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**DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF A MODEL AND METHOD FOR  
ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS OF TOURISM PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE**

BY

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ABSTRACT

New models are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of tourism promotional materials, especially that provide insight into causal processes. These types of models seem to be helpful in explaining the influence of promotional material on intent to visit. Findings also suggest that CVG's influence was to reinforce intentions to visit.

INTRODUCTION

State tourism agencies produce tourism promotional literature to attract visitors and persuade them to stay longer. Information on the effectiveness of promotional literature is needed to justify expenditures and to enhance the effectiveness of future promotional efforts. Tourism promotional literature has commonly been evaluated by a conversion study methodology. This approach often does not determine if the literature actually caused the visitation, and it can provide little understanding as to why it was effective (1). This suggests that a new conceptual model to guide future research, and a new method to measure tourism promotional literature effectiveness may be warranted.

There were three study objectives; (1) develop a causal model to assess the effectiveness of tourism promotional literature, (2) develop and test a methodology for assessing effectiveness of tourism literature, and (3) measure changes of intention to visit a state related to promotional literature. An empirical study using the 1990 Colorado Official Vacation Guide (CVG) was undertaken to satisfy study objectives.

METHOD

The consumer behavior literature suggests two types of information processing; a central route involving cognitive elaboration, and a peripheral route with an affective or emotional response (2, 5, 6). The proposed tourism promotion effectiveness model shown in Figure 1 builds

upon these studies and those of Manfredo and Bright (4) and posits that both cognitive elaboration, and affective response to the tourism literature, as defined in this study by the construct of attitude toward the ad (ATTAD), mediate intention to visit and overall attitude toward visiting a tourism destination. Also hypothesized to effect intention and attitude were prior knowledge, direct experience, personal involvement and motive for seeking the literature.

Fishbein and Ajzen (3) suggest that to change attitude one must change beliefs about the object, such as a tourist destination, and/or the evaluation of object attributes. Combining their attitude change model with the proposed model it is hypothesized that both elaboration, and affective response to the tourism literature, should be related to changes in beliefs and evaluations about Colorado as a tourist destination.

Data for use in the survey were collected from a randomly selected sample of persons inquiring for summer leisure trip information from the Colorado Tourism Board. A telephone survey was undertaken to determine the most important and highly desired attributes and beliefs about a Colorado spring, summer or fall vacation. This data was used to develop two mail surveys. The first questionnaire arrived prior to respondent receipt of the CVG, and measured intention and attitude toward visiting the state, trip type, motive for seeking the CVG and recipient characteristics. The second survey was sent to respondents of the first questionnaire and measured post-treatment intention and attitude toward visiting, and cognitive and affective response to the CVG.

A total of 1,004 pre-treatment surveys were mailed to respondents, from which 77.6% were returned and usable. In total 406 post-treatment surveys were returned for a response rate of 52.1% in the second survey, for an overall response rate of 40.4%.

Indices measuring model constructs all had Cronback Alpha levels of .74 or greater, suggesting index reliability was within acceptable ranges. Prior to undertaking path analysis a check for multi-collinearity was performed. Intercorrelations were all below .80.

Path analysis, using ordinary least squares regression, was employed to test relationships between model constructs. Coefficients not significant at alpha of  $p < .05$  were eliminated. Direct and first order indirect effects were calculated.

The direction and magnitude of changes in intention to visit, overall attitude toward visiting, and attribute beliefs and evaluations were calculated using a paired-sample design in the T-Test program of SPSSPC. Differences between pre-treatment and post-treatment values were considered significant if the two-tailed probability was .05 or less. The next step was to determine if the pattern of change for the total sample was the same for different levels of cognitive elaboration, ATTAD, involvement and prior knowledge, as well as for five different trip types and four categories of motive for seeking the CVG. A similar statistical approach was employed in the assessment of change in planned length of stay, except in utilized Chi-square statistics.

## RESULTS

Data analysis showed that respondents were primarily interested in a touring vacation (42.7%), and the most popular motive for seeking the CVG was to aid in destination choice (64%), rather than itinerary planning (23.0%). Over 13% of respondents sought the CVG for recreation and other reasons. Respondents had relatively low levels of direct experience (78.5% had one or fewer leisure trips to the state in last 5 years), had low to moderate prior knowledge (84.8%) about Colorado vacation attributes, and expressed relatively low levels (78.5%) of personal involvement with the state of Colorado.

Path analysis results, as shown in Figure 2, illustrate that the proposed model had an R-Squared of .61. As hypothesized, pre-intention to visit ( $b=.69$ ), pre-attitude toward visiting ( $b=.22$ ), elaboration ( $b=.19$ ), ATTAD ( $b=.05$ ), post-attitude toward visiting ( $b=.14$ ), prior knowledge ( $b=.12$ ), direct experience ( $b=.20$ ), involvement ( $b=.16$ ) and motive for information search ( $b=.21$ ) all had significant effects on post-treatment intention. ATTAD also mediated elaboration ( $b=.18$ ).

T-Tests and Chi-square were used to determine significant differences between pre and post-treatment intention, attitude toward visiting and planned length of stay at different levels of elaboration, and ATTAD. Table 1 shows that there was a significant ( $-.30$ ) overall decline in intention to visit between pre- and post-treatment. However, there were no significant changes in intention at high levels of elaboration ( $+.31$ ) and ATTAD ( $+.03$ ), while there were significant declines at medium ( $-.51$  and  $-.43$ ) and low ( $-1.04$  and  $-.83$ ) levels.

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents had pre-treatment attitude toward visiting scores that were very high (60.2%) and there were no significant changes in post-treatment levels. When measured at post-treatment there were no significant changes in attitude toward visiting the state at any level of elaboration or ATTAD.

Over 22% of respondents stated that they plan to increase their length of stay in Colorado because of the CVG (see Table 3). Chi-square tests determined that changes in planned length of stay were associated with high levels of elaboration ( $p=.001$ ) and ATTAD ( $p=.0000$ ).

Table 4 illustrates that on an attribute evaluation scale of +3 to -3, the most highly desired Colorado leisure trip attributes were mountain scenery (2.25), good climate (2.23), many things to do (2.20) and safe easy travel (2.18). Only two relatively highly desired vacation attributes, good climate ( $+.21$ ) and unique historic sites ( $+.25$ ) had significant increases in belief scores at post-treatment. There were other significant belief score increases but these were associated with attributes that were not highly evaluated. Four attributes had significant changes in evaluation scores, all in a negative direction.

## DISCUSSION

The causal model accounted for over 61% of the variance in post-treatment intention to visit. This suggests that a persuasion theory approach and the proposed model may be helpful in explaining tourist vacation decision making and the influence of promotional material on intention to visit a destination. Post-treatment intention is primarily related to pre-treatment intention to visit. However, cognitive and affective response to the literature exert a significant influence on intention. This suggests that when designing promotional tourism literature one must be concerned, not only with the information content, but with its emotional or affective appeal.

Study findings related to the influence of the tourism literature suggest the CVG was effective in increasing respondents planned length of stay. It was not, however, effective in increasing the number of respondents intending to visit the state. The CVG's primary influence was to reinforce prior high intentions to visit. It did not significantly effect overall attitude toward visiting the state, and only moderately changed beliefs and attitudes about Colorado vacation attributes.

Ways to improve the effectiveness of the CVG are suggested by study findings. It appears that the CVG design should better reflect the recipients motives for seeking it. About 64% of the survey respondents had a destination choice motive, while only 23% had definitely decided to come to the state and wanted the guide to help them plan their itinerary. Greater design emphasis should be placed on convincing tourists to visit.

Increased effectiveness in persuading people to visit Colorado may be successfully accomplished through enhancing the affective, or emotional, response generated by the guide. Study findings demonstrated that ATTAD influenced both intention to visit and elaboration of the guide. Emotional response has particularly important implications for tourism promotion because the benefits of leisure travel are intangible experiences, rather than tangible products. A strong affective appeal may better convey the destination benefits to those who are uncertain about visiting.

Another means of improving the effectiveness of the guide would be to focus content more on leisure trip attributes that are highly desired, but which respondents identified as a weakness (the attribute desirability score was higher than belief score) for Colorado, and which the 1990 CVG did not significantly increase their attitude scores.

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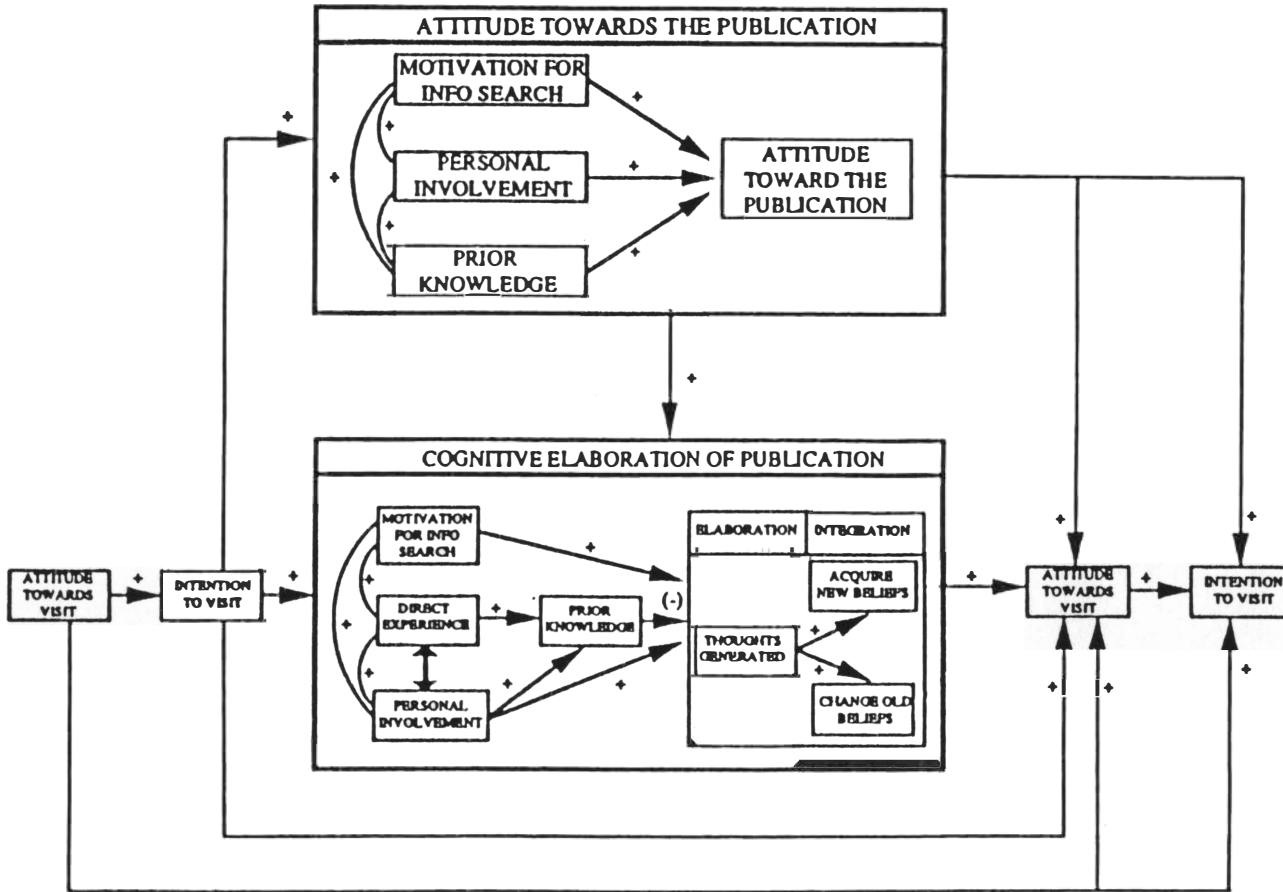
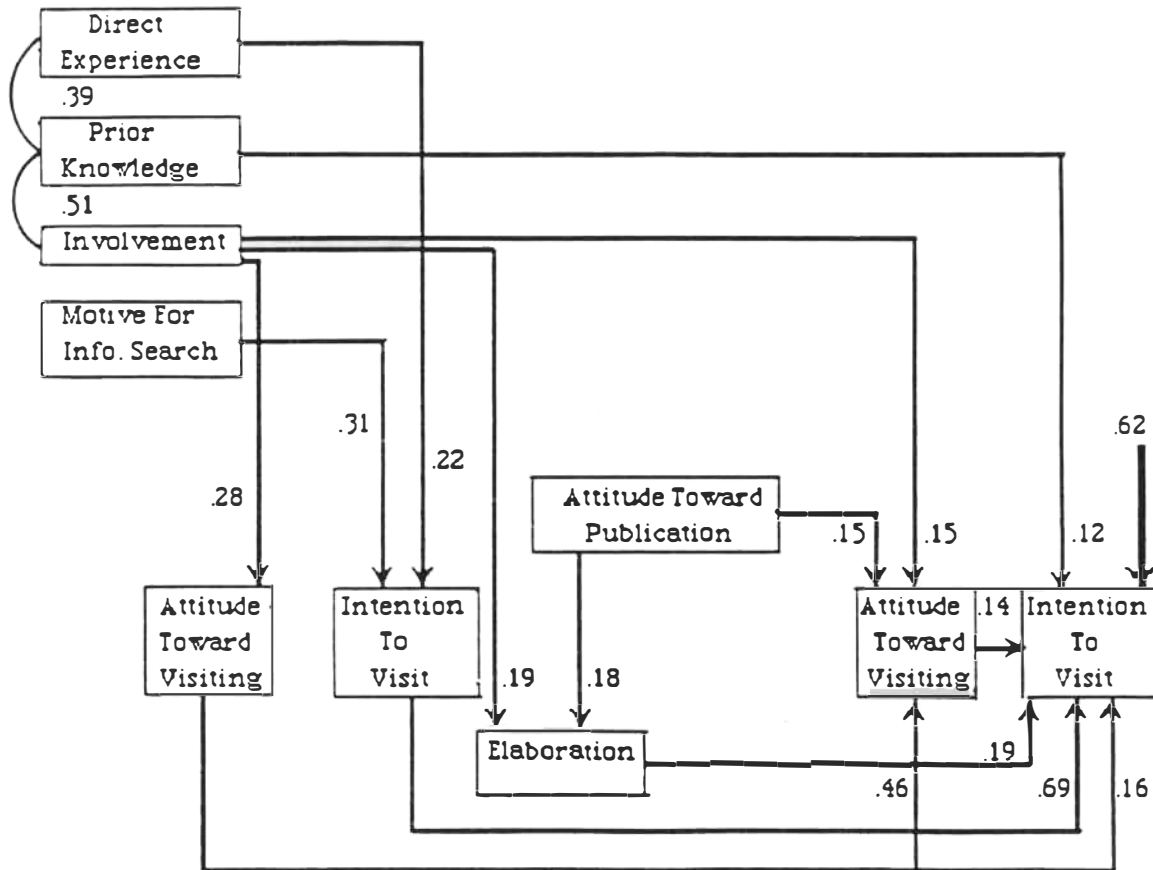


FIGURE 1  
TOURISM PUBLICATION EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

FIGURE 2  
 DIRECT AND FIRST ORDER INDIRECT  
 EFFECTS ON INTENTION TO VISIT



.23 Significant Path With Path Coefficient  
 — Error Term



Table 1  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE AND POST-TREATMENT  
INTENTION TO VISIT IN 1990(1)

	PRE TREATMENT	POST TREATMENT	CHANGE
<b>Measurement Scale Scores</b>			
1 Not At All Likely	17.6%	26.2%	+8.6%
2	9.0	13.1	+4.1
3	9.0	6.6	-2.4
4	9.8	9.4	-0.4
5	11.5	7.8	-3.7
6	9.8	5.7	-4.1
7 Extremely Likely	29.5	30.3	+0.8
<b>Mean Scores</b>			
Total Sample (N=234)	4.42	4.12	-.30*
<b>By Level of Elaboration</b>			
Low (N=22)	3.77	2.72	-1.04*
Medium (N=134)	4.62	4.11	-.51*
High (N=70)	4.35	4.67	+.31
<b>By Level of ATTAD</b>			
Low (N=6)	5.00	4.17	-.83
Medium (N=102)	4.37	3.94	-.43*
High (N=93)	4.52	4.55	+.03

\* T-Test significant difference between pre and post scores at .05 level.

1 Intention to visit was measured on a scale of 1, not at all likely; to 7, extremely likely to visit in 1990.

Table 2  
CHANGE IN PRE AND POST-TREATMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD  
VISITING COLORADO (1)

ATTITUDE TOWARD VISITING	PRE TREATMENT	POST TREATMENT	CHANGE
<b>Measurement Scale Scores</b>			
1 Very Low	0.0%	0.9%	+0.9%
2	0.0	0.0	0.0
3	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	3.7	1.8	-1.9
5	6.3	9.8	+3.5
6	29.9	27.6	-2.6
7 Very High	60.2	59.9	-0.3
<b>Mean Scores</b>			
Total Sample (N=230)	6.30	6.24	-.06
<b>By Cognitive Elaboration</b>			
Low (N=18)	5.67	5.56	-.11
Medium (N=138)	6.31	6.31	0.00
High (N=70)	6.47	6.30	-.17
<b>By Attitude Toward the Publication</b>			
Low (N=5)	5.53	4.87	-.67
Medium (N=106)	6.06	6.00	-.06
High (N=94)	6.70	6.66	-.04

- \* T-Test significant difference at .05 level.  
1 Attitude toward visiting Colorado was measured on a scale of 1, low; to 7, high. Values shown are pre and post-treatment mean attitude toward visiting scores.

Table 3  
 CVG INFLUENCED PLANNED LENGTH OF STAY IN COLORADO,  
 BY ELABORATION AND ATTITUDE TOWARD PUBLICATION (1)

	NO	YES	TOTAL
CVG INFLUENCED LENGTH OF STAY (2)			
Total Sample (N=230)	77.4%	22.6%	100.0%
Attitude Toward Publication			
Low			
Number of cases	4	0	4
Percent	100.0%	0.0%	2.1%
Medium			
Number of cases	91	9	100
Percent	91.0	9.0	51.3
High			
Number of cases	56	35	44
Percent	61.5	38.5	22.6
Subtotal			
Number of cases	151	44	195
Percent	77.4	22.6	100.0
Cognitive Elaboration			
Low			
Number of cases	17	0	17
Percent	100.0%	0.0%	7.9%
Medium			
Number of cases	109	18	127
Percent	85.8	14.2	59.1
High			
Number of cases	41	30	71
Percent	57.7	42.3	33.0
Subtotal			
Number of cases	167	48	215
Percent	77.7	22.3	100.0

1 Chi-Square test of statistics for ATTAD and elaboration produced a Chi-Square values of 24.857 and 26.013, with a significance of .001 and .000.

2 Respondents were asked if the Colorado Vacation Guide influenced them to increase the number of days they now plan to spend in Colorado, compared to their planned length of stay prior to seeing the CVG.

Table 4  
PRE-POST CHANGE IN BELIEFS AND EVALUATIONS ABOUT  
COLORADO LEISURE TRIP ATTRIBUTES(1)

ATTRIBUTE	PRE TREATMENT	POST TREATMENT	CHANGE
Mountain scenery belief	2.63	2.65	+.02
Evaluation	2.25	2.23	-.02
Good climate belief	1.99	12.20	+.21*
Evaluation	2.23	2.22	-.01
Many things to do belief	2.10	2.07	-.03
Evaluation	2.20	2.06	-.14*
Safe and easy travel belief	1.65	1.74	+.09
Evaluation	2.18	2.15	-.03
Visit natural areas belief	1.80	1.87	+.07
Evaluation	1.93	1.79	-.14
Interesting cities belief	1.72	1.82	+.10
Evaluation	1.66	1.52	-.14
Unique historic sites belief	1.70	1.96	+.25*
Evaluation	2.13	2.09	-.04
Hike-outdoor rec. belief	2.13	2.09	-.04
Evaluation	1.52	1.12	-.39*
Adventure belief	1.57	1.57	0.00
Evaluation	1.24	1.06	-.18*
Accommodations belief	1.45	1.75	+.31*
Evaluation	0.99	0.91	-.08
Festivals-events belief	1.01	1.52	+.51*
Evaluation	0.77	0.70	-.07
Not too far from home belief	0.34	0.33	-.01
Evaluation	0.68	0.45	-.23
Camp in the mountains belief	1.18	1.42	+.24
Evaluation	0.23	0.06	-.17
Visit friends-rels belief	-0.92	-1.08	-.16
Evaluation	-0.37	-0.66	-.29*
Exciting theatre belief	-0.11	0.71	+.60*
Evaluation	-0.51	-0.56	-.05

\* T-Test significance at .05 level.

1 Belief and evaluation scores range from +3 to -3.