

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CORPORATE MEETING PLANNERS' PERSONALITY TRAITS

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ABSTRACT

This study is to determine the influence of personality on the novelty preference for corporate meeting destination choice. The Big-Five model of personality which consists of five traits namely openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism was employed to operationalise the personality construct. A total of 75 corporate meeting planners drawn from public listed service organisations were involved. The main method of data collection was questionnaire survey and multiple regression analysis was employed as the main statistical analysis. The results revealed that only openness (positively) and agreeableness (negatively) contributed significantly to the prediction of novelty preference for corporate meeting destination choice. This study, which also seeks to determine the relationships between some demographical variables and novelty preference, found that demographical information is not a good predictor of meeting destination choice. The main implication of this study is pertaining to the segmentation and targeting of the corporate meeting market. This study also helps in bridging the gap between tourism marketing and organisational research.

Keywords: *Corporate meeting destination; Novelty preference; Big-Five personality model.*

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk melihat pengaruh personaliti ke atas pilihan destinasi mesyuarat korporat berdasarkan kepada preferensi noveltinnya. Model

personaliti “Big-Five” yang terdiri daripada lima tret iaitu *openness*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *agreeableness* dan *neuroticism* digunakan untuk mengoperasikan konstruk personaliti. Sejumlah 75 orang perancang mesyuarat korporat yang dipilih daripada organisasi perkhidmatan yang tersenarai di bursa saham terlibat dalam kajian ini. Kaedah utama pengutipan data yang digunakan adalah survei dan analisis regresi berganda adalah merupakan analisis statistik utama dalam kajian ini. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa *openness* (secara positif) dan *agreeableness* (secara negatif) menyumbang secara yang signifikan kepada penentuan pilihan destinasi mesyuarat korporat berdasarkan kepada preferensi novelty. Implikasi utama kajian ini adalah ke atas pembentukan strategi segmentasi dan pemasaran pasaran mesyuarat korporat. Kajian ini juga membantu dalam merapatkan jurang antara penyelidikan pemasaran pelancongan dan penyelidikan organisasi.

Kata kunci: Destinasi mesyuarat korporat; Preferensi novelty; Model personaliti “Big-Five”.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry has played a significant role in contributing to the Malaysian development in terms of its economic and social aspects (Ahmad, Ariffin, & Chung, 2001). The meetings sector of the tourism industry today is one of the most competitive and lucrative of market segments (Crouch & Louviere, 2004; Weber & Chon, 2002). This lucrative meeting market that consists of two main sub-sectors (association meetings and corporate meetings), acts as a major revenue generator in the tourism and hospitality industry. The corporate market represents the majority of the events held, while the associations market accounts for the highest delegate numbers (Leask & Hood, 2001). The corporate groups tend to be less sensitive to price than other types of business. They spend more money per person within the selected meeting facility. Shure (1995) described the meeting market as a *red-hot* industry because of its enormous expenditures and direct impact on businesses in many industries. Despite this fact, relatively very little academic research has been conducted concerning the behaviour and decision process of the various components of this substantial market including the effects of destination setting or environment. The meeting service experience occurs in the context of an inanimate environment and all elements of physical evidence of a meeting space convey important information about the type and level of service anticipated and perceived (Weber & Chon, 2002).

However, compared to corporate meetings, the association meeting is gaining far more attention from the researchers (Choi & Boger, 1998; Go & Zhang, 1997; Oppermann, 1996; Weber, 2001). The reason is because as opposed to the corporate organisations, associations are claimed to be relatively flexible with respect to choosing their meeting destination while in the corporate sector, business locations and headquarters are claimed to commonly determine the selected meeting destination (Oppermann, 1996; Weber, 2001). Because the setting for much meeting activity is in major urban areas and the development of the industry is often regarded as a strategy for urban redevelopment, it is mainly discussed in the context of the city or urban tourism literature (Weber & Chon, 2002).

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

In general, corporate meetings are essentially driven by the needs of individual businesses (Weber & Chon, 2002). Most of the events will also incorporate a social aspect and may be seen as a reward to attendees in addition to the business objectives. McCabe, Poole, Weeks, and Leiper (2000) emphasised that, unlike other tourism areas, the chief activity of meetings is business rather than leisure. Yet business tourism could also involve a substantial leisure element (Davidson, 1994).

Even though the destination settings for corporate meetings are claimed to be generally conventional in nature (Oppermann, 1996; Weber, 2001), recent development has indicated that there is a growing interest among corporate organisations to hold their meetings in a less conventional or novel setting (Callan & Hoyes, 2000; Leask & Hood, 2001), either in unusual venues (facility-bound) or rural, second-tier or regional areas (destination-bound). This observation has led to the major issue that this research mainly attempts to address - "what are the factors that drive the choice of corporate meeting planners on meeting destination with respects to its novelty setting?"

Although several researchers (Callan & Hoyes, 2000; Leask & Hood, 2001) have recently investigated the characteristics and the nature of novel meeting destination offerings, they did not explicitly explain the underlying behavioural reasons behind such decisions. Furthermore, most of the past academic research was only focused on two topical areas; the meeting industry's economic impacts and the criteria or attributes considered important in site selection (Ladkin, 2002). Dimanche and Havitz (1994) argued that novelty-seeking is one of the most important topical areas associated with the decision-making

process in tourism context that show great promise for better understanding the consumption of tourism. The development of rural, second-tier, or regional tourism associated with novel destinations can help to increase employment opportunities, to generate economic activities, as well as to provide a better environment in the rural areas (Lapping *et al.*, 1989; Luloff & Swanson, 1990; Middleton, 1982; Oppermann, 1996; World Tourism Organization, 1998). Novelty preference in this study is defined as the extent to which a corporate meeting planner prefers a destination setting that creates an unusual, unique, and exciting meeting travel experiences (adapted from TNS, 2004).

The novelty-seeking behaviour in relation to pleasure travel has been studied by several researchers in the past (Basala & Klenosky, 2001; Bello & Etzel, 1985; Lee & Crompton, 1992) while its significance has not yet been investigated in business travel, such as in the meeting market. Novelty-seeking is widely reported as a key travel motive (Crompton, 1979; Leiper, 1984) where people travel because they want to experience something new and different. Literature on organisational buying behaviour in general (Garrido-Samaniego & Gutierrez-Cillan, 2004; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1999; Webster & Wind, 1972) as well as in the context of tourism and hospitality (Clark & Knutson, 1995) argued that one of the most crucial factors that influence the organisational decision process is the individual or decision-maker factor. One of the most important factors that makes up for the individual factor is personality. There have been a few studies in tourism, which have attempted to determine if personality factors predict tourist behaviour. Overall, most of them have failed to accurately predict tourist behaviour (Jackson, White, & White, 2001). This is surprising given the industry's need to develop and to market person-specific products to the broad population.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

In this study, destination choice is anticipated to be explained by the personality of the decision-maker. According to Seta *et al.* (2000), human being differs from one another in a number of ways – the most important being their personality type. Based on trait theory, personality in this study is defined as a set of points falling along several behavioural dimensions, each corresponding to a trait, resulting in a unique profile different from that of other individuals (Pervin, 1989). A series of widely referred research on novelty travel behaviour by Plog (1974, 1990, 1991) indicated that the choice of travel destination is

influenced by the personality types of the travelers or the decision-makers. Callan and Hoyes (2000) conducted a survey to assess the service and facilities provided by an unusual or novel meeting venue in the United Kingdom. They stated that “innovation and greater creativity on the part of corporate buyers are trends that have been observed in the meeting market”.

A research conducted by Driver and Knopf (1977) on the relationships between personality, outdoor recreation, and its expected consequences indicated that personality is one of the major variables to influence a behavioural tendency and the direction, intensity, and persistence of the behaviour prompted by the tendency. Selected personality variables were found to be significantly related to the amount of participation in a preferred activity once the choice has been made. The study also revealed that personality affects the psychological meanings attached to the choice of a particular recreational activity. The flexibility-rigidity dimension based on the concept of adaptive behaviour is mainly employed to help explain the expected relationship between personality and novelty preference for destination choice.

In this study, the Five-Factor Model of personality or the so called the *Big Five* was employed to operationalise the construct. This framework was selected because it represents personality at the broadest level of abstraction (Gosling *et al.*, 2003), enjoys considerable support, and has become the most widely used or extensively researched model of personality (John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1999). The Big Five framework is a hierarchical model of personality traits with five factors, frequently labeled as extraversion (E), openness (O), neuroticism (N), conscientiousness (C), and agreeableness (A). The research model developed to guide this study is presented in the following Figure 1.

In this study, the findings from research streams associated with innovativeness, creativity, and information-seeking behaviour were drawn to help explain the possible relationships between personality and novelty preference for destination choice. Novelty-seeking behaviour has been investigated to some extent within the innovation context. The desire to seek out the new and different is conceptually indistinguishable from the construct of innovativeness (Hirschman, 1980).

Apart from that, the disciplines of personality psychology also share an essential commonality with creativity, which emphasises on the uniqueness of the individual. The essence of a creative person is the

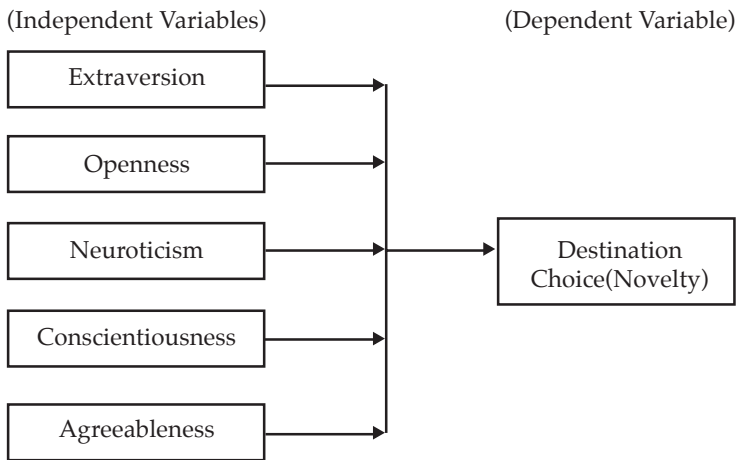


Figure 1
Research model

uniqueness of his or her idea and behaviour, whereas personality psychology is the study of what makes a person unique from others (Feist, 1998). The basic notion underlying the construct of novelty seeking appears to be that through some internal drive or motivating force the individual is activated to seek out novel information (Acker & McReynolds, 1967). Thus, an individual who expresses a desire to adopt a new idea, product, or practice is necessarily also expressing a desire for new or novel information (Hirschman, 1980).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The following are the two key questions and the related hypotheses developed for this study:

Research Question I: How does the personality of meeting planners relate to the novelty preferences for destination choice?

In organisational settings, people who are high on openness may have both a broader range and depth of experience, more of an appreciation of the merits of new ways of doing things, and the potential for improving and changing the status quo. Their appreciation for things that are novel and unique in conjunction with their greater sensitivity to and range of experience may cause them to come up with novel solutions to problems and creative ideas to improve on current functioning. Openness was found to be the most clearly apparent and highly correlated personality trait to creative individuals by many research (Fiest, 1998; George & Zhou, 2001; King, Walker, & Broyles, 1996).

Apart from that, the characteristics of the trait were also argued to be comparable to those of innovators from the innovation research point of view (Kirton, 1989; & Palmer, 1991). McCrae and Costa (1999) also argued that open individuals, who are imaginative, inventive, creative, and curious are not only inquisitive when faced with novel situations, but have a tendency to actually seek out new and varied experiences (McCrae & Costa, 1999). From the perspective of information-seeking behaviour, openness was related to critical information judgment as well as preference for thought-provoking documents (Heinstrom, 2003). This description indicated that openness is positively associated with adaptive behaviours. Open individuals are also unconventional and prepared to question authorities (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In contrast, individuals who are low in openness may find more comfort in the status quo and in following tried and true ways of doing things that reduce uncertainty (George & Zhou, 2001). Burger (2000) stated that those people low in openness tend to be more conventional and prefer the familiar rather than something new. The study also showed that a conservative (low in openness), who wants things to remain as they always have, prefer familiarity to novelty in information retrieval. Therefore, it is hypothesised in this study that:

Hypothesis 1(a): Openness is positively correlated with novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Hypothesis 1(b): Openness contributes positively to the prediction of novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Extraversion summarises traits related to activity and energy, dominance, sociability, expressiveness, and positive emotions. People who exhibit high extraversion trait tend to be more physically and verbally active. Their high desire for activity and excitement-seeking (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998) may cause them to end up with challenging and unusual options in their daily decisions. On the other hand, people who exhibit low extraversion, or the introverts, are described as being more independent, reserved, and like to be alone. Based on their characteristics, these people are expected for not realising the importance of socialisation aspect and this would include the role environment plays in the social interaction process. The introverts basically prefer activities that are not tiring and more convenient.

Creative people are found to be more autonomous, self-confident, self-accepting, ambitious, dominant, and impulsive (King *et al.*, 1996). These descriptions suggest that extraversion would be positively related to creativity. From the information-seeking perspective, these energetic and outgoing people want to find much information without being

very systematic in their quest. They also welcome discussions or documents which bring new perspectives to their subject area (Heinstrom, 2003). Their appreciation for new knowledge may lead them to come up with new or novel solutions to problems and change the current form of functioning. Based on the above, it is logical to anticipate that:

Hypothesis 2(a): Extraversion is positively correlated with novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Hypothesis 2(b): Extraversion contributes positively to the prediction of novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Neuroticism contrast emotional stability with a broad range of negative affects, including anxiety, sadness, irritability, and nervous tension (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). Taggar and Irving (2004) found a negative relationship between neuroticism and adaptive behaviour. A study on the flexibility-rigidity of personality traits by Bakht (1992) also revealed that rigidity was positively correlated with neuroticism. There is a notion that creativity ought to relate to superior coping and heightened well being (Anthony, 1987). For instance, Golf (1993) reported a positive relation between creativity and life satisfaction. According to Burger (2000), individuals with low neuroticism tend to be calm, well-adjusted, and not prone to maladaptive emotional reactions. Based on these descriptions, less neurotic people are expected to be more open to new and unique solutions.

The problems of emotional regulation faced by individuals with high neuroticism can diminish the ability to think clearly and make decisions. People with high level of neuroticism are more vulnerable to the strain of many conflicting messages and, accordingly prefer less confusing information. Previous research has shown that the more secure the people are, the more active in information seeking and the more able to accept new information (Miculincer, 1997). Self-reliance and confidence are linked to an inner security which makes novelty appear less threatening. Kuhithau (1993) reported that state of anxiety can be linked to a preference for familiar document content or documents which confirm previous ideas. Based on the above discussion, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 3(a): Neuroticism is negatively correlated with novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Hypothesis 3(b): Neuroticism contributes negatively to the prediction of novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Conscientiousness describes socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task and goal-directed behaviour. The more conscientious a person is, the more competent, dutiful, orderly, responsible, and thorough he or she is (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). Conscientiousness was shown to have positive relationship with adaptability behaviour (Taggar & Irving, 2004). The researchers argued that all facets of conscientiousness were crucial for adaptive behaviour to take place. Prior research also suggested that conscientiousness is consistently beneficial in the work setting (George & Zhou, 2001; Mount & Barrick, 1995). Conscientiousness was also shown to be positively related to creativity (King *et al.*, 1996). The researchers argued that persistence and hard work are important for the successful production of creative tasks. Furthermore, conscientious work habits may also allow less talented individuals to produce creatively.

Conscientiousness was also found to be related to preference to acquire new ideas from retrieval information in the context of information-seeking behaviour (Heinstrom, 2003) which indirectly shows that there is a positive link between conscientiousness and adaptive behaviour. Conscientious is related to preference of thought-provoking documents instead of documents which confirm previous ideas and use of effort in information seeking. Determination in personality may be a decisive factor in material preference, as introduction to new ideas always requires analysis and reconsideration. Therefore, it is anticipated in this study that:

Hypothesis 4(a): Conscientiousness is positively correlated with novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Hypothesis 4(b): Conscientiousness contributes positively to the prediction of novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

The six facets of agreeableness are straightforwardness, compliance, modesty, trust, tender-mindedness, and altruism (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). In other words, agreeable individuals are "eager to cooperate and avoid conflict" (McCrae & Costa, 1990). These descriptors indicated that agreeableness may lead to conformity. Their appreciation for conformity may cause them to follow the existing way of doing things to avoid associated risks. Therefore, it was not surprising that the agreeableness trait was shown to be negatively correlated with creative accomplishment (Cropley, 1990). From the innovation research stream, a non-significant connection was also found between the agreeableness personality trait and aiming to acquire new ideas (Kirton, 1989). Therefore, this study hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 5(a): Agreeableness is negatively correlated with novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Hypothesis 5(b): Agreeableness contributes negatively to the prediction of novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Research Question II: What is the most important personality trait in explaining novelty preferences for destination choice?

Findings of past research indicated that openness appears to be the most relevant dimension of the Big Five personality with adaptability (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003) as well as creativity (Fiest, 1998; George & Zhou, 2001; King *et al.*, 1996). All the six facet of openness (ideas, fantasies, aesthetics, feelings, values, and actions) as identified by Benet-Martinez and John (1998) are also found to be highly related to novelty-seeking behaviour. For instance, those with high scores in artistic interests love beauty, both in art and nature. They become easily involved and absorbed in artistic and natural events. It is anticipated in this study that:

Hypothesis 6: Openness is the most influential personality trait in explaining novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The population of this study is defined as internal corporate meeting planners employed by services/trading corporations listed on the main board of Bursa Malaysia and involved in the final decision of meeting destinations. Public listed corporations are chosen because of their relatively higher number of professional expertise, larger material and human resources, and good financial standing compared to smaller corporations (McAdam, 2000; Thong & Yap, 1995), which enable them to undertake innovative programmes (Gray *et al.*, 2003) including human resource practices. This study also focuses on service-based corporations because they are shown to be committed to effective management of human resource practices (Lovelock *et al.*, 2002) which covers corporate meetings.

A total of 32 corporations were found to have fulfilled all the requirements to be included in this study. To determine the estimated number of meeting planners per corporation, five of the corporations, each from different sectors (telecommunication, health, tourism, financial, and trading) were contacted by phone. On average, the

number of meeting planners for a single corporation is found to be five individuals. Therefore, the estimated size of the population for this study is 160 (32 X 5) meeting planners. Due to the difficulty in obtaining good responses from the organisational or managerial level respondents, only a total of 100 corporate meeting planners (from 20 corporations) or 62.5% of the total population were targeted for this study. The size of the sample was relatively higher than those of past research on corporate meeting planners in a similar setting. For example, the sample sizes in the study conducted by McCleary (1978) to determine the needs of corporate meeting planners was 15 while Callan and Hoyes (2000) used only 50 meeting planners to investigate the novel meeting destination consumption among corporate organisations.

Concentrating on a small and more specific population such as the large service corporations would increase the managerial value of a research for targeted marketing decisions rather than a wide population, but with a very low anticipated response rate. When the population is large, the sampling error is a function of sample size (Finn, Elliot-White, & Walton, 2000). When the population is small and sample comprises a significant proportion of that population, then the standard error can be adjusted to reflect this. Moriarty (1983) argued that because of the complexity of organisational buying decisions and the number of people involved, large-scale data collection efforts can be exceedingly time-consuming and costly.

The sampling process in this study consists of two stages. The first stage was pertaining to the selection of the 20 participating corporations followed by the identification of the five meeting planners from each corporation in the second stage. A simple random probability sampling using SPSS procedure was employed to select the 20 corporations from the sampling frame of 32 corporations listed under the services/trading counter in the Bursa Malaysia. Then, the five meeting planners representing each corporation were selected based on their substantial involvement in the decision-making process of meeting destinations within 2002 and 2003.

Data Collection Method

The data of this study was actually derived from a larger study focusing on the various determinants of novelty preference for meeting destination choice. Apart from personality, other independent variables incorporated in the original study were consumption value, organisational structure, as well as perceived risk and budget.

The data for this study was collected using mail questionnaires that were distributed to a cross section of organisations. In order to obtain the required sample size of 100 corporate meeting planners from 20 corporations, a larger amount of questionnaires were distributed. A total of 125 questionnaires were distributed to 25 randomly selected corporations from the sampling frame. The completed questionnaires were then collected and returned to the researcher by the appointed liaison officer at each corporation.

Measurements

Dependent Variable: Novelty Preference. An initial pool of items for the measurement of novelty preference was generated from available measures, extensive literature search, construct domains, and the context in which the measures were to be used. In addition, protocol analysis was employed to generate items that are more specific to the context of corporate meeting market. The protocol analysis technique involves placing a person in a decision-making situation and asking the person to verbalise everything he or she considers when making a decision. The technique is also a practical method considering the hectic schedule of corporate meeting planners to be pooled together such as in a focus group session.

A total of 25 items were generated after taking into account identical or equivalent items. The initial items were refined and edited for content validity by a group of three expert judges who are academicians with research interest in services and tourism. Under this procedure, three of these items were discarded from further analysis. The samples of the finalised 22 items used to measure novelty preference are presented in the appendix. The scale contains a series of bipolar items for the various properties of the construct. In this study, an even-numbered six-point scale was used in order to avoid the clustering of responses at the neutral point, which will turn out to make the result unreliable (Ling, 1998). Decades of psychological research also have shown that a six-point scale with three levels of agreement and three levels of disagreement works best for the assessment of psychological attributes.

The construct of destination choice (novelty preference) was measured by calculating the mean responses to all the items along a six-point scale, where 6 depicted a very strong novelty preference for meeting destination while 1 depicted a very weak novelty preference. The scale recorded an excellent Cronbach's reliability coefficient of 0.91.

Independent Variables: Big Five Personality. In this study, personality was measured by employing the scale of Big Five Inventory (BFI). The BFI which consists of five dimensions (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) and 44 items was developed by John, Donahue, and Kentke (1991). Eight items were used to measure extraversion. Both agreeableness and openness were measured using 10 items. Nine items were involved in the measurement of conscientiousness while seven items for neuroticism. The opposite adjectives of each item in the bipolar scale were shown in the parentheses. Samples of the items are presented in the appendix. The Cronbach's alphas for the scales were 0.92 (openness), 0.75 (extraversion), 0.87 (neuroticism), 0.84 (agreeableness), and 0.89 (conscientiousness).

Data Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis was performed to test hypotheses 1(a) through 5(a). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicates both the degree and the direction of the associations. Correlation analysis was also conducted among the five dimensions of personality to check on the multicollinearity.

A multiple regression analysis was performed to gauge the independent relations of the five personality traits to novelty preference. Specifically, the regression model was computed to test the hypotheses 1(b) through 5(b) as well as the final hypothesis (hypothesis 6). The independent variables in the regression model were the five personality traits; (1) extraversion, (2) openness, (3) neuroticism, (4) conscientiousness, and (5) agreeableness while the dependent variable was destination choice (novelty preference). To examine the independent effect of each independent variable on dependent variable, the statistical significance of the beta coefficients (from zero) were determined using a t-test. The null hypothesis was rejected if the significance level of the t value was less than 0.05. The sign of the beta coefficients indicate the direction of the relationships. Positive (negative) sign shows that there is a positive (negative) relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The value of the standardised regression coefficient shows the strength of the influence of each independent variable where the highest value indicates the most important independent variable.

Apart from the above, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to determine the degree of association between novelty preference and demographic variables such as age, education level and management

level. The independent sample t-test was conducted to test whether or not there were significant differences between males and females with regard to their means of novelty preferences for meeting destination.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

A total of 76 meeting planners from 17 corporations returned the surveys, representing a response rate of 60.8%. One of the returned questionnaires was eliminated as the respondent had systematically marked the scale's extreme points of the novelty preference. After eliminating the unusable response, 75 responses were coded and used for data analysis. Missing data were reduced as much as possible by checking all the questionnaires at time of collection. When any questions were found unanswered, it was immediately brought to the attention of the related respondents.

All respondents were confirmed to have been involved in the final decision of meeting destinations for their corporate meetings. Examination on the 17 participating corporations showed that the samples represented various types of service business entities covering entertainment, healthcare, education, transportation, telecommunication, advertising, insurance, and retailing.

Profile of the Respondents

The respondent's profiles are summarised in Table 1. The sample shows a balance combination between males and females. The female respondents represented a slightly higher percentage of the whole sample (53.3%) compared to the male respondents (46.7%). The majority of the respondents were middle-aged (i.e., 31-45 years) followed by those in the age group of 46 and above (30.7%). Approximately half the respondents (50.7%) were Malay, followed by Chinese and Indian with 37.3% and 12% respectively.

The completed sample was composed of well-educated individuals. The majority (72%) of them hold a bachelor's degree while the other 20% had completed postgraduate studies. For the position in the corporations, the largest percentage (46.7%) was those in top level management, as the respondents were those who have the final authority to make the decision regarding meeting destinations. About 38.7% or 29 of the respondents were in the middle management, while only 14.6% or 11 respondents were in the lower management level.

Table 1
Profiles of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics		N	Percentage %
Gender	Male	35	46.7
	Female	40	53.3
Age	30 and less	15	20.0
	31- 45	37	49.3
	46 and above	23	30.7
Ethnic	Malay	38	50.7
	Chinese	28	37.3
	Indian	09	12.0
EducationalLevel	Diploma	06	08.0
	Bachelor	54	72.0
	Postgraduate	15	20.0
Position	Top Management	35	46.7
	Middle Management	29	38.7
	Lower Management	11	14.6

Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis: Demographic Variables and Novelty Preference

The three demographic variables involved were age, educational level, and management level. Table 2 presents the result of the Pearson correlation analysis. The results indicated that all the three demographic variables were not significantly correlated with novelty preference for meeting destination choice ($p>0.1$).

Table 2
Result of Pearson Correlations - Demographic Variables and Novelty Preference

	Demographic Variables	Novelty
Age	Pearson Correlation (r) Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0050.967
Educational	Pearson Correlation (r)Level Sig. (2-tailed)	0.1060.364
Management	Pearson Correlation (r)Level Sig. (2-tailed)	0.1240.287

Results of t-test: Gender and Novelty Preference

Independent sample t-test was conducted to test whether or not there were significant differences between males and females with regard to their means of novelty preferences for meeting destination. The results showed that the t value was 0.37 and it was non-significant at the 0.1 level. Therefore, there were no significant mean differences between male and female with regard to their levels of novelty preferences for meeting destination choice. Table 3 summarises the output of the independent sample t-test.

Table 3
Result of Independent Sample t-test - Gender and Novelty Preference

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Male	35	3.7248	0.18873	0.370	0.712
Female	40	3.6382	0.14404		

Results of Hypotheses Testing: Hypotheses 1(a) – 5(a)

As presented in Table 4, the results of the Pearson correlation analysis showed that all five dimensions were significantly correlated with novelty preference for meeting destination choice at 0.05 level. With correlation coefficient of 0.52, openness was found to be positively correlated with novelty preference, supporting hypothesis 1(a). Furthermore, the strength of the association was also considered to be strong and highly significant at the 0.01 level. Extraversion was also showed to be positively correlated with novelty preference at 0.05 level, marginally supporting hypothesis 2(a). The correlation appeared to be at a quite low level as it recorded a coefficient of 0.32.

The results of the Pearson correlation also indicated that neuroticism was negatively correlated with novelty preference for destination choice at 0.05 level, marginally supporting hypothesis 3(a). With the coefficient value of -0.37, the strength of the association was moderately low. Apart from neuroticism, agreeableness was also found to be negatively correlated with novelty preference at the 0.01 level, highly supporting hypothesis 4(a). The correlation was considered to be strong ($r = -0.51$). Finally, as expected, a positive correlation emerged between conscientiousness and novelty preference, supporting hypothesis 5(a). With coefficient of 0.40, the strength of the association was found to be at a moderate level.

Table 4

Result of Pearson Correlations - Personality and Novelty Preference

Personality Traits		NoveltyPreference
Openness	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.520*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Extraversion	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.317**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation (r)	-0.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.032
Agreeableness	Pearson Correlation (r)	-0.409*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007
Conscientiousness	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.395**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018

* Significant at 0.01 level ** Significant at 0.05 level

Results of Hypothesis Testing: Hypotheses 1(b) through 5(b), and Hypothesis 6

The results of the multiple regression analysis is presented in Table 5. Overall, the regression equation was significant at 0.01 level ($F = 19.23$, $p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.45$). The resulting multicollinearity diagnostics also revealed that the VIF scores were all below 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a problem in this regression model. Furthermore, the correlation matrix among the five personality traits also indicated that the absolute values of the correlation coefficients were lower than the acceptable cut-off point of 0.8 (Benny & Feldman, 1985). Out of the five personality dimensions, only two (openness and agreeableness) were found to contribute significantly to the prediction of novelty preference for meeting destination choice. With $\beta = 0.47$ and $p = 0.000$, openness was strongly and positively related to novelty preference for meeting destination choice, significant at the 0.01 level.

On the other hand, agreeableness reported a standardised beta coefficient of -0.35 and $p = 0.005$, which exerted a strong negative effect on novelty preference for meeting destination choice, significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the results showed that only hypotheses 1(b) and 5(b) were supported in this study. With the highest value of beta coefficient, openness is the most influential personality trait in explaining novelty preference for meeting destination choice, supporting hypothesis 6.

Table 5
Result of Multiple Regression - Personality Dimensions and Novelty Preference

Independent Variables	Beta Coeff.	t	Sig.	VIF
Openness	.469*	4.845	.000	1.034
Neuroticism	-.076	-.493	.624	2.577
Conscientiousness	.180	1.268	.209	2.251
Agreeableness	-.353*	-2.929	.005	1.034
Extraversion	.250	1.602	.114	2.758
R:	.662			
R Square:	.448			

Dependent Variable: Novelty Preference

* Significant at 0.01 level

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the Pearson correlation conducted on the Big-five dimensions of personality traits showed that two of the dimensions (openness and agreeableness) were highly and significantly correlated, while the remaining were marginally and significantly correlated with novelty preference for destination choice. Furthermore, all the resulted relationships were also shown to be in the predicted directions. These findings implies that those people high in openness, extraversion, or conscientiousness prefer a more novel type of setting for their meeting destinations compared to those who score low in each of the three traits. In contrast, conventional or commonplace settings are preferred by those individuals who score high in neuroticism or agreeableness.

Interestingly, the results of the subsequent multiple regression showed that only two out of the five personality traits were significantly related to novelty preference for destination choice. Openness was found to be contributing significantly to the prediction of novelty preference at 0.01 level, highly supporting hypothesis 2(b). Apart from that, the results also revealed that openness is the most influential personality trait with regards to novelty preference, thus supporting hypothesis 6. This result is seems to be in agreement with the findings of previous research that reported open individuals are highly associated with interest for new ideas (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and varied experiences (McCrae, 1987).

Corporate meeting planners with high openness trait may have both a broader range and depth of experience, and more of an appreciation

of the merits of new ways of doing things. Therefore, the tendency for them to actually select a novel or unique destination setting for their meeting destinations is relatively higher than those meeting planners who are low in openness. Corporate meeting planners who are low in openness may find more comfort in status quo and therefore, would be more likely to end up with commonplace meeting every time they plan their corporate meeting events. Benet-Martinez and John (1998) contended that people with high openness have broad interests, are liberal, and like novelty.

Another significant finding is the inverse effect of the agreeableness trait on novelty preference. In other words, this means that agreeableness is highly associated with the choice of commonplace or conventional destination setting. This result seems to be in agreement with the common notion that agreeableness may lead to conformity and creative individuals tend to be less conforming (Guncer & Oral, 1993) and more autonomous (Perkins, 1993). In addition, the attributes of straightforwardness and compliance, which could lead to the selection of a more novel destination, are two of the main facets of agreeableness. Finally, the non-significant effects of the other three personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness showed that positive emotion, assertiveness, anxiety, hostility, deliberation, and self-discipline do not help in determining the novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

The findings of this study are of utmost importance to managers and administrators in the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly the meeting service providers or marketers. The information on the relationships between personality and novelty preference would help to enhance the understanding on the choice of corporate meeting destinations from the perspective of the decision-makers or meeting planners. These findings would help provide input in the development of targeted marketing programmes for the meeting venue suppliers, such as hotels, resorts, or purposely built meeting places. In order to promote a perceived novel destination as a meeting destination, the *shotgun approach* of marketing programme should be aimed at meeting planners with high openness trait. Further research is recommended to determine, more specifically, the meeting planners with high openness trait, as this study also revealed that demographic information is not a good predictor of novelty preference for corporate meeting destination choice. On the other hand, marketing programmes aimed at meeting planners with high agreeableness trait would help in increasing the possibility of a successful sale closing for the meeting venue supplier in a perceived commonplace destination.

The managerial implication of this study is primarily related to the development of market segmentation approach in the corporate meeting market. It is suggested that the Malaysian corporate meeting market is best segmented using a two-stage segmentation approach. The geographical base is the most suitable to be employed as the primary segmentation as different locations are associated with different levels of novelty. Under this segmentation, the meeting market will be divided into groups of corporate organisations that share the same geographic location. At the second stage, the market could be further sub-divided using a second segmentation which is suggested to be the personality of the meeting planners. The two dimensional personality profiles of *openness-agreeableness* is proposed to be employed at this stage as the two are found to be contributing significantly to the determination of novelty preference in this study. As openness is found to be positively related to novelty, it is expected to be associated with the segment of novelty-seekers while the negatively related trait of agreeableness is anticipated to describe the segment of novelty-avoiders.

SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

It would be fascinating to conduct a nationwide survey on meeting destination choice to understand the meeting industry from the perspective of meeting planners' personality in great detail. In this present study, the respondents were drawn only from those organisations located in the Klang Valley area. A comparative study between internal and independent corporate meeting planners or between services and manufacturing organisations could also be another interesting study to be carried out in the future. Extending this kind of research to a larger population would help ascertain the significant influences of the openness and agreeableness traits as well as the non-significant effects of the extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness on novelty preference for meeting destination choice.

Finally, it is concluded that all the five dimensions of the Big-five personality were found to be significantly correlated with novelty preference. However, the results of multiple regression revealed that only openness and agreeableness were significantly contributing to the prediction of novelty preference for meeting destination choice. The findings were interesting as it showed that openness was positively related to preference for a novel setting, while agreeableness was associated with preference for a more conventional destination. The

results of this study were important in providing valuable input for the formulation of the segmentation approach for the corporate meeting market.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE, NOVELTY PREFERENCE SCALE FOR MEETING DESTINATION

The destination (includes the geographical location as well as the meeting venue or facilities)

- 1) offers new things to the participants. (*offers common things to the participants*)
- 2) offers a standard form of meeting experience to the participants. (*offers a different meeting experience to the participants.*)*
- 3) is in great distance from our office locality. (*is in good distance from our office locality*)
- 4) is unusual for a corporate meeting. (*is common for a corporate meeting*)
- 5) is not built for a meeting purpose. (*is specifically built for a meeting purpose*)

SAMPLE, BIG-FIVE INVENTORY (BFI) SCALE

I see myself as someone who.....

- 1) is outgoing, sociable. (*is self-contained, unsociable*)
 - 2) likes to cooperate with others. (*is uncooperative*)
 - 3) is relaxed, handles stress well. (*is distress, emotional*)
 - 4) is original, comes up with new ideas. (*is closed-mindedness*)
 - 5) prefers work that is routine. (*prefers work that is dynamic*)
-