Abstract

Travel and tourism is an extremely important sector in all advanced and most developing countries. The travel and tourism behaviour of individuals and families can be quite complex, with a range of high-involvement decisions to be made. Many scholars in travel and tourism have therefore conducted a range of research and developed theoretical models to understand, explain and predict travel and tourism behaviour incorporating many disciplinary perspectives.

This thesis attempts, firstly, to ascertain the effects of travel constraints (macrosystem variables) on dimensions of travel choice, secondly, to investigate the effects of microsystem variables including activities, interests and opinions (AIOs), lifestyle, past and intended household purchases, other demographics, and travel motivation on travel preference, travel intention and travel choice while holding macrosystem variables constant, and lastly, to conduct quantitative research on the qualitative finding of Woodside et al. (2007) and provide significant increased understanding of travel choices and behaviour.

This thesis reviews comprehensive models of both consumer decision making and complex travel choice behaviour. The thesis describes how the leisure constraints model, ecological system theory, and folk theory of mind and behaviour can help to understand travel behaviour. A wide range of antecedents of travel behaviour is summarized, such as, age; income; life stage; lifestyle; activities, interests, and opinions (AIOs); and motivation for travel are important explanatory variables and highlighted the usefulness and explanatory power of these variables in predicting travel behaviour.

Past research on consumer decision-making and complex travel choice behaviour shows the importance of macrosystem and microsystem influences and constraints in understanding consumer travel needs, desires and the decision process. There is a lack of published empirical evidence which systematically studies the impact of leisure and travel constraints. Additionally, all of these variables effectively work as a market segmentation tool for tourism marketing strategy.

The conceptual model outlines the relationship between macrosystem variables (age, income and life stage) and microsystem variables (AIOs, lifestyle groups, past and intended household purchases, other demographics, and motivation for travel) and travel preference, intention and choice. The constraining nature of demographic variables is shown as mediating the relationship between travel intentions and travel choice.

The thesis utilizes secondary data provided by the Roy Morgan Research Centre in Australia (RMRC) to test the hypotheses. A face-to-face questionnaire survey and a self-completion survey were collected across a wide range of products and services categories including travel and tourism during 2003 and 2004. The total sample size is 49,105 respondents and is representative of the Australian population aged 14 years and over. These data have not been previously utilized in an academic thesis.

Factor analysis using tetrachoric correlations was utilized to further refine variables measuring AIOs, activities, and past and intended home related expenditure. Binary logistic regression is used for H_1 to H_4. Binary logistic regression and point bi-serial correlation are used for H_5 to H_{14} and discriminant analysis is used for H_{15}.

The thesis provides support for the significant role of macro and microsystem travel constraints on the travel decision. Income, life stage and age plus the two way interactions significantly affect travel. These constraints operate differently for travel intention and travel choice and also act different for intrastate, interstate and overseas travel. Some destinations are less impacted by macro and microsystem constraints.

In the activities, interests and opinions (AIOs) analysis, there are commonalities and differences across the constraint groups and travel destinations. The findings identify the attitudinal determinants of behaviour where demographic travel constraints have been held constant. The study identifies significant activity factors and provides insight into why constrained respondents are less likely to travel. More active respondents plan and do travel. Some constrained respondents may limit the cost of these activities so that they can afford travel. Significant lifestyle groups also provide insight into why constrained respondents do travel. The findings of this thesis also support the usefulness of lifestyle information.

This study uses a two-stage analysis approach which is useful for linking demographics with AIOs and is consistent with the approach suggested by Dawley (2006). This study finds that both AIOs and demographics are significant in differentiating travelers from non-travellers holding travel constraints constant. The two-stage analytic approach used in this thesis also enhances the value of the lifestyle insights.

The research also provides insight into market segmentation in the travel and tourism sector and the implications for tourism marketing managers.