late consideration set, rather than in one of the excluded sets. If the destination is not in the initial consideration set of a large proportion of a target market, it suggests an intensive advertising campaign is needed. If it is in the inert set, a promotional strategy such as comparative advertising may be effective. If it is in the late consideration set, but not the action set, then offering an incentive for potential tourists to contact the destination’s representatives may be a useful strategy. Generally, if a destination disappears from the selection track late in the process, then the problem is likely to be with the personal follow-up procedures rather than with promotion. For example, if prominent discarding occurs at the interaction set transition point, then attention needs to be directed at the destination’s sales personnel or the travel agents who serve as their representatives.

Woodside and Sherrell point out that the use of choice sets is likely to produce marketing implications unlikely to be seen from a general question such as asking, “What places are you considering for your vacation next year?”:

Developing comparative advertising messages may be inferred from the identification of a major competitive vacation destination in the
traveler's evoked set. The need to improve destination facilities and services may be pinpointed by learning why many travelers locate a destination in the inept set. Direct action promotional programs may be inferred for the vacation destination often found in a traveler's evoked set and consequently not visited. The need to build awareness and positive attitudes using a public relations program may be recognized if the vacation destination is found often in the traveler's inert set (1977:18).

As the process evolves, tourists eliminate destinations that were in their initial consideration set. If a discarded destination is assigned to the reject rather than the inert set, it is important to find this out and to discover the reasons for the initial positive predisposition becoming negative. Once it is in the reject set, it is likely to be excluded from future initial consideration sets, unless reasons for the negativism can be identified and their cause addressed.

Using a survey approach, marketing managers can identify what percentage of a target market is in each choice set. They can also identify the characteristics of the people in each choice set using geographic, sociodemographic, or behavioral descriptors to see whether it is possible to define market segments by their choice set patterns.

In addition to identifying the percentage in each set, marketers want to know how successful they are in transforming people in each set into visitors to their destination. For this purpose, Spiggle and Sewall (1987) have suggested four indices that can be adopted so destinations can formulate estimates of the probability that a destination and its competitors can transform given stages of the choice set structure into marketing share. The four indices may be termed the initial consideration index, the late consideration index, the action index, and the interaction index.

The initial consideration index is computed as the number of individuals in a target market who visited a destination, divided by the number in the target market who were considering it as a possible destination for a trip within the next year, multiplied by 100. This measures the extent to which a destination and its competition are able to translate presence in the initial consideration set into actual visitation. It can be interpreted as an estimate of the probability that a destination included in the initial consideration set could be selected as the final choice.

The late consideration index is computed as the number of individuals in a target market who visited a destination, divided by the number in the target market who were considering it as a probable destination for a trip within the next year, multiplied by 100. This measures the extent to which a destination and its competitors are able to translate presence in the late consideration set into actual visitation. It estimates the probability that a destination in the late consideration set will actually be visited.

The action index is computed as the number of individuals in a target market who visited a destination, divided by the number in the target market who actually contacted the destination's marketers or their representatives (e.g., travel agents), multiplied by 100. This measures the extent to which a destination and its competitors are able to convince
individuals who contact it or its representatives to actually visit it. The
index estimates the probability that a sale will be made to individuals
who included the destination in their action sets.

The interaction index is computed as the number of individuals in a
target market who visited a destination, divided by the number in the
target market who were exposed to a representative who engaged them
in personally selling a destination, multiplied by 100. This is an esti-
mate of the probability that individuals who talked with a representa-
tive will select a destination as their final choice.

Spiggle and Sewall (1987) assert that combining the percentage of
visitors who include a destination in their choice sets, with the pattern
of scores across the indices, can suggest the points at which a destina-
tion can allocate resources more effectively to overcome weaknesses
and attain marketing objectives. This approach can be used to discuss
how effective a destination is compared to its competitors at various
transition points in the decision process and to develop performance
objectives for improvement.

The choice set structure is dynamic. Both the size of the sets and
their constituent destinations will vary across both consumers and spe-
cific contexts (Dommermuth 1965; May and Homans 1977; Punj and
Staelin 1983). Further, the assignment of a destination by an individ-
ual to a choice set is temporal and likely to change over time. For
example, given a different set of circumstances, destinations included
in the inert set may shift into the initial consideration set or be retained
at the later transition points in the structure at which they were dis-
carded. Changes in the benefits offered at a destination, in price, in
ease of access to it, or in its promotional campaign, may all be effective
in stimulating this shift. Alternatively, internal changes in the individ-
ual's underlying motives for taking a vacation may provide the neces-
sary different circumstance. Because the consideration sets consist of a
restricted number of destinations, the movement of a new destination
into those sets suggests that a compensatory movement may occur,
shifting a destination currently in the consideration sets into one of the
exclusion sets.

The choice structure taxonomy is not an explanatory model, because
it does not explain the roles of internal and external forces that shape
the choices. Rather, it is an analytical tool that destinations can use to
ascertain their relative strengths and weaknesses at different transition
points in the destination selection process (Spiggle and Sewall 1987).
This should facilitate a more effective allocation of their resources.

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