

in Travel and Tourism

Abraham Pizam Yoel Mansfeld Editors

Consumer Behavior in Travel and Tourism

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Abraham Pizam, PhD Yoel Mansfeld, PhD Editors



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Introduction

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The question of how people consume travel and tourism products has become a focal point in tourism research in the past two decades. Efforts to unveil the determinants that shape travel behavior stemmed not only from pure academic interest, but from practical business considerations as well. The evolving marketplace of the travel industry has realized that understanding travel behavior is imperative in today's highly competitive business environment. After all, in such circumstances the ability to compete effectively is highly correlated with the ability to tailor the travel product to tourists' needs, expectations, and desires. This mutual interest forms the raison d'etre for *Consumer Behavior in Travel and Tourism*.

In recent years, a growing number of published research works have improved our body of knowledge in this highly important domain. However, these scholarly studies are scattered in numerous journals and have never been incorporated into a single volume that summarizes all explored and, as yet, not fully explored issues in tourists' consumer behavior. The aim of this volume is twofold. First, it represents for the first time an attempt to explore, define, analyze, and evaluate the state of the art in this multifaceted phenomenon of consuming tourist and travel products. Second, it packages the various issues and aspects of consumer behavior in travel and tourism in the form of a textbook, to be used by both students and practitioners. Thus, each chapter includes learning objectives, main concept definitions, and review questions.

The book comprises five main sections. In search of improved approaches to marketing tourist products, Part I consists of a comprehensive discussion of the main factors that affect consumer behavior in travel and tourism. This discussion unveils, in a critical manner, the relationship between travel motivation, destination choice, and the consequent travel behavior. While evaluating these relationships, the chapter stresses the as-yet undiscovered issue of nonparticipants and their reluctance to travel.

Part II explores in greater detail the manner in which different consumers go through various decision-making processes that lead to consequent

destination choices and spatial behaviors. Using various case studies such as a ski destination choice or decisions to visit Disney World in Florida, the section defines the unique characteristics of the tourist product, followed by an analysis of the major factors and constraints that shape each stage in the decision-making process. Based on observations illustrating the "push" and "pull" factors as well as various constraints imposed on potential travelers, this section also makes some marketing recommendations. It suggests that to succeed in this highly competitive environment, the tourism industry must improve the level of compatibility between tourists' expectations and their actual travel experience.

Because tourism is an intangible product, and since there normally is a time lag between the purchase of this product and its actual consumption, travelers develop a cognitive image of the product they bought. Part III of this book demonstrates how this image is created, developed, and changed as the traveler moves from a decision-making stage to a traveler stage. It is suggested in this section that the changing image of a given destination and the evolving travel experiences can have a major effect on travelers' satisfaction levels. Today, tourism practitioners and destination managers have at their disposal a variety of research techniques that enable them to measure the gap between expected and actual travel experience. Thus, one can evaluate the extent to which the quality of a given tourist product meets customer expectations and from this find ways to constantly improve it.

The availability of sophisticated research techniques aimed at understanding destination choice and tourists' spatial behaviors is imperative in a growing competitive business environment. Part IV discusses some selected research tools and evaluates the marketing implications of using qualitative and/or quantitative research techniques.

Finally, Part V, which concludes this book, examines the relationships between consumers' characteristics and their behavior as tourists. The section portrays possible environmental, socioeconomic, cultural, and/or demographic influences on how potential tourists select from among travel alternatives, choose their preferred destination, and behave while on site. It shows that consumer behavior in travel and tourism is shaped, after all, by both individual and environmental factors. We hope that after reading this book, students, practitioners, and fellow researchers will be better equipped to detect and analyze the relative roles of these two major types of behavioral determinants.

Consumer Behavior in Travel and Tourism would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of our colleagues who contributed their valuable academic and industrial experience in this field. We

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would like to thank all of them—those who wrote their chapters specifically for this book and those who kindly allowed us to republish their outstanding research findings and theoretical developments. Special thanks go to Charles Goeldner, editor of the Journal of Travel Research, who gave us permission to use some articles that were previously published in his journal. We would also like to express our gratitude to the many colleagues and practitioners who strongly supported our initiative to edit this volume. The evident lack of such a textbook deterred many of them from teaching this highly practical topic as a full-fledged course. We believe that with this book, that opportunity can be realized. We are also grateful to the Research Authority of the University of Haifa, which financially supported the production of this book. Finally, a word of appreciation for three special women: Olga Sagi, who was responsible for the English editing, Genoveba Breitstein, who was responsible for typing and arranging the book according to the publisher's requirements, and Shoshi Mansfeld, who (re)produced all the graphic work for this book. By extending their professional skills they have contributed immensely to the successful production of this book.