Consumer Behavior in Travel and Tourism
Consumer Behavior in Travel and Tourism

Abraham Pizam, PhD
Yoel Mansfeld, PhD
Editors
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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Abraham Pizam, PhD, is Professor of Tourism Management in the Department of Hospitality Management and Director of the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Previously, he served as Director of Graduate Programs in the Department of Hotel, Restaurant, and Travel Administration at the University of Massachusetts. Widely known in the field of hospitality and tourism management, Dr. Pizam has conducted several international research projects, and served as a consultant in more than thirty countries. He has held various academic positions in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Israel, and Switzerland. In addition, Dr. Pizam is the author of more than 100 scientific publications and four books and is on the editorial boards of ten academic journals in his field.

Yoel Mansfeld, PhD, is Chair of the Center for Tourism, Pilgrimage, and Recreation Research and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography at the University of Haifa. He is the author of more than twenty refereed publications and numerous technical reports, and serves on the editorial boards of several journals.
Contributors

John L. Crompton is Professor of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences in the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station.

John C. Crotts is Associate Professor and Director of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program in the School of Business and Economics, College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina.

Alain Decrop is a Research Assistant in the Department of Business Administration, University of Namur, Belgium.

Maureen F. Devitt is with The Cadmus Group, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Ngaire Douglas is Senior Lecturer and Director of Studies in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW, Australia.

Norman Douglas is Director of Research Consultancy, Pacific Profiles, Australia.

Gordon Ewing is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Jaishankar Ganesh is Assistant Professor of Marketing, Department of Marketing, College of Business Administration, University of Central Florida, Orlando.

Charles E. Gengler is Associate Professor in the Department of Marketing, School of Business at Baruch College, City University of New York, New York.

Peter Gillett is Professor of Marketing, Department of Marketing, College of Business Administration, University of Central Florida, Orlando.

Jurgen Gnoth is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Marketing, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Wolfgang Haider is Assistant Professor in the School of Resource and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada.
Monica Hanefors is Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Travel/Social Anthropology, School of Transportation and Society, Darlarna University College, Borlänge, Sweden.

Douglass K. Hawes is a retired Professor who previously taught at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.

J. S. Perry Hobson is Senior Lecturer in Marketing, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW, Australia.

Simon Hudson is Senior Lecturer in the School of Service Management, University of Brighton, Eastbourne, United Kingdom.

Rajshikhar G. Javalgi is Professor of Services Marketing, James J. Nance College of Business Administration, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio.

John M. Jenkins is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Leisure and Tourism Studies at the University of Newcastle, Callaghan, Newcastle, NSW, Australia.

Bharath M. Josiam is Associate Professor in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Biljana Juric is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Marketing, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

David B. Klenosky is Assistant Professor in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Leisure Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Robert Lawson is Professor of Marketing at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Michael Luckett is Assistant Professor of Marketing, Department of Marketing, College of Business Administration, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Lena Larsson Mossberg is Senior Lecturer in Marketing, School of Economics and Commercial Law, Göteborg University, Göteborg, Sweden.

Michael S. Mulvey is Assistant Professor in the Department of Marketing, School of Business, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Catherine M. Nichols is with the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

S. R. Rao is Executive Director of Academic Programs and Associate Professor of Marketing, James J. Nance College of Business Administration, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio.
**Contributors**

**Chris Ryan** is Editor in Chief, *Tourism Management*, and Professor in the Tourism Program, Center for Management Studies, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

**David J. Snepenger** is Associate Professor of Marketing in the College of Business, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

**Silvia Sussmann** is Senior Lecturer in Management Computing, School of Management Studies for the Service Sector, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom.

**Edward G. Thomas** is Professor of Marketing in the James J. Nance College of Business Administration, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio.

**Maree Thyne** is a Research Fellow working on a tourism research program at Otago University that is funded by the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

**Timothy J. Tyrrell** is Professor of Tourism Economics, Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, University of Rhode Island, Kingston.

**Seoho Um** is Associate Professor in the Department of Tourism and Recreation, Kyonggi University, E-We-Dong, South Korea.

**Arzu Ünel** has recently completed an MSc in Tourism Marketing at the University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom.

**David J. Walmsley** is Professor of Geography and Planning, School of Geography, Planning, Archaeology, and Palaeoanthropology, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia.

**Tracy Young** is a Research Fellow working on a tourism research program at Otago University that is funded by the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science, and Technology, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.
Introduction

Abraham Pizam
Yoel Mansfeld

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
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.