WHY PEOPLE TRAVEL? EXAMINING PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF TOURISM

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

It has been demonstrated that people often feel happier, healthier, and more relaxed after a vacation. However, there is still lack of research on how people perceive the benefits of travel and how these perceptions influence their travel behavior. Thus, the primary purpose of this research was to examine the effects of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior based on the model of attitude importance.

Since existing scales of tourism benefits failed to incorporate some important items or factors, particularly the health benefits of tourism, this dissertation involved three online panel surveys, including: (1) a preliminary study (n=566) to elicit new benefit items, (2) a pilot study (n=434) to trim down the number of items, and (3) a main survey (n=559) to finalize the scale. As a result, several items associated with health benefits were elicited from the preliminary study; in the later stages of scale development, these items were identified and validated as a convergent dimension of perceived health benefits.

Further, several hypotheses pertaining to the effect of perceived tourism benefits and the applicability of the attitude-importance model in tourism were tested. The results showed that: (1) the premise of the attitude-importance model that important attitudes can instigate the process of knowledge accumulation was supported; (2) the applicability of the attitude-importance model in tourism was supported; (3) the three factors of perceived tourism benefits – experiential, health, and relaxation benefits, had positive effects on travel behavior through attitude importance.

These results had theoretical and practical implications. First, while previous tourism studies on tourists' information search have tended to incorporate information search behavior in the context of vacation planning, this research demonstrated that the accumulation of product-related knowledge can be on a regular basis. Second, while previous tourism studies have a strong preference for the evaluative features of attitudes, this research demonstrated that attitude importance as a dimension of attitude strength is relevant in tourism. Finally, the experiential, health, and relaxation benefits were shown to have positive effects on travel behavior, which indicates that the tourism industry can encourage people to travel more by convincing them taking vacations is beneficial.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Liang-Yu Chen and Hsueh-Ching Chiu for

their unconditional love and support

and

To my lovely wife, Ya-Chi Lee (Vicky).

You have believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

Your unwavering support enabled me to take the time necessary for this dissertation.

With your love and sacrifice, you made the past four years the best of my life.

No words can express how grateful I am for your love.

Thank you my wonderful wife.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Taking vacations is seen as an integral feature of human life for many people in the developed world (Richards, 1999). As observed by Hobson and Dietrich (1995), our society has assumed that "tourism is a mentally and physically healthy pursuit to follow in our leisure time (p.23)." Therefore, scholars from different disciplines have endeavored to investigate the contribution of vacations to subjective well-being (Dolnicar, Yanamandram, & Cliff, 2012; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Neal, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2007; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu, 2011), health (de Bloom, Kompier, Geurts, de Weerth, Taris, & Sonnentag, 2009; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Strauss-Blasche, Reithofer, Schobersberger, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2005), and recovery from stress experienced at work (Etzion, 2003; Kühnel & Sonnentag, 2011; Westman & Eden, 1997). The benefits of vacationing have been generally supported by previous studies.

Even though previous findings have suggested that taking a vacation can increase the quality of human life, it remains unclear how people perceive the benefits of taking a vacation and how these perceptions influence their travel behavior. Multiple previous tourism studies have paid more attention to motivations and purchase intentions of a particular tourism service (Li & Petrick, 2008; Ritchie, 1997). This research proposes to examine why some people purchase more tourism services in general (i.e., spend more money during vacations, spend more time in tourist destinations, or go on a vacation more frequently) than others. In particular, this research seeks to answer the questions of

whether and how the amount of tourism services purchased by an individual is influenced by his or her perceived benefits of tourism.

Theoretical Foundation

The present inquiry is based on Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, and Fabrigar's (1995a) model of attitude importance. These social psychologists have been fascinated by how some social and political activists routinely engage in dramatic acts expressing their attitudes that they consider extremely important personally, while at the same time, numerous other people seem completely unmoved by the same issues. As argued by Boninger, Krosnick, and Berent (1995b), such variability in how people invest in their attitudes seems as likely to be true of attitudes towards political issues as attitudes towards other objects, such as consumer products, aspects of self, or places.

Despite its absence in the tourism literature, the concept of attitude importance has been shown as an important factor influencing social perceptions and behavior (Boninger et al., 1995a). In particular, since people who attach personal importance to an attitude are more likely to accumulate knowledge about the attitude through processes of selective exposure and elaboration (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, & Boninger, 2005), importance attitudes are often resistant to change, stable over time, and powerful on thought and on behavior (Boninger et al., 1995a).

Previous studies on the topic have also examined the antecedents of attitude importance. As supported by a series of introspective (Boninger et al. 1995b), correlational (Boninger et al., 1995b; Lau, Brown, and Sears, 1978) and experimental

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studies (Boninger et al., 1995b; Holbrook et al. 2005), an attitude seems to be more important when individuals perceive the attitude object to be connected to their self-interests (self-interest), when the people to whom they feel closest to care deeply about the attitude object (social influence), and when they view the attitude object as relevant to their basic personal values (value relevance).

Theoretical Framework

This research intends to examine how perceived benefits of tourism influence the purchase of tourism services based on the attitude importance model. The proposed model is illustrated in Figure 1-1. Perceived importance of vacationing serves as the core of the proposed model; in other words, the attitude object in the proposed model is vacationing.

Based on the attitude importance model, it is proposed that perceived importance of vacationing can be predicted by a trio of variables: perceived benefits of tourism, social influence, and value relevance. As corroborated by previous studies (Boninger et al., 1995a; Holbrook et al. 2005), the origins of attitude importance include self-interest, social influence, and value relevance, but this research further conceptualizes self-interest as perceived benefits of tourism in the proposed model. According to Boninger et al. (1995a), self-interest develops when "one perceives an attitude to be instrumental to the attainment of one's goals (p.176)." In other words, when individuals feel their own well-being may be directly influenced by an issue, their perceived self-interests are likely to be high (Boninger et al., 1995a). In the context of tourism, Sirgy (2010) has

also proposed that individuals can experience higher levels of overall life satisfaction by selecting leisure travel goals that are more likely to be attained and by engaging in travel activities that would allow them to experience goal attainment. Therefore, it is proposed that how individual perceived the benefits of tourism should affect their purchases of tourism services, while this relationship is proposed to be mediated by perceived importance of vacationing.

The consequences of attitude importance are also incorporated in the proposed model. Previous studies have demonstrated that attaching personal importance to an object might instigate the process of knowledge accumulation, and subsequently influences thinking and action (Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick & Petty, 1995). It is thus proposed that perceived importance of vacationing has a direct and indirect effect (through the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge) on the amount of tourism services purchased.

Figure 1-1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Antecedents of Attitude Importance

- Perceived benefits of tourism
- Social influence
- Value relevance

Perceived Importance of Vacationing

Control Variable

Travel Constraints

Knowledge

The Amount of Tourism Services Purchased

Consequences of Attitude Importance
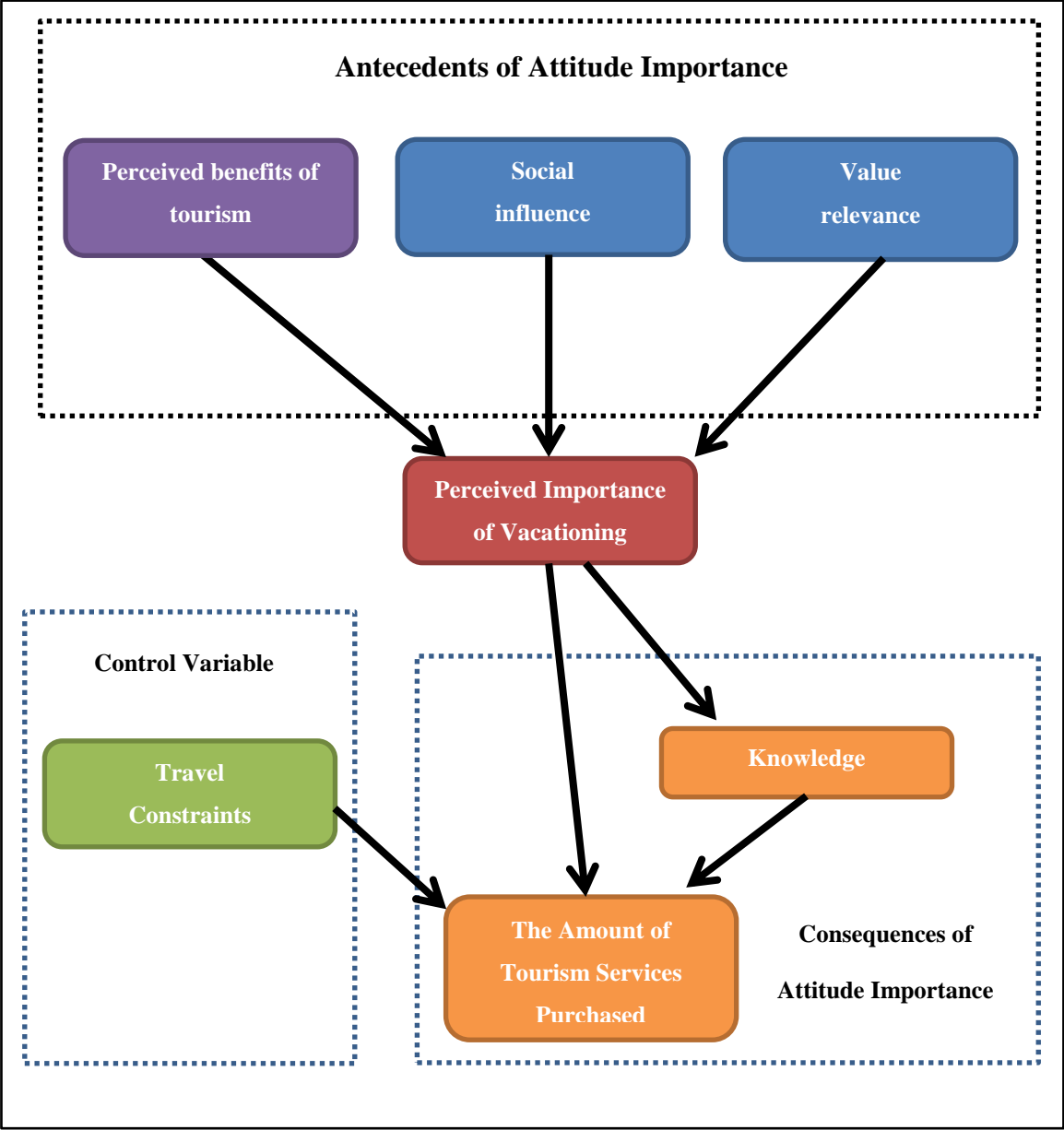
Objectives and Hypotheses

Objective One: This research intends to develop a scale to measure perceived benefits of tourism.

The concept of benefit has been extensively used in tourism research (Frochot & Morrison, 2001). A number of studies have proposed benefit sought as a primary source of the purchasing behavior in the context of tourism, such as holiday destinations (Jang, Morrison, & O'Leary, 2002; Sarigöllü & Rong, 2005; Yannopoulos & Rotenberg, 2000), rural destinations (Frochot, 2005; Li, Huang, & Cai, 2009), and heritage sites (Frochot, 2004; Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998). However, there is still a lack of research on how individuals perceive the benefits of vacationing. In other words, existing instruments on benefits have been mostly developed in the context of a particular destination. It is thus proposed to develop a new scale to measure perceived benefits of tourism that can be utilized across different populations.

Objective Two: This research intends to test the model of attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995a) in a tourism context.

As attitude is a fundamental building block in social and behavioral sciences (Crano & Prislin, 2006), this concept has been frequently applied to examine a variety of issues in tourism, such as destination image and choice behavior (Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008; Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008; Um & Crompton, 1990) or residents' attitude toward tourism development and impacts (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma, & Carter, 2007; Nicolas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). However, previous tourism studies have tended to embrace the evaluative features of attitudes, while

strength-related dimensions of attitudes have been largely ignored in the tourism literature.

This research intends to examine a particular strength-related dimension of attitude – attitude importance. Since attitudes that individuals consider important have been found to exert an especially strong influence on their perceptions and behaviors (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Holbrook et al., 2005), attitude importance is arguably an important factor for understanding the process of attitude formation and change (Crano & Prislin, 2006). In particular, the concept of attitude importance is more likely to be apparent in situations of deliberative processing when individuals have to carefully plan out their thoughts and behaviors in order to make a decision (Boninger et al., 1995a). Given the intangible characteristics of the tourism product, purchasing a tourism service often involves intensive information (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) and deliberative processing of both internal and external information searches (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). It is thus proposed to apply the model of attitude importance to help determine why some individuals purchase more tourism services than others. A total of six hypotheses associated with this objective are listed as follows (see Figure 1-2 for the illustration of these hypotheses):

Hypothesis 2a: Perceived benefits of tourism will positively influence perceived

importance of vacationing.

Hypothesis 2b: Social influence will positively influence perceived importance

of vacationing.

Hypothesis 2c: Value relevance will positively influence perceived importance

of vacationing.

Hypothesis 2d: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence

self-rated knowledge of vacationing.

Hypothesis 2e: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence

travel behavior.

Hypothesis 2f: Self-rated knowledge of vacationing will positively influence

travel behavior.

Figure 1-2 Illustration of Hypotheses Associated with Objective Two
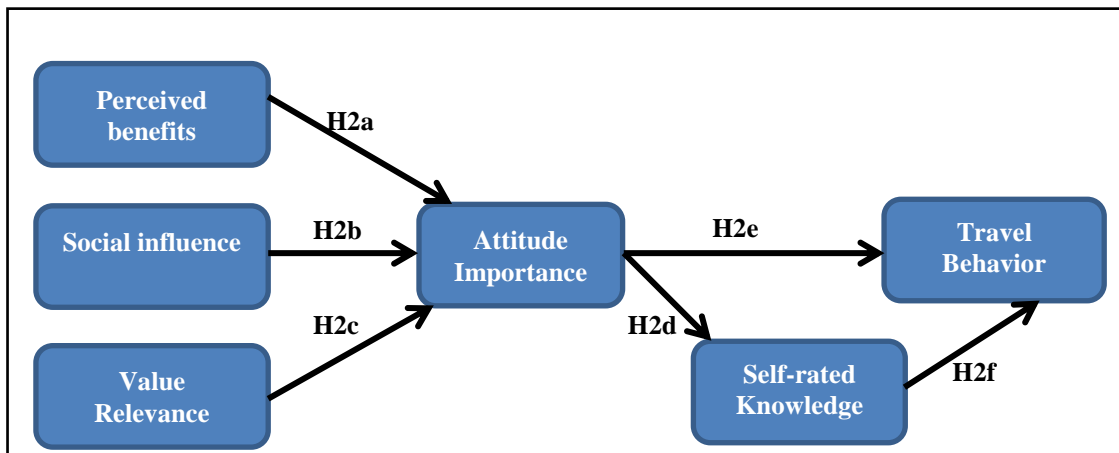
Objective Three: This research attempts to examine the direct and indirect effects of perceived benefits of tourism on the amount of travel behavior.

As stated before, multiple previous tourism studies have paid attention to motivations and purchase intentions of a particular tourism service (Li & Petrick, 2008; Ritchie, 1997), while this research intends to examine tourism services in general. Given that the positive effects of vacationing on individuals' psychological and physiological well-beings have been supported by previous studies in tourism (Dolinar et al., 2012; Neal et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011) as well as other areas (de Bloom et al. 2009; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005), the second objective of this research is to further test whether the amount of tourism services purchased by an individual within a certain period of time is positively influenced by his or her perceived benefits of tourism.

This research objective should help to answer the question – whether the tourism industry can encourage individuals to purchase more tourism services by convincing them that taking vacations is beneficial. Based on the model of attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995a), three associated hypotheses are listed as follows (see Figure 1-3 for the illustration of these hypotheses):

Hypothesis 3a: Perceived benefits of tourism will positively affect perceived

importance of vacationing.

Hypothesis 3b: Perceived benefits of tourism will positively affect travel

behavior.

Hypothesis 3c: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively affect travel

behavior.

Figure 1-3 Illustration of Hypotheses Associated with Objective Three
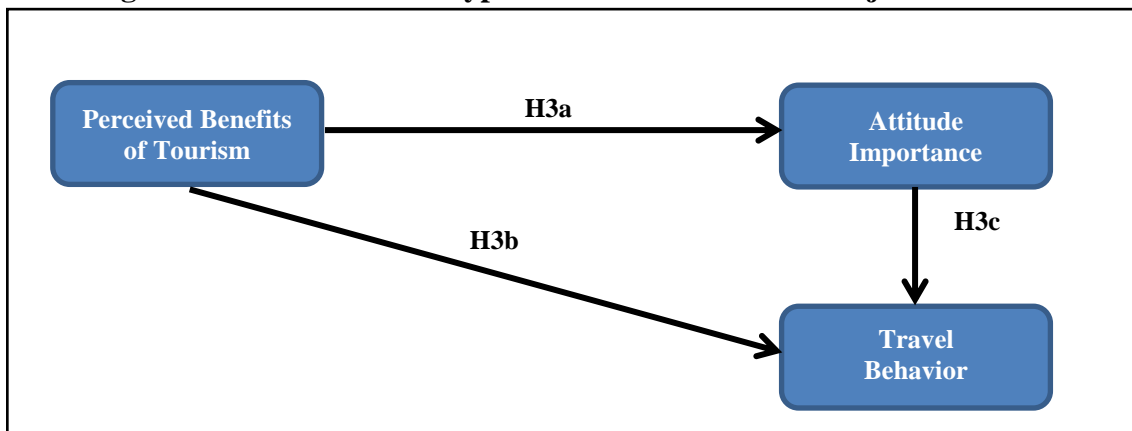
Objective Four: This research intends to examine how attitude importance instigates the   accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge in a tourism context.

Since tourism services are intangible products, it has been demonstrated that the process of making a purchase decision in the context of tourism often involves intensive information processing (Chen & Lin, 2012; Gursoy & McCleay, 2004; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). For this reason, information search behavior has been a popular topic in the tourism literature (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). Among related studies on the topic, extensive attention has been paid to the credibility of various information sources (Dickinger, 2011; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Grønfalten, 2009), the diversity of information search behaviors (Beldona, 2005; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2004), and online channels and information processing (Dickinger, 2011; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Most studies on the topic of tourists' information search have arguably tended to incorporate information search behavior within the context of vacation planning; however, as suggested by research on attitude importance (Holbrook et al., 2005), the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge can be instigated by attaching personal importance to an attitude on a regular basis. It is thus proposed to examine how attitude importance instigates the process of attitude-relevant knowledge in a tourism context. This research objective should help to examine the question (in a tourism context), whether and how attitude-relevant knowledge can be accumulated on a regular basis through active information gathering (discussion with friends) as well as passive information receiving (attention to attitude-relevant information). A total of four

hypotheses associated with this objective are listed below (see Figure 1-4 for the illustration of hypotheses):

Hypothesis 4a: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence attention to vacation-relevant information.

Hypothesis 4b: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence frequency of discussion about taking a vacation.

Hypothesis 4c: Attention to vacation-relevant information will positively influence self-rated knowledge of vacationing.

Hypothesis 4d: Frequency of discussion about taking a vacation will positively influence self-rated knowledge of vacationing.

Figure 1-4 Illustration of Hypotheses Associated with Objective Four
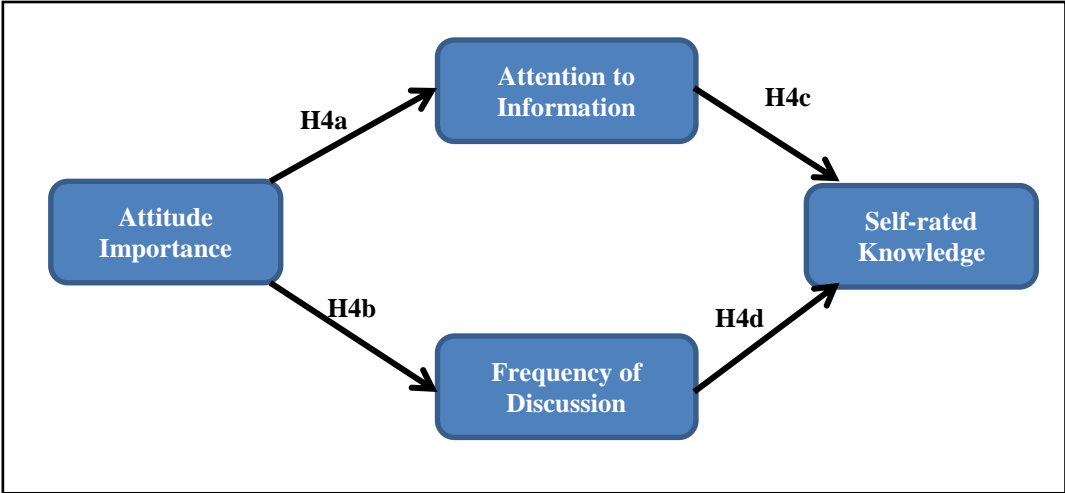
Delimitations

This research has the following six delimitations:

(1) This research will be delimited to American residents;

(2) This research will only focus on an individual level of travel behavior, while the group level of travel behavior will not be considered;

(3) Travel constraints as a control variable will be included in the research model. However, other situational variables influencing travel behavior will not be considered;

(4) This research will only focus on the effect of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior based on the attitude importance model, while other plausible explanations of the effect (theories or models) will not be included in the scope of the study;

(5) Customers' decision-making processes will not be considered in this research.

Limitations

This research is also subject to a couple of limitations:

(1) Even though the study population is defined as American residents, this study is limited to those who are currently included in an online panel survey company's database;

(2) This research will adopt a self-reported measure of travel behavior by asking how frequent respondents traveled last year. This is arguably an appropriate

way of measuring travel behavior, but it will inevitably involve some measurement errors.

Conceptual Definitions

According to de Bloom et al. (2009), vacations are a form of meta-recovery that can help individuals to recover from work load and stress. It has also been demonstrated that vacations have the potential to contribute to individuals' subjective well-being (Dolinar et al., 2012; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Neal et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005). Therefore, this research attempts to examine the effect of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior. Before the effect of vacationing is assessed, it is necessary to specify the definition of vacation and/or other related terms, such as vacationing and travel behavior.

In this research, vacation, vacationing, holiday taking, and travel behavior are used interchangeably. Vacation has been defined as a temporary respite from work lasting from several days to several weeks (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986), while the scope of this research is not limited to tourism benefits pertaining to work recovery. Therefore, vacation is more broadly defined in this study based on the definition of tourism and/or travel behavior. According to Smith (1995), there are two important components of travel behavior, including: purpose of visit and usual environment. Specifically, for a trip to be defined as a form of tourism, pleasure should be either the only or the main purpose of a visit (Smith, 1995). Moreover, a trip to a place that individuals visit on a

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regular basis should not be defined as a form of tourism (Smith, 1995). The concept of

vacation is thus defined as:

VACATION/VACATIONING/TRAVEL BEHAVIOR – A pleasure trip outside

an individual's usual environment.

Based on the definition of benefit in the marketing literature (Haley, 1968) that

benefits are the desirable consequences sought from a product, benefits of tourism is

defined in the current study as follows:

BENEFITS OF TOURISM – The desirable consequences sought from taking a

pleasure trip outside an individual's usual environment.

The effect of tourism benefits on travel behavior will be examined based on the

model of attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995a). In this study, attitude and attitude

importance are defined as two separate concepts, while both concepts can have the same

attitude object (such as vacation in this study). These two concepts are defined as

follows:

ATTITUDE – "A psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a

particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly and Chaiken's, 1993:

p.1).

ATITTUDE IMPORTANCE - "An individual's subjective sense of the concern,

caring, and significance he or she attached to an attitude" (Boninger et al., 1995a, p. 62).

Based on the model of attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995a), three

antecedents of attitude importance will be assessed, including: perceived benefits, social

influence, and value relevance. Perceived benefits of tourism have been defined before, while the other two concepts are defined as follows:

SOCIAL INFLUENCE – The actions, thoughts, or behaviors of an individual that are influenced by other people.

VALUE RELEVANCE - The relevance of an issue to an individual's social and personal values.

This research intends to examine how attitude importance instigates the process of information search in the context of tourism. Based on Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard's (1995) definition that consumers' information searches are the motivated behavior to search for information stored in memory and/or acquisition of information pertaining to decision making, the concept of tourists' information search is defined as:

TOURISTS' INFORMATION SEARCH – The motivated activity to search for tourist information stored in memory and/or acquisition of decision-relevant information pertaining to potential vacations.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge should be an outcome of information search behavior. The concept of attitude-relevant knowledge is defined as follows:

ATTITUDE RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE - Skills and information stored in memory pertaining to an attitude object.

Finally, travel constraints are also measured in this research in order to control for their effect on travel behavior. Based on Jackson's (1991) definition of leisure constraint, travel constraint is defined as:

TRAVEL CONSTRAINTS – Factors that inhibit or prohibit participation in pleasure travel.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of Tourism

Given that vacations are recognized as an essential element of modern life for many people in the developed world (Dolnicar et al., 2012), the topic of vacation benefits have drawn increasing attention in tourism (Dolnicar et al., 2012; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Neal, Sirgy, Uysal, 1999; Neal et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011) as well as other fields of study, such as organizational behavior (Etzion, 2003; Kühnel & Sonnentag, 2011; Westman, Etzion, & Gattenio, 2008) and health science (de Bloom et al., 2009; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Strauss-Blasche, et al., 2005).

In this section, the theoretical underpinnings of vacation benefits will first be discussed. In the second half of the section, the focus will be on the empirical findings relevant to vacation benefits. The positive and negative factors influencing individuals' life satisfaction before, during, and after a vacation will also be reviewed. This review is not limited to the tourism literature in that articles published in tourism journals only accounted for a small portion among all studies pertaining to the topic of vacation benefits.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Tourism Benefits

Even though research on the topic of vacation benefits has accumulated a body of literature, only a few studies have explicitly specified their theoretical foundations. In tourism, a number of scholars (Neal et al., 1999; Neal et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011)

have examined the benefits of tourism based on bottom-up spillover theory. As shown in Figure 2-1, bottom-up spillover theory suggests that overall life satisfaction is influenced by evaluations of various life domains, such as personal health, work, leisure, and family, while the positive and negative affects accompanied by a life event are assumed to have an influence on how individuals evaluate various life domains (Neal et al., 1999).

Figure 2-1 The Hierarchy Model of Life Satisfaction
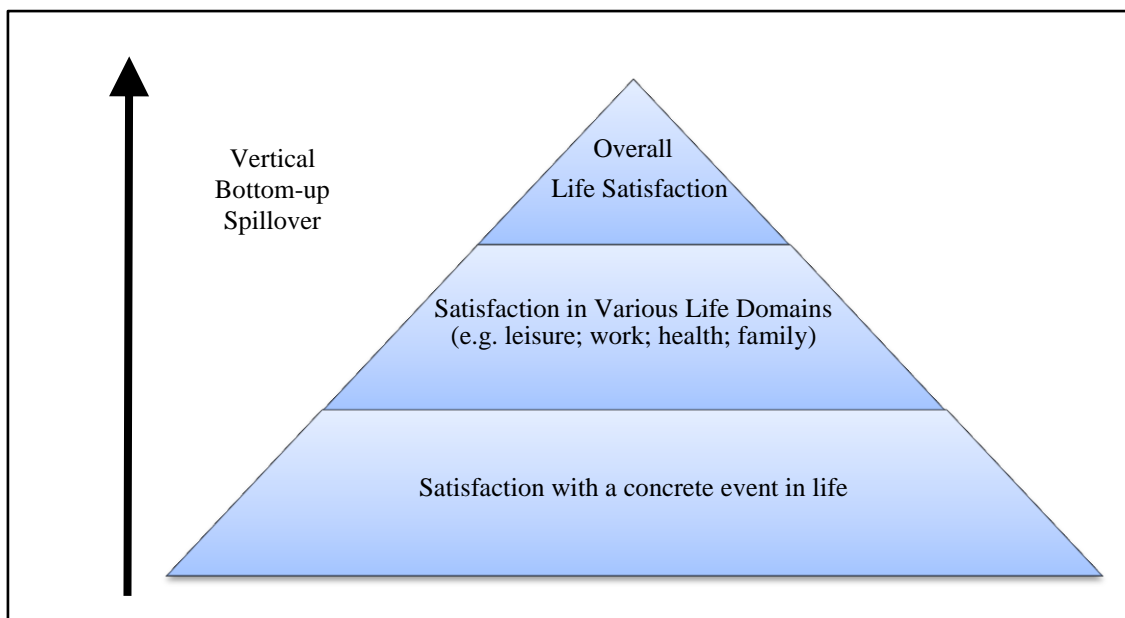
Adapted from Neal, Sirgy, and Uysal (1999: p.155)

A series of studies have been conducted to empirically test the bottom-up spillover model in tourism. Neal et al. (1999) were among the first to examine the effects of vacationing as a life event on individuals' life satisfaction. Their research indicated that life satisfaction was directly influenced by trip satisfaction, while the proposed mediating role of leisure life satisfaction was found to not be significant ($p > .05$).

Since Neal et al. (2007) attributed the non-significant effect to the nature of the sample (faculty and staff members of a university in the United States), they further tested the hierarchy of satisfaction using a random sample of 2,000 adults residing in Southwest Virginia (Neal et al., 2007). In this subsequent study (Neal et al., 2007), the direct and indirect effects of trip satisfaction were supported. However, their studies (Neal et al., 1999, 2007) only examined the effects of vacationing on two life domains: leisure life and non-leisure life.

Sirgy et al. (2011) thus developed a scale to measure the positive and negative affects accompanied by taking a vacation couched within various life domains, including: social life, family life, leisure life, cultural life, health and safety, financial life, work life, love life, arts and culture, spiritual life, intellectual life, self, culinary life, and travel life. Sirgy et al., (2011) also tested whether the positive and negative affects of vacation experiences on these 13 life domains influenced overall life satisfaction through satisfaction with the 13 life domains. They found that positive affects associated with taking a vacation had direct and indirect effects on overall life satisfaction.

As bottom-up spillover theory helps tourism scholars to understand whether trip satisfaction contributes to life satisfaction, Sirgy (2012) further proposed to apply goal theory to examine how individuals can benefit from taking vacations. Research on goal theory (Brunstein, Schultheiss, & Grässman, 1998) has found that achieving accessible and personally meaningful goals is associated with subjective well-being. Based on this notion, Sirgy (2012) argued that individuals can benefit from taking vacations by selecting travel goals that have high levels of attainability and valence, and by engaging in tourism activities that would help individuals to experience goal attainment. However, the applicability of goal theory in the context of tourism has not been empirically tested.

In the field of organizational behavior, a number of researchers have attempted to examine the effects of vacationing on releasing stress related to work (Etzion, 2003; Kühnel & Sonnentag, 2011; Westman & Eden, 1997). Along this research line, the conservation of resources theory has been frequently specified as the theoretical foundation. According to Hobfoll (1989), the conservation of resources theory postulates that individuals strive to obtain and retain their external resources (such as financial assets) as well as internal resources (such as personal energies and positive mood). Since stress can lead to the depletion of internal resources, individuals should gain more internal resources in order to recover from stress (Hobfoll, 1989).

Based on the notion of internal and external resources, Westman and her colleagues have employed a series of studies to investigate the impacts of vacations on burnout (Westman & Eden, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2001; Westman & Etzion, 2002; Westman et al., 2008), and their results have indicated that vacations decreased

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respondents' job stress and burnout. In a similar vein, Sonnentag and Frtiz subsequently

demonstrated that vacation recovery experiences (such as psychological detachment

from work, relaxation experience, master experience, and perceived control during

vacation) can contribute to employees' mental and physical health by providing internal

and external resources (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

Empirical Findings of Tourism Benefits

As a result of an extensive review of the literature, a total of 29 articles

involving testing tourism benefits were identified. As shown in Table 2-1, most studies

were interested in whether taking a vacation can contribute to individuals' perceived

health and psychological well-being. With only a few exceptions (Milman, 1999;

Tarumi, Hagihara, & Morimoto, 1998), the health and wellness benefits of tourism were

supported by most studies across different samples (such as senior travelers, company

employees, university faculty and staff members, individuals with disabilities, and

patients and their caregivers) and different geographical locations.

Nearly half (n=14) of the studies in Table 2-1 adopted pretest-posttest designs.

In these studies, researchers measured individuals' perceived health and psychological

well-being before and after a vacation, and vacation effects were tested by comparing

two measures of perceived health and wellness. In order to understand whether vacation

effects diminish after a vacation, a number of studies employed at least two measures

after individuals were back from their vacations (de Bloom, Geurts, Taris, Sonnentag,

de Weerth, & Kompier, 2010; de Bloom, Geurts, & Kompier, 2011a; de Bloom, Geurts,

Sonnentag, Taris, de Weerth, & Kompier, 2011b; Etzion, 2003; Kuhnel & Sonnentag, 2011b; Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, & Vingerhoets, 2010; Westman & Eden, 1997). These results have suggested that vacation effects last for about two to three weeks (de Bloom et al., 2010; de Bloom et al., 2011a; Etzion, 2003; Westman & Eden, 1997), while under certain circumstances, vacation effects might persist for only a few days (de Bloom et al., 2011b; Nawijn et al., 2010).

Moreover, previous studies have examined whether vacation satisfaction and vacation experience are associated with perceived psychological well-being after taking a vacation. As mentioned before, based on the bottom-up spillover theory, a number of studies have tested and provided evidence that satisfaction with tourism services might lead to an increase in overall life satisfaction (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Neal et al., 1999, 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011).

The association between vacation experience and perceived wellness has also been corroborated by previous studies. For example, Neal et al. (2007) and Sirgy et al. (2011) have demonstrated that positive trip reflections (such as perceived freedom of control and challenging experience) might contribute to overall life satisfaction. Likewise, it has been shown that vacation recovery experiences (such as psychological detachment from work, relaxation experience, challenging experience, learning opportunities, and perceived control during vacation) might positively influence perceived wellness (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007).

Regarding vacation outcomes, most studies have been interested in perceptions, such as perceived health and psychological well-being, while physiological measures

have been adopted by only a couple of studies (Tarumi et al., 1998; Toda et al., 2004). For example, Tarumi et al. (1998) have attempted to examine the association between work stress and frequency of vacationing among 551 male white-collar workers. Their results indicated that frequency of vacationing had a negative effect on the psychological measures of stress, while the relationship between vacationing and the physiological measure of stress was not significant. Toda et al. (2004) used saliva samples from 40 women to test whether people can release stress on a three-day trip. The results indicated that even a short trip could contribute to stress relief (P<.005).

It is also worth noting that previous studies pertaining to tourism benefits have been interested in specific groups of people. For example, scholars in organizational behavior and applied psychology have paid extensive attention to employees' work-life balance. These studies have demonstrated that taking a vacation could lead to decreases in: work stress (de Bloom et al., 2010; Etzion, 2003; Westman & Etzion, 2002), burnout (Etzion, 2003; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Westman & Eden, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2001, 2002), exhaustion (Kuhnel & Sonnentag, 2011; Strauss-Blasche, et al., 2005), and/or absenteeism (Westman & Etzion, 2001), and an increase in recuperation (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2002, 2005) and/or job performance (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986).

Table 2-1 A Summary of Studies on Tourism Benefits

Author	Pretest-posttest	Place	Respondent	Hypothesis[1]	Result[2]
Lounsbury & Hoopes (1986)	Yes	USA	128 employees	*Vacation → Job Performance & Life Satisfaction (↑) *Vacation Satisfaction → Life Satisfaction (↑) *Vacation Satisfaction → Job Performance (↑)	Yes Yes
Westman & Eden (1997)	Yes	Israel	76 clerks	*Vacation → Burnout (↓) *Fade out → 3 weeks *Duration of Trip → Vacation Effect (↑)	Yes No
Tarumi et al.(1998)	No	Japan	551 employees	*Vacation → Perceived Health (↑) *Vacation → Physiological Measures of Health (↑)	Yes No
Milman (1998)	Yes	USA	124 senior travelers	*Vacation Activities → Psychological well-being (↑) *Vacation Experience → Psychological well-being (↑)	No No
Neal et al.(1999)	No	USA	373 employees	*Vacation Satisfaction → Life Satisfaction (↑)	Yes
Gump & Matthews (2000)	No	USA	12388 men at high risk for heart disease	*Vacation → Health Risk (↓)	Yes
Westman & Etzion (2001)	Yes	Israel	87 employees	*Vacation → Absenteeism & Burnout (↓)	Yes
Westman & Etzion (2002)	Yes	Israel	57 business travelers	*Vacation → Stress & Burnout (↓)	Yes
Wei & Milman (2002)	No	USA	300 senior travelers	*Vacation Activity → Psychological well-being (↑)	Yes
Gilbert & Abdullah (2002)	Yes	UK	355 holiday takers &	*Expectation about Vacation → Life Satisfaction (↑)	Yes
Strauss-Blasche et al. (2002)	Yes	Austria	53 employees	*Vacation → Perceived Health & Well-being (↑) *Vacation → Recuperation (↑) *Work Load after Vacation → Vacation Effect (↓)	Yes Yes Yes

[1]: ↑ denotes positive effect; ↓ denotes negative effect
2: Yes denotes hypothesis was supported, while No denotes hypothesis was not supported.

Table 2-1 Continued

Author	Pretest-posttest	Place	Respondent	Hypothesis[1]	Result[2]
Etzion (2003)	Yes	Israel	110 employees	*Vacation → Burnout & Job Stress (↓) *Fade out → 3 weeks *Duration of Trip → Vacation Effect (↑)	Yes No
Toda et al. (2004)	No	Japan	50 women	*Vacation → Physiological Measures of Health (↑)	Yes
Gilbert & Abdullah (2004)	Yes	UK	355 holiday-takers	*Vacation → Perceived Health (↑) *Vacation → Subjective Well-being (↑)	Yes
Neal et al.(2007)	No	USA	815 adult consumers of travel services	*Vacation Satisfaction & Experience → Life Satisfaction (↑) *Duration of Trip → Vacation Effect (↑)	Yes Yes
Strauss-Blasche, et al. (2005)	No	Austria	239 employees	*Vacation → Exhaustion (↓) *Vacation → Recuperation (↑)	Yes Yes
Fritz & Sonnentag (2006)	Yes	Germany	233 nonacademic university employees	*Vacation & Vacation Experience → Perceived Health (↑) *Vacation& Vacation Experience → Burnout (↓) *Vacation→ Job Performance (↑)	Yes Yes No
McConkey & McCullough (2006)	No	North Ireland	152 family carers for individuals with learning disability	*Vacation → Subjective Well-being (↑)	Yes
Pols & Kroon (2007)	No	Netherland	11 individuals with mental health problems	*Vacation → Subjective Well-being (↑)	Yes
Mactavish et al.(2007)	No	Canada	15 family carers for people with intellectual disability	*Vacation → Subjective Well-being (↑)	Yes

[1]: ↑ denotes positive effect; ↓ denotes negative effect
2: Yes denotes hypothesis was supported, while No denotes hypothesis was not supported.

Table 2-1 Continued

Author	Pretest-posttest	Place	Respondent	Hypothesis[1]	Result[2]
de Bloom et al. (2010)	Yes	Netherland	96 respondents	*Vacation → Perceived Health & Well-being (↑) *Vacation → Stress (↓) *Vacation → Sleep Quality (↑) *Fade out → 2 weeks	Yes Yes No
Nawijn et al. (2010)	No	Netherland	1530 Panelists	*Vacation → Perceived Health (↑) *Fade out → Vacation Effect (↓)	Yes Yes
McCabe, Joldersma, & Li (2010)	Yes	UK	300 low income families	*Vacation → Subjective Well-being (↑)	Yes
de Bloom et al. (2011a)	Yes	Netherland	176 employees	*Vacation → Perceived Health & Well-being (↑) *Negative Incidents → Perceived Health & Well-being (↓) *Fade out → 2 weeks	Yes Yes
de Bloom et al. (2011b)	Yes	Netherland	93 employees	*Vacation → Perceived Health & Well-being (↑) *Fade out → 3 days	Yes
Kuhnel & Sonnentag (2011)	No	Germany	131 German teachers	*Vacation → Exhaustion (↓) *Fade out → 1 month	Yes
Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, & Yu (2011)	No	South Africa	264 adults	*Vacation Satisfaction & Experience → Life Satisfaction (↑)	Yes
Cleaver & Muller (2002)	No	Australia	356 senior travelers	*Subjective age during vacation → Trip Activities (↑) *Subjective age during vacation → Well-being (↑)	Yes Yes
Dolincar et al. (2012)	No	Australia	1000 panelists	*Vacation → Well-being (↑)	Yes

[1]: ↑ denotes positive effect; ↓ denotes negative effect
2: Yes denotes hypothesis was supported, while No denotes hypothesis was not supported.

Senior travelers have also been the focus of several studies (Cleaver & Muller, 2002; Milman, 1998; Wei & Milman, 2002). For example, Milman (1998) was among the first to examine the effect of vacationing on senior travelers' psychological well-being. His results showed that vacation experiences and the level of activity during vacation had no effect on perceived wellness after vacation. He attributed the non-significant effects to the small sample size (n= 124) and the homogenous nature of the sample (Milman, 1998). Wei and Milman's (2002) subsequent work (using a sample of 300) provided evidence that senior travelers who were more actively participated in a variety of activities during their vacations might benefit more from vacationing. Likewise, Cleaver and Muller (2002) examined the concept of subjective age among senior travelers. They found that senior travelers who perceived themselves as younger more actively participated in a variety of activities during vacation and likely benefited more from taking a vacation.

On the other hand, Scholars have also paid attention to those who are mostly excluded from taking a vacation, such as low income families (McCabe et al., 2010), patients (Gump & Matthews, 2000; Pols & Kroon, 2007), and individuals with disabilities and their family caregivers (Mactavish et al., 2007; McConkey & McCullough, 2006). Specifically, McCabe et al. (2010) conducted a study in the United Kingdom to examine whether low income families benefit from taking a rare vacation. Their results indicated that family members might benefit from vacationing in terms of gaining new experiences, being able to cope with difficult family situations, and having a chance to spend quality time together as a family. McCabe et al. (2010) concluded that

policy makers should consider providing financial support for low income families to have regular vacations.

Individuals with health problems and/or disabilities have also drawn attention from scholars in health science. For example, Gump & Matthews (2000) examined the association between frequency of vacationing and health risks among 12,388 men at high risk for heart disease in the United States. They found that individuals who traveled more frequently had fewer nonfatal cardiovascular events and lower risk factors for coronary heart disease. Furthermore, based on their interviews with 11 individuals with mental health problems in the Netherlands, Pols & Kroon (2007) also found that mental health patients might benefit from taking a vacation in terms of new perceptions of self-identity, skill development, and social relations. Likewise, it has been found that both individuals with disabilities (McConkey & McCullough, 2006) and low income families could benefit from taking a vacation.

The Happiness Curve

The results of previous research pertaining to tourism benefits are further

summarized in Figure 2-2. As mentioned before, the positive effects of vacationing on

perceived health and psychological well-being have been supported by a number of

studies, it has also been shown that perceived happiness might fluctuate before, during,

and after a vacation (de Bloom, Kompier, Geurts, de Weeth, Taris, & Sonnentag, 2009;

Nawijn, 2011). Specifically, individuals might experience four stages during their

vacations, including: anticipation, experience, beneficial, and fade-out stages.

In the anticipation stage, it is believed that individuals might feel happier than

usual even before their vacation because they expect to have positive experiences

(Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Nawijn et al., 2010). In the experience stage, perceived

happiness might be further lifted by a number of factors during vacation, including

positive trip reflection (Neal et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2012), recovery experiences (Fritz

& Sonnentag, 2006; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007), and vacation satisfaction (Neal et al.,

1999, 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011). However, it has also been demonstrated that perceived

happiness might be negatively influenced by negative incidents during vacation (de

Bloom et al., 2011b), including: the time-zone difference to home (Strauss-Blasche et

al., 2005), health problems (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005), and the temperature at the

vacation site (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005).

In the beneficial stage, it is believed that individuals often feel happier (supported

by a total of 15 studies), healthier (supported by a total of 9 studies), and more relaxed

(supported by a total of 9 studies) (see Figure 2-2 for details). It has also been shown that

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employees (and subsequently their employers) might benefit from taking a vacation

because they might have higher job performance after a vacation (Frtiz & Sonnentag,

2006; Lounsbuy & Hoopes, 1986). However, in the fade-out stage, the positive effects of

vacationing on perceived wellness, health, and stress might be gradually diminished by

work load and other stresses in the days and weeks after a vacation (Strauss-Blasche et

al., 2002). It has been found that vacation effects might last for only a few days (de

Bloom et al., 2011b; Nawijn et al., 2010), two to three weeks (de Bloom et al., 2010; de

Bloom et al., 2011a; Etzion, 2003; Westman & Eden, 1997), or no more than one month

(Kuhnel & Sonnentag, 2011).

Figure 2-2 Factors Influencing Vacation Outcomes

Before Vacation	During Vacation	After Vacation	

Anticipation Stage	Experience Stage	Beneficial Stage	Fade-out Stage

The level of Life Satisfaction

Positive Factor:	Positive Factors		Negative Factor:
Expectation about Vacation (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Nawijn et al., 2010)	*Positive Trip Reflection* (Neal et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2012) *Recovery Experience* (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007) *Vacation Satisfaction* (Neal et al., 1999, 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011) *Activity Level* (Cleaver & Muller, 2002; Wei & Milman, 2002) *Negative Factors:* *Negative Incidents* (de Bloom et al., 2011) *Time-zone Difference to Home* (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005) *Health Problem during Vacation* (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005) *Temperature at vacation site* (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005)		*Work Load* (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2002)
Outcome: *Happpiness* (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Nawijn et al., 2010)	**Outcomes:** *Positive Affect* (Nawijn, 2011; Sirgy et al., 2011) *Happiness* (Kemp, Burt, & Furneaux, 2008; Nawijn et al., 2010; Nawijn, 2011)	**Outcomes:** *Life Satisfaction*[1] *Health*[2] *Stress Relief*[3] *Job Performance*[4]	**Outcome:** *Fade-out Effect* (de Bloom et al., 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Etzion, 2003; Nawijn et al. 2010; Westman & Eden, 1997)

[1](Cleaver & Muller, 2002; Dolincar et al., 2012; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Lounsbuy & Hoopes, 1986; Mactavish et al., 2007; McConkey & McCullough, 2006; Neal et al., 1999, 2007; Pols & Kroon, 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2002, 2010, 2011ab; Wei & Milman, 2002)
[2](Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2006; Gump & Matthews, 2000; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2002, 2010, 2011ab; Tarumi et al.,1998; Toda et al., 2004)
[3](Etzion, 2003; Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2006; Kuhnel & Sonnentag, 2011; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2002, 2005, 2010; Westman & Eden, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2001, 2002)
[4](Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2006; Lounsbuy & Hoopes, 1986)

Conceptualization of the Attitude Construct

The relevance of attitudes in the social science world lies in the fact that "human beings react to their environments in an evaluative fashion" (Albarracín, Zanna, Johnson, & Kumkale, 2005: p.3). In the routine context of everyday life, people often make decisions based on their evaluations about whether objects, events, perceived selves, and others are favorable or unfavorable. In the context of tourism, people evaluate alternative destinations and tourism services in order to plan for their vacations. They also evaluate the people and cultures that they encounter at tourist destinations as a part of their destination experiences. More importantly, unlike personality, attitudes are expected to change as a function of personal preference, social influence, and past experiences (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). For this reason, scholars who study attitudes are particularly interested in how attitudes are formed and how they can be changed, which is also known as the study of attitude and persuasion (Crano & Prislin, 2006).

In this section, the nature of attitudes will first be discussed. In the second half of the section, the focus will be on strength-related dimensions of attitudes, particularly attitude importance. Given the relevance of attitude, related studies have formed a substantial body of literature in the social and behavioral sciences. Therefore, in this review, attention will primarily be paid to the development of the attitude construct in social psychology and its application to the field of tourism.

The Nature of Attitude

The concept of attitude has been defined in a myriad ways in social psychology (Fabrigar, MacDonald, & Wegener, 2005). Among the early scholars who studied attitude, Allport (1935) introduced the classic definition of attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experiences, exerting a direct or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 805). As argued by Eagly and Chaiken (2007), Allport seemingly used the term "attitude" to cover all internal sets or predispositions motivating human behavior, which have been subsequently separated as different psychological concepts, such as personality, motivation, or value (Ostrom, 1989). Therefore, Allport and his broad definition of attitude have lost its relevance in social psychology (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007).

Contemporary studies on attitude are mostly based on Eagly and Chaiken's (1993) definition of attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (p.1). As further explained by Eagly and Chaiken (1993), this definition possesses three important features: evaluation, attitude object, and tendency. The evaluative feature refers to all classes of evaluative judgments, which can be cognitive, affective, or behavioral (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). In other words, evaluation includes the evaluative aspects of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. The evaluative judgment is directed to an object (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). For example, people may evaluate a destination, a hotel, or an airline company. These are the objects of an evaluation. According to Eagly and Chaiken (2007), an attitude

object yields stimuli that elicit a psychological tendency of favor or disfavor, such as the favorability of a destination, a hotel, or an airline company.

The ABC Model of Attitude

Based on the evaluative definition of attitude, attitude has been frequently conceptualized as the composite of cognitive, affective, and behavioral evaluations (Greenwald, 1989). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) further specified that people's beliefs about an object (cognitive evaluation) and their feelings about the object (affective evaluation) are interrelated concepts, while people often act on their beliefs and feelings. This notion of attitude formation is known as the affective-behavior-cognitive (ABC) model of attitude (Bagozzi, Tybout, Craig, & Sternthal, 1979).

The ABC model of attitude has been widely applied in the field of social psychology (Crano & Prislin, 2006; Crites, Fabrigar, & Petty, 1994; Zanna & Rempel, 1988), and also in tourism (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002; Lee et al., 2008; Nadeau et al., 2008). Tourism scholars have frequently applied this model to examine a variety of topics, particularly the topic of destination image. Destination image is arguably one of the most popular topics in tourism (Chen & Lin, 2012). According to Pike (2002), a total of 142 papers on destination image were published from 1973 to 2000 and it continues to be a popular topic in the tourism literature.

Tourism scholars have tended to define destination image as an attitude or potential tourists' evaluations of a tourist destination (Um & Crompton, 1990). Given that early studies on the topic were criticized as "a-theoretical" (Echtner & Ritchie,

1993; Gallarza,et al., 2002), several tourism scholars (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004) have endeavored to develop theoretical models of destination image based on the ABC model of attitude. As shown in Figure 2-3, the model of destination image formation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004) has been argued to include cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of destination image. This model of destination image has been corroborated by a number of subsequent studies (Chen, 2008; Chen & Lin, 2012; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Martín & del Bosque, 2008; Nadeau et al., 2008; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Figure 2-3 The Model of Destination Image Formation
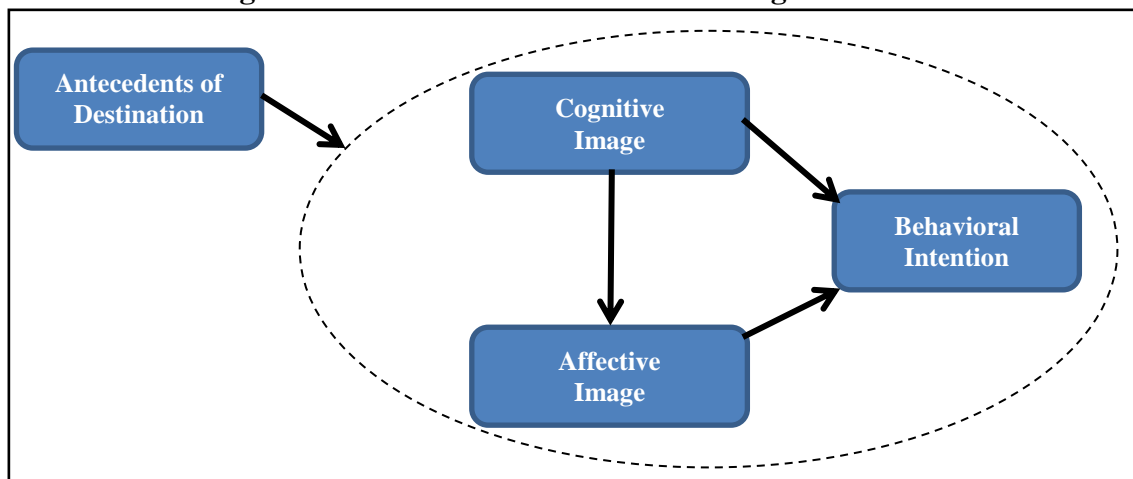
Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Beerli and Martín (2004)

Despite its popularity in social psychology, the ABC model of attitude has drawn a lot of criticisms (Ostrom, 1989). In particular, since the ABC model postulates that people act on their thoughts and feelings, attitude-behavior consistency is seemingly assumed in the model (Ostrom, 1989). However, it has been demonstrated that the ABC model is vulnerable to falsification in that attitude-behavior consistency can be dependent on or moderated by other variables (Davidson, Yantis, Norwood, Norwood, & Montano, 1985; Fazio, Chen, McDonel, & Sherman, 1982; Zanna, Olson, & Fazio, 1980).

It seems that tourism scholars have been less interested in attitude-behavior consistency, at least when they have studied the topic of destination image. Specifically, in the above-mentioned model of destination image formation, the behavioral component of destination image has been mostly operationalized as behavioral intention rather than actual visitation (Chen & Lin, 2012; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Martín & del Bosque, 2008; Nadeau et al., 2008; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Strength-related Dimensions of Attitudes

In order to explain the inconsistencies between attitude and behavior, a number of social psychologists have paid attention to the strength-related dimensions of attitudes (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Specifically, it has been demonstrated that some attitudes are stable and consequential - they resist change and exert strong control on thoughts and behaviors - while other attitudes are quite flexible and have few effects on behavior

(Krosnick & Petty, 1995; Visser, Krosnick, & Simmons, 2003). Social psychologists often use the term "attitude strength" to mark this distinction (Visser et al., 2003).

Krosnick and Petty (1995) have specified two important features of attitude strength: strong attitudes are durable and impactful. Previous studies have paid more attention to two aspects of durability, including: the stability of the attitude (it remains unchanged over time) and resistance to change (it is difficult to be changed by persuasion) (Brannon, Tagler, & Eagly, 2007; Eaton, Majka, & Visser, 2008; Holbrook et al., 2005; Visser et al., 2003; Visser, Bizer, & Krosnick, 2006). Likewise, two aspects of attitudinal impact have drawn the most empirical attention (Krosnick & Petty, 1995): strong attitudes can influence information processing and they can guide behavior (Eaton et al., 2008; Holbrook et al., 2005; Visser et al., 2003; Visser, Bizer, & Krosnick, 2006).

Based on the notion that strong attitudes are durable and impactful (Krosnick & Petty, 1995), researchers have identified a number of strength-related dimensions of attitudes, including: attitude importance (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Boninger et al., 1995b; Holbrook et al. 2005), attitude certainty (Holland, Verplanken, & van Knippenberg, 2003; Petrocelli, Tormala, & Rucker, 2007; Visser et al., 2003), attitude accessibility (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Holland et al., 2003; Visser et al., 2003), and other dimensions of attitude strength. These strength-related dimensions of attitudes have shown to be interrelated concepts (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). However, in the attitude strength literature, a major debate has revolved around whether these dimensions of attitude strength are either interchangeable attributes of the same construct or different constructs with different antecedents and consequences (Visser et al., 2003).

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The accumulative evidence has shown that each dimension of attitude strength is a distinct construct (Visser et al., 2003; Visser et al., 2006). For example, Visser et al. (2003) compared the effects of attitude importance and attitude certainty on information processing. As shown in Figure 2-4, the results indicated that attitude importance and attitude certainty were correlated with each other (p<.001); however, attitude importance had significant effects on passive information receiving (interest in attitude-relevant information: p<.001; attention to attitude-relevant information: p<.001), active information gathering (p<.001), and attitude-expressive behavior (frequency of discussion: p<.001), while the effects of attitude certainty on all four dependent variables were not significant (p>.05). Visser et al. (2006) also provided an extensive review on the latent structure of strength-related attitude dimensions. By illustrating the conflicting evidence that supports each side of the debate, Visser et al. (2006) concluded that scientific evidence tends to support that each dimension is unique construct.

Attitude Importance

This research intended to apply one dimension of strength-related attitude – attitude importance. According to Boninger et al. (1995a), attitude importance refers to the extent to which an individual ascribes psychological significance to an attitude. The development of the attitude importance construct originated from the empirical observations that some social and political activists routinely engage in dramatic acts expressing their attitudes that they consider extremely important, while other people are seemingly unmoved by the same issues (Boninger et al., 1995b). As argued by Boninger

et al. (1995b), such variability of personal attachment to an attitude seems as to be true

of attitudes towards political and social issues as well as attitudes towards consumer

products, aspects of self, or places.

Figure 2-4 Effects of Attitude Importance & Certainty on Information Processing
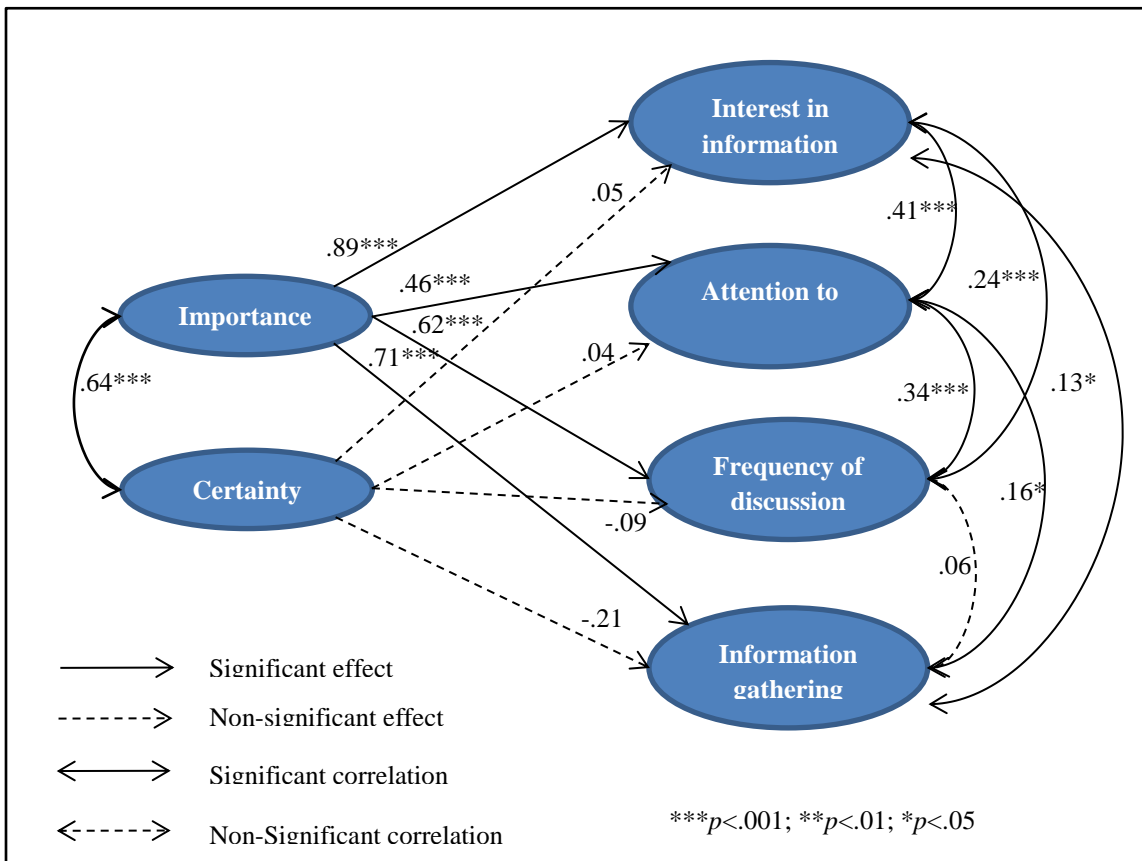
Adapted from Visser, Krosnick, and Simmons (2003: p.126)

The concept of attitude importance was chosen in this study for the following reasons. First, the concept of attitude importance is more likely to be apparent in situations of deliberative processing (Boninger et al., 1995a). As suggested by Fazio (1990), people often perform behaviors without actively considering relevant attitudes via spontaneous processing, while in other occasions, people have to deliberately plan out their thoughts and behaviors in order to make a decision (Boninger et al., 1995a). Given that tourism products are intangible, purchasing a tourism service often involves deliberative processing of both internal and external information (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). Therefore, it is argued that attitude importance should be an important concept to understand the dynamics behind the purchase of tourism services.

Second, social psychologists (Boninger et al., 1995b) have developed a theoretical model of the causes and consequences of attitude importance. As shown in Figure 2-5, as corroborated by a series of studies (Boninger et al. 1995a; Holbrook et al. 2005; Lau, Brown, and Sears, 1978), at least three antecedents of attitude importance have been specified, including: self-interest (the extent to which individuals perceive the attitude object to be connected to their self-interests), social influence (the influence of other people on an individual's actions, thoughts or behaviors), and value relevance (the relevance of the attitude object to their basic personal values).

It has also been demonstrated that attaching personal importance to an object might instigate the process of knowledge accumulation, and subsequently influence thinking and action (Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Specifically,

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individuals regularly consider that some attitude objects are more important than others, while previous studies have shown that they often pay more attention to and actively gather information that is relevant to important attitude objects (Holbrook et al., 2005; Visser et al., 2003).   Through this process of selective exposure and elaboration, importance attitudes have been found to be: more resistant to change, stable over time, and impactful on thought and behavior (Boninger et al., 2005a).

Figure 2-5 A Model of the Causes & Consequences of Attitude Importance
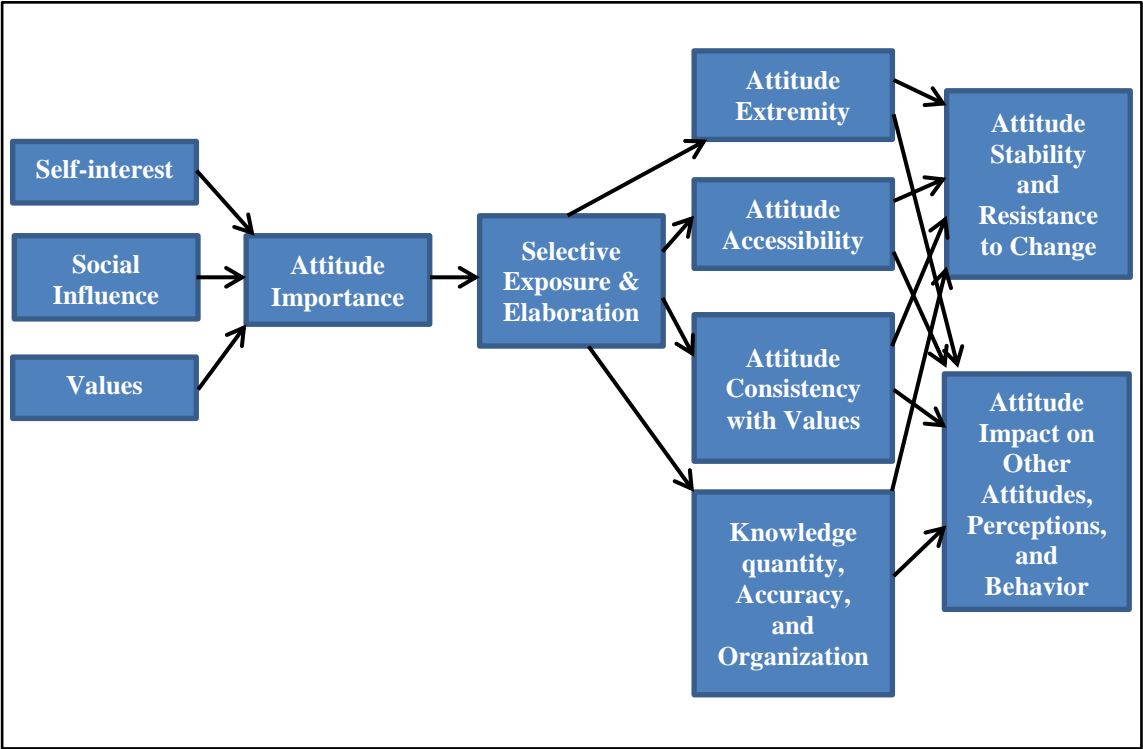
Originated from Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, and Fabrigar (1995: p.179)

Finally, even though attitudes are a fundamental building block in social and behavioral sciences (Crano & Prislin, 2006), previous tourism studies have tended to embrace the evaluative features of attitudes, particularly by applying the ABC model of attitude to examine a variety of issues in tourism. However, strength-related dimensions of attitudes have been largely ignored in the tourism literature. As mentioned before, strength-related dimensions of attitudes can help to explain the inconsistency of attitude and behavior. Unfortunately, tourism scholars have thus far neglected this issue. Therefore, it is arguably important to examine the model of attitude importance in the context of tourism.

Tourists' Information Search

Given the intangible characteristics of the tourism product, it has been assumed and demonstrated that the process of purchasing a tourism product often involves intensive information processing (Chen & Lin, 2012; Gursoy & McCleay, 2004; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). For this reason, information search behavior has been a popular topic in the tourism literature (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). Extensive attention has been paid to several topics related to tourists' information search, such as the credibility of various information sources (Dickinger, 2011; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Grønfalten, 2009), the diversity of information search behaviors (Beldona, 2005; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2004), and online channels and information processing (Dickinger, 2011; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). However, it is

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argued that most studies have tended to incorporate information search behavior within the context of vacation planning.

In this section, the nature of tourists' information search behavior will first be discussed, particularly focusing on the deliberate processing of tourists' information. In the second half of the section, more details about tourists' information search will be provided, including Gursoy and McCleary's (2004) model of tourists' information search and several topics pertaining to information search behavior in the context of tourism.

Deliberate Information Processing

According to Fazio (1990), many daily behaviors appear to be spontaneous in that they would cause dysfunction of an individual's life if he or she constantly relied on deliberate reasoning for daily living. However, some behaviors require considerable cognitive work (Fazio, 1990). In particular, it has been shown that people are more likely to deliberately plan out their thoughts and behaviors in order to make a decision when they perceive that a behavior or decision involves high risk and/or a high cost (Ajzen, 2002; Fazio, 1990).

In tourism, it has been generally assumed that planning a holiday vacation involves deliberate information processing for several reasons (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). First, according to Fakeye and Crompton (1991), individuals frequently have limited knowledge about alternative vacation destinations. Therefore, people often rely on their perceptions of alternative choices in the process of destination choice (Fakeye &

Crompton, 1991), and frequently search for destination-related information in order to make reasonable decisions (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993). More importantly, a vacation often involves considerable consumption of time and money (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Morley, 1992). Therefore, it is argued that planning a vacation is rarely a spontaneous decision.

For the above reasons, tourism scholars have conceptualized the process of vacation destination choice as a funnel-like procedure of narrowing down alternative choices, informed by information search (Crompton, 1992; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Prentice, 2006). This conceptualization of the destination-choice process, according to Sirakaya and Woodside (2005), is primarily based on consumer purchase decision processes (Kotler, 1983). As illustrated in Figure 2-6, the process of making a purchase decision can be broken down into a series of stages. The first stage involves the recognition of purchase needs, which has been shown to be multiple in the context of tourism (Crompton & McKay, 1997). Subsequently, people often rely on product-related information in order to evaluate alternative choices. Finally, once the purchase decision is made, people will further evaluate the purchase after they actually use (or experience) the product.

Figure 2-6 Consumer Purchase Decision Process
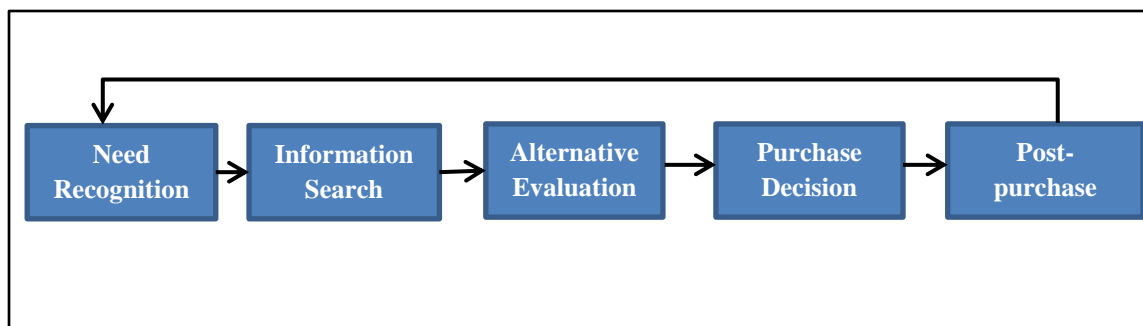
Originated from Kotler (1983: p.148)

Based on consumer purchase decision processes (Kotler, 1983), two important

assumptions have been suggested to have been embraced by most studies on vacation

destination choice (Chen & Lin, 2012). The first assumption is that the process of

destination choice involves intensive information processing because people want to

make reasonable decisions (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Prentice, 2006), and the second

assumption is that since people are limited in their capacity for information processing,

they narrow down their choices among alternative destinations in the process (Sirakaya

& Woodside, 2005; Prentice, 2006).

Building on these two assumptions, a number of destination-choice models have

been developed, though the choice-sets model is arguably the most popular one in the

tourism literature (Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005; Prentice, 2006). According to the

choice-sets model (Crompton, 1992; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Um & Crompton,

1990), as illustrated in Figure 2-7, the process of destination choice begins with a total

set (all destinations), while the number of possible choices is decreased because unaware

destinations (the unaware set) and aware but unavailable destinations (the aware

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unavailable set) are eliminated in the first stage. Among aware and available

destinations, undesirable destinations (the inept set) and uninterested destinations (the

inert set) are further eliminated. Subsequently, final decisions are made from a set of

destinations that an individual is aware of and thinks well of (Sirakaya & Woodside,

2005)

Figure 2-7 The Destination Choice-sets Model
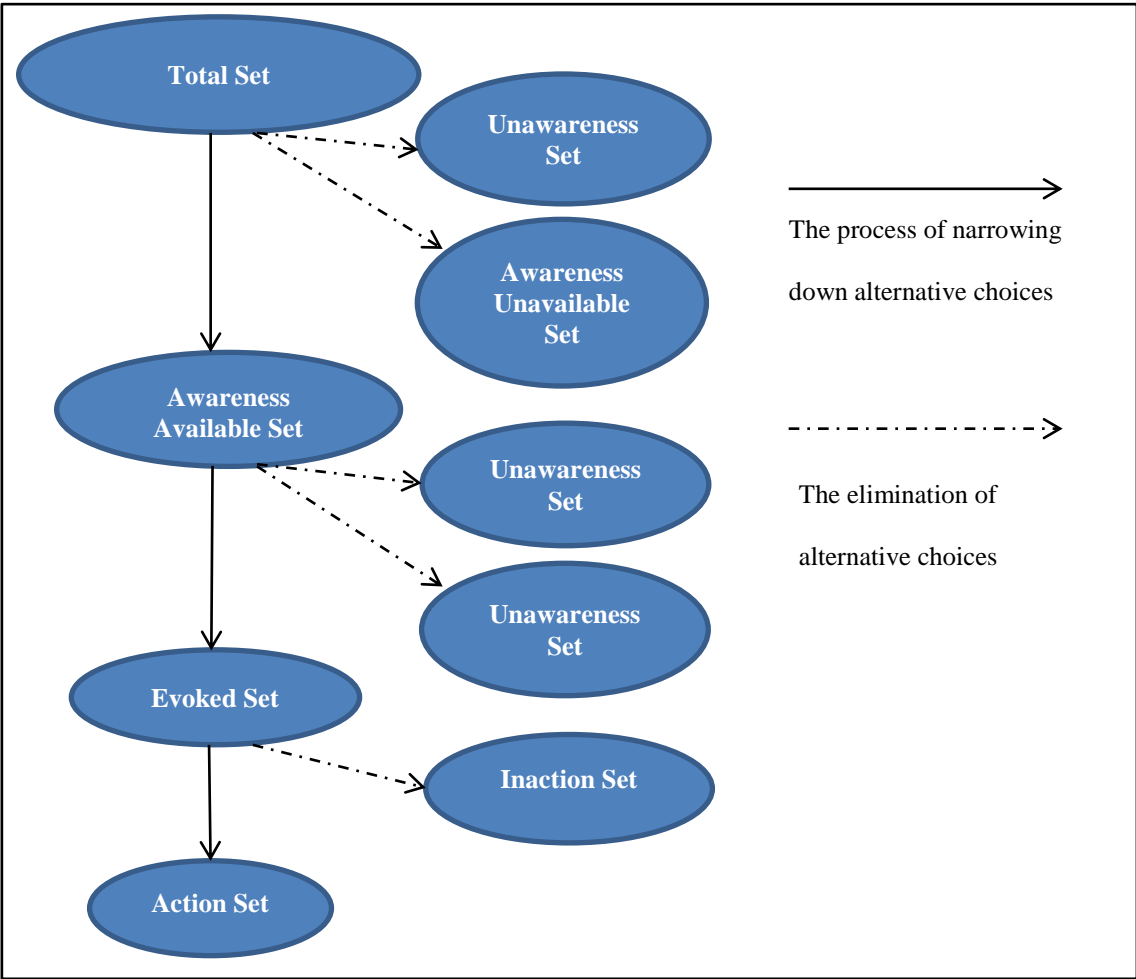
Adapted from Prentice (2006: p.1154).

Research on Tourists' Information Search

As the premise that purchasing a tourism product involves deliberate information processing is theoretically founded and empirically supported, tourism scholars have attempted to examine a variety of issues concerning tourists' information search behaviors. For example, the credibility of various information sources has drawn extensive attention in the tourism literature (Dickinger, 2011; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Grønfalten, 2009).

Among studies pertaining to the credibility of information sources, the main focus has arguably been on how people perceive the trustworthiness of different information sources and how their perceptions affect vacation planning and final decisions. It is worth noting that earlier studies pertaining to the topic frequently examined traditional information sources, such as travel agencies, magazines, guide books, and destination marketing organizations (Andereck & Caldwell, 1994; Fodness & Murray, 1997), while recent studies have paid more attention to word of mouth, such as the spread of information within a social group (Hsu, Kang, & Lam, 2006; Qu & Lee, 2011; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004) and online reviews (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009).

Recent studies on tourists' information search have directed attention to online information search. It has been argued that the Internet has become one of the most important information sources for tourist information (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that Generation Xers prefer to use the Internet for vacation planning, while baby boomers also often use the Internet as a source of tourist

information (Beldona, 2005). In a similar vein, Kim, Lehto, and Morrison (2007) found that both men and women heavily rely on the Internet as a source of tourist information.

According to Buhalis and Law (2008), the emergence of the Internet has fundamentally reshaped how tourist information is distributed and how people search for tourist information. For example, communication through traditional media is unidirectional, while online channels possess the capacity of interactivity (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006). Online channels can also provide high levels of customized content according to an individual's idiosyncratic preferences (Pan & Fesenmaier). These characteristics make the Internet a unique and powerful tool for marketing.

However, it is arguably more important to examine how and why people search for information rather than their preferences for media channels and their differences in information search behavior. Unfortunately, only a few tourism studies have endeavored to examine the mechanisms behind tourists' information search behaviors (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006).

As shown in Figure 2-8, Gursoy and McCleary (2004) proposed a comprehensive model of tourists' information search behavior based on previous literature. According to Gursoy and McCleary (2004), it has been found that involvement is a key factor in the process of information search because highly involved individuals are more likely to accumulate product-related knowledge and utilize both internal searches (the retrieval of knowledge from memory) and external information searches (the collection of information from the environment). Empirical evidence in the consumer behavior and marketing literature has also found that the accumulation of knowledge might decrease

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the cost of internal information searched for, while it increases the cost of conducting external information searches (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004), which suggests that knowledgeable individuals are more likely to rely on the retrieval of knowledge memory rather than external sources in the process of vacation planning.

Gurosy and McCleary's (2004) model has provided an important implication for this research. Specifically, previous studies on tourists' information search have primarily focused on external information search, particularly in the context of vacation planning. Information search behavior is the motivated behavior to search for information stored in memory and/or acquisition of information pertaining to decision making (Engel, al., 1995). Arguably, more tourism research is needed to examine how knowledge is accumulated and stored in memory on a regular basis, which is also one of the objectives in this research. As argued before, based on the attitude importance model (Holbrook et al., 2005), it is proposed that accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge can be instigated by attaching personal importance to an attitude on a regular basis. Therefore, this research intends to examine how attitude importance instigates the process of attitude-relevant knowledge in a tourism context.

Figure 2-8 Tourists' Information Search Behavior Model
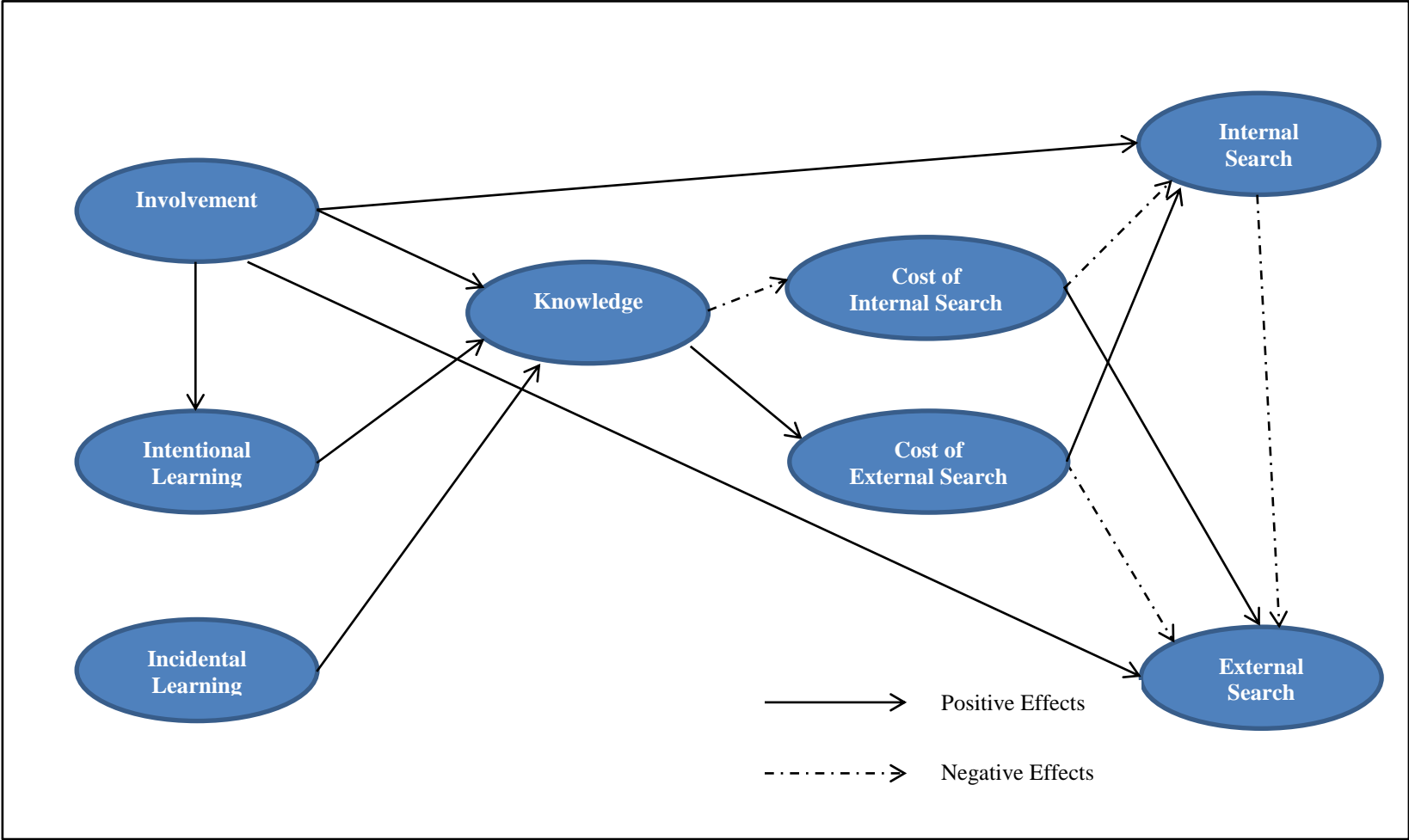
Adapted from Gursoy and McCleary (2004: p.365)

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

This research intended to examine the predictors of travel behavior with a focus on

perceived benefits of tourism. Development of the conceptual framework for this

research was guided by the model of attitude importance borrowed from the field of

social psychology (Boninger et al., 1995a). The model of attitude importance, as

mentioned before, postulates that attitude importance is a strong predictor of behavior in

that people who attach personal importance to an attitude are more likely to actively

accumulate attitude-relevant knowledge on a regular basis (Boninger et al., 1995b;

Holbrook et al. 2005).

Alternative Models

Multiple tourism studies have examined the predictors of travel behavior based on

at least two other social psychological models, including: the ABC model of attitude

(Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985). As

mentioned before, the ABC model of attitude suggests that people's beliefs and feelings

about an object are interrelated, while both of them influence behavior (Fishbein &

Ajzen, 1975). Even though the ABC model of attitude has been widely applied in social

psychology (Crano & Prislin, 2006; Crites et al., 1994; Zanna & Rempel, 1988) as well

as in tourism (Gallarza et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2008; Nadeau et al., 2008), this model has

drawn a lot of criticism because attitudes and behaviors are seemingly assumed to be

consistent in the model (Ostrom, 1989). The ABC model has been applied and validated

in a variety of tourism topics, particularly the topic of destination image (Gallarza et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2008; Nadeau et al., 2008). However, travel behavior has been mostly operationalized as travel intention in the tourism literature. Since travel behavior and intention have been shown to be uncorrelated to each other (McKercher & Tse, 2012), the validation of the ABC model in tourism is arguably problematic.

In order to resolve the observed inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviors, the TPB was proposed by Ajzen (1985). Specifically, the TPB suggests that an individual's behavioral intentions and behaviors are predicted by the combination of favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward the behaviors, perceived social pressure or subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls (Ajzen, 1985). According to the TPB, if individuals evaluate a behavior as positive (attitude) and if they think people around them want them to perform the behavior (subjective norm), they are more likely to perform the behavior. However, favorable evaluations and positive norms do not guarantee actions because individuals are different in their abilities to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Therefore, by adding the component of perceived behavioral control, the TPB has been shown to improve the predictive power on the relationship between attitude and behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Albarracin, Johnson, Zanna, & Kumkale, 2005). The applicability of TPB in tourism was first tested and validated by Lam and Hsu (2006), and subsequent studies have applied the TPB to examine a variety of tourism topics (Dyer et al., 2007; Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010; Hsu, Tsai, & Wu, 2009; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010).

The model of attitude importance provides a different theoretical framework for the relationships between attitudes and behaviors. As mentioned before, it has been demonstrated that some attitudes are stable and consequential - they resist change and exert strong control on thoughts and behaviors - while other attitudes are quite flexible and have few effects on behavior (Krosnick & Petty, 1995; Visser et al., 2003). Attitude importance is one of the strength-related dimensions, which were developed to capture the distinction between strong attitudes and weak attitudes (Boninger et al., 1995a).

The model of attitude importance was selected in this research for several reasons. First, when examining the relationship between attitudes and behaviors, tourism scholars have had a strong preference for the ABC model of attitude, the model which has been shown to be unable to resolve the problem of attitude-behavior inconsistency (Ostrom, 1989). Moreover, travel behavior has been mostly operationalized as travel intention in previous studies (McKercher& Tse, 2012). As this research intended to examine the predictors of travel behavior, the model of attitude importance is arguably more favorable than the ABC model in that it provides a solution for the issue of attitude-behavior inconsistency - strong attitudes result in behaviors, while weak attitudes do not.

Second, the concept of attitude importance is more likely to be apparent in situations of deliberative processing when individuals have to carefully plan out their thoughts and behaviors in order to make a decision (Boninger et al., 1995a). Given the intangible characteristics of the tourism product, purchasing a tourism service often involves intensive information (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) and deliberative processing of both internal and external information searches (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004;

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Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). Therefore, the model of attitude importance is arguably applicable in the context of tourism. In particular, information processing is a fundamental part of the attitude-importance model (Holbrook et al., 2005) as well as the traditional conceptualization of travel purchase decisions (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), while the TPB seemingly has no connection to the issue. It is thus believed that the attitude-importance model can provide further insights into the mechanisms behind travel behavior.

The last reason for applying the model of attitude importance in this research is that it provides a linkage between perceived tourism benefits and travel behavior. The model of attitude importance suggests that an attitude is more important when individuals perceive the attitude object to be connected to their self-interests (Boninger et al., 1995a). In this research, benefits of tourism were defined as the desirable consequences sought from taking a pleasure trip outside an individual's usual environment. Since the attitude object in this research is vacationing, the concept of self-interests was replaced by perceived tourism benefits. Therefore, it was proposed that perceived benefits of tourism should have an indirect effect on travel behavior through attitude importance.

The Strength of Important Attitudes

In the literature on attitude-behavior relationships, the relevance of attitude importance is due to attitudes being usually resistant to change, stable over time, and powerful on thoughts and behaviors (Boninger et al., 2005a). Regarding resistance to

change, it has been demonstrated that individuals who are concerned about biological warfare (Fine, 1957) and Canadian separatism (Gorn 1975) are less likely to change their attitudes in response to a persuasive message. In a similar vein, Zuwerink and Devine (1996) found that individuals who favored allowing gay people in the military were more resistant to a counter-attitudinal message.

Further, important attitudes have been shown to be stable over time. For example, Krosnick (1988) examined how Americans' attitudes towards government policies were changed from 1980 to 1984. They found that attitudes towards government policies that people considered more important were less likely to change (Krosnick, 1988). Similarly, political attitudes held by the same individuals on different occasions of time have shown to be stronger when the attitudes involved were more important (Feldman, 1989; Schuman & Presser, 1981).

Given that important attitudes are usually resistant to change and stable over time, a great deal of evidence suggests that important attitudes are more likely to shape our thoughts and behaviors (Boninger et al., 1995b). For example, multiple studies have shown that voters favored political candidates who held similar attitudes that the voters considered important (Boninger et al., 1995b; Krosnick, 1990; McGraw, Lodge, & Stroth, 1990). Additional research has revealed that attitudes towards government policies that people considered more important were powerful determinants of voting behavior in elections. Holtz and Miller (1985) provided further evidence that important attitudes are likely to shape our thoughts at the group level. They found that college fraternity members tended to agree with in-groups and disagree with out-groups on the

issues that were important to them; however, on the issues about which fraternity members had unimportant attitudes, their attitudinal agreement was equivalent for in-groups and out-groups.

Motivation on Information Processing

As argued before, the model of attitude importance was chosen in this research because information processing is a fundamental part of the model. According to Fazio (1990), there are two forms of information processing, including spontaneous processing and deliberate processing. In most occasions, people perform behaviors without actively considering relevant attitudes via spontaneous processing; however, people sometimes have to deliberately plan out their thoughts and behaviors in order to make a decision (Fazio, 1990). Several studies have suggested that people will be motivated to deliberately process information relevant to important attitudes (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Holbrook et al., 2005; Visser et al., 2003). This suggests that attitude importance guides the development of adaptive strategies in dealing with a huge amount of information around us (i.e. we often ignore information relevant to unimportant attitudes so that we have the time and energy to pay more attention to and carefully process information relevant to important attitudes) (Boninger et al., 1995a). These adaptive strategies, guided by attitude importance, might also explain why important attitudes are resistant to change, stable over time, and powerful on thoughts and behaviors (Boninger et al., 1995a).

The notion that important attitudes have strong impacts on motivation to process relevant information is supported by two areas of research. First, a number of studies have demonstrated that people tend to expose themselves to information relevant to important attitudes (Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick et al., 1993; Visser et al., 2003). Second, several studies have found that people tend to more carefully elaborate information relevant to important attitudes (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Holbrook et al., 2005; Howard-Pitney, Borgida, & Omoto, 1986).

Given that we all receive an enormous amount of information on a daily basis, it is important for us to selectively expose ourselves to only some of the information in the world around us (Boninger et al., 1995a). It has been found that important attitudes guide us in the selection of information. For example, Holbrook et al. (2005) asked a total of 63 respondents to watch the presidential debate between George H. W. Bush and Michael Dukakis in 1988. After the debate, each respondent was asked to recall the statements made by two candidates on the issues of taxes, capital punishment, and defense spending. The results showed that respondents were more likely to recall the statements on the issues that they cared more about, and their recollection on personally important issues were found to be more accurate (Holbrook et al., 2005).

Further, Visser et al. (2003) found that college students who cared more about legalized abortion paid more attention to this topic and discussed more about this topic in their daily life. In the same study, (Visser et al., 2003), students were asked to evaluate 12 political candidates, while they could choose to learn more about each candidate's position on three of six possible issues; it was found that students who cared

more about legalized abortion were more likely to choose to learn about a candidate's position on legalized abortion. Similar results have been reported by Holbrook et al. (2005). In their experimental study, a total of 202 college students were asked to evaluate 12 political candidates, while they were able to learn each candidate's stands on 12 issues. Holbrook et al. (2005) found that participants were more likely to select the issues that they personally cared more about across the 12 candidates.

Additional work has explored variation in the amount of effort in information processing. Multiple studies have supported that people tend to more carefully process information relevant to important attitudes (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Holbrook et al., 2005; Howard-Pitney et al., 1986). For example, Celsi and Olson (1988) reported that when the topic of an advertisement was relevant to a personally important attitudes, people spent more time on the advertisement and generated more thoughts about the advisement as well as the product. Similarly, Howard-Pitney et al. (1986) asked their respondents to watch a debate about drinking-age legislation. They found that people who cared more about the topic generated more message-oriented thoughts.

The Consequences of Selective Exposure and Elaboration

Since attitude importance usually motivates selective exposure and elaboration (Boninger et al., 1995a; Holbrook et al., 2005; Visser et al., 2003), it has been argued and demonstrated that several consequences should follow, including: the development of attitude accessibility and the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge.

First, multiple studies have shown that attitude importance is a cause of attitude accessibility (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Krosnick, 1989; Visser et al., 2003). Attitude accessibility can be defined as "the strength of the object-evaluation link in memory (Krosnick et al., 1993: p.1133)." As mentioned before, people usually selectively expose themselves to and elaborate more carefully about information relevant to important attitudes. According to Krosnick (1989), in this process of selective exposure and elaboration, people often think frequently about the attitude and relevant information, resulting in strengthening the object-evaluation link in memory.

Regarding the association between attitude importance and accessibility, empirical findings have shown that people are able to report their attitudes on political or policy issues more quickly when the issues are personally important to them (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Krosnick, 1989; Krosnick et al., 1993). Further, Bizer and Krosnick (2001) designed an experimental study to examine the causal effect of attitude importance on attitude accessibility. Respondents were interviewed twice right before and after the October 6 White House Conference on Global Climate Change in 1997. Bizer and Krosnick (2001) found that respondents who cared more about the issue of climate change spent more time with news related to the conference (selective exposure). Moreover, it was found that respondents who cared more about the issue were able to answer questions about climate change more quickly and expressed more personal views on the issue (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001).

Second, if people tend to expose themselves to and elaborate more on information relevant to important attitudes, and if this process of selective exposure and elaboration

contributes to the enhancement of the object-evaluation link in memory, it is expected that they will be especially knowledgeable about the attitude objects that are personally important to them (Boninger et al., 1995a). The association between attitude importance and attitude-relevant knowledge has been reported by multiple studies (Bizzer et al., 2003; Krosnick et al., 1993; Holbrook et al., 2005).

Attitude importance has also been found to contribute to the accuracy of attitude-relevant knowledge. For example, Krosnick (1990) found that people were more likely to accurately perceive a presidential candidate's positions on the issues that were important to them. Similar results were reported by Holbrook et al. (2005) that respondents were more likely to pay attention to the policy issues that they cared more about, and they were also found to have more accurate perceptions of political candidates' positions on the issues that were personally important to them.

The Origins of Attitude Importance

Previous studies have also examined the antecedents of attitude importance. As supported by a series of introspective (Boninger et al. 1995b), correlational (Boninger et al., 1995b; Lau et al., 1978) and experimental studies (Boninger et al., 1995b; Holbrook et al. 2005), an attitude seems to be more important when individuals perceive the attitude object to be connected to their self-interests (self-interest), when the people to whom they feel closest to care deeply about the attitude object (social influence), and when they view the attitude object as relevant to their basic personal values (value relevance).

Specifically, in an introspection study, Boninger et al. (1995b) asked their respondents why they believed that several political attitudes were important or unimportant to them. The results of content analysis revealed that a majority of responses (59%) were related to their self-interests, followed by social influence (18%) and values (17%). The correlation between self-interest and attitude importance has also been supported by empirical studies. For example, Lau et al. (1978) found that people who had relatives or friends serving in Vietnam were more personally concerned about the war. Further, Boninger et al. (1995b) conducted a series of five correlational studies. Self-interest was found to be a strong and consistent predictor of attitude importance across different issues, including racial integration, defense spending, marijuana, pollution, and abortion, while social influence and values were also found to have modest correlations with attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995b).

As the above-mentioned five cstudies only involved college students, Boninger et al. (1995b) further examined the effects of self-interest, social influence, and values on attitude importance in a random sample of 174 residents of the Columbus, Ohio. They found that self-interest (β=.29, P<.05), social influence (β=.23, P<.05), and value relevance (β=.32, P<.05) had modest effects on perceived importance of gun control.

The Application of the Attitude-Importance Model in Tourism

This research attempted to examine the effects of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior based on the model of attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995a). A number of social psychologists (Boninger et al., 1995b; Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick

1998; Visser et al., 2003) have been fascinated by how some social and political activists routinely engage in dramatic acts expressing their attitudes that they consider extremely important personally, while at the same time, numerous other people seem completely unmoved by the same issues. As demonstrated in the previous sections, the concept of attitude importance has been developed and validated primarily by examining people's attitude towards political issues. However, as argued by Boninger et al., (1995a), the variability in how people invest in their attitudes seems as likely to be true of attitudes towards political issues as attitudes towards other objects, such as consumer products, aspects of self, or places.

In particular, the concept of attitude importance is more likely to be apparent in situations of deliberative processing when individuals have to carefully plan out their thoughts and behaviors in order to make a decision (Boninger et al., 1995a). Given the intangible characteristics of the tourism product, purchasing a tourism service often involves seeking a lot of information (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) and deliberative processing of both internal and external information searches (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). Therefore, the model of attitude importance is arguably applicable in the context of tourism.

In this research, a total of four path models were established based on the model of attitude importance. As shown in Figure 3-1, the full model incorporated all theoretical concepts. However, as it has been argued that models with more than five factors or 30 items seldom have very good fits (Bentler & Chou, 1987), this full model was separated into three sub-models. These three sub-models were built and tested in order to achieve

the second research objective (testing the model of attitude importance in a tourism context), the third objective (examining the direct and indirect effects of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior), and the fourth objective (investigating the process of knowledge accumulation in a tourism context). The development of each model is explained in the following sections.

Figure 3-1 The Proposed Full Path Model
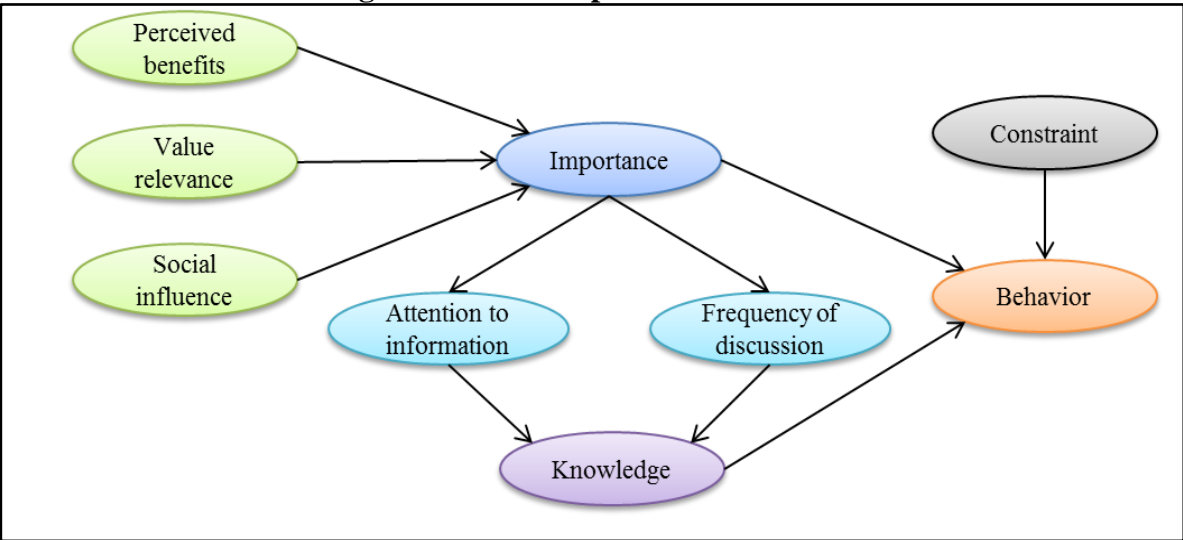
Testing the Model of Attitude Importance

The first sub-model was established in order to achieve the research objective of testing the model of attitude importance in a tourism context. As shown in Figure 3-2, it was hypothesized that attitude importance should be predicted by value relevance, social influence, and perceived tourism benefits, and the direct effect of attitude importance on travel behavior and the indirect effect of attitude importance on travel behavior through knowledge were also hypothesized.

As corroborated by a series of introspective (Boninger et al. 1995b), correlational (Boninger et al., 1995b; Lau et al., 1978) and experimental studies (Boninger et al., 1995b; Holbrook et al. 2005), the origins of attitude importance include self-interest, social influence, and value relevance. However, this research further conceptualized self-interest as perceived benefits of tourism in the proposed model. According to Boninger et al. (1995a), self-interest develops when "one perceives an attitude to be instrumental to the attainment of one's goals (p.176)." In other words, when individuals feel their own well-being may be directly influenced by an issue, their perceived self-interests are likely to be high (Boninger et al., 1995a). In the context of tourism, Sirgy (2010) has also proposed that individuals can experience higher levels of overall life satisfaction by selecting leisure travel goals that are more likely to be attained and by engaging in travel activities that allow them to experience goal attainment. Therefore, it is proposed that how individual perceived the benefits of tourism should affect their purchases of tourism services, and this relationship was proposed to be mediated by perceived importance of vacationing.

Figure 3-2 The Proposed Path Model for the First Research Objective
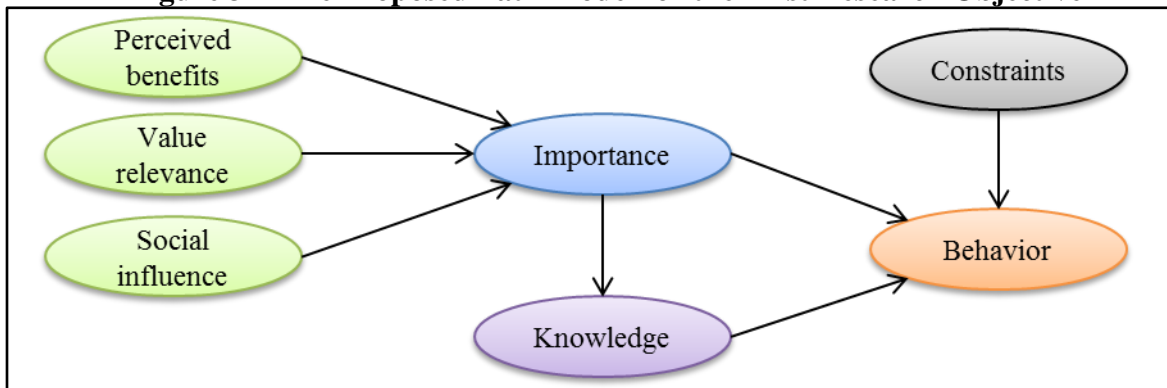
It is worth noting that perceived benefits should be a multi-dimensional construct (Frochot & Morrison, 2001). The proposed model (Figure 3-2) was built to test the model of attitude importance, while the relative importance of each benefit factor on attitude importance was not the main objective here. Therefore, all the benefit factors would be combined as a single factor in the process of structural modeling.

The consequences of attitude importance were also incorporated in the proposed model. Previous studies have demonstrated that attaching personal importance to an object might instigate the process of knowledge accumulation through the process of selective exposure and elaboration (Bizzer et al., 2003; Krosnick et al., 1993; Holbrook et al., 2005), and subsequently influences thinking and action (Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick & Petty, 1995). It was thus proposed that perceived importance of vacationing would have a direct effect on knowledge, and knowledge would have a direct effect on travel behavior.

Moreover, previous studies have also suggested that important attitudes usually have direct impacts on attitude-relevant behaviors (Boninger et al., 1995a). For example, a number of studies have demonstrated that attitudes towards government policies that people considered more important were powerful determinants of voting behavior in elections (Boninger et al., 1995b; Holtz & Miller, 1985; Krosnick, 1988). Therefore, the direct effect of attitude importance on travel behavior was also proposed.

Assessing the Effects of Perceived Tourism Benefits

The second sub-model was established in order to achieve the research objective of assessing the effects of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior. As shown in Figure 3-3, it was hypothesized that perceived tourism benefits should have direct effects on travel behavior, and indirect effects on travel behavior through perceived importance of vacationing. In the first path model, all the benefit factors were combined as a single factor. However, in the second path model, they were not combined together because the relative importance of each benefit factor on attitude importance and travel behavior was the major concern in the second path model. Moreover, the effects of social influence and value relevance were also hypothesized in the model.

The other difference between the first path model (Figure 3-1) and the second path model (Figure 3-2) was that the concept of knowledge was not incorporated in the second path model. As mentioned before, previous studies have demonstrated that attitude importance should have a direct effect on attitude-relevant behavior (Boninger et al., 1995b; Holtz & Miller, 1985; Krosnick, 1988) as well as an indirect effect on

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attitude-relevant behavior through knowledge (Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick & Petty, 1995). However, since the major concern in the second path model was the benefit-importance-behavior associations rather than the importance-knowledge-behavior associations, the concept of knowledge was thus deleted from the proposed model.

Figure 3-3 The Proposed Path Model for the Second Research Objective
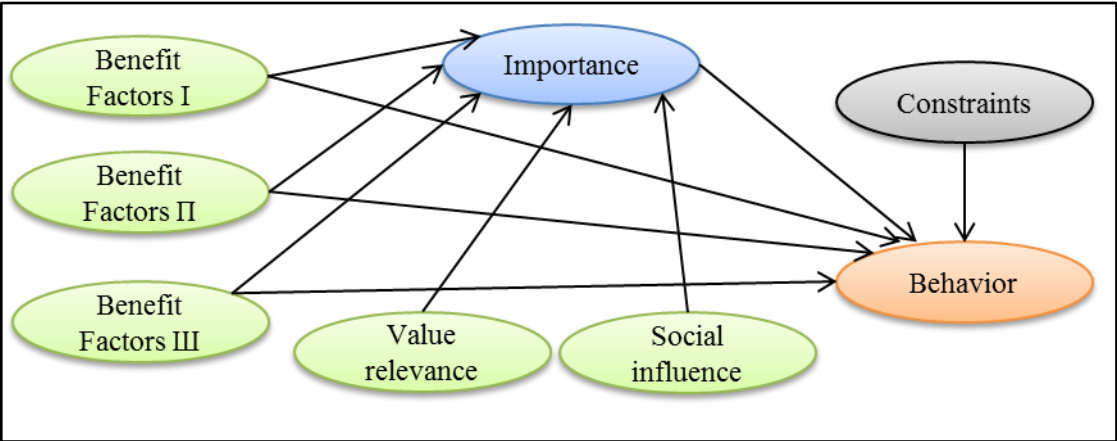
Examining the Process of Knowledge Accumulation

The third sub-model was established in order to achieve the research objective of examining the process of knowledge accumulation in a tourism context. Building on the previous findings that attitude importance usually motivates selective exposure and elaboration of attitude-relevant information (Boninger et al., 1995a; Holbrook et al., 2005; Visser et al., 2003), it was hypothesized that people who care more about taking vacations should pay more attention to information about potential vacations and discuss more frequently about potential vacations. As shown in Figure 3-4, the direct effects of importance on attention to information and frequency of discussion were proposed. Moreover, previous findings have also revealed that the process of selective exposure and elaboration often results in the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge (Holbrook et al., 2005). Thus, the direct effects of attention to information and frequency of discussion on knowledge were also proposed in the third path model.

Figure 3-4 The Proposed Path Model for the Third Research Objective
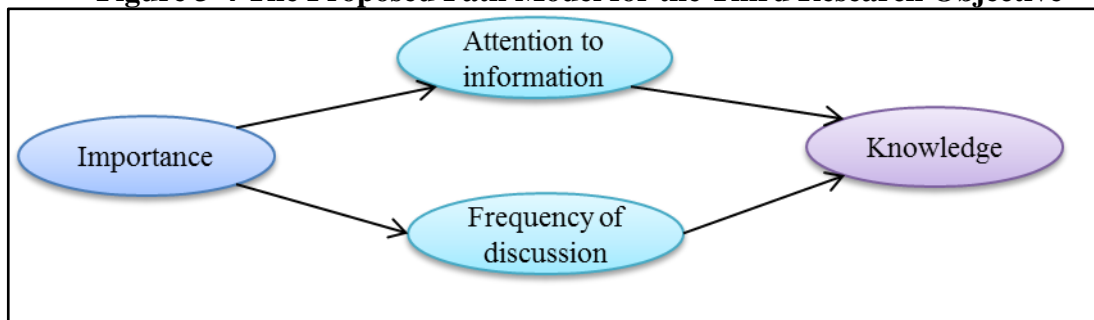
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In order to achieve the proposed research objectives, this research involved a trio of studies, including a preliminary study, a pilot study, and a main survey (see Figure 4-1). A preliminary study and a pilot study were conducted to examine the first research objective. As mentioned before, the first research objective was to develop a new scale to measure perceived benefits of tourism. Since previous benefit studies in tourism have mostly focused on one particular tourist destination or tourism service (Frochot & Morrison, 2001), the preliminary study was implemented to generate a comprehensive list of items measuring how individuals perceive the benefits of tourism services in general. A pilot study was conducted to initially assess the reliability and validity of the scale as well as to trim down the number of items in the scale (the details of scale development process is provided in the next section).

Figure 4-1 Research Design
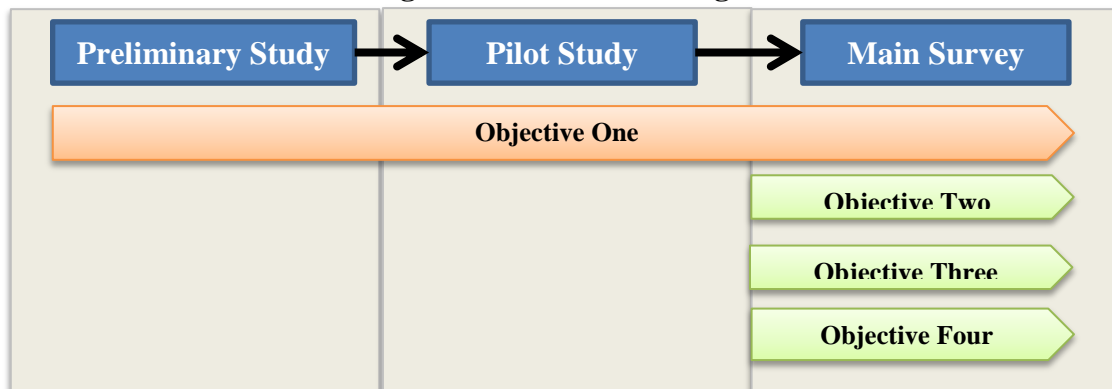
Furthermore, the main survey was conducted for all research objectives. For the first objective, the main survey could help to further assess the reliability and validity of the scale. For the other three research objectives (which involve testing three separate theoretical models), the proposed models were tested.

Scale Development

Adopting the procedure of scale development as suggested by Churchill (1979) and Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma (2003), the first objective of this research was to develop a scale to measure the perceived benefits of tourism. As argued before, previous benefit studies in tourism have mostly examined a particular tourist destination or tourism service, while this research intends to examine general perceptions of how individuals can benefit from taking a vacation.

As shown in Table 4-1, a list of 26 benefit items were compiled by Frochot and Morrison (2001) based on 14 studies in tourism, leisure, and recreation from 1980 to 1998. Even though it has been supported that taking a vacation can help tourists to improve their mental and physical health (Dolinar et al., 2012; Neal et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2011; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005), health is unfortunately not included in the list. More recent studies on tourism benefits have also been examined (Frochot, 2005; Jang, Morrison, & O'Leary, 2002; Kang, Scott, Lee, & Ballantyne, 2012; Li et al., 2009; Sarigöllü & Huang, 2005; Yannopoulos & Rotenberg, 2000). However, most items adopted in these studies are in the list compiled by Frochot and Morrison (2001), none of

them adopted items associated with mental and psychological health benefits. Therefore, it was believed to be necessary to develop a new scale.

In order to generate a comprehensive list of benefit items, a preliminary study was conducted in February 2012. The sample was randomly selected from a list of qualified online panelists from a survey company's database. A total of 566 panelists provided their responses to an open-ended question – what benefits do you believe you receive from taking a vacation.

Responses were analyzed following procedures of content analysis recommended by Weber (1990). The first step was "defining recording units", that is breaking down the responses into different recording units. Subsequently, the recorded categories were defined based on all recording units. In the next step, as mentioned by Pike (2003), the purpose was to seek generality in the data. Therefore, each recording unit was coded into each category, and the frequency and penetration rate of each category were calculated.

The above procedure of content analysis was conducted separately by two researchers. As a result, a total of 709 recording units were defined. Since the purpose of the study was to elicit new benefits items, recording categories were defined based on the list of benefit items complied by Frochot and Morrison (2001). Specifically, all 26 items in the list (see Table 4-1) were first defined as recording categories; then, two researchers decided separately whether each recording unit should be coded into any existing categories. As shown in Table 4-1, a total of 578 recording units were coded into existing categories. However, as shown in Table 4-2, the two researchers were unable to code a total of 131 recording units into the existing categories. Therefore, the

two researchers examined these recording units again, and decided separately how to

define additional recording categories. After negotiation, both researchers agreed on 13

new categories and each recoding unit was subsequently coded into these categories.

Additionally, a total of 10 benefit items that Frochot and Morrison (2001) recommended,

were not mentioned by panelists participating in the preliminary study.

Table 4-1 Results of Preliminary Study (Existing Benefit Items)

#	Benefit Items [a]	Counts [b]
1	To get away from everyday life/routine	43
2	To be with friends	17
3	To do something with the family	61
4	To relax	224
5	To develop my knowledge/ learn new things	23
6	To experience something new	31
7	To engage in physical activities/keep fit	0
8	To be with others who enjoy the same thing	0
9	To release tensions/stress	99
10	To experience the tranquility/ solitude	0
11	To be outdoors/ in nature	3
12	To do something that I normally wouldn't do	5
13	To have fun	41
14	To do exciting things	1
15	For an interest in history	0
16	To be entertained	0
17	For social recognition	0
18	To learn about nature/wildlife	0
19	To meet new people	8
20	To do nothing	1
21	To observe scenic beauty	1
22	To experience new cultures/places	19
23	To experience something authentic	0
24	For the adventure	1
25	For self esteem	0
26	To satisfy curiosity	0
Total		578

[a]: Items were compiled by Frochot and Morrison (2001).
[b]: The counts were based on the results of preliminary study.

In order to further trim down the number of items, a pilot study was conducted in May 2012. Similar to the methods used in the preliminary study, the sample was randomly selected from a list of qualified online panelists from a survey company's database. All participating panelists were asked to rate the level of agreement or disagreement to a list of 29 items associated with tourism benefits (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). These items included all 13 new items (Table 4-2) and 16 existing items that were additionally mentioned by panelists participating in the preliminary study.

Table 4-2 Results of Preliminary Study (New Benefit Items)

#	Benefit Items [a]	Counts [b]
1	To reflect on the priorities of my life	5
2	To sleep better	1
3	To get peace of mind	12
4	To live longer	4
5	To bring down my blood pressure	2
6	To be healthier	4
7	To become refreshed	20
8	To change scenery/environment	14
9	To revive my spirit	4
10	To have better mental outlook/mental clarity	12
11	To gain a new perspective of life/ appreciation for life	17
12	To renew energies/recharge	31
13	To change my pace	5
Total		131

[a]: Items were elicited from the preliminary study
[b]: The counts were based on the results of preliminary study.

A total of 434 panelists participated in the pilot study. Their responses were further analyzed in order to trim down the number of items measuring perceived benefits of tourism. The concept of perceived benefits was expected to be a multi-dimensional construct, while its dimensions could not be determined by previous literature. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was thus used to uncover the underlying factor structure of perceived benefits. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), the minimum sample size for EFA is five times the total number of items measuring a construct. The sample size of 434 in the pilot study was thus deemed sufficiently large in that it is almost 15 times the total number of benefit items.

Since the dimensions of perceived benefits should be correlated to each other, the method of Principal Axis Factoring with PROMAX rotation was used (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Moreover, based on Hair et al.'s (1998) recommendations, the latent root criterion of 1.0 was used for factor extraction. Regarding the criteria for item inclusion, Hair et al. (1998) suggested a factor loading of .50 to be considered as significant. However, as it was at the early stage of scale development, factor loadings of .40 were used for item inclusion (Netemeyer et al., 2003).

As shown in Table 4-3, the factor analysis of the tourism benefit scale produced four factors. The first factor explained 51.6% of the variance and included ten items mostly related to relaxation. The second factor explained 9.7% of the variance and included five items related to physical health benefits of tourism. The third factor explained 5.3% of the variance and included nine items related to experience. The fourth

factor explained 3.7% of the variance and included three items related to psychological health benefits of tourism.

The assumptions in factor analysis were met as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for the analysis was higher than .80 (KMO=.951) and the Bartlett test of sphericity was significant at the .001 level. The results of reliability analysis also indicated high internal consistency for the entire tourism benefit scale (all 27 items) (Cronbach's alpha = .890) as well as for all four factors (relaxation and rest: Cronbach's α=.94; physical health benefits: Cronbach's α=.90; experience and fun: Cronbach's α=.92; psychological health benefits: Cronbach's α=.89).

It is worth noting that only two items were deleted in the process of factor analysis, including "revive my spirit" and "to do nothing" in that both items had low loadings on all four factors (all lower than .40). Thus, the construct of perceived tourism benefits was measured with the resultant 27-item scale (see Table 4-3).

Table 4-3 The Results of the Pilot Study

Benefit factors/ items	Communality	Factor loadings			
Relaxation					
1.To get away from everyday life/ routine	.775	.981			
2.To relax	.707	.942			
3.To become refreshed	.718	.835			
4.To change scenery/ environment	.687	.813			
5.To have fun	.703	.738			
6.To release tensions/ stress	.685	.711			
7.To do something that I normally wouldn't do	.478	.575			
8.To renew energies/ recharge	.679	.482			
9.To change my pace	.606	.457			
10.To do something with my family	.428	.429			
Physical health					
11.To be healthier	.769		.824		
12.To bring down my blood pressure	.620		.768		
13.To live longer	.676		.765		
14.To sleep better	.601		.738		
15.To get peace of mind	.689		.508		
Experience					
16.To experience something new	.774			.711	
17.To meet new people	.495		.418	.671	
18.To experience new cultures/ places	.714			.649	
19.To do exciting things	.698			.645	
20.For the adventure	.695			.623	
21.To develop my knowledge/ learn new Things	.681			.612	
22.To be outdoors/ in nature	.461			.571	
23.To be with friends	.437			.567	
24.To observe scenic beauty	.669			.493	
Psychological health					
25.To gain a new perspective of life/ appreciation for life	.723				.663
26.To have better mental outlook/ clarity	.790		.415		.587
27.To reflect the priorities of my life	.613				.583
Cronbach's α		.937	.903	.917	.890

% Variance Explained: 70.292
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling (KMO): .951
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 10071.695
Significance < .001

Study Instrument

The concept of attitude importance was defined as "an individual's subjective sense of the concern, caring, and significance he or she attach(es) to an attitude" (Boninger et al., 1995a: p. 62). Based on this definition, attitude importance was regarded as a subjective perception of an attitude in this research, which has been argued to be best measured by means of self-reports (Boninger et al., 1995a). Thus, perceived importance of vacationing was measured with three questions adopted from previous studies (Boninger et al., 1995a; Holbrook et al., 2005) asking people: how important an attitude object is to them personally, how deeply they care about the object, and how important the object is to them relative to other issues in their life. As this research focuses on attitudes towards vacationing, the respondents were asked about the personal importance they attached to vacationing (see Table 4-4).

In addition to the construct of perceived benefits, the other two proposed antecedents of attitude importance (social influence and value relevance) were also operationalized in the theoretical model. As shown in Table 4-4, items measuring social influence and value relevance were adopted from Boninger et al. (1995a) and Holbrook et al. (1995).

The concept of social influence was defined as the influence of others on an individual's actions, thoughts, or behaviors. When measuring the concept, respondents were first asked to identify people to whom they feel closest (i.e. parents, spouse, friends, coworkers…etc), and then, they were asked to answer: how important taking a vacation is to the people they feel the closest, how much the people they feel the closest

care about taking a vacation, and how often the people they feel the closest think about potential vacations. The concept of value relevance was defined as the relevance of an issue to an individual's social and personal values. The scale measuring value relevance included three questions: how much their opinions on vacationing are related to their personal values, how often they contemplates that their attitudes on vacationing are related to their personal values, and how much their attitudes on vacationing are based on their general beliefs about how life should be lived.

As shown in Table 4-5, three consequences of attitude importance were measured in this study, including: attention to attitude-relevant information, frequency of discussion about the issue, and self-rated knowledge. Items measuring attention to information and discussion were adopted from Visser, Krosnick, and Simmons (2003), while items measuring self-rated knowledge were adopted from Holbrook et al. (2005).

Perceived benefits of tourism in this research were defined as the desirable consequences sought from taking a pleasure trip. Based on previous literature (Frochot & Morrison, 2001) and the results of the preliminary and pilot studies, a comprehensive list of 27 items measuring tourism benefits were compiled in this study (see Table 4-5).

In this study, travel constraints were defined as factors that inhibit or prohibit participation in pleasure travel. The scale measuring travel constraints were adopted from Nyaupane, Morais, and Graefe (2004). However, since it has been documented that some people are reluctant to take vacations because of job commitments (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004) and some people often feel sick or unable to relax themselves on a

vacation (Van Heck & Vingerhoets, 2007), three more items were added to the scale (items 11, 12, and 13).

As mentioned before, vacation, vacationing, holiday taking, and travel behavior were used interchangeably in this research. Vacation was defined as a temporary respite from work lasting from several days to several weeks (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986), while the scope of this research was not limited to tourism benefits pertaining to work recovery. Therefore, vacation was more broadly defined in this study based on the definition of tourism and/or travel behavior. According to Smith (1995), there are two important components of travel behavior, including: purpose of visit and usual environment. Specifically, for a trip to be defined as a form of tourism, pleasure should be the only or the main purpose of a visit (Smith, 1995). Moreover, a trip to a place that individuals visit on a regular basis should not be defined as a form of tourism (Smith, 1995). The concept of vacation was thus defined as a pleasure trip outside an individual's usual environment.

The scale measuring travel behavior was adopted from Kerstetter, Confer, and Graefe (2001), which includes the following four items: what is the total number of pleasure trips or vacations you have made in the past 12 months, how many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months that were more than 75 miles away from home, and how many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months that were overnight trips.

Table 4-4 Research Instruments (1)

Constructs	Items	Sources
Attitude Importance		
1.Perceived importance of vacationing	1. How important is taking vacations to you personally? 2. How much you personally care about taking vacations? 3. How important is taking vacations to you relative to other issues in your life?	Boninger et al., (1995a); Holbrook et al., 2005
Antecedents of Attitude Importance		
1.Social influence	Please identify people to whom you feel closest (maybe your parents, spouse, friends, coworkers…etc) 1. How important is taking vacations is to them (people you feel closest to)? 2. How much do them (people you feel closest to) care about taking vacations? 3. How often do them (people you feel closest to) think about potential vacations?	Boninger et al. (1995a)
2.Value relevance	1. How much are your opinions on vacationing related to your personal values? 2. How often do you contemplate that your attitudes on vacationing are related to your personal values? 3. How much are your attitudes on vacationing based on your general beliefs about how life should be lived?	Boninger et al. (1995a)
Consequences of Attitude Importance		
1.Attention to attitude-relevant information	1 How much attention do you generally pay to information you came across regarding potential vacations? 2 How much attention do you pay to potential vacations relative to other issues? 3 How much attention do you pay to news articles or televised news stories about potential vacations?	Visser et al. (2003)
2. Frequency of discussion	1. How frequent do you discuss potential vacations with other people? 2. How often do potential vacations come up in your conversations with others? 3. How much time do you spend talking about potential vacations relative to other issues?	Visser et al. (2003)
3. Self-rated knowledge	1. How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about vacationing? 2. How much information do you have about vacationing? 3. To what extent do you consider yourself to be an expert on vacationing?	Holbrook et al. (2005)

Table 4-5 Research Instruments (2)

Constructs	Items	Sources
Perceived Benefits of Tourism		
	1.To get away from everyday life/ routine 15.To get peace of mind 2.To relax 16.To experience something new 3.To become refreshed 17.To meet new people 4.To change scenery/ environment 18.To experience new cultures/ places 5.To have fun 19.To do exciting things 6.To release tensions/ stress 20.For the adventure 7.To do something that I normally wouldn't do 21.To develop my knowledge/ learn new things 8.To renew energies/ recharge 22.To be outdoors/ in nature 9.To change my pace 23.To be with friends 10.To do something with my family 24.To observe scenic beauty 11.To be healthier 25.To gain a new perspective of life/ appreciation for life 12.To bring down my blood pressure 13.To live longer 26.To have better mental outlook/ clarity 14.To sleep better 27.To reflect the priorities of my life	Frochot and Morrison (2001); The results of the preliminary and pilot studies
Travel Constraints	1. Taking a vacation is too physically demanding 2. Taking a vacation involves too much risk 3. I don't like to take a vacations 4. I don't know what to expect about potential vacations 5. I have no one to go with 6. My family and friends are not interested in taking a vacation 7. There are no places to visit near me 8. Taking a vacation is too costly 9. I have no time for a vacation 10. Family commitment keeps me from taking a vacation 11. Job commitment keeps me from taking a vacation 12. I am unable to relax myself on a vacation 13. I always felt sick when I was on vacation	Nyaupane et al. (2004); Gilbert and Abdullah (2004) ; Van Heck and Vingerhoets (2007)
Travel Behavior	1. What is the total number of pleasure trips or vacations you have made in the past 12 months? 2. How many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months were more than 75 miles away from home? 3. How many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months were overnight trips?	Kerstetter et al. (2001)

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Data Analysis

As illustrated in Table 4-6, this research involved multiple analysis techniques, including content analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and path analysis. As mentioned before, the purpose of the content analysis was to analyze responses to the open-ended question in the preliminary study. In the pilot study, the number of items measuring perceived benefits of tourism was trimmed down based on the results of the EFA.

Table 4-6 Steps of Data Analysis

	Stages		
	Preliminary Study	Pilot Study	Main Survey
Objective One	*Content analysis	*EFA [a]	*Descriptive analysis *EFA *CFA [b] *Path analysis
Objective Two			*Descriptive analysis *EFA *CFA *Path analysis
Objective Three			*Descriptive analysis *CFA *Path analysis
Objective Four			*Descriptive analysis *CFA *Path analysis

[a]: EFA denotes exploratory factor analysis
[b]: CFA denotes confirmatory factor analysis

In the main survey, analysis of the data included four steps. In the first step, in order to test the normality assumptions, the skewness and kurtosis values for each item were examined. Skewness and kurtosis values between -1 and 1 suggest uni-variate normality (Hair et al., 1998), while askew index greater than 3.0 and a kurtosis index greater than 8.0 should be considered as significant departure from normality (Kline, 2010). Therefore, items associated with high absolute skewness and kurtosis values were considered to be deleted or transformed.

The second step involved using EFA to uncover the underlying factor structure of perceived benefits. Since the dimensions of perceived benefits should be correlated to each other, the method of Principal Axis Factoring with PROMAX rotation was used. Based on Hair et al. (1998), the latent root criterion of 1.0 was used for factor extraction, and the factor loading criteria of .50 was used for item inclusion.

Subsequently, in order to assess measurement fit, the measurement model for each construct was established with the use of CFA. These constructs included: perceived benefits of tourism, perceived importance of vacationing, value relevance, social influence, attention to attitude-relevant information, frequency of discussion, self-rated attitude-relevant knowledge, travel behavior, and travel constraints. In this research, model fit was evaluated by several fit indices, including: the comparative fit index (CFI), the normed fit index (NFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Based on Byrne (1998) and Bollen (1989), a model is regarded as having a good fir, if CFI and NFI exceed .90, and RMSEA is less than .80 (acceptable fits indicate good fits of measurements). In the last step, path analysis was

used to test the proposed models associated with the second, third, and fourth objectives of the study.

Data Collection

The population of this study was defined as all American residents who were 18 years or older at the time of data collection. Therefore, respondents in this research were delimited to those who are currently living in the United States. As mentioned before, a preliminary study and a pilot study were conducted to develop a new scale measuring perceived benefits of tourism, while the main survey was conducted in order to further validate the scale as well as to test several hypotheses pertaining to the effect of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior and the applicability of the attitude importance model in tourism.

The preliminary study and the pilot study were conducted in February and May 2012, respectively. Both samples were randomly selected from a list of qualified online panelists from a survey company's database. A total of 566 panelists participated in the preliminary study, which was deemed sufficient for a qualitative study. Moreover, a total of 434 panelists participated in the pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study was to trim down the number of benefit items. According to Hair et al. (1998), the sample size in factor analysis should be at least five times the number of items associated with a single construct. Since the number of items measuring benefits of tourism was 29, the sample size of 434 in the pilot study is arguably sufficient in that it is almost 15 times the total number of benefit items.

For the main survey, an online panel survey was implemented to obtain a national representative sample. Similar to the method adopted in the preliminary and pilot studies, the sample was also randomly selected from a list of online panelists from the same survey company's database in August 2012. A total of 559 panelists participated in the main survey. As argued by Kline (2010), structural equation modeling techniques (including path analysis and CFA) require larger samples in that results derived within larger samples produce less sampling error. Kline (2010) has further suggested that a sample size of 200 may be necessary for a complicated path model, and that the cases/parameter ratio should be more than 5:1. Therefore, a sample size of 559 was deemed sufficient.

It is worth noting that all three studies in the research involved online panel survey. The current spread of the Internet has instigated the application of electronic technologies for data collection, particularly survey research. As argued by Hung and Law (2011), the Internet has been commonly used as a research tool for survey researchers in various fields of study. However, the validity of the Internet as a data-collection tool has also been questioned (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2004). In general, Internet-based surveys are attractive to researchers because of low cost, high efficiency, and response rate, while it is also believed that Internet-based surveys can be subject to high coverage errors, low data quality, and response bias (Hung & Law, 2011).

A number of studies have been conducted to compare the validity and reliability of online and offline data. As shown in Table 4-7, the advantages of online surveys have been frequently demonstrated, including fast response time (Cobanoglu, Warde, &

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Moreo, 2001; McDonald & Adam, 2003; Kwak & Radker, 2002; Tse, 1998), low cost (Cobanoglu et al., 2001; McDonald & Adam, 2003), and high response rate (Cole, 2005; McDonald & Adam, 2003; Kwak & Radker, 2002; Tse, 1998).

Regarding the disadvantages of Internet-based surveys, the assumption of poor data quality (which was often assessed by the number of missing values) has not been supported (Buchanan & Smith, 1999; Cole, 2005; Riva,Teruzzi, & Anolli, 2003), and the assumption of response biases (by testing whether online and offline data have different data patterns, such as variable mean or the relationship between variables) has only been supported by a few studies (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2004; McDonald & Adam, 2003). However, as shown by a number of studies (Cole, 2005; Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2004; Kwak & Radker, 2002); McDonald & Adam, 2003), coverage error is seemingly a more serious problem for Internet-based surveys.

The major issue pertaining to the coverage error of Internet-based surveys is that the Internet population is not equivalent to the general public because not every person has access to the Internet (Cole, 2005; McDonald & Adam, 1998). According to the World Bank (2011), less than half of the people in China (34.4%) and Mexico (31.1%) were able to access to the Internet in 2010. Therefore, the Internet might not be an appropriate tool to survey the general public in China and Mexico. However, since most people in the United States have access to the Internet (74.2% in 2010, according to the World Bank (2011), the Internet is arguably a legitimate tool for data collection in this study; though the potential for coverage errors still exists.

Table 4-7 The Results of Online versus Offline Research

Research	Location	Sample	Advantages			Disadvantages		
			Response time	Low cost	Response Rate	Coverage error	Data quality	Response bias
Litvin and Kar (2001)	Singapore	General public				PS[1]		PS
Cole (2005)	U.S.A.	Travel retailers			S	S	N	PS
Hwang and Fesenmaier (2004)	U.S.A.	CVB users				S		S
Buchanan & Smith(1999)	U.S.A.	General public					N	N
Riva,Teruzzi, and Anolli (2003)	Italy	College students					N	N
Cobanoglu et al. (2001)	U.S.A.	Hospitality professors	S	S	N			N
McDonald and Adam (2003)	Australia	Members of football clubs	S	S	S	S		S
Stanton(1998)	U.S.A.	Employed professionals				N		N
Kwak and Radker(2002)	U.S.A.	College students	S		S	S		
Knapp and Kirk(2003)	U.S.A.	College students				N		PS
Epstein, Klinkenberg, Wiley, and McKinley (2001).	U.S.A.	College students				PS		PS
Tse(1998)	Hong Kong	College staff	S		S		N	

[1] S denotes supported; PS denotes partially supported; N denotes not supported

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

An online panel survey was conducted to obtain a national representative sample, which yielded a total of 559 respondents. Table 5-1 provides demographic information for the survey participants. As can be seen, there were nearly equal numbers of female (286 or 51.2%) and male respondents (273 or 48.8%). Only one-fourth of the respondents had high school or less education (138 or 24.7%), while a majority of respondents pursued higher education (college: 265 or 47.4%; graduate school: 156 or 27.9%).

Table 5-1 also reveals that most survey participants were aged between 20 to 70 years old, including: 76 respondents in age group 20-29 (13.6%), 101 respondents in age group 30-39 (18.1%), 115 respondents in age group 40-49 (20.6%), and 83 respondents in age group 50-59 (14.8%), and 83 respondents in age group 60-69 (14.8%). Only 30 respondents were younger than 20 years old (5.4%) and 71 respondents were older than 70 years old (12.7%). The mean age was 46.8 with a standard deviation of 17.9. Moreover, nearly 70% of the respondents reported that their household incomes were between $25,000 and $100,000 ($25,000 to $49,999: 169 or 30.2%; $50,000 to $74,999: 110 or 19.7%; $75,000 to $99,999: 95 or 17.0%), while only 96 respondents had household incomes lower than $25,000 (17.2%) and 89 respondents had household incomes greater than $100,000 (15.9%).

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Table 5-1 Profile of Respondents

Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%
Gender			**Education**		
Male	273	48.8	High School	138	24.7
Female	286	51.2	College	265	47.4
Total	559	100.0	Graduate School	156	27.9
			Total	559	100.0
Marital Status			**Household income**		
Married	313	56.0	Under $25,000	96	17.2
Single	236	42.2	$25,000 – 49,999	169	30.2
Prefer not to answer	10	1.8	$50,000 – 74,999	110	19.7
Total	559	100.0	$75,000 – 99,999	95	17.0
			More than $100,000	89	15.9
			Total	559	100.0
Age					
Under 20 years	30	5.4	**Pleasure trips in the past 12 months**		
20 to 29 years	76	13.6	No	158	28.3
30 to 39 years	101	18.1	Once	142	25.4
40 to 49 years	115	20.6	Twice	113	20.2
50 to 59 years	83	14.8	Three times	57	10.2
60 to 69 years	83	14.8	Four times	34	6.1
70 Years and over	71	12.7	Five time or more	55	9.8
Total	559	100.0	Total	559	100.0

As shown in Table 5-1, a majority of respondents had at least one pleasure trip within the past 12 months; 142 respondents had only one (25.4%), 113 had two (20.2%), 57 had three times (10.2%), 34 had four times (6.1%) , and 55 had 5 times or more (9.8%). Only 158 respondents did not travel for pleasure within the past 12 months (28.3%).

Sampling Bias Check

As mentioned before, an online panel survey was implemented to obtain a national representative data. Therefore, the demographics of the U.S. population and the research sample were compared with chi-square tests. A total of four tests were conducted to detect the independence between two probability distributions in sex, age, education, and income.

Table 5-2 shows that the research sample had approximately equal numbers of male (273 or 48.8%) and female respondents (286 or 51.2%). According to 2010 census data, male and female accounted for 49.2% and 50.8 of the population. These two numbers were the expected percentages for male and female respondents. The expected values for male and female respondents were calculated by multiplying each expected percentage by the sample size; the expected values for male and female were 276 and 283. The results of chi-square test indicate that the research sample and the U.S. population were homogenous in regards to gender (Chi-square=0.06; df=1; p=.80).

Table 5-2 Demographic Comparison – Gender

Gender	Observed value	Observed %	Expected %[1]	Expected value[2]
Male	273	48.8	49.2	276
Female	286	51.2	50.8	283

Chi-square=0.06; df=1; p=.80

Note: [1] Expected percentages were drawn from 2010 Census Data
(http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data)
[2] Expected values were calculated by the following formula: sample size (559)* expected %

The age difference between the research sample and the U.S. population was further compared. As mentioned before, the survey population was defined as all U.S. residents who were 18 years or older at the time of data collection. Therefore, a total of 30 respondents (who were younger than 20) were thus excluded from the comparison. Table 5-3 reveals that the study sample had 76 respondents in age group 20-29 (14.4%), 101 respondents in age group 30-39 (19.1%), 115 respondents in age group 40-49 (21.7%), 83 respondents in age group 50-59 (15.7%), and 83 respondents in age group 60-69 (15.7%). According to 2010 census data, the percentage for each age group was 18.9 (20-29 years old), 17.8 (30-39 years old), 19.3 (40-49 years old), 18.6 (50-59 years old), 13.0 (60-69 years old), and 12.3 (70 years or older). The results of chi-square test indicate that the research sample and the U.S. population were not homogenous in age (Chi-square=12.81; df=5; p<.05). In general, the survey sample had more than expected respondents in age group 30-39 and 40-49, and fewer than expected respondents in age group 20-29, 50-59, and 60-69.

Table 5-3 Demographic Comparison – Age

Age	Observed value	Observed %	Expected %[1]	Expected value[2]
20 to 29 years	76	14.4	18.9	99
30 to 39 years	101	19.1	17.8	95
40 to 49 years	115	21.7	19.3	103
50 to 59 years	83	15.7	18.6	98
60 to 69 years	83	15.7	13.0	69
70 years and over	71	13.4	12.3	65

Chi-square=12.81; df=5; p<.05

Note: [1] Expected percentages were drawn from 2010 Census Data (http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data)
[2] Expected values were calculated by the following formula: (559-30) * expected %

Subsequently, education differences between the research sample and the U.S. population were further compared. Since a total of 109 respondents (who were younger than 24) were excluded from the comparison, the sample size in the test was only 490. Table 5-4 shows that less than one-fourth of the respondents had high school or less education (109 or 22.2%), while a majority of respondents pursued higher education (college: 234 or 47.8%; graduate school: 147 or 30.0%). According to 2010 census data, the percentage for each education group was 44.1 (high school), 45.3 (college), and 10.5 (graduate school). The results of chi-square test indicate that the research sample and the U.S. population were not homogenous in education (Chi-square=227.21; df=2; p<.001). In general, the survey sample had more than expected respondents who had attended graduate school, and less than expected respondents who had only high school education.

Table 5-4 Demographic Comparison – Education

Education	Observed value	Observed %	Expected %[1]	Expected value[2]
High school	109	22.2	44.1	216
College	234	47.8	45.3	222
Graduate school	147	30.0	10.5	52

Chi-square=227.21; df=2; p<.001

Note: [1] Expected percentages were drawn from 2010 Census Data (http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data)
[2] Expected values were calculated by the following formula: sample size (490)* expected %

Regarding the difference in household income, Table 5-5 showed that the survey sample had 96 respondents with household incomes of less than $25,000 (17.2%), 169 respondents earned $25,000-49,999 (30.2%), 110 respondents reported between $50,000-74,999 (17.0%), and 89 reported household incomes of more than $100,000 (15.9%). According to 2010 census data, the expected percentage in each group was 17.8 (under $25,000), 23.8 ($25,000-49,999), 19.4 ($50,000-74,999), 13.5 ($75,000-99,999), and 15.9 (more than $100,000). The results of chi-square test indicate that the research sample and the U.S. population were not homogenous in household income (Chi-square=33.80; df=5; p<.001). In general, the survey sample as compared to the U.S population had lower household incomes.

Table 5-5 Demographic Comparison – Household Income

Age	Observed value	Observed %	Expected %[1]	Expected value[2]
Under $25,000	96	17.2	17.8	99
$25,000 – 49,999	169	30.2	23.8	134
$50,000 – 74,999	110	19.7	19.4	108
$75,000 – 99,999	95	17.0	13.5	76
More than $100,000	89	15.9	25.6	142

Chi-square=33.80; df=5; p<.001

Note: [1] Expected percentages were drawn from 2010 Census Data
(http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data)
[2] Expected values were calculated by the following formula: sample size (559)* expected %

In summary, the results of chi-square tests show that the survey sample and the U.S. population were homogenous in gender and nearly homogenous in age. However, the survey sample was better educated. Specifically, only 10% of Americas who were 25 or older had attended graduate school in 2010, while 30% of the survey sample had attended graduate school. Moreover, the differences in house income were also observed, especially in the wealthiest group (people with household incomes of more than $100,000). About 26% of the Americans were in the wealthiest group in 2010, while only 16% of the respondents had household incomes of more than $100,000.

As argued before, even though the Internet is a legitimate tool for data collection, the potential for coverage errors still exists. Previous studies have frequently reported that online samples are more likely to include better-educated respondents (Cole, 2005; Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2004), while people with higher incomes are less likely to participate in online surveys (Cole, 2005; Litvin & Kar, 2001). Therefore, even though sampling errors were observed in this study due to the nature of online sampling, this research had successfully reached Americans with different demographic backgrounds.

Descriptive Statistics

In the next step, the descriptive statistics of each variable were examined, including mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. The descriptive statistics for the 27 benefit items are shown in Table 5-6. As can be seen, all benefit items had mean values larger than 3 on a five-point scale and the mean values of 13 items were larger than 4. These results indicate that respondents generally believed that taking vacations is beneficial. It is worth noting that several items associated with health benefits of tourism had lower mean values, such as sleep better (m=3.18), to live longer (m=3.32), to bring down my blood pressure (m=3.12), and to be healthier (m=3.30). These items also had higher standard deviations (all larger than 1).

As shown in Table 5-6, the skew and kurtosis indices for most benefit items fell within the suggested range between -1 and 1. Nine items had a skewness value lower than -1, which indicates an uneven distribution with more observations higher than normal, while the absolute values of all 9 items were smaller than the threshold of 3. Similarly, nine benefit items had a kurtosis value larger than 1, which suggested that more observations were concentrated around the mean. Since the absolute values of all 9 items were smaller than the threshold of 8, it is believed that the assumption of univariate normality was not extremely violated by the benefit items.

The descriptive statistics of items measuring attitude importance, value relevance, and social influence are illustrated in Table 5-7. The results showed that all 9 items had a mean value larger than 4 on a five-point scale, which indicates that respondents generally believed taking vacations was important to their life, their beliefs

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about vacationing were highly related to their personal values, and their close friends

and family members also regarded vacationing as important.

Table 5-6 Descriptive Statistics of Benefit Items

Items	Mean	S. D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
To relax	4.20	.856	-1.304	2.281
To become refreshed	4.19	.854	-1.164	1.706
To release tensions/ stress	4.13	.838	-.866	.783
To get away from everyday life/ routine	4.41	.766	-1.419	2.595
To change scenery/ environment	4.32	.795	-1.251	2.084
To do something that I normally wouldn't do	4.06	.890	-.808	.505
To sleep better	3.18	1.052	-.081	-.313
To live longer	3.32	1.033	-.158	-.267
To bring down my blood pressure	3.12	1.106	-.103	-.451
To be healthier	3.30	1.052	-.253	-.286
To change my pace	3.93	.899	-.874	1.062
To get peace of mind	3.84	.952	-.662	.287
To renew energies/ recharge	4.01	.911	-.924	1.000
To reflect the priorities of my life	3.47	1.060	-.361	-.302
To have better mental outlook/ clarity	3.72	.976	-.458	-.127
To gain a new perspective of life/ appreciation for life	3.74	.979	-.582	.171
To do something with my family	4.15	.989	-1.201	1.143
To be with friends	3.67	1.098	-.646	-.142
To meet new people	3.31	1.114	-.282	-.514
To have fun	4.36	.761	-1.178	1.582
For the adventure	4.05	.944	-.865	.468
To do exciting things	4.02	.911	-.789	.494
To be outdoors/ in nature	3.89	.955	-.606	-.092
To experience something new	4.13	.859	-1.006	1.254
To experience new cultures/ places	3.99	.944	-.797	.323
To observe scenic beauty	4.21	.884	-1.168	1.396
To develop my knowledge/ learn new things	3.95	.907	-.712	.422

Table 5-7 Descriptive Statistics of Items Measuring Attitude Importance, Value Relevance, and Social Influence

Items	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attitude importance	5.03	1.764	-.709	-.348
1. How important is taking vacations to your life?				
2. How important is taking vacations to you relative to other issues in your life?	4.32	1.757	-.250	-.691
3. How much do you personally care about taking vacations?	5.02	1.757	-.736	-.279
Value relevance				
1. How much are your opinions on vacationing related to your personal values?	5.03	1.594	-.771	.227
2. How much are your attitudes on vacationing based on your general beliefs about how life should be?	5.02	1.642	-.791	.081
3. How often do you contemplate that your attitudes on vacationing are related to your personal values?	4.23	1.876	-.313	-.916
Social influence				
1. How important is taking vacations to people you feel closest to?	5.32	1.630	-.940	.303
2. How much do the people you feel closest to care about taking vacations?	5.25	1.594	-.850	.217
3. How often do the people you feel closest to think about potential vacations?	5.03	1.614	-.723	.004

It is worth noting that 9 items listed in Table 5-7 had larger standard deviations than benefit items. Specifically, all 9 items measuring attitude importance, value relevance, and social influence had a standard deviation larger than 1.5, while none of benefit items had a standard deviation larger than 1.2. Moreover, the skew and kurtosis indices for all 9 items in Table 5-7 fell within the suggested range between -1 and 1, which indicated the assumption of univariate normality was not violated across the 9 items.

The descriptive statistics of items measuring three consequences of attitude importance - attention to attitude-relevant information, frequency of discussion, and self-rated attitude-relevant knowledge, are illustrated in Table 5-8. All 9 items had a mean value larger than 3.5 on a five-point scale, which indicates that respondents generally paid much attention to information about potential vacations, they also frequently discussed about potential vacations, and they were generally knowledgeable about potential vacations.

Table 5-8 Descriptive Statistics of Items Measuring Attention to Information, Frequency of Discussion, and Self-rated Knowledge

Items	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attention to information				
1. How much attention do you generally pay to information you came across regarding potential vacations?	4.46	1.766	-.426	-.640
2. How much attention do you pay to potential vacations relative to other issues?	4.12	1.707	-.180	-.717
3. How much attention do you pay to news articles and televised new stories about potential vacations?	4.08	1.833	-.204	-.958
Frequency of discussion				
1. How frequently do you discuss potential vacations with other people?	4.23	1.799	-.240	-.886
2. How often do potential vacations come up in your conversations with others?	3.95	1.778	-.129	-.949
3. How much time do you spend talking about potential vacations relative to other issues?	3.53	1.769	.136	-.944
Knowledge				
1. How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about vacationing?	4.43	1.665	-.328	-.582
2. How much information do you have about vacationing?	4.35	1.643	-.381	-.462
3. To what extent do you consider yourself to be an expert on vacationing?	3.71	1.798	-.048	-1.010

Table 5-8 shows that all 9 items measuring attention to information, frequency of discussion, and self-rated knowledge had a standard deviation larger than 1.5. Moreover, the skew and kurtosis indices for all 9 items in Table 5-8 fell within the suggested range between -1 and 1, which indicates the assumption of univariate normality was not violated by the 9 items.

The descriptive statistics for the 13 constraint items are shown in Table 5-9. As can be seen, a total of 12 constraint items had a mean value smaller than 2.5 on a five-point scale, while "taking a vacation is too costly" was the only item that had a mean value larger than 2.5. These results indicate that respondents generally believed that their vacation plans were not influenced by the constraints listed in Table 5-9. Moreover, the skew and kurtosis indices for most constraint items fell within the suggested range between -1 and 1. Only two items had a skewness value larger 1, and two items had a kurtosis value smaller than -1. Since all four absolute values were fairly close to 1, it is believed that the assumption of univariate normality was not extremely violated across the constraint items.

Table 5-10 provides descriptive statistics of items measuring travel behavior. It was reported that respondents had taken an average of 1.9 pleasure trips within the past 12 months, and the mean values for trips more than 75 miles and overnight trips were 1.8 and 1.7. However, all three standard deviations were more than 2. The skewness and kurtosis indices of the three items were further examined. As can be seen in Table 4-10, all three variables had a kurtosis value larger than 10, which indicated extreme departure from normality.

Table 5-9 Descriptive Statistics of Constraint Items

Items	Mean	S. D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Taking a vacation is too physically demanding.	2.39	1.118	.353	-.787
Taking a vacation involves too much risk.	2.18	.967	.519	-.206
I don't like to take vacations.	1.85	1.058	1.037	.188
I don't know what to expect about potential vacations.	2.24	1.033	.329	-.825
I have no one to go on vacation with.	2.11	1.245	.828	-.444
My family and friends are not interested in taking a vacation.	2.09	1.123	.688	-.452
There are no places to visit near me.	1.95	1.050	.858	-.093
Taking a vacation is too costly.	3.33	1.281	-.451	-.777
I have no time for a vacation.	2.47	1.235	.306	-1.002
Family commitment keeps me from taking a vacation.	2.36	1.206	.394	-.930
Job commitment keeps me from taking a vacation.	2.45	1.342	.357	-1.175
I am unable to relax on a vacation.	2.05	1.107	.811	-.201
I feel sick when I am on a vacation.	1.79	1.034	1.220	.823

In order to minimize normality problems, the three items measuring travel behavior were recoded in the same way. Specifically, old values smaller than 4 were copied to three new variables, while old values larger than 5 were recoded as 5 in the three new variables. In this way, the three new variables only had six different values, including 0 (none), 1(one trip), 2 (two trips), 3 (3 trips), 4 (four trips), and 5(five trips or more). Table 5-10 showed the skew and kurtosis indices for all 3 recoded items fell

within the suggested range between -1 and 1, which indicated that the problem of

univariate normality was minimized.

Table 5-10 Descriptive Statistics of Items Measuring Travel Behavior

Items	Mean	S. D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Before recoding				
Total number of pleasure trips	1.92	2.31	2.803	13.171
Number of pleasure trips that were more than 75 miles	1.80	2.64	4.770	41.717
Number of pleasure trips that were overnight	1.74	2.18	2.486	10.073
After recoding				
Total number of pleasure trips	1.70	1.59	.758	-.470
Number of pleasure trips that were more than 75 miles	1.55	1.63	.920	-.294
Number of pleasure trips that were overnight	1.56	1.60	.851	-.396

Exploratory Factor Analysis

In the next step, EFA was used to uncover the underlying factor structure of perceived benefits. In the pilot study, EFA was used to initially examine the factor structure of perceived benefits, while the primary purpose was to trim down the number of benefit items. Therefore, a low threshold for item inclusion (factor loadings of .40) was chosen in order to retain more items in the early stages of scale development. In this stage of scale development, EFA was conducted to finalize the scale. Thus, based on Hair et al. (1998), a factor loading of .50 was chosen as the criteria for item inclusion. Moreover, the latent root criterion of 1.0 was used for factor extraction. Since the dimensions of perceived benefits should be correlated to each other, the method of Principal Axis Factoring with PROMAX rotation was used (Netemeyer et al., 2003).

As shown in Table 5-11, the factor analysis of the tourism benefit scale produced three factors. The first factor explained nearly 47% of the variance and included 9 items mostly related to fun, new, and nature experiences. This factor was thus labeled as "Experience." The second factor explained about 13% of the variance and included 6 items related to physical and psychological health benefits of tourism. This factor was thus labeled as "Health." The third factor explained nearly 8% of the variance and included 5 items related to relaxation and relief. This final factor was thus labeled as "Relaxation."

Table 5-11 Results of EFA

Benefit factors/items	Commun ality	Factor loading		
		Factor	Factor	Factor
Experience				
To experience something new	.775	.882	-.089	.055
To do exciting things	.682	.842	.033	-.049
To develop my knowledge/ learn new things	.500	.820	.156	-.168
For the adventure	.611	.802	.004	-.034
To experience new cultures/ places	.605	.798	.001	-.032
To do something that I normally wouldn't do	.477	.644	-.037	.092
To observe scenic beauty	.637	.630	-.044	.137
To have fun	.654	.592	-.195	.383
To be outdoors/ in nature	.428	.579	.185	-.044
Health				
To be healthier	.693	-.014	.831	.017
To bring down my blood pressure	.585	-.104	.809	-.004
To live longer	.657	.073	.806	-.064
To sleep better	.548	-.112	.750	.077
To reflect the priorities of my life	.555	.138	.671	.000
To have better mental outlook/ clarity	.597	.214	.567	.125
Relaxation				
To relax	.729	-.059	.026	.878
To become refreshed	.774	-.011	.041	.867
To release tensions/ stress	.734	-.076	.080	.864
To get away from everyday life/ routine	.640	.241	-.148	.688
To renew energies/ recharge	.591	.067	.276	.549
Cronbach's α		.922	.894	.907
Variance Explained (%)		46.926	12.928	7.841

% Variance Explained: 67.695
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling (KMO): .933
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 8126.620
Significance < .001

The assumptions in factor analysis were met as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for the analysis was higher than .80 (KMO=.933) and the Bartlett test of sphericity was significant at the .001 level. The results of reliability analysis also indicated high internal consistency for the entire tourism benefit scale (all 20 items) (Cronbach's alpha = .94) as well as for all three factors (experience: Cronbach's α=.92; health: Cronbach's α=.89; and, relaxation: Cronbach's α=.91).

Compared to the results of EFA in the pilot study (Table 4-3), seven additional items were deleted as these items had low loadings (lower than .50) on all three factors. Furthermore, the resultant factor structures in the pilot study and the main survey were similar to each other. However, two resultant factors in the pilot study - psychological health and mental health, were combined as a single factor in the main survey.

Assessing Scale Validity

The fits of measures of all 9 constructs in the proposed model were tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As suggested by Hair et al. (1998), when scales and dimensional structures of items are developed by the literature, CFA is an appropriate method of assessing fits of measurements. Existing scales were adopted to measure the following 7 single-dimension constructs: attitude importance, value relevance, social influence, attention to information, frequency of discussion, self-rated knowledge, and travel behavior. The other two constructs in the proposed model – travel constraints and perceived benefits, were multi-dimensional. The factor structure of travel constraints has been specified as the combination of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints (Nyaupane et al., 2004). In this study, the dimensions of perceived benefits have also been specified as the combination of experience, relaxation, and health benefits. Therefore, a total of 9 measurement models were first established to assess the fits of measures for each construct.

As mentioned before, model fits in this study were evaluated by several fit indices, including the comparative fit index (CFI), the normed fit index (NFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Based on Byrne's (1998) and Bollen's (1989) suggestions, a model is regarded as having a good fit, if CFI and NFI exceeds .90, and RMSEA is less than .80.

Results from CFA on perceived benefits revealed that the initial measurement model consisting of one 9-item factor (experience), one 6-item factor (health), and one 5-item factor (relaxation) had low fit indices ($\chi 2$=1236.89, df=167, CFI=.87, NFI=.85,

and RMSEA=.107). Since all regression weights were significant (p<.001), the measurement model was further refined by deleting items associated with large residuals (standardized residuals greater than 2.57 are considered statistically significant as suggested by Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma, 2003) and large modification indices (modification indices greater than 3.84 are considered as statistical significant as suggested by Netemeyer et al., 2003). The process of model modification involved deleting items associated with highest standardized residuals and modification indices until a good model fit was achieved.

As shown in Table 5-12, one item measuring health benefits of tourism - to have better mental outlook/clarity, was first deleted in that this item was highly correlated with another health benefit item - to reflect the priorities of my life, which resulted in a significant decrease in the value of chi-square ($\Delta\chi2=253.71$; $\Delta df=18$; P<.001) and improved fit indices (CFI=.89; NFI=.87; RMSEA=.100). Since fit indices appeared to be unacceptable after deleting one item, another item measuring experiential benefits of tourism – to do exciting things, was deleted in that this item was highly correlated with another two items associated with experiential benefits - to have fun and for adventure, which resulted in a significant decrease in the chi-square value ($\Delta\chi2=185.28$; $\Delta df=17$; P<.001). The resultant model, as shown in Figure 5-1, consisted of one 8-item factor (experience) and two 5-item factors (heath and relaxation) had overall good fit indices ($\chi2=797.90$, df=132, CFI=.90, NFI=.90, and RMSEA=.095). As can be seen, all 18 factor loadings and 3 correlations were statistically significant (P<.001).

Table 5-12 Process of Model Modification for the Measurement Model of Benefits

Models	χ^2	AIC	Df	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Original	1236.89	1322.89	167	.87	.85	.107
Without item – To have better mental outlook/ clarity	983.18	1065.18	149	.89	.87	.100
Without item – To do exciting things	797.90	875.90	132	.90	.90	.095

The convergent validity of the items measuring perceived benefits was further assessed by two diagnostics, including: composite reliability and average variance extracted estimate (AVE). As shown in Table 5-13, the composite reliability levels for experiential benefits, health benefits, and relaxation were .91, .88, and .91 respectively. All of them exceeded the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). The AVEs for experiential benefits, health benefits, and relaxation were .57, .60, and .67 respectively. All of them also exceeded the suggested threshold of .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Therefore, the convergent validity of the scale was considered as high.

The discriminant validity for benefit factors was assessed by comparing the square of the correlation between two factors and their AVEs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square of the correlation between experiential and health benefits was .20, which was smaller than the AVEs of experiential benefits (.57) and health benefits (.60). The square of the correlation between experiential and relaxation benefits was .48, which was also smaller than the AVEs of experiential benefits (.57) and relaxation benefits (.67). Finally, the square of the correlation between health and relaxation benefits was .25, which was also smaller than the AVEs of health benefits (.60) and relaxation benefits (.67). Therefore, the discriminant validity for three benefit factors was considered as high.

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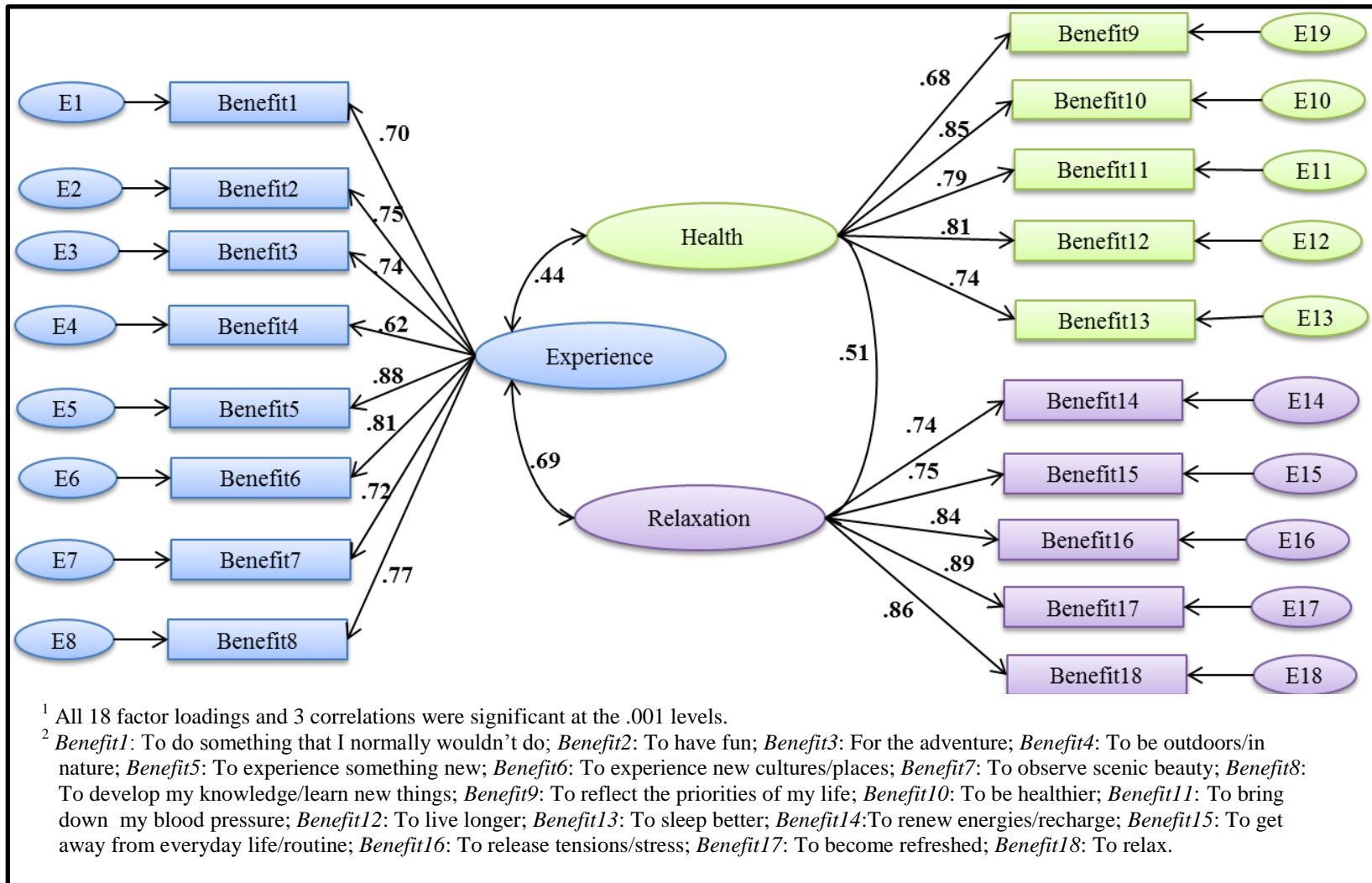**Figure 5-1 The Measurement Model of Perceived Tourism Benefits**

[1] All 18 factor loadings and 3 correlations were significant at the .001 levels.

[2] *Benefit1*: To do something that I normally wouldn't do; *Benefit2*: To have fun; *Benefit3*: For the adventure; *Benefit4*: To be outdoors/in nature; *Benefit5*: To experience something new; *Benefit6*: To experience new cultures/places; *Benefit7*: To observe scenic beauty; *Benefit8*: To develop my knowledge/learn new things; *Benefit9*: To reflect the priorities of my life; *Benefit10*: To be healthier; *Benefit11*: To bring down my blood pressure; *Benefit12*: To live longer; *Benefit13*: To sleep better; *Benefit14*:To renew energies/recharge; *Benefit15*: To get away from everyday life/routine; *Benefit16*: To release tensions/stress; *Benefit17*: To become refreshed; *Benefit18*: To relax.

Table 5-13 The Convergent Validity of Benefit Scale

Factors/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Experience			.91	.57
To do something that I normally wouldn't do	.70	.51		
To have fun	.75	.44		
For the adventure	.74	.46		
To be outdoors/ in nature	.62	.61		
To experience something new	.88	.22		
To experience new cultures/ places	.81	.35		
To observe scenic beauty	.72	.48		
To develop my knowledge/ learn new things	.77	.41		
Health			.88	.60
To reflect the priorities of my life	.68	.54		
To be healthier	.85	.28		
To bring down my blood pressure	.79	.37		
To live longer	.81	.34		
To sleep better	.74	.45		
Relaxation			.91	.67
To renew energies/ recharge	.74	.46		
To get away from everyday life/ routine	.75	.43		
To release tensions/ stress	.84	.29		
To become refreshed	.90	.20		
To relax	.86	.26		

Next, the measurement model of travel constraints was established. Results from CFA on travel constraints revealed that the initial measurement model consisting of one 2-item factor (interpersonal constraints), one 6-item factor (intrapersonal constraints), and one 5-item factor (structural constraints) had low fit indices (χ2=475.15, df=62,

CFI=.89, NFI=.88, and RMSEA=.109). Since all regression weights were significant (p<.001), the measurement model was further refined by deleting items associated with large residuals and large modification indices. As shown in Table 5-14, only one item associated with structural constraints - there are no places to visit near me, was deleted. The resultant model, as shown in Figure 5-2, consisted of one 2-item factor (interpersonal constraints), one 6-item factors (intrapersonal constraints), and one 4-item factor (structural constraints) had overall good fit indices ($\chi2$=282.50, df=51, CFI=.93, NFI=.92, and RMSEA=.090). As can be seen, all 18 factor loadings and 3 correlations were statistically significant (P<.001).

The convergent validity of the items measuring travel constraints was further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. As shown in Table 5-15, the composite reliability levels for interpersonal constraints, intrapersonal constraints, and structural constraints were .83, .89, and .78 respectively. Two of them (interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints) exceeded the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003), and the composite reliability of structural constraints was close to the suggested threshold. The AVEs for interpersonal constraints, intrapersonal constraints, and structural constraints were .71, .58, and .49 respectively. All of them were larger than or close to the suggested threshold of .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Therefore, the convergent validity of the scale was considered as acceptable, though potentially problematic.

Table 5-14 Process of Model Modification for the Measurement Model of Constraints

| Models	$\chi2$	AIC	Df	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Original	475.15	533.15	62	.89	.88	.109
Without item – There are no places to visit near me	282.50	336.50	51	.93	.92	.090

Note: The chi-square differential test was significant at the .001 level.

The discriminant validity for benefit factors was further assessed. The square of the correlation between intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints was .49, which was smaller than the AVEs of intrapersonal (.58) and interpersonal constraints (.71). The AVEs of interpersonal and structural constraint were .71 and .49, and both were higher than the square of the correlation between these two factors (.24). Finally, the square of the correlation between intrapersonal and structural constraints was .35, which was also smaller than the AVEs of intrapersonal (.58) and structural constraints (.49). Therefore, the discriminant validity for the three constraint factors was considered as high.

Table 5-15 The Convergent Validity of Constraint Scale

Factors/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Interpersonal			.83	.71
I have no one to go on vacation with.	.81***	.34		
My family and friends are not interested in taking a vacation.	.87***	.24		
Intrapersonal			.89	.58
I feel sick when I am on a vacation.	.81***	.35		
I am unable to relax on a vacation.	.83***	.31		
I don't know what to expect about potential vacations.	.72***	.48		
I don't like to take vacations.	.82***	.33		
Taking a vacation involves too much risk.	.72***	.49		
Taking a vacation is too physically demanding.	.65***	.58		
Structural			.78	.49
Taking a vacation is too costly.	.49***	.76		
I have no time for a vacation.	.86***	.27		
Family commitment keeps me from taking a vacation.	.64***	.59		
Job commitment keeps me from taking a vacation.	.75***	.43		

Note: *** denotes P<.001

Figure 5-2 The Measurement Model of Travel Constraints
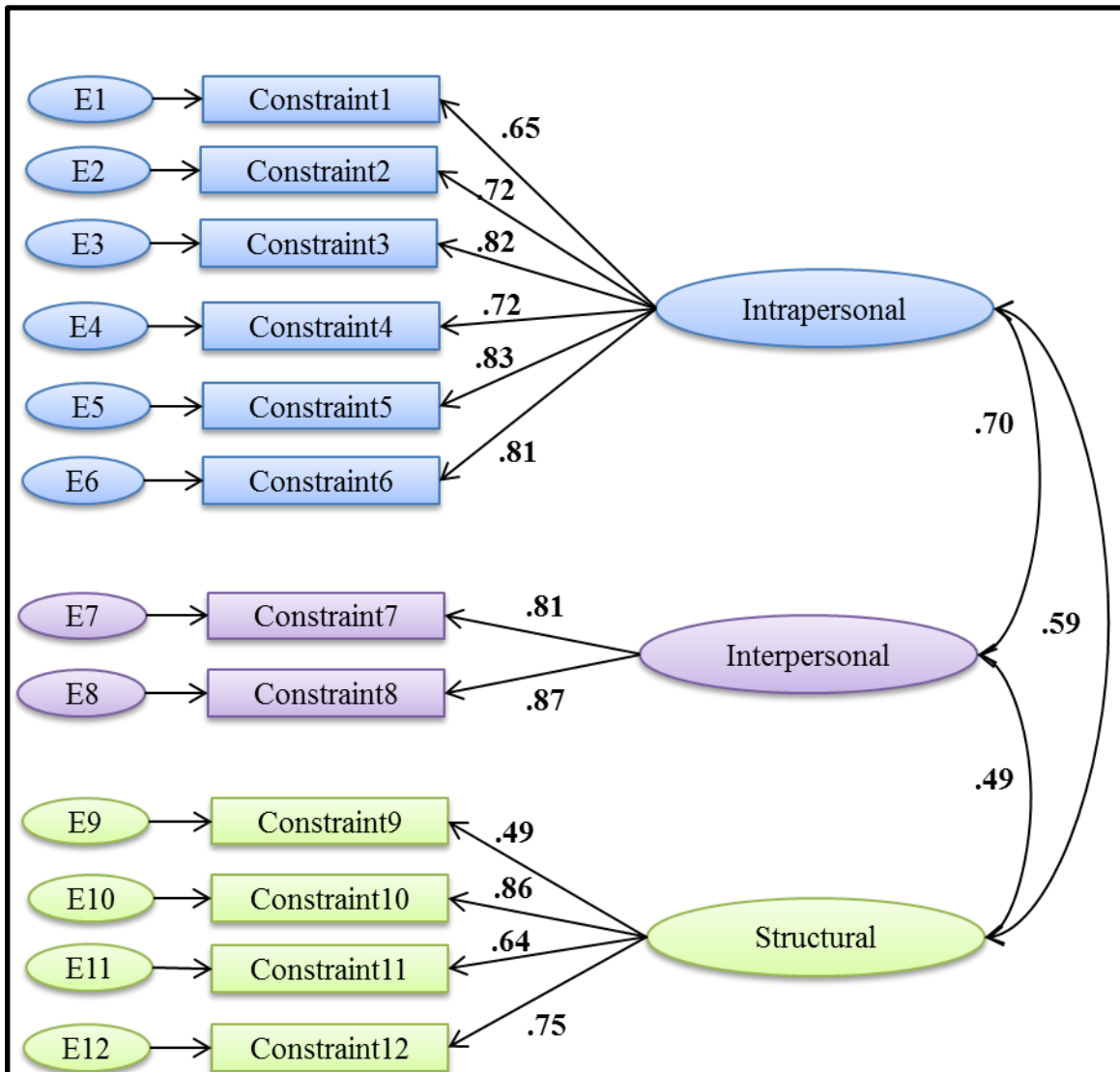
^{1} All 3 correlations and 11 factor loadings were significant at .001 levels.
^{2} *Constraint1*: Taking a vacation is too physically demanding; *Constraint2*: Taking vacation
Involves too much risk; *Constraint3*: I don't like to take vacations; *Constraint4*: I don't know
what to expect about potential vacations; *Constraint5*: I am unable to relax on a vacation;
Constraint5: I feel sick when I am on a vacation; *Constraint7*: I have no one to go on vacation
with; *Constraint7*: My family and friends aren't interested in taking a vacation; *Constraint9*:
Taking a vacation is too costly; *Constraint10*: I have no time for a vacation; *Constraint11*: Family
commitment keeps me from taking a vacation; *Constraint12*: Job commitment keeps me from
taking a vacation.

In the next step, the measurement models for the other 7 single-dimensional

constructs were established. As shown in Table 5-16, since the measurement model of

attitude importance was just-identified (df=0), the chi-square was zero and both CFI and

NFI were 1. Since the three factor loadings were all significant (p<.001), no item were

considered for deletion. The convergent validity of the attitude-importance scale was

further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. As shown in Table 5-17, the

composite reliability was .91, which exceeded the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer

et al., 2003). The AVE was .78, which was larger than .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003).

Therefore, the convergent validity of the scale was considered as high.

Table 5-16 Fit Indices for Seven Single-dimensional Measurement Models

Models	χ^2	AIC	df	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
1.Attitude importance	0	12	0	1	1	0.845
2. Value relevance	0	12	0	1	1	0.653
3. Social influence	0	12	0	1	1	0.846
4. Attention to information	0	12	0	1	1	0.821
5. Frequency of discussion	0	12	0	1	1	0.852
6. Knowledge	0	12	0	1	1	0.796
7. Travel Behavior	0	12	0	1	1	0.987
Note: All 7 measurement models were just-identified models.						

Table 5-16 also shows that the measurement models of value relevance and social influence were both just-identified ($\chi 2$=0, *df*=0, CFI=1, NFI=1). No item was considered to be deleted in that 3 factor loadings in each model were all significant (P<.001). The convergent validity of two scales was further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. As shown in Table 5-17, the composite reliability for value relevance and social influence were .84 and .91. Both exceeded the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). The AVEs for value relevance and social influence were .64 and .78, with both being larger than the suggested threshold of .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Therefore, the convergent validity of the two scales was considered as high.

The discriminant validity for the scales assessing attitude importance and its antecedents (experiential benefits, health benefits, relaxation benefits, value relevance, and social influence) was further examined by comparing the square of the correlation between each pair of discriminating factors and their AVEs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 5-18, the correlation coefficients (r) between the 12 pairs of discriminating factors ranged from .28 to .68. The r-square values thus ranged from .08 to .46. Since the AVEs for all factors were higher than .50, the discriminant validity for the scales of attitude importance, perceived benefits, value relevance, and social influence was considered as high.

Table 5-17 The Convergent Validity of Attitude Importance, Value Relevance, and Social Influence Scales

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Attitude importance			.91	.78
1. How important is taking vacations to your life?	.93	.14		
2. How important is taking vacations to you relative to other issues in your life?	.79	.37		
3. How much do you personally care about taking vacations?	.92	.15		
Value relevance			.84	.64
1. How much are your opinions on vacationing related to your personal values?	.86	.26		
2. How much are your attitudes on vacationing based on your general beliefs about how life should be?	.87	.25		
3. How often do you contemplate that your attitudes on vacationing are related to your personal values?	.67	.56		
Social influence			.91	.78
1. How important is taking vacations to people you feel closest to?	.86	.26		
2. How much do the people you feel closest to care about taking vacations?	.95	.09		
3. How often do the people you feel closest to think about potential vacations?	.83	.31		

Note: [1] All factor loadings were significant at the .001 levels.
[2] All three measurement models were just-identified (df=0)

Table 5-18 The Discriminant Validity of the Scales Assessing Attitude Importance and its Antecedents

Discriminating factors	r	r-square	AVEs
1. Importance vs. Experience	.45***	.20	Importance: .78; Experience: .57
2. Importance vs. Health	.40***	.16	Importance: .78; Health: .60
3. Importance vs. Relaxation	.43***	.18	Importance: .78; Relaxation: .67
4. Importance vs. Value	.68***	.46	Importance: .78; Value: .64
5. Importance vs. Social	.56***	.31	Importance: .78; Social: .78
6. Experience vs. Value	.42***	.18	Experience: .57; Value: .64
7. Experience vs. Social	.42***	.17	Experience: .57; Social: .78
8. Health vs. Value	.43***	.18	Health: .60; Value: .64
9. Health vs. Social	.28***	.08	Health: .60; Social: .78
10. Relaxation vs. Value	.39***	.15	Relaxation: .67; Value: .64
11. Relaxation vs. Social	.35***	.12	Relaxation: .67; Social: .78
12.Value vs. Social	.58***	.34	Value: .64; Social: .78

Regarding the measurement models of three consequences of attitude importance, all were just-identified ($\chi2$=0, df=0, CFI=1, NFI=1). As shown in Table 5-19, no items were deleted as the 3 factor loadings in each model were significant (P<.001). The convergent validity of the three scales was further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. Table 5-19 shows that the composite reliability for attention to information, frequency of discussion, and self-rated knowledge were .91, .92, and .90. All exceeded the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). The AVEs for attention, discussion, and knowledge were .77, .78, and .76. All these values were also larger than the suggested threshold of .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Therefore, the convergent validity of the three scales was considered as high.

Table 5-19 The Convergent Validity of Attention, Discussion, and Knowledge Scales

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Attention to Information			.91	.77
1. How much attention do you generally pay to information you came across regarding potential vacations?	.90	.19		
2. How much attention do you pay to potential vacations relative to other issues?	.91	.18		
3. How much attention do you pay to news articles and televised new stories about potential vacations?	.82	.33		
Frequency of discussion			.92	.78
1. How frequently do you discuss potential vacations with other people?	.85	.28		
2. How often do potential vacations come up in your conversations with others?	.96	.07		
3. How much time do you spend talking about potential vacations relative to other issues?	.84	.29		
Knowledge			.90	.76
1. How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about vacationing?	.89	.21		
2. How much information do you have about vacationing?	.89	.22		
3. To what extent do you consider yourself to be an expert on vacationing?	.84	.30		

Note: [1] All factor loadings were significant at the .001 levels.
[2] All three measurement models were just-identified (df=0)

The discriminant validity for the scales assessing three consequences of attitude importance was further examined by comparing the square of the correlation between each pair of discriminating factors and their AVEs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 5-20, the correlations coefficients (r) between the 6 pairs of discriminating factors ranged from .57 to .76. The r-square values ranged from .32 to .57. Since the AVEs for all factors were higher than .60, the discriminant validity for the scales of attention to information, frequency of discussion, and self-rated knowledge was considered as high.

Table 5-20 The Discriminant Validity of Attention, Discussion, and Knowledge Scales

Discriminating factors	r	r-square	AVEs
1. Importance vs. Attention	.67***	.45	Importance: .78; Attention: .77
2. Importance vs. Discussion	.63***	.40	Importance: .78; Discussion: .78
3. Importance vs. Knowledge	.57***	.32	Importance: .78; Knowledge: .76
4. Attention vs. Discussion	.76***	.57	Attention: .77; Discussion: .78
5. Attention vs. Knowledge	.68***	.46	Attention: .77; Knowledge: .76
6. Discussion vs. Knowledge	.69***	.47	Discussion: .57; Knowledge: .76

The measurement model of travel behavior was also a just-identified model ($\chi2$=0, df=0, CFI=1, NFI=1). As shown in Table 5-21, no items were deleted as the 3 factor loadings in each model were all significant (P<.001). The convergent validity of the scale was further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. Table 5-21 reveals that

the composite reliability was .93 and the AVE was .83. Both exceeded the suggested

threshold, so the convergent validity of the scale was considered as high.

The discriminant validity for the scales assessing attitude importance, travel

constraints, and travel behavior was further examined by comparing the square of the

correlation between each pair of discriminating factors and their AVEs (Fornell &

Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 5-22, the absolute values of the correlation

coefficients (r) between the 7 pairs of discriminating factors ranged from .24 to .44. The

r-square values ranged from .06 to .19. Since the AVEs for all factors were higher than

.40, the discriminant validity for the scales of attitude importance, travel constraints, and

travel behavior was considered as high.

Table 5-21 The Convergent Validity of Travel Behavior Scale

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Travel behavior			.93	.83
1. Total number of pleasure trips	.96	.08		
2. Number of pleasure trips that were more than 75 miles	.87	.24		
3. Number of pleasure trips that were overnight	.90	.20		

Note: [1] All factor loadings were significant at the .001 levels.
[2] This measurement model was just-identified (df=0)

Table 5-22 The Discriminant Validity of Importance, Constraint, and Behavior Scales

Discriminating factors	r	r-square	AVEs
1. Importance vs. Behavior	.44***	.19	Importance: .78; Behavior: .83
2. Importance vs. Intra	-.38***	.14	Importance: .78; Intra: .58
3. Importance vs. Inter	-.27***	.07	Importance: .78; Inter: .71
4. Importance vs. Structural	-.24***	.06	Importance: .78; Structural: .49
5. Behavior vs. Intra	-.31**	.09	Behavior: .83; Intra: .57
6. Behavior vs. Inter	-.30***	.09	Behavior: .83; Inter: .71
7. Behavior vs. Structural	-.24***	.06	Behavior: .83; Structural: .49

The Path and Measurement Models for the Second Research Objective

Subsequently, since it was intended to establish four path models in this research, four measurement models associated with these path models were developed. The first path model was developed for the second research objective – testing the model of attitude importance in a tourism context. According to Holbrook et al. (2005a), important attitudes instigate a process of knowledge accumulation, and subsequently influence attitude-relevant behavior. Therefore, it was proposed that perceived importance of vacationing should have a direct effect on travel behavior and an indirect effect on travel behavior through self-rated knowledge. Based on previous literature (Boninger et al., 1995a; Holbrook et al. 2005), the direct effects of perceived benefits, value relevance, and social influence on attitude importance were also proposed in the path model. Moreover, the proposed effect of travel constraints on travel behavior was also examined. Thus, this path model and the associated measurement model had a total of 7 constructs, including: perceived benefits, value relevance, social influence, attitude importance, knowledge, travel behavior, and travel constraints.

It is worth noting that both perceived benefits and travel constraints had three factors. The proposed model was built to test the model attitude importance, while the relative importance of each benefit factor on attitude importance and the relative importance of each constraint factor on travel behavior were not the main objective here. Therefore, the factor scores of the three benefit factors and constraint factors were used in the process of structural modeling.

As shown in Table 5-23, results from CFA revealed that the measurement model for Objective Two consisting of seven 3-item factors had acceptable fit indices ($\chi2$=454.91, *df*=168, CFI=.97, NFI=.95, and RMSEA=.055). All the 21 factor loadings (Table 5-23) and the 21 correlations (Table 5-24) in the measurement model were significant (*p*<.001). Thus, no further modifications were made.

The convergent validity of each construct was further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. As shown in Table 5-23, the composite reliability levels for value relevance, social influence, attitude importance, knowledge, and travel behavior were .84, .91, .91, .90, and .94 respectively, with all being larger than the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). However, the composite reliability levels for perceived benefits and travel constraints were .77 and .76 respectively, and both were slightly smaller than .80. The AVEs for perceived benefits, value relevance, social influence, attitude importance, knowledge, travel behaviors, and travel constraints were .54, .64, .78, .78, .76, .83 and .53 respectively. All of them were larger than the suggested threshold of .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Therefore, the convergent validity of the scale was considered as acceptable, though potentially problematic.

Table 5-23 The Measurement Model for Objective Two

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Perceived benefits			.77	.54
Experience	.80	.36		
Health	.56	.69		
Relaxation	.82	.33		
Value relevance			.84	.64
Value1	.86	.26		
Value2	.87	.25		
Value3	.67	.56		
Social influence			.91	.78
Social1	.87	.24		
Social2	.94	.11		
Social3	.84	.30		
Importance			.91	.78
Import1	.92	.15		
Import2	.79	.37		
Import3	.93	.14		
Knowledge			.90	.76
Know1	.88	.23		
Know2	.89	.20		
Know3	.83	.30		
Behavior			.94	.83
Be1	.96	.09		
Be2	.88	.23		
Be3	.90	.19		
Constraints			.76	.53
Intrapersonal	.88	.22		
Interpersonal	.68	.53		
Structural	.58	.66		

Note: [1] All factor loadings were significant at the .001 levels.
[2] Model fit indices: $\chi2$=454.91, *df*=168, CFI=.97, NFI=.95, and RMSEA=.055

The discriminant validity was further assessed by comparing the square of the

correlation between two factors and their AVEs. Since all the seven factors in the

measurement model had an AVE larger than .50, only the correlation larger than .70

would be a potential threat to discriminant validity (the square of .70 equals to .49). As

shown in Table 5-24, all the 21 correlations were smaller than .70, except for the

correlation between attitude importance and value relevance (.77). Since the AVEs for

attitude importance and value relevance were .78 and .64, with both being larger than the

square of .77(.59), the discriminant validity for the seven factors in the measurement

model was considered as high.

Table 5-24 The Correlations in the Measurement Model for Objective Two

	Benefits	Value	Social	Importance	Knowledge	Behavior	Constraints
Benefits	1						
Value	.58	1					
Social	.49	.65	1				
Importance	.59	.77	.60	1			
Knowledge	.39	.68	.49	.62	1		
Behavior	.25	.40	.32	.47	.40	1	
Constraints	-.49	-.36	-.41	-.46	-.24	-.39	1

Note: [1] All correlations were significant at the .001 levels.

Regarding the path model for Objective Two, Figure 5-3 shows that all of the

proposed paths (direct effects) were significant (P<.01). Specifically, the direct effects of

perceived benefits (β=.22; P<.001), value relevance (β=.64; P<.001), and social influence (β=.15; P<.01) on perceived importance of vacationing were all significant, which indicates that H2a, H2b, and H2c were supported. The direct effects of attitude importance on knowledge (β=.61) and travel behavior (β=.26) were both significant (p<.001), which suggested that both H2d and H2e were supported. The other hypothesis (H2f) was also supported as the direct effect of self-rated knowledge on travel behavior was statistically significant (β=.18; P<.01). Finally, travel constraints was found to have a negative effect on travel behavior (β= -.25; P<.001). As the model had a good fit ($\chi2$=838.21, *df*=181, CFI=.92, NFI=.90, and RMSEA=.081), no further modifications were made.

The direct, indirect, and total effects in the proposed model are listed in Table 5-25. Among the four exogenous variables, perceived benefits, value relevance, and social influence only had an indirect effect on travel behavior, and the other variable – travel constraints, only had a direct effect on travel behavior. The four exogenous variables had a moderate effect on travel behavior (r-square=.13).

Figure 5-3 The Path Model for Objective Two

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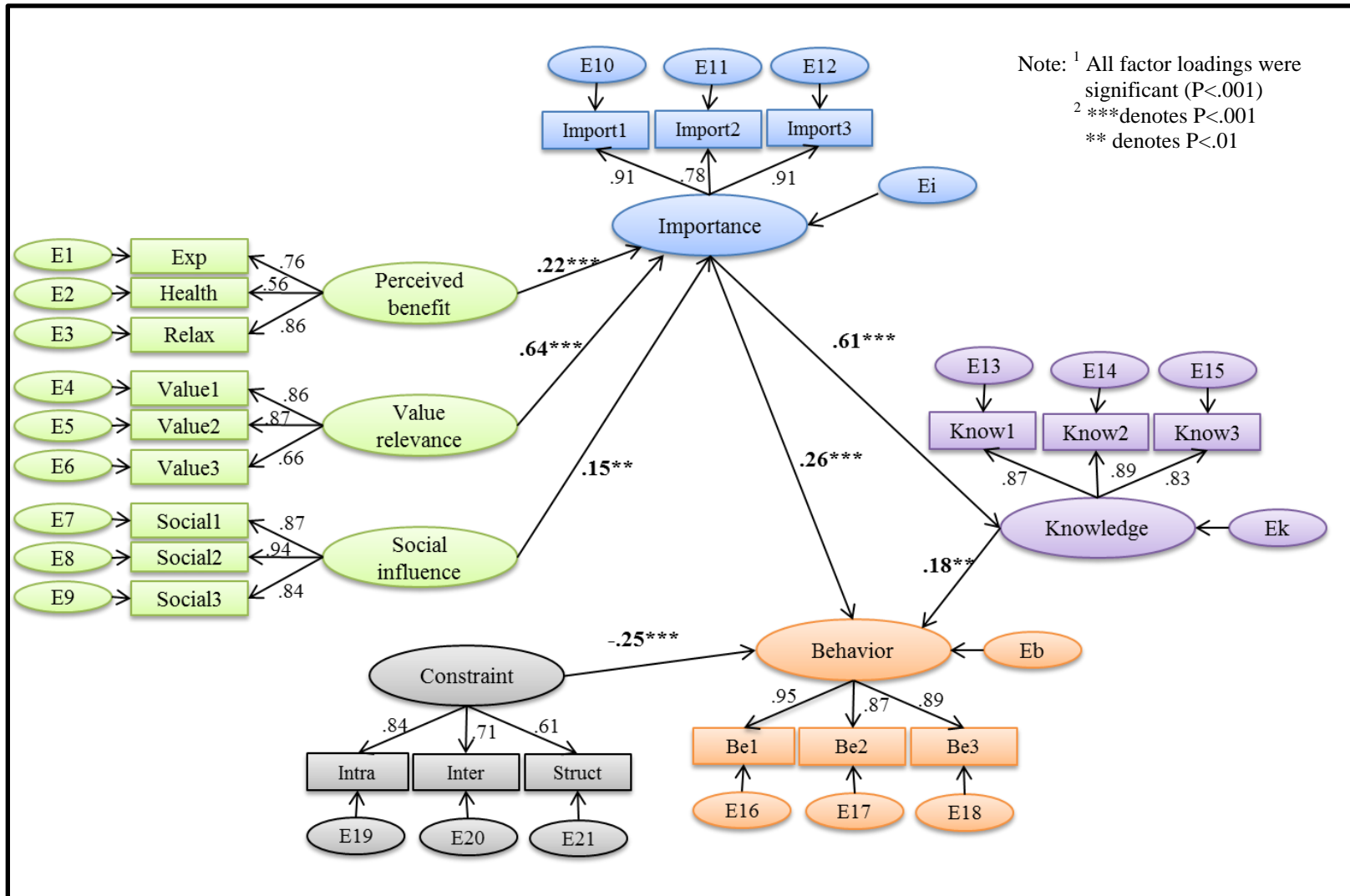
Table 5-25 The Direct, Indirect and Total Effects in the Proposed Model for Objective Two

Effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Perceived benefits ➔ Attitude importance	.22		.22
Value relevance ➔ Attitude importance	.64		.64
Social influence ➔ Attitude importance	.15		.15
Attitude importance ➔ Self-rated knowledge	.61		.61
Attitude importance ➔ Travel Behavior	.26	.11	.37
Self-rated knowledge ➔ Travel Behavior	.18		.18
Travel constraints ➔ Travel behavior	-.25		-.25
Perceived benefits ➔ Travel behavior		.08	.08
Value relevance ➔ Travel Behavior		.24	.24
Social influence ➔ Travel Behavior		.05	.05

Note: R-square for travel behavior was .13

The Path and Measurement Models for the Third Research Objective

The second path model was established to examine the effects of perceived benefits on travel behavior. It was hypothesized that perceived benefits should have a direct effect on travel behavior (H3b) and an indirect effect on travel behavior through attitude importance (H3a and H3c). The effect of travel constraints on travel behavior was also proposed in the model. Thus, this path model and the associated measurement model had a total of 8 constructs, including: experiential benefits, health benefits, relaxation benefit, value relevance, social influence, attitude importance, travel behavior, and travel constraints.

As shown in Table 5-26, results from CFA revealed that the measurement model for Objective Three consisting of one 8-item factors (experiential benefits), two 5-item factors (health and relaxation benefits), and five 3-item factors (attitude importance, social influence, value relevance, travel behavior, and travel constraints) had acceptable fit indices ($\chi2$=1401.16, df=467, CFI=.93, NFI=.90, and RMSEA=.060). All the 33 factor loadings (Table 5-26) and the 28 correlations (Table 5-27) in the measurement model were significant (p<.001), except for the correlation between health and constraints (P<.01). Thus, no further modifications were made.

Table 5-26 The Measurement Model for Objective Three

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Experiential benefits			.91	.57
Bene1	.70	.51		
Bene2	.75	.44		
Bene3	.74	.46		
Bene4	.62	.61		
Bene5	.88	.22		
Bene6	.80	.35		
Bene7	.73	.47		
Bene8	.77	.41		
Health benefits			.88	.60
Bene9	.74	.45		
Bene10	.81	.35		
Bene11	.80	.37		
Bene12	.85	.28		
Bene13	.68	.54		
Relaxation benefits			.91	.67
Bene14	.86	.26		
Bene15	.89	.20		
Bene16	.84	.29		
Bene17	.75	.43		
Bene18	.74	.46		
Value relevance			.84	.64
Value1	.85	.27		
Value2	.88	.23		
Value3	.66	.56		
Social influence			.91	.78
Social1	.87	.24		
Social2	.94	.11		
Social3	.84	.30		
Importance			.91	.78
Import1	.92	.15		
Import2	.79	.37		
Import3	.93	.14		
Behavior			.93	.83
Be1	.96	.09		
Be2	.87	.24		
Be3	.90	.20		
Constraints			.76	.53
Intrapersonal	.89	.20		
Interpersonal	.68	.54		
Structural	.57	.67		

The convergent validity of each construct was further assessed by composite

reliability and AVE. As shown in Table 5-26, the composite reliability levels for

experiential benefits (.91), health benefits (.88), relaxation benefits (.91), value relevance

(.84), social influence (.91), attitude importance (.91), and travel behavior (.93) were all

larger than the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003), while the composite

reliability level for travel constraints (.76) was slightly smaller than .80. The AVEs for

all the 8 factors were larger than threshold of .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Therefore, the

convergent validity of the scale was considered as acceptable, though potentially

problematic.

The discriminant validity was further assessed by comparing the square of the

correlation between two factors and their AVEs. Since all the eight factors in the

measurement model had an AVE larger than .50, only the correlation larger than .70

would be a potential threat to discriminant validity (the square of .70 equals to .49). As

shown in Table 5-27, all the 28 correlations were smaller than .70, except for the

correlation between attitude importance and value relevance (.77). Since the AVEs for

attitude importance and value relevance were .78 and .64, with both being larger than the

square of .77(.59), the discriminant validity for the eight factors in the measurement

model was considered as high.

Regarding the path model for the third objective, the results shows that the direct

effects of experiential, health, and relaxation benefits on travel behavior were all non-

significant (P>.05), which indicates that the proposed direct effect of perceived benefits

on travel behavior was rejected (H3b). Therefore, these three path models were deleted,

and the resultant model is displayed in Figure 5-4.

Figure 5-4 shows that the direct effects of experiential benefits (β=.13; P<.001),

health benefits (β=.08; P<.05), and relaxation benefits (β=.07; P<.05) on attitude

importance were all significant, which indicates that H3a was supported. The direct effects of attitude importance on travel behavior (α=.43) was also significant (P<.001), which suggests that H3c was supported. Regarding the three control variables in the model, the effects of value relevance and (β=.63; P<.001) and social influence (β=.15; P<.01) on attitude importance were both significant, and the effect of travel constraints on travel behavior was statistically significant (β=.33; P<.001). Since the path model had good fit indices ($\chi2$=1833.41, df=485, CFI=.9, NFI=.87, and RMSEA=.071), no further modifications were made.

Table 5-27 The Correlations in the Measurement Model for Objective Three

	Experience	Health	Relaxation	Value	Social	Importance	Behavior	Constraint
Experience	1							
Health	.44	1						
Relaxation	.69	.51	1					
Value	.48	.45	.45	1				
Social	.45	.30	.37	.65	1			
Importance	.50	.42	.46	.77	.60	1		
Behavior	.22	.16	.2	.40	.32	.47	1	
Constraint	-.42	-.13	-.46	-.36	-.41	-.45	-.38	1

Note: [1] All correlations were significant at the .01 levels

Figure 5-4 The Path Model for Objective Three
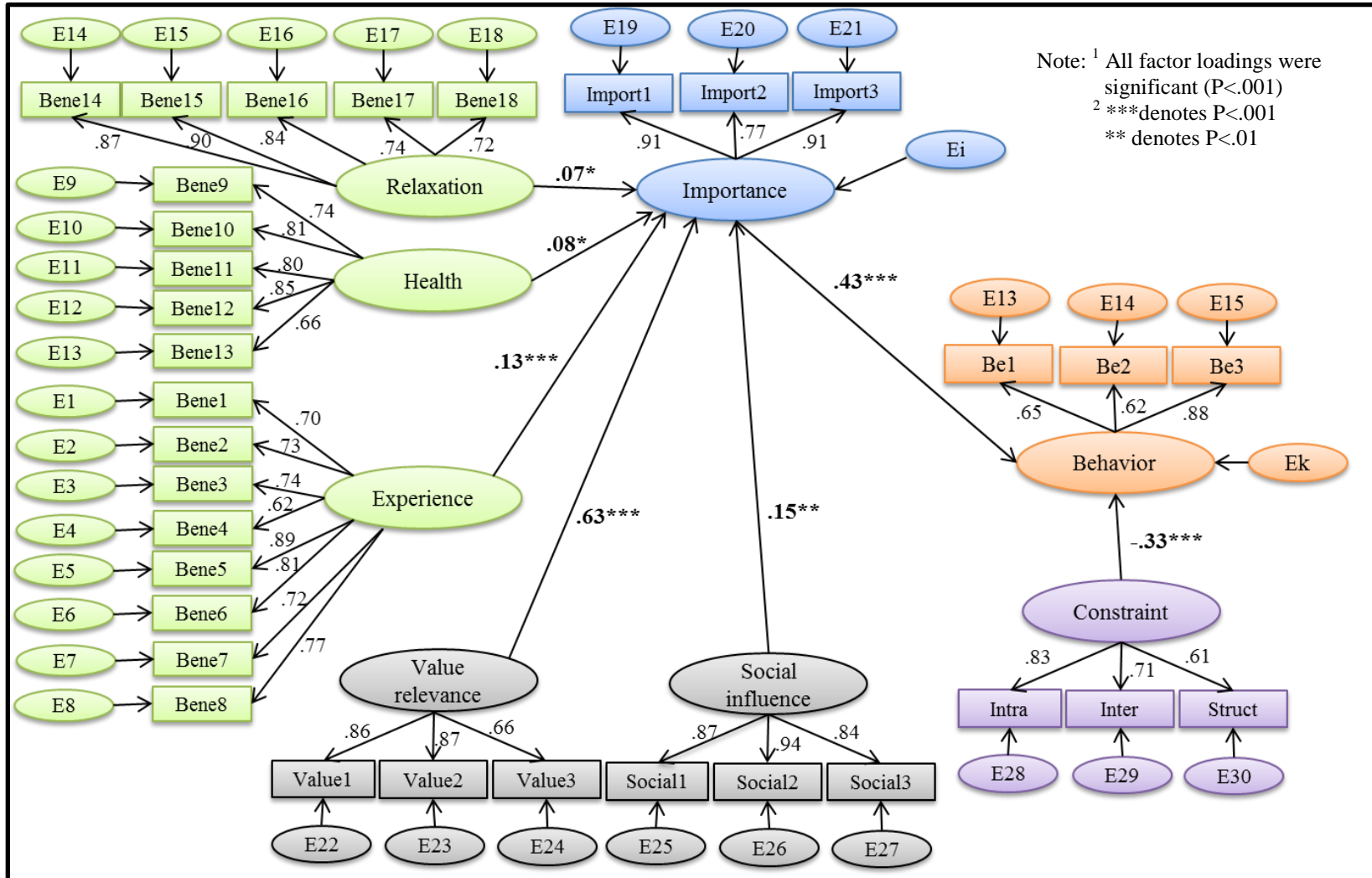
The direct, indirect, and total effects in the proposed model are listed in Table 5-28. Among the five exogenous variables, experiential benefits, health benefits, relaxation benefits, value relevance, and social influence only had an indirect effect on travel behavior, and the other variable – travel constraints, only had a direct effect on travel behavior. The five exogenous variables had a moderate effect on travel behavior (r-square = .19). However, the three benefit factors only explained approximately 1% of the variance.

Table 5-28 The Direct, Indirect and Total Effects in the Proposed Model for Objective Three

Effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Experiential benefits ➔ Attitude importance	.12		.12
Health benefits ➔ Attitude importance	.08		.08
Relaxation benefits ➔ Attitude importance	.07		.07
Value relevance ➔ Attitude importance	.63		.63
Social influence ➔ Attitude importance	.15		.15
Attitude importance ➔ Travel behavior	.43		.43
Travel constraints ➔ Travel Behavior	-.33		-.33
Experiential benefits ➔ Travel Behavior		.05	.05
Health benefits ➔ Travel behavior		.03	.03
Relaxation benefits ➔ Travel behavior		.03	.03
Value relevance ➔ Travel Behavior		.27	.27
Social influence ➔ Travel Behavior		.06	.06

Note: R-square for travel behavior was .19

The Path and Measurement Models for the Fourth Research Objective

The third path model was established to examine how attitude importance instigates the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge in a tourism context. It was hypothesized that attitude importance should positively affect self-rated knowledge through attention to attitude-relevant information (H4a and H4c) and frequency of discussion (H4b and H4d). Thus, this path model and the associated measurement model had a total of 4 constructs, including: attitude importance, attention to information, frequency of discussion, and self-rated knowledge.

As shown in Table 5-29, results from CFA revealed that the measurement model for Objective Four consisting of four 3-item factors had acceptable fit indices ($\chi2$=176.73, df=48, CFI=.98, NFI=.97, and RMSEA=.069). All the 12 factor loadings and the 6 correlations (Table 4-29) in the measurement model were significant (p<.001). Thus, no further modifications were made.

The convergent validity of each construct was further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. As shown in Table 5-29, the composite reliability levels for attitude importance (.91), attention (.91), discussion (.92), and knowledge (.90) were all larger than the suggested threshold of .80 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). The AVEs for attitude importance (.78), attention (.77), discussion (.79), and knowledge (.76) were all larger than threshold of .50 (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Therefore, the convergent validity of the scale was considered as acceptable.

Table 5-29 The Measurement Model for Objective Four

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Attitude importance			.91	.78
Import1	.93	.14		
Import2	.80	.36		
Import3	.91	.17		
Attention in information			.91	.77
Atten1	.91	.18		
Atten2	.90	.19		
Atten3	.82	.33		
Frequency of discussion			.92	.79
Dis1	.87	.25		
Dis2	.93	.14		
Dis3	.87	.25		
Knowledge			.90	.76
Know1	.87	.24		
Know2	.89	.22		
Know3	.85	.28		

Correlations: Importance ↔ Attention= .73; Importance ↔ Discussion= .67; Attention ↔ Knowledge= .74; Discussion ↔ Knowledge= .74; Attention ↔ Discussion= .81; Importance ↔ Knowledge= .62

Note: [1] All factor loadings and correlations were significant at the .001 levels.
[2] Model fit indices: $\chi2$=176.73, *df*=48, CFI=.98, NFI=.97, and RMSEA=.069

The discriminant validity was further assessed by comparing the square of the

correlation between two factors and their AVEs. Since all the four factors in the

measurement model had an AVE larger than .70, only the correlation larger than .80

would be a potential threat to discriminant validity (the square of .70 equals to .64). As shown in Table 5-29, all the 6correlations were smaller than .80, except for the correlation between attention and discussion (.81). Since the AVEs for attention (.77) and discussion (.79) were both larger than the square of .81 (.66), the discriminant validity for the eight factors in the measurement model was considered as high.

Regarding the path model for the fourth objective, Figure 5-5 shows that the direct effects of attitude importance on attention to information (β=.76; P<.001) and frequency of discussion (β=.71; P<.001) were both significant, which indicates that H4a and H4b were supported. The direct effects of attention to information (β=.43; P<.001) and frequency of discussion (β=.44; P<.001) on self-rated knowledge were both significant, which suggests that H4c and H4d were also supported. Since the path model had good fit indices ($\chi2$=352.06, df=50, CFI=.95, NFI=.94, and RMSEA=.104), no further modifications were made.

The direct, indirect, and total effects in the proposed model are displayed in Table 5-30. The total effect of attitude importance on knowledge was .64. Thus, attitude importance explained nearly 40% of the variance associated with self-rated knowledge.

Table 5-30 The Direct, Indirect and Total Effects in the Proposed Model for Objective Four

Effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Attitude importance ➔ Attention to information	.76		.76
Attitude importance ➔ Frequency of discussion	.71		.71
Attention to information ➔ Knowledge	.43		.43
Frequency of discussion ➔ Knowledge	.44		.44
Attitude importance ➔ Knowledge		.64	.64

Note: R-square for knowledge was .40

Figure 5-5 The Path Model for Objective Four

Note: [1] All factor loadings were significant (P<.001)
[2] ***denotes P<.001

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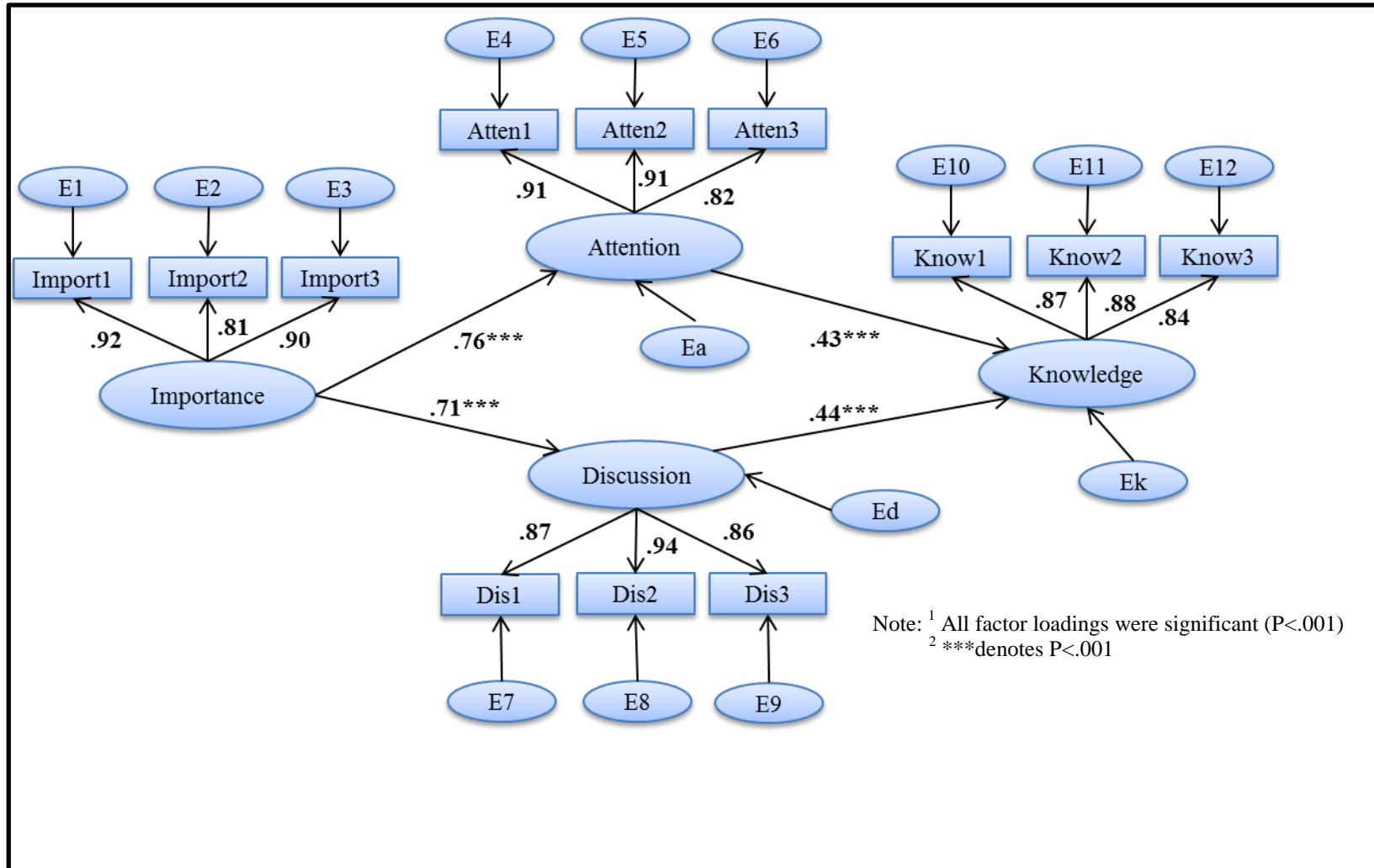
The Full Path and Measurement Models

In the final step, the full path and measurement models were established. The full path model and the associated measurement model had a total of 11 constructs, including: experiential benefits, health benefits, relaxation benefits, value relevance, social influence, attitude importance, attention to information, frequency of discussion, self-rated knowledge, travel behavior, and travel constraints.

As shown in Table 5-31, results from CFA revealed that the full measurement consisting of one 8-item factors (experiential benefits), two 5-item factors (health and relaxation benefits), and eight 3-item factors (attitude importance, social influence, value relevance, attention, discussion, knowledge, travel behavior, and travel constraints) had acceptable fit indices ($\chi2=454.91$, df=168, CFI=.97, NFI=.95, and RMSEA=.055). All the 42 factor loadings (Table 4-31) and the 55 correlations (Table 4-32) in the measurement model were significant ($p<.001$), except for the correlation between health and constraints (P<.01). Thus, no further modifications were made.

Table 5-31 The Full Measurement Model

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Experience			.91	.57
Bene1	.70	.51		
Bene2	.75	.44		
Bene3	.74	.46		
Bene4	.62	.61		
Bene5	.88	.22		
Bene6	.80	.36		
Bene7	.72	.48		
Bene8	.77	.41		
Health			.88	.60
Bene10	.74	.45		
Bene11	.81	.35		
Bene12	.80	.37		
Bene13	085	.28		
Bene14	.68	.54		
Relaxation			.91	.67
Bene14	.86	.26		
Bene15	.89	.20		
Bene16	.84	.29		
Bene17	.75	.43		
Bene18	.74	.46		
Value relevance			.84	.65
Value1	.85	.28		
Value2	.87	.24		
Value3	.68	.54		
Social influence			.91	.78
Social1	.87	.24		
Social2	.94	.12		
Social3	.84	.30		
Importance			.91	.78
Import1	.92	.15		
Import2	.80	.36		
Import3	.92	.15		

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Table 5-31 Continued

Constructs/ Items	Factor loadings	Error variances	Composite reliability	AVE
Attention			.91	.77
Atten1	.90	.19		
Atten2	.91	.18		
Atten3	.82	.33		
Discussion			.92	.79
Dis1	.87	.25		
Dis2	.92	.15		
Dis3	.87	.25		
Knowledge			.90	.76
Know1	.87	.24		
Know2	.89	.21		
Know3	.85	.28		
Behavior			.93	.83
Be1	.96	.09		
Be2	.88	.23		
Be3	.90	.20		
Constraints			.76	.53
Intrapersonal	.90	.19		
Interpersonal	.67	.55		
Structural	.57	.68		

Note: [1] All factor loadings were significant at the .001 levels.
[2] Model fit indices: $\chi2$=2015.31, df=764, CFI=.93, NFI=.90, and RMSEA=.054

The convergent validity of each construct was further assessed by composite reliability and AVE. As shown in Table 5-31, the composite reliability levels for experiential benefits (.91), health benefits (.88), relaxation benefits (.91), value relevance (.84), social influence (.91), attitude importance (.91), attention (.91), discussion (.920, knowledge (.90), and travel behavior (.93) were all larger than the suggested threshold of .80, while the composite reliability level for travel constraints (.76) was slightly smaller

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than .80. The AVEs for experiential benefits (.57), health benefits (.60), relaxation

benefits (.67), value (.65), social influence (.78), attitude importance (.78), attention

(.77), discussion (.79), knowledge (.76), travel behavior (.83), and travel constraints

(.53) were larger than the suggested threshold of .50. The convergent validity of the

scale was thus considered as acceptable, though potentially problematic.

The discriminant validity was further assessed by comparing the square of the

correlation between two factors and their AVEs. Since all the eight factors in the

measurement model had an AVE larger than .50, only the correlation larger than .70

would be a potential threat to discriminant validity (the square of .70 equals to .49). As

shown in Table 5-32, all the 55 correlations were smaller than .70, except for three

correlations, including the correlation between attitude importance and value relevance

(.77), the correlation between attention and value relevance (.76), and the correlation

between attention and discussion (.81). The AVEs for attitude importance and value

relevance were .78 and .65, with both being larger than the square of their correlation

(.59). The AVEs for attention and value relevance were .77 and .65, and both values

were larger than the square of their correlation (.58). Moreover, the AVEs for attention

and discussion were .77 and .79, with both being larger than the square of .81 (.66). The

discriminant validity for the 11 factors in the full measurement model was thus

considered as high.

The results of the full path model are displayed in Figure 5-6. As can be seen, all

of the proposed paths (direct effects) were significant (P<.01), except for the proposed

effect of relaxation benefits on attitude importance (β=.02; P>.05). Specifically, the

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direct effects of experiential benefits (β=.13; P<.01) and health benefits (β=.11; P<.01) on perceived importance of vacationing were significant, even when the effects of value relevance (β=.67; P<.001) and social influence (β=.14; P<.01) on perceived importance of vacationing were controlled. The direct effects of attitude importance (β=.27; P<.001) and knowledge (β=.16; P<.01) on travel behavior were also significant, even when the effect of travel constraints (β=-.25; P<.001) on travel behavior was controlled. Further, the effects of attitude importance on attention (β=.77) and discussion (β=.71) were both significant P<.001), and the effects of attention (β=.42; P<.001) and discussion (β=.43; P<.001) on knowledge were both significant

The direct, indirect, and total effects in the proposed model are listed in Table 5-33. Among the six exogenous variables, experiential benefits, health benefits, relaxation benefits, value relevance, and social influence only had an indirect effect on travel behavior, and the other variable – travel constraints, only had a direct effect on travel behavior. The six exogenous variables had a moderate effect on travel behavior (r-square=.13), while the three benefit factors only explained nearly 1% of the variance.

Table 5-32 The Correlations in the Full Measurement Model

	Experience	Health	Relaxation	Value	Social	Importance	Attention	Discussion	Knowledge	Behavior	Constraints
Experience	1										
Health	.44	1									
Relaxation	.69	.52	1								
Value	.48	.46	.45	1							
Social	.45	.30	.37	.65	1						
Importance	.50	.42	.46	.77	.60	1					
Attention	.45	.43	.36	.76	.52	.73	1				
Discussion	.35	.41	.28	.66	.50	.67	.81	1			
Knowledge	.35	.38	.26	.67	.48	.62	.74	.74	1		
Behavior	.22	.16	.20	.40	.32	.47	.39	.37	.40	1	
Constraints	-.42	-.13	-.46	-.36	-.40	-.45	-.30	-.21	-.23	-.38	1

Note: [1] All correlations were significant at the .001 levels except for the correlation between health and constraints (P<.01).

Figure 5-6 The Full Path Model

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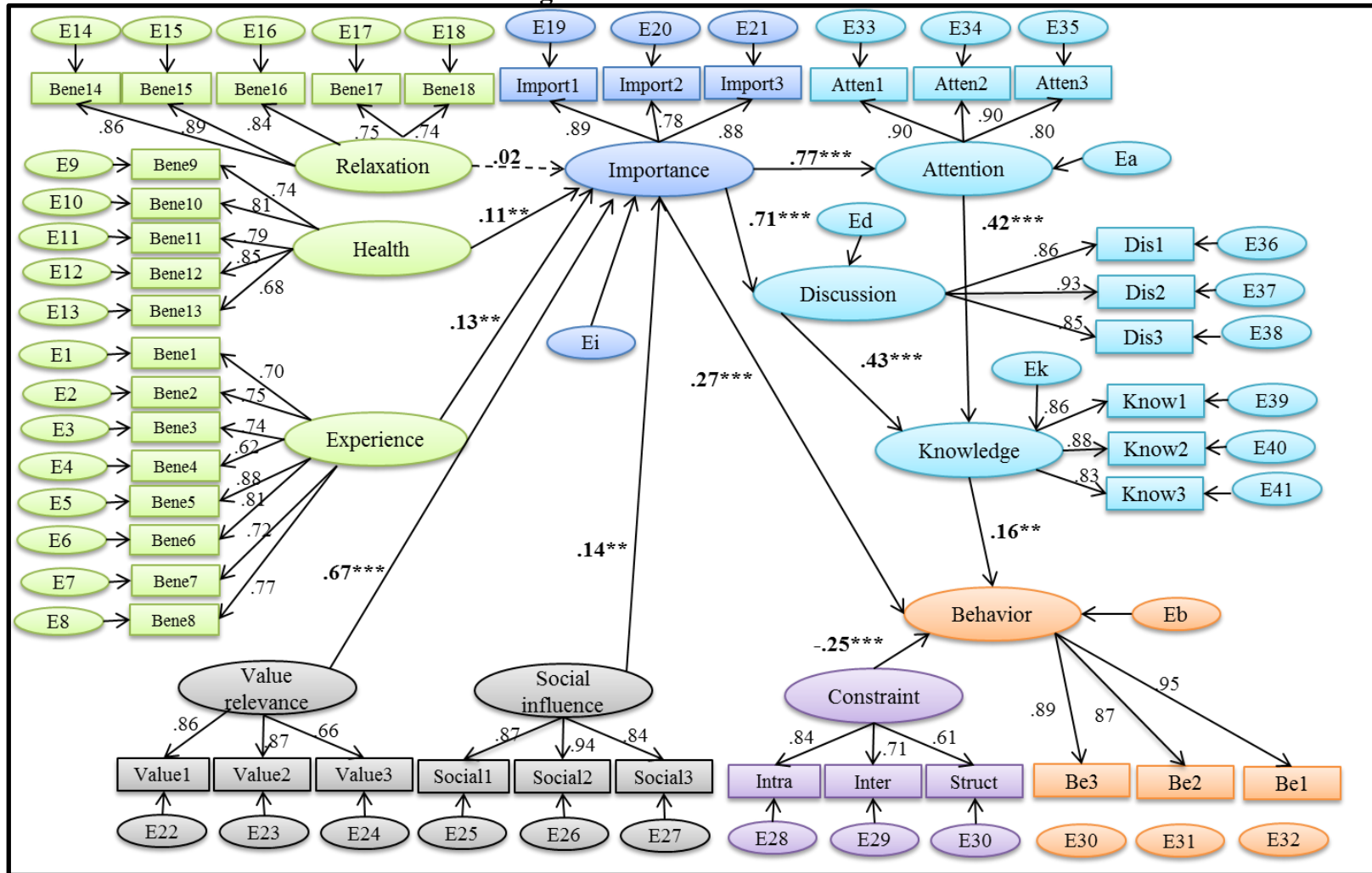
Table 5-33 The Direct, Indirect and Total Effects in the Full Path Model

Effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
Experiential benefits ➜ Attitude importance	.13		.13
Health benefits ➜ Attitude importance	.11		.11
Relaxation benefits ➜ Attitude importance	.02		.02
Value relevance ➜ Attitude importance	.67		.67
Social influence ➜ Attitude importance	.14		.14
Attitude importance ➜ Travel behavior	.27	.10	.37
Knowledge ➜ Travel behavior	.16		.16
Travel constraints ➜ Travel Behavior	-.25		-.25
Attitude importance ➜ Attention	.77		.77
Attitude importance ➜ Discussion	.71		.71
Attitude importance ➜ Knowledge		.63	
Attention ➜ Knowledge	.42		.42
Discussion ➜ Knowledge	.43		.43
Experiential benefits ➜ Travel Behavior		.05	.05
Health benefits ➜ Travel behavior		.04	.04
Relaxation benefits ➜ Travel behavior		.01	.01
Value relevance ➜ Travel Behavior		.25	.25
Social influence ➜ Travel Behavior		.05	.05
Attention ➜ Travel Behavior		.07	.07
Discussion ➜ Travel Behavior		.07	.07

Note: R-square for travel behavior was .13

Synopsis of the Chapter

This research addressed the issue of tourism benefits. It was intended to examine whether and how perceived benefits of tourism influence travel behavior based on the model of attitude importance. As argued before, there is a lack of research on how individuals perceive the benefits of vacationing. Even though health has been demonstrated as an important benefit of travel (de Bloom et al., 2009; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Strauss-Blasche, et al., 2005), this dimension had mostly been excluded from existing scales of tourism benefits. Thus, the first research objective was to develop a new scale to measure the perceived benefits of tourism.

Furthermore, as the present inquiry was based on the social psychological model of attitude importance, the second objective was to test the attitude-importance model in a tourism context. Subsequently, the third objective was to examine the direct and indirect effects of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior. Finally, previous studies have suggested that attitude importance influences thoughts and behavior because people who attach personal importance to an attitude are more likely to accumulate attitude-relevant knowledge through processes of selective exposure and elaboration (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Holbrook et al., 2005). The fourth objective thus investigated how attitude importance instigates the process of knowledge accumulation.

As shown in Figure 5-1, the resultant measurement model of perceived benefits consisted of three dimensions, including: (1) experiential benefits, (2) health benefits, and (3) relaxation benefits. Each dimension exhibited good convergent validity as all items measuring each dimension possessed high factor loadings (experiential benefits:

composite reliability=.91, AVE=.57; health benefits: composite reliability=.88, AVE=.60; relaxation benefits: composite reliability=.91, AVE=.67). The discriminant validity between the three factors of perceived benefits was shown to be acceptable in that the three factors were moderately correlated with each other. Moreover, it was hypothesized that attitude importance can be predicted by perceived benefits, value relevance, and social influenced. Thus, the discriminant validity between the three benefit factors, attitude importance, social influence, and value relevance was further examined. The results showed that all seven constructs were moderately correlated with each other, which suggested acceptable discriminant validity.

The results associated with Objective Two are summarized in Table 5-34. As can be seen, all six hypotheses were supported, which provides evidence that the attitude-importance model is applicable in a tourism context. In particular, perceived benefits had a significant effect (β=.22, P<.001) on attitude importance even when the effects of value relevance (β=.64, P<.001) and social influence (β=.15, P<.01) on attitude importance were controlled. Moreover, the direct and indirect effects of attitude importance on travel behavior were both significant (P<.001) when the effect of travel constraints on travel behavior was controlled (β=-.25, P<.001). However, the variance associated with travel behavior was mostly explained value relevance (nearly 6%) and travel constraints (nearly 7%), while perceived benefits only explained about 1% of the variance.

Table 5-34 Summary of Results – Objective Two

Objective Two: This research intends to test the model of attitude importance in a tourism context.	
Results ***: P<.001 **: P<.01 	
H2a: Perceived benefits of tourism will positively influence perceived importance of vacationing.	Supported
H2b: Social influence will positively influence perceived importance of vacationing.	Supported
H2c: Value relevance will positively influence perceived importance of vacationing.	Supported
H2d: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence self-rated knowledge of vacationing.	Supported
H2e: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence travel behavior.	Supported
H2f: Self-rated knowledge of vacationing will positively influence travel behavior.	Supported

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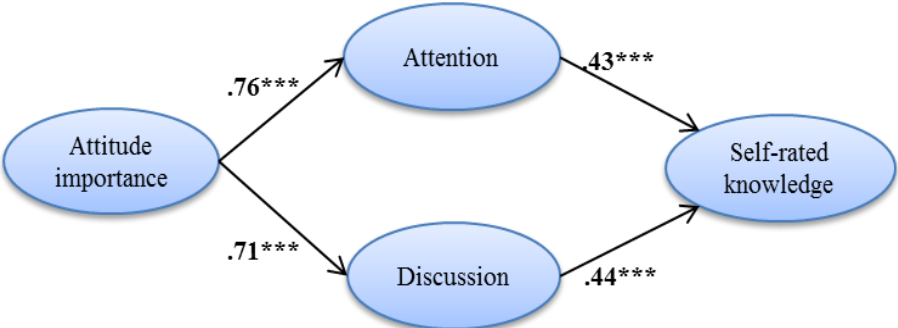
Table 5-35 provides a summary of the results associated with Objective Three. The results showed that the direct effects of the three benefit factors on travel behavior were not significant (P>.05). However, each benefit factor had an indirect effect on travel behavior through attitude importance even when the effects of social influence (β=.15, P<.001) and value relevance (β=.63, P<.001) on attitude importance and the effect of travel constraints (β= -.33, P<.001) on travel behavior were controlled. In general, the variance associated with travel behavior was mostly explained by value relevance (nearly 7%) and travel constraints (nearly 10%), while the three benefit factors only explained about 1% of the variance.

Table 5-35 Summary of Results – Objective Three

Objective Three: This research attempts to examine the direct and indirect effects of perceived benefits of tourism on the amount of travel behavior.	
Results ***: P<.001 *: P<.05	
H3a: Perceived benefits of tourism will positively affect perceived importance of vacationing.	Supported
H3b: Perceived benefits of tourism will positively affect travel behavior.	Not supported
H3c: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively travel behavior.	Supported

The results associated with Objective Four are summarized in Table 5-36. As can be seen, all four hypotheses were supported, which suggests that perceived importance of vacationing positively influences self-rated knowledge through attention to information and frequency of discussion. Perceived importance of vacationing explained all 40% of the variance associated with self-rated knowledge, individually through attention to information and frequency of discussion.

Table 5-36 Summary of Results – Objective Four

Objective Four: This research intends to examine how attitude importance instigates the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge in a tourism context.	

Results ***: P<.001	

H4a: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence attention to vacation-relevant information.	Supported
H4b: Perceived importance of vacationing will positively influence frequency of discussion about taking vacation.	Supported
H4c: Attention to vacation-relevant information will positively influence self-rated knowledge of vacationing.	Supported
H4d: Frequency of discussion about taking a vacation will positively influence self-rated knowledge of vacationing.	Supported

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Review of the Findings

It has been demonstrated that people often feel happier (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Nawijn et al., 2010), healthier (Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2006; Gump & Matthews, 2000), and more relaxed (Etzion, 2003; Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2006; Kuhnel & Sonnentag, 2011) after a vacation. However, there is still a lack of research on how people perceive the benefits of travel and how these perceptions influence their travel behavior. While tourism scholars have paid considerable attention to motivations and benefits sought from purchasing a particular tourism service (Li & Petrick, 2008; Ritchie, 1997), this research intended to examine tourism services in general. Given that the positive effects of taking a vacation on individuals' psychological and physiological well-beings have been demonstrated, the primary purpose of this research was to examine the effects of perceived benefits on travel behavior based on the model of attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995a).

Scale Development

Before examining the effects of perceived benefits, a reliable and valid scale of perceived benefits of tourism was needed. Unfortunately, existing scales of perceived tourism benefits seemingly failed to incorporate some of the fundamentally important items or factors related to tourism benefits, particularly the perceived health benefits of travel. Specifically, Frochot and Morrison (2001) compiled a total of 26 benefits items

based on 14 studies in tourism, leisure, and recreation from 1980 to 1998. As shown in Table 4-1, health was not included in the list. More recent studies on tourism benefits were also examined (Frochot, 2005; Jang, Morrison, & O'Leary, 2002; Kang, Scott, Lee, & Ballantyne, 2012; Li et al., 2009; Sarigöllü & Huang, 2005; Yannopoulos & Rotenberg, 2000). However, most items adopted in these studies were in the list compiled by Frochot and Morrison (2001), while none of them adopted items associated with mental and psychological health benefits. Therefore, the first research objective was to develop a new scale of perceived tourism benefits. In order to achieve this objective, a total of three studies were conducted based on the procedure of scale development as suggested by Churchill (1979) and Netemeyer et al. (2003). These three studies included: (1) a preliminary study to elicit new benefit items, (2) a pilot study to trim down the number of items and initially assess scale reliability and validity, and (3) a main survey to finalize the scale.

A preliminary study was conducted in February 2012. The sample was randomly selected from a list of qualified online panelists from a survey company's database. A total of 566 panelists provided their responses to an open-ended question – what benefits do you believe you receive from taking a vacation. Responses were analyzed following procedures of content analysis recommended by Weber (1990). As a result, a total of 13 new benefit items were identified, while 10 existing benefit items were not mentioned by panelists participating in the preliminary study. As shown in Table 4-2, a number of new items were related to mental and psychical health benefits of tourism, including: (1) to sleep better, (2) to live longer, (3) to bring down my blood

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pressure, (4) to be healthier, (5) to reflect on the priorities of my life, (6) to revive my spirit, (7) to have better mental outlook/mental clarity, (8) to gain a new perspective of life/appreciation for life, and (9) to renew energies/recharge. Therefore, the preliminary study successfully achieved its goal of eliciting new benefit items, particularly items associated with health benefits.

Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted in May 2012. Similar to the methods used in the preliminary study, the sample was randomly selected from a list of qualified online panelists from a survey company's database. All participating panelists were asked to rate the level of agreement or disagreement to a list of 29 items associated with tourism benefits. A total of 434 panelists participated in the pilot study. Their responses were further analyzed in order to trim down the number of items measuring perceived benefits of tourism. Based on the results of EFA, a total of four factors with high internal consistency were identified, including: (1) experiential benefits ($\alpha=.92$), (2) physical health benefits ($\alpha=.90$), (3) psychological health benefits ($\alpha=.89$), and (4) relaxation benefits ($\alpha=.94$). Moreover, a couple of items with low loadings (lower than .40) on all factors were deleted.

For the main survey, an online panel survey was implemented to obtain a national representative sample. Similar to the method adopted in the preliminary and pilot studies, the sample was also randomly selected from a list of online panelists from the same survey company's database in August 2012. A total of 559 panelists participated in the main survey. The demographics of the research sample and the U.S. population were compared with chi-square tests. The results showed that the survey

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sample and the U.S. population were homogenous in gender and nearly homogenous in age, while the survey sample was better educated and less wealthy.

In the next step, EFA was used to uncover the underlying factor structure of perceived benefits. In the pilot study, EFA was used to initially examine the factor structure of perceived benefits, while the primary purpose was to trim down the number of benefit items. Therefore, a low threshold for item inclusion (factor loadings of .40) was chosen in order to retain more items in the early stages of scale development. In this stage of scale development, EFA was conducted to finalize the scale. Thus, based on Hair et al. (1998), a factor loading of .50 was chosen as the criteria for item inclusion. The results showed that EFA produced three factors with high internal consistency. These factors included: (1) experiential benefits (α=.92), (2) health benefits (α=.89), and (3) relaxation benefits (α=.91). Comparing with the results of EFA in the pilot study, seven additional items were deleted in that these items had low loadings on all three factors (all lower than .50). Furthermore, the resultant factor structures in the pilot study and the main survey were similar to each other. However, two resultant factors in the pilot study - psychological health and mental health, were combined as a single factor in the main survey.

Next, the reliability and validity of the scale was assessed with the use of CFA. The resultant measurement model of perceived benefits showed that all three dimensions exhibited good convergent validity as all items measuring each dimension possessed high factor loadings (experiential benefits: composite reliability=.91, AVE=.57; health benefits: composite reliability=.88, AVE=.60; relaxation benefits: composite

reliability=.91, AVE=.67). The discriminant validity between the three factors of

perceived benefits was shown to be acceptable in that three factors were moderately

correlated with each other. Moreover, it was hypothesized that attitude importance can

be predicted by perceived benefits, value relevance, and social influenced. Thus, the

discriminant validity between the three benefit factors, attitude importance, social

influence, and value relevance was further examined. The results showed that all seven

constructs were moderately correlated with each other, which suggested acceptable

discriminant validity. Therefore, with the implementation of three studies, a reliable and

valid scale of perceived tourism benefits was successfully developed.

Model Testing

As the present inquiry was based on the social psychological model of attitude

importance, the second objective was to test the attitude-importance model in a tourism

context. According to the model of attitude importance (Boninger et al., 1995a), attitude

importance influences thoughts and behavior because people who attach personal

importance to an attitude are more likely to accumulate attitude-relevant knowledge

through processes of selective exposure and elaboration. It was thus hypothesized that

attitude importance has a direct effect on travel behavior (H2e) and an indirect effect on

travel behavior through attitude-relevant knowledge (H2d and H2f). Moreover, previous

studies have also identified three predictors of attitude importance, including: self-

interest, social influence, and value relevance (Boninger et al., 1995a; Holbrook et al.

2005). This research further conceptualized self-interest as perceived benefits of tourism

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in the proposed model. Therefore, the direct effects of perceived benefits, value relevance, and social influence on attitude importance were also hypothesized (H2a, H2b, and H2c).

The results showed that all six hypotheses were supported, which provided evidence that the attitude-importance model is applicable in a tourism context. In particular, perceived benefits had a significant effect (β=.22, P<.001) on attitude importance even when the effects of value relevance (β=.64, P<.001) and social influence (β=.15, P<.01) on attitude importance were controlled. Moreover, the direct and indirect effects of attitude importance on travel behavior were both significant (P<.001) when the effect of travel constraints on travel behavior was controlled (β=-.25, P<.001). However, the variance associated with travel behavior was mostly explained by value relevance (nearly 6%) and travel constraints (nearly 7%), while perceived benefits only explained about 1% of the variance.

Effect Assessment

The third objective was to examine the effects of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior. Based on the model of attitude importance, it was hypothesized that perceived benefits have a direct effect on travel behavior (H3b) and an indirect effect on travel behavior through attitude importance (H3a and H3c). Furthermore, the effects of value relevance and social influence on attitude importance and the effect of travel constraints on travel behavior were also incorporated in the model.

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The results showed that the direct effects of the three benefit factors on travel behavior were not significant (P>.05). However, each benefit factor had a direct effect on attitude importance (experiential benefits: β=.13, P<.001; health benefits: β=.08, P<.05; relaxation benefits: β=.07, P<.05) even when the effects of social influence (β=.15, P<.001) and value relevance (β=.63, P<.001) on attitude importance were controlled. The direct effect of attitude importance on travel behavior was also significant (β=.43, P<.001) even when the effect of travel constraints (β= -.33, P<.001) on travel behavior was controlled, which suggested that all three benefit factors had an indirect effect on travel behavior through attitude importance. Among these three benefit factors, experiential benefits had a greater effect on travel behavior (β=.05) than health benefits (β=.03) and relaxation benefits (β=.05). However, the variance associated with travel behavior was mostly explained by value relevance (nearly 7%) and travel constraints (nearly 10%), while the three benefit factors only explained approximately 1% of the variance.

Knowledge Accumulation

Finally, previous studies have suggested that people who attach personal importance to an attitude are more likely to accumulate attitude-relevant knowledge through processes of selective exposure and elaboration (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Holbrook et al., 2005). Thus, the fourth objective was to investigate how attitude importance instigates the process of knowledge accumulation in a tourism context. It was hypothesized that attitude importance has indirect effects on self-rated attitude-

relevant knowledge through attention to information (H4a and H4c) and frequency of discussion (H4b and H4d).

The results showed that all four hypotheses were supported, which indicated that perceived importance of vacationing positively influences self-rated knowledge through attention to information and frequency of discussion. Perceived importance of vacationing explained all 40% of the variance associated with self-rated knowledge, individually through attention to information and frequency of discussion.

Theoretical Implications

The primary purposes of this research was to develop a reliable and valid scale to measure perceived benefits of travel, and to further examine the effects of perceived benefits on travel behavior based on the model of attitude importance (Figure 2-4). This theoretical framework was revised and validated based upon empirical findings of this research. As shown in Figure 6-1, self-interest as an antecedent of attitude importance in the original model was replaced by perceived benefits of travel; perceived benefits was also identified and validated as the composite of experiential, health, and relaxation benefits. Further, the direct and indirect effects of attitude importance on travel behavior were hypothesized and supported even when the effects of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural constraints on travel behavior were controlled. Confirmation of the revised model has several theoretical implications.

Figure 6-1 The Revised Conceptual Framework
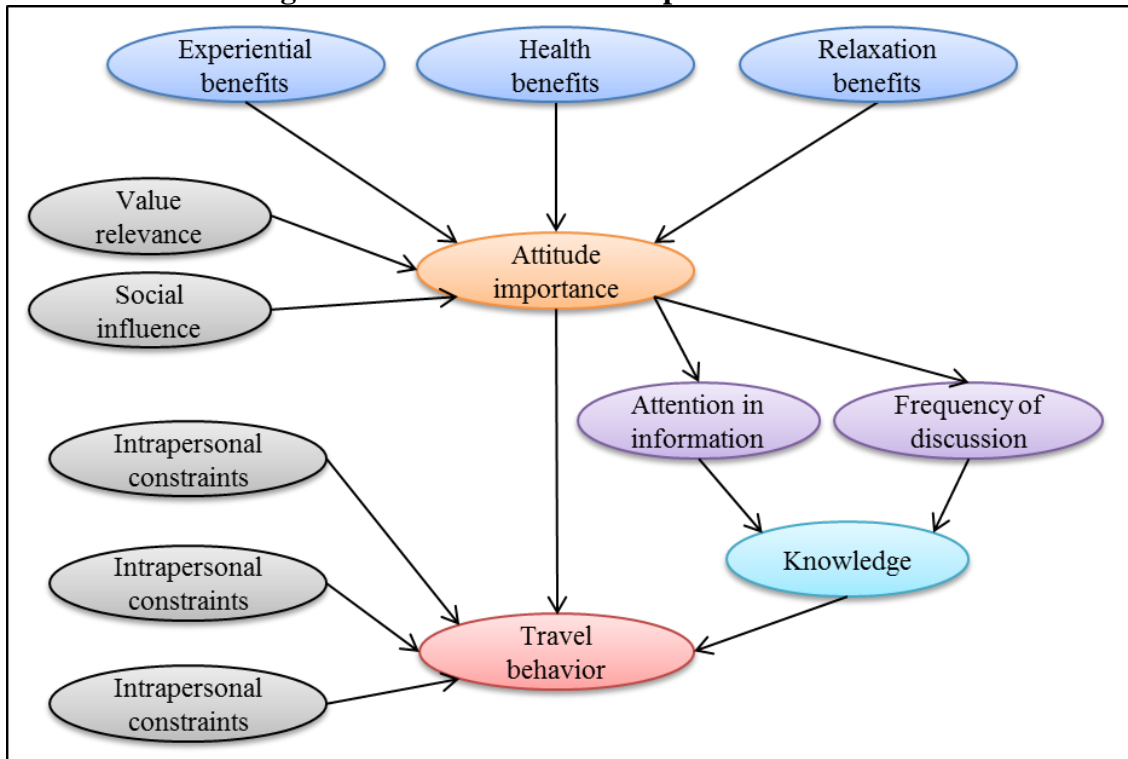
Benefit Scale

With the implementation of three studies, a new scale of perceived tourism benefits was developed and validated. As argued before, even though the health benefits of travel have been demonstrated by a number of studies (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2006; Gump & Matthews, 2000; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2010; Tarumi et al., 1998; Toda et al., 2004), this dimension was mostly excluded from existing scales of tourism benefits. In this research, several items associated with health benefits were elicited from a qualitative study; in the later stages of scale development, these items were identified and validated as a convergent dimension of perceived

benefits. Further, this research found that health benefits had an indirect effect on travel behavior through attitude importance, which indicated that respondents who agreed that taking vacations is beneficial for their health cared more about vacations, and they also traveled more frequently. As the effect of perceived health benefits was demonstrated in this research, it is recommended that future research on tourism benefits should incorporate the dimension of health benefits in the scale.

Moreover, the study results showed that the perceived health benefits were not limited to the physical aspect of health, such as to live longer, to bring down my blood pressure or to be healthier. The mental aspect of health was also shown to be an element of health benefits, such as to reflect the priorities of my life and to have better mental outlook/clarity. According to the conversation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), people strive to obtain and retain their external and internal resources. Since people are more likely to feel relaxed and to detach from work stress during a vacation, it has been shown that people often gain more internal resources and feel happier after a vacation (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). This research further demonstrated that respondents generally believed that taking vacations is beneficial for their mental health, and these perceptions were shown to positively influence the perceived importance of vacationing and frequency of travel.

Attitude Importance Model

This research also attempted to test the model of attitude importance in a tourism context. As mentioned before, the concept of attitude importance is more likely

to be apparent in situations of deliberative processing when individuals have to carefully plan out their thoughts and behaviors in order to make a decision (Boninger et al., 1995a). Given the intangible characteristics of the tourism product, purchasing a tourism service often involves seeking a lot of information (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) and deliberative processing of both internal and external information searches (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). As demonstrated in this research, the model of attitude importance is applicable in the context of tourism.

Since attitude is a fundamental building block in social and behavioral sciences (Crano & Prislin, 2006), the concept of attitude has been frequently applied to examine a variety of issues in tourism. However, previous tourism studies have tended to embrace the evaluative feature of attitude, while strength-related dimensions of attitudes have been largely ignored in the tourism literature. In particular, a strong preference has been given to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) ABC model of attitude. However, the ABC model of attitude has drawn a lot of criticism in that attitude-behavior consistency is seemingly assumed in the model (Ostrom, 1989). Thus, many social psychologists have paid attention to the strength-related dimensions of attitude (Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick & Petty, 1995; Visser et al., 2003). Unfortunately, tourism scholars have been less interested in attitude-behavior consistency because travel behavior has been mostly operationalized as travel intention in the tourism literature, which is seemingly problematic in that these two concepts have been shown to be uncorrelated to each other (McKercher & Tse, 2012).

This research applied one strength-related dimension of attitude – attitude importance, to explore the mechanisms behind tourism purchase behavior. Previous social psychological studies have postulated that important attitudes are more likely to influence thinking and action based on the premise that attaching personal importance to an attitude object might instigate the process of knowledge accumulation (Holbrook et al., 2005; Krosnick & Petty, 1995). This research further demonstrated that individuals who cared more about taking vacations would travel more frequently. In particular, the premise of knowledge accumulation was also supported in that these individuals were more knowledgeable about vacationing because they paid more attention to and actively gathered information pertaining to potential vacations.

In summary, purchasing a tourism service often involves deliberative processing, a situation in which the concept of attitude importance is more likely to be apparent (Boninger et al., 1995a). It is thus argued that the concept of attitude importance should be relevant to tourism. As demonstrated in this research, perceived importance of vacationing can instigate the process of knowledge accumulation and directly influence travel behavior. Therefore, the concept of attitude importance is arguably a valid and important concept for tourism studies.

Perceived Tourism Benefits

Given that previous findings have demonstrated that taking vacations can help people to feel happier, healthier, and more relaxed (Etzion, 2003; Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2006; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2002; Nawijn et al., 2010), this research attempted to further

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examine how people perceive the benefits of tourism and how their perceptions influence their travel behavior. Before testing the effects of perceived tourism benefits, three dimensions of travel benefits – experiential, health, and relaxation benefits, were first identified. The study results also showed that respondents tended to agree more on experiential and relaxation benefits of travel, while all three dimensions had an indirect effect on travel behavior through perceived importance of vacationing.

Multiple studies have demonstrated the effects of perceived benefits or motivations on purchase intentions of a particular tourism service, such as holiday destinations (Jang et al., 2002; Sarigöllü & Rong, 2005; Yannopoulos & Rotenberg, 2000), rural destinations (Frochot, 2005; Li et al., 2009), and heritage sites (Frochot, 2004; Prentice et al., 1998). This research further demonstrated that perceived experiential, health, and relaxation benefits of tourism services in general had positive effects on frequency of travel. Given that perceived health benefits have been mostly neglected and purchase intention rather than purchase behavior has typically been measured by previous studies, this is arguably an important finding.

Among the three factors of perceived benefits, experiential benefits were found to have a larger effect on travel behavior. The items included in the factor of experiential benefits were mostly related to new experiences and self-development. Previous studies have suggested that mastery experiences during vacations – "off-job activities that distract from the job by providing challenging experiences and learning opportunities in other domains (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007: p.206)," can help people to gain more internal resources and to feel better about their life. This research further demonstrated that

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respondents generally believed that taking vacations can provide the opportunities for new experiences and self-development, and these perceptions were shown to positively influence the perceived importance of vacationing and frequency of travel.

Further, even though the study results showed that the perceived experiential, health, and relaxation benefits had direct effects on perceived importance of vacationing and indirect effects on travel behavior, the magnitude of these effects were found to be fairly limited. As shown in Figure 5-4, all the three benefit factors only explained approximately 3% of the variance associated with attitude importance and 1% of the variance associated with travel behavior, while nearly 40% of the variance associated with attitude importance was explained by value relevance and nearly 11% of the variance associated with travel behavior was explained by travel constraints. The low variance explained (by the three factors of perceived tourism benefits) might result from the heterogeneity of the respondents. Previous studies have shown that people often vary in their perceptions of tourism benefits, so benefits sought have been frequently used as a segmentation tool in tourism (Frochot, 2005; Jang et al., 2002; Sarigöllü & Rong, 2005; Yannopoulos & Rotenberg, 2000). As mentioned before, the items associated with health benefits had larger standard deviations, which indicated the respondents varied in their perceptions of health benefits. Therefore, it is of interest to further explore whether and how the effects of perceived benefits are moderated by other variables, such as age, family life cycle, and income.

This study also found that value relevance (40% variance explained) is a better predictor of attitude importance than the three factors of tourism benefits (3% variance

explained) and social influence (2% variance explained). Moreover, it was found that value relevance explained 7% of the variance associated with travel behavior, while the three factors of tourism benefits only explained 1%. These results indicated that value relevance plays an important role in the process of tourism purchase decisions. Even though this research found that respondents who believed that their opinions on vacationing are related to their personal values cared more about vacations, more studies are needed to examine which dimensions of personal values are relevant to travel behavior.

It was also found that social influence had a direct effect on attitude importance (explained 2% of the variance) and an indirect effect on travel behavior (explained less than 1% of the variance), while both effects were fairly weak. However, the modest effects of social influence on attitude importance have been reported regarding the issue of gun control (explained 11% of the variance) (Boninger et al., 1995b) and abortion (explained 14% of the variance) (Holbrook et al., 2005). Therefore, compared to two of the most controversial social issues in the U.S. – gun control and abortion, taking vacations is seemingly more of an individual preference and decision, at least in the U.S.

Knowledge Accumulation

Since purchase decision in the context of tourism often involves intensive information processing (Chen & Lin, 2012; Gursoy & McCleay, 2004; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), information search behavior has been a popular topic in the tourism literature. However, most studies on the topic of tourists' information search have tended

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to incorporate information search behavior within the context of vacation planning. Therefore, based on the premise of the attitude-importance model that the accumulation of attitude-relevant knowledge can be instigated by attaching personal importance to an attitude (Holbrook et al., 2005), the final objective of this research was to examine how attitude-relevant knowledge can be accumulated on a regular basis in a tourism context.

The study results demonstrated that individuals who cared more about taking vacations were more knowledgeable about vacationing because they paid more attention to and actively gathered information pertaining to potential vacations. As tourism scholars have tended to examine how potential tourists search for information in the process of vacation planning, it is arguably an important finding because it suggests that the accumulation of tourism knowledge can be on a regular basis.

Moreover, the role of attitude importance in the process of knowledge accumulation is similar to that of involvement in the process of information search. As shown in Figure 2-7, it has been found that involvement is a key factor in the process of tourists' information search because highly involved individuals are more likely to accumulate product-related knowledge and utilize both internal and external information searches (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). However, tourism scholars tended to regard involvement as a situational factor in the process of vacation planning (Cai, Feng, & Breiter, 2004; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Money & Crotts, 2003). Therefore, it is of interest to combine the model of knowledge accumulation as demonstrated in this study and the model of vacation planning by examining how attitude importance influences involvement.

Predictors of Travel Behavior

This research attempted to examine the predictors of travel behavior with a focus on the perceived benefits of tourism. As shown in Figure 4-4, it was found that the three factors of tourism benefits had weak effects on travel behavior (1% variance explained), while value relevance (7% variance explained) and travel constraints (11% variance explained) contributed the most variance associated with travel behavior. However, the five exogenous variables explained only 19% of the variance.

Previous studies suggest that travel behavior might be influenced by other factors, such as income (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002), family life cycle (Lawson, 1991), age (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002), health conditions (Wei & Milman, 2002), and work strain (de Bloom et al., 2009). These uncontrolled factors are associated with some of the constraint items adopted in this research, such as taking vacation is too costly (income), taking a vacation is too physically demanding (health conditions and/or age), family commitment keeps me from taking a vacation (family life cycle), and job commitment keeps me from taking a vacation (work strain). Therefore, travel constraints and these uncontrolled factors should have compounding effects on travel behavior, while incorporating these factors should be able to increase the total variance explained.

Practical Implications

This research also has practical implications. First, previous studies have demonstrated that people can receive three kinds of benefits from taking vacations: (1) experiential benefits: the opportunities for new experiences and self-development; (2) health benefits: the opportunities for mental and physical health improvement; and, (3) relaxation benefits: the opportunities for release from work and family commitment. This research further demonstrated that people are more likely to travel more when they believe they can receive benefits from taking vacations. Therefore, the tourism industry should encourage people to travel more by convincing them that taking vacations is beneficial.

While different members of the tourism industry - such as tourist destinations, hotels, travel agencies, or amusement parks - are promoting their own products right now, it is recommended that the tourism industry should work cooperatively to communicate with the general public about the experiential, health, and relaxation benefits of tourism. When the general public have a better awareness of the tourism benefits, they will travel more, which means they will have more opportunities to experience something new, to relax themselves, and to feel and become healthier; all members of the tourism industry will also benefit from the increased awareness in that people will purchase more tourism services in general.

In fact, health or wellness tourists – those who are interested in certain tourism products that are believed to contribute to health and wellness (such as spa tourism), have been identified as a unique market segment (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001; Sayili,

Akca, Duman, & Esengun, 2007; Spivack, 1998). However, it has been shown that all pleasure trips have the potential to contribute to our health and wellness in that staying away from our usual environment can help us to feel relaxed and detach from work and family strain (Frtiz & Sonnentag, 2004; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Thus, health or wellness tourism should not be narrowly defined as a specific form of travel. Instead, the tourism industry should actively communicate with the general public about the experiential, relaxation, and health benefits of tourism, which are supported by scientific findings, because people are more likely to travel more when they believe they can receive benefits from taking a vacation. Further, the study results showed that respondents tended agree more on experiential and relaxation benefits of travel than health benefits. More efforts should be made to raise awareness of health benefits.

Moreover, the study results showed that value is seemingly a better predictor of travel behavior than perceived benefits. Personal values are shared beliefs about universal human requirements (Kamamura & Novak, 1992), which often differ from culture to culture (Li & Cai, 2012). Even though research on personal value or culture in the field of tourism remains scarce (Li & Cai, 2012), personal values might be connected to travel behavior. For example, there is an old Chinese proverb, "you can learn more by traveling a thousand miles than by reading a thousand books." This shared value might explain why Chinese tourists have been eager to see the world since the emergence of Chinese economy. Given that traveling is beneficial for people, the tourism industry should not only communicate with the general public about the benefits of travel but also try to establish shared values that we should go traveling because it is beneficial.

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Further, this research demonstrated that perceived importance of vacationing strongly influence travel behavior. In particular, the study results showed that important attitudes would instigate a process of knowledge accumulation on a regular basis, so customers might pay attention only to information pertaining to attitude objects or products that they attach personal importance to. Therefore, for individual tourism service providers or tourist destinations, building favorability might not be enough for tourism service providers in that customers have too many choices in the market. In fact, tourism service providers or destinations are not just competing with each other. The tourism industry is also competing with movie theaters, TV channels, video game makers and any other companies who provide services or experiences for leisure time. Therefore, it is important for the tourism industry to tell the general public – why traveling is important and why they should travel?

Research Limitations

This research is subject to several limitations. Fist, the study population was defined as all American residents who are 18 years or older. A series of three online surveys were thus conducted in order to obtain a national representative sample in each survey. However, as mentioned in Chapter I, this study is limited to those who were included in an online panel survey company's database at the time of data collection. Therefore, the results of this study might be generalizable only to individuals who were included in the panel, or to those who have computer access.

Second, this research adopted a self-reported measure of travel behavior by asking respondents how frequent they traveled last year. This is arguably an appropriate way of measuring travel behavior, yet it inevitably involved some measurement errors. In some large-scale tourist surveys, respondents are required to provide details of each trip. This method of measurement might help to reduce measurement errors, but it might also lead to excessive survey length. This measurement was thus considered as not feasible for the current study.

Further, this research operationalized travel behavior as frequency of travel, while other dimensions of behavior - such as the amount of travel days or travel spending, were not included in the analysis. In particular, previous studies have suggested that the relationships between travel constraints and travel behavior are fairly complicated (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002). For example, people in managerial positions generally have no time for vacations, so they tend to travel less frequently but spend more. In this example, time (or work commitment) as a travel constraint negatively influence frequency of travel but positive influence travel spending. Therefore, operationalizing travel behavior as frequency of travel is a limitation of this research, which might also contribute to low variance explained for travel behavior.

Moreover, it has been demonstrated that several factors have effects on travel behavior, such as income (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002), family life cycle (Lawson, 1991), age (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002), health conditions (Wei & Milman, 2002), and work strain (de Bloom et al., 2009). These factors were not fully controlled in this research, which is also a limitation of this research. However, as discussed before, since these

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uncontrolled factors are associated with some of the constraint items adopted in this research, it is argued that some portion of the variance for these factors were controlled with the inclusion of travel constraints in the proposed model.

On the other hand, this research attempted to explore how attitude-relevant knowledge is accumulated on a regular basis. The results showed that individuals who cared more about vacationing were more knowledgeable about vacationing because they paid more attention to and actively gathered information pertaining to potential vacations. In this research, the variables of attention to information and frequency of discussion were assessed by self-reported measures, while the information search behavior was not directly observed, which is also a limitation of this research.

Finally, this research only focused on an individual level of benefits sought and travel behavior. Previous studies have shown that some travel decisions might be made based on the needs of travel companions, such as children or spouse (Kang & Hsu, 2004; Litvin, Xu, & Kang, 2004; Wang, Hsieh, Yeh, & Tsai, 2004). Since the group level of travel behavior was not considered in this study, this is arguably a limitation for this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research provided empirical evidence for (1) the dimensional structure of perceived tourism benefits, (2) the applicability of the attitude importance model in tourism, and (3) the effect of perceived tourism benefits on travel behavior. The theoretical framework proposed in this study provided fertile ground for future research.

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First, a new dimension of perceived benefits – health benefits, were identified and validated in this research. As perceived health benefits were demonstrated to be a predictor of travel behavior. It is suggested to incorporate this factor and associated items in the scale. However, the effects of the three benefit factors on travel behavior were shown to be weak. One of the explanations is the heterogeneity of the respondents in terms of their beliefs about tourism benefits. For example, the study results showed that respondents agreed more on experiential and relaxation benefits, while their opinions on health benefits were relatively divided. Previous studies have shown that people often vary in their perceptions of tourism benefits, so benefits sought have been frequently used as a segmentation tool in tourism (Frochot, 2005; Jang et al., 2002; Sarigöllü & Rong, 2005; Yannopoulos & Rotenberg, 2000). Therefore, it is of interest to examine why people have different beliefs about tourism benefits (particularly health benefits) and how these differences influence their travel behavior.

Second, since perceived importance of vacationing was shown to have a strong effect on travel behavior, it is recommended to examine why some individuals attach personal importance to traveling while others not. This research showed that perceived importance of vacationing could be predicted by perceived benefits, social influence, and value relevance, while personal value was shown to be the best predictor. Given that tourism research on personal value remains scarce (Li & Cai, 2012), it is recommended to explore the connection between personal value and travel behavior. Further, the study results showed that social influence had a relatively week effect on attitude importance. The study population was Americans, who have strong individualistic tendencies (Kim

& Lee, 2000). Therefore, it is of interest to test the model of vacationing importance using different population samples, particularly those who have collective tendencies, such as Chinese or Japanese.

The study results supported the applicability of the attitude-importance model in tourism. However, travel behavior was operationalized as frequency of travel in this research, which might result in the low variance for travel behavior. Therefore, future research can examine the effects of attitude importance and other related concepts on other dimensions of travel behavior, such as such as the amount of travel days or travel spending. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to further validate the causal effects of attitude importance on travel behavior.

Moreover, this research examined the predictors of travel behavior based on the model of attitude importance. As mentioned before, attitude importance is one dimension of strength-related attitudes, while previous tourism studies have tended to embrace the evaluative features of attitudes. The results supported the applicability of the attitude-importance model in tourism, and the results also showed that perceived importance of vacationing had a modest effect on travel behavior. Therefore, it is recommended that future research in tourism should apply the concept of attitude importance and other dimensions of strength-related attitudes.

In particular, attitude importance is more likely to be apparent in situations of deliberative processing (Boninger et al., 1995a). This concept should be relevant to the field of tourism in that tourism purchase decisions often involve intensive information searches. This research examined tourism services in general based on the concept of

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attitude importance, while future research can apply the concept of attitude importance to examine the purchase decisions of specific tourism services or tourist destinations. Moreover, important attitudes are shown to be powerful on thought and behavior (Boninger et al., 1995a). As shown in this research, when a consumers regard a product as important (not just favorable), they are more likely to purchase more. Thus, it is of interest to apply the concept to examine the issues of brand loyalty and relationship marketing.

Finally, with the use of survey data and structural equation modeling, this research provided evidence that perceived importance of vacationing might instigates the process of knowledge accumulation on a regular basis. It is recommended to conduct experimental studies to further validate the causal effect of attitude importance on attitude-relevant knowledge in the context of tourism. Moreover, as argued before, the role of attitude importance in the process of knowledge accumulation is similar to that of involvement in the process of tourists' information search, while tourism scholars tended to regard involvement as a situational factor in the process of vacation planning (Cai et al., 2004; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Money & Crotts, 2003). Therefore, it is of interest to combine the model of knowledge accumulation as demonstrated in this study and the model of vacation planning by examining how attitude importance influences involvement.

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PILOT TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1: What benefits do you believe you receive from taking a vacation?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.To relax	○	○	○	○	○
2.To become refreshed	○	○	○	○	○
3.To do nothing	○	○	○	○	○
4.To release tensions/ stress	○	○	○	○	○
5.To get away from everyday life/ routine	○	○	○	○	○
6.To change scenery/ environment	○	○	○	○	○
7.To do something that I normally wouldn't do	○	○	○	○	○
8.To sleep better	○	○	○	○	○
9.To live longer	○	○	○	○	○
10.To bring down my blood pressure	○	○	○	○	○
11.To be healthier	○	○	○	○	○
12.To change my pace	○	○	○	○	○
13.To get peace of mind	○	○	○	○	○
14.To revive my spirit	○	○	○	○	○
15.To renew energies/ recharge	○	○	○	○	○
16.To reflect the priorities of my life	○	○	○	○	○
17.To have better mental outlook/ clarity	○	○	○	○	○
18.To gain a new perspective of life/ appreciation for life	○	○	○	○	○
19.To do something with my family	○	○	○	○	○
20.To be with friends	○	○	○	○	○
21.To meet new people	○	○	○	○	○
22.To have fun	○	○	○	○	○
23.For the adventure	○	○	○	○	○
24.To do exciting things	○	○	○	○	○
25.To be outdoors/ in nature	○	○	○	○	○
26.To experience something new	○	○	○	○	○
27.To experience new cultures/ places	○	○	○	○	○
28.To observe scenic beauty	○	○	○	○	○
29.To develop my knowledge/ learn new Things	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-1 How important is taking vacations to you personally?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unimportant ↔ Important	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q2-2 How important is taking vacations to you relative to other issues in your life?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unimportant ↔ Important	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q2-3 How much do you personally care about taking vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q3-1 How much are your opinions on vacationing related to your personal values

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q3-2 How much are your attitudes on vacationing based on your general beliefs about how life should be lived?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q3-3 How often do you contemplate that your attitudes on vacationing are related to your personal values?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not often ↔ Very often	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q4-1 Please identify people to whom you feel closest (maybe your parents, spouse, friends, coworkers...etc):_____

Q4-2 How important is taking vacations to them (people you feel closest to)?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unimportant ↔ Important	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4-3 How much do them (the people you feel closest to) care about taking vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4-4 How often do them (the people you feel closest to) think about potential vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not often ↔ Very often	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5-1 How frequent do you discuss potential vacations with other people?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not frequently ↔ Frequently	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5-2 How often do potential vacations come up in your conversations with others?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not often ↔ Very often	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5-3 How much time do you spend talking about potential vacations relative to other issues?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much time ↔ Very much time	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6-1 How much attention do you generally pay to information you came across regarding potential vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6-2 How much attention do you pay to potential vacations relative to other issues?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6-3 How much attention do you pay to news articles and televised new stories about potential vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7-1 How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about vacationing?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not knowledgeable ↔ Very knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7-2 How much information do you have about vacationing?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7-3 To what extent do you consider yourself to be an expert on vacationing?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q8-1 What is the total number of pleasure trips or vacations you have made in the past 12 months? _____

Q8-2 How many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months were more than 75 miles away from home? _____

Q8-3 How many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months were overnight trips? _____

Q9 Are you male of female? _____

Q10 What is your current age? _____

Q11 How many years of education have you completed? _____

Q12 What was your approximate total household income last year? (please check one)

❍ Under $25,000
❍ $25,000 - 39,999
❍ $40,000 - 49,999
❍ $50,000 - 74,999
❍ $75,000 - 99,999
❍ $100,000 - 124,999
❍ $125,000 - 149,999
❍ $150,000 or more

APPENDIX B

MAIN SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions are about your vacation preferences (Note: In this survey, a vacation is defined as a pleasure trip outside your usual environment)

Q1-1 How important is taking vacations to you personally?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unimportant ↔ Important	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q1-2 How important is taking vacations to you relative to other issues in your life?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unimportant ↔ Important	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q1-3 How much do you personally care about taking vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-1 How much are your opinions on vacationing related to your personal values

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-2 How much are your attitudes on vacationing based on your general beliefs about how life should be lived?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-3 How often do you contemplate that your attitudes on vacationing are related to your personal values?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not often ↔ Very often	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3-1 Please identify people to whom you feel closest (maybe your parents, spouse, friends, coworkers...etc):_____

Q3-2 How important is taking vacations to them (people you feel closest to)?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unimportant ↔ Important	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3-3 How much do them (the people you feel closest to) care about taking vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3-4 How often do them (the people you feel closest to) think about potential vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not often ↔ Very often	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4-1 How frequent do you discuss potential vacations with other people?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not frequently ↔ Frequently	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4-2 How often do potential vacations come up in your conversations with others?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not often ↔ Very often	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4-3 How much time do you spend talking about potential vacations relative to other issues?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much time ↔ Very much time	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5-1 How much attention do you generally pay to information you came across regarding potential vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5-2 How much attention do you pay to potential vacations relative to other issues?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5-3 How much attention do you pay to news articles and televised new stories about potential vacations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6-1 How knowledgeable do you consider yourself to be about vacationing?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not knowledgeable ↔ Very knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6-2 How much information do you have about vacationing?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6-3 To what extent do you consider yourself to be an expert on vacationing?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not much ↔ Very much	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7: What benefits do you believe you receive from taking a vacation?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. To relax	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
2. To become refreshed	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
3. To release tensions/ stress	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
4. To get away from everyday life/ routine	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
5. To change scenery/ environment	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
6. To do something that I normally wouldn't do	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
7. To sleep better	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
8. To live longer	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
9. To bring down my blood pressure	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
10. To be healthier	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
11. To change my pace	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
12. To get peace of mind	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
13. To renew energies/ recharge	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
14. To reflect the priorities of my life	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
15. To have better mental outlook/ clarity	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
16. To gain a new perspective of life/ appreciation for life	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
17. To do something with my family	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
18. To be with friends	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
19. To meet new people	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
20. To have fun	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
21. For the adventure	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
22. To do exciting things	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
23. To be outdoors/ in nature	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
24. To experience something new	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
25. To experience new cultures/ places	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
26. To observe scenic beauty	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
27. To develop my knowledge/ learn new Things	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q8-1 What is the total number of pleasure trips or vacations you have made in the past 12 months? _____

Q8-2 How many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months were more than 75 miles away from home? _____

Q8-3 How many pleasure trips or vacations have you made in the past 12 months were overnight trips? _____

Q9 What are the constraints that prevent you from taking a vacation as often as you would like?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Taking a vacation is too physically demanding.	○	○	○	○	○
2. Taking a vacation involves too much risk.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I don't like to take vacations.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I don't know what to expect about potential vacations.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I have no one to go on vacation with.	○	○	○	○	○
6. My family and friends are not interested in taking a vacation.	○	○	○	○	○
7. There are no places to visit near me.	○	○	○	○	○
8. Taking a vacation is too costly.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I have no time for a vacation.	○	○	○	○	○
10. Family commitment keeps me from taking a vacation.	○	○	○	○	○
11. Job commitment keeps me from taking a vacation.	○	○	○	○	○
12. I am unable to relax on a vacation.	○	○	○	○	○
13. I feel sick when I am on a vacation.	○	○	○	○	○

Q10 Are you male of female? _____

Q11 What is your current age? _____

Q12 How many years of education have you completed? _____

Q13 What was your approximate total household income last year? (please check one)

❍ Under $25,000
❍ $25,000 - 39,999
❍ $40,000 - 49,999
❍ $50,000 - 74,999
❍ $75,000 - 99,999
❍ $100,000 - 124,999
❍ $125,000 - 149,999
❍ $150,000 or more