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CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND UTAH'S OUT OF STATE VISITOR

PERRY J. BROWN and JOHN D. HUNT

The fall of 1967 proved to be a time of controversy and discussion concerning programs of the Utah Travel Council. Much of this discussion was about the *Utah Traveler Index*. The *Utah Traveler Index* is a measure of percentile change, from a base period, in nonresident travel to Utah.¹

During 1966 the *Utah Traveler Index* reported an increase in automobile travel of 14 percent over 1965. In the first 6 months of 1967, the *Utah Traveler Index* reported a decrease of 15 percent under 1966. A decrease was also recorded during the third quarter of 1967. Why?

Research conducted by Utah State University² in 1966 indicates that Utah tourists generally complete their vacation area planning by May or June. Surveys of travelers visiting Utah indicate that nearly three-fourths of them have made their final decisions by these months. This means that the planning period is probably concentrated in the first and second quarters of each year. This assumption is supported by the analysis of requests for information by prospective Utah tourists as reported by Ross Journey and Associates, Inc.³

¹ Bradley, Iver E., and R. S. Lawson. 1967 *Utah Traveler Index*. Bureau of Economic and Business Research. University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. 21 pp.

² Hunt, John D., and Perry J. Brown. 1967 *Consumer Decisions Affecting Vacation Patterns*. Interim Report to the Utah Travel Council. Utah State University, Logan, Utah. 105 pp.

³ Ross Journey and Associates, Inc., 1967. "Interim Report." An unpublished report to the Utah Travel Council. May 4-June 10, 1967. Salt Lake City, Utah.

If we superimpose the planning period over the *Index of Consumer Sentiment* reported by the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan (figure 1), some interesting observations can be made. The *Index of Consumer Sentiment* indicates expectations about consumer spending on automobiles, appliances, and leisure-time pursuits. All of these are considered "postponable expenditures."

Expenditures for leisure-time pursuits are postponable. However, vacation time is traditionally available and must be used regardless of consumer expectations. The question here is whether people stay close to home, thus postponing expenditures, or travel. In 1966 more people traveled; in 1967 more people probably stayed closer to home.

In the third quarter of 1965 the *Index of Consumer Sentiment* reached an all-time peak, and the fourth quarter was nearly as high.

With optimistic expectations for the future, the consumer probably began to plan early for his vacation. Moving into the first and second quarters of 1966, the *Index of Consumer Sentiment* dropped, but it was still quite high and vacation area plans were probably being crystallized. The third quarter of 1966 showed an additional drop, but by then consumers had planned their vacations and were probably traveling. They did not view the next 6 months as favorably, but their decisions had already been made. The record high Indices of Consumer Sentiment recorded in 1965 could possibly have accounted for the high *Utah Traveler Index* in 1966.

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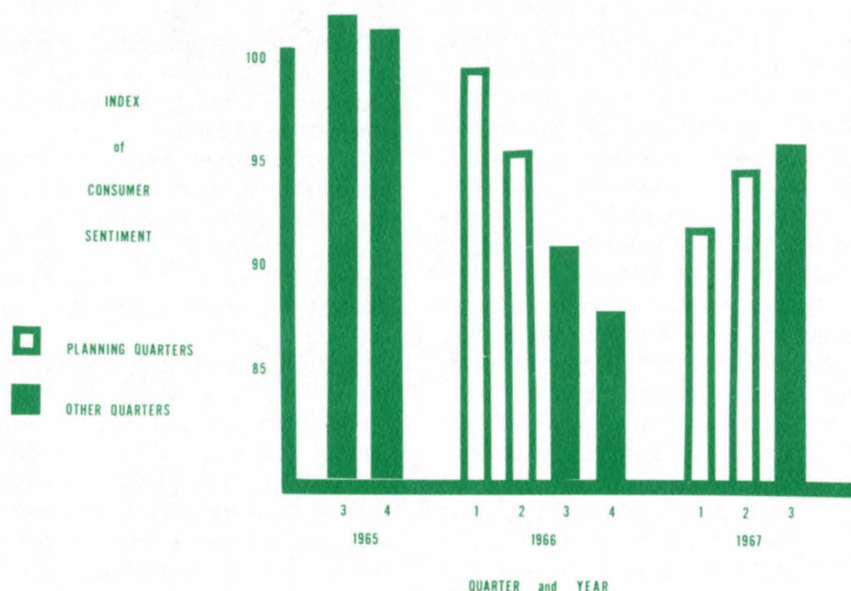


Figure 1. Consumer sentiment index decline preceding reduced travel year.

Plant Scientist Retires

The lowest *Index of Consumer Sentiment* figure recorded in recent years was in the fourth quarter of 1966. Contemplating a relative decrease in discretionary income, consumers' plans probably centered on inexpensive vacations. Moving into 1967, the *Index of Consumer Sentiment* began to rise, but not nearly to the levels of 1965 or the first half of 1966. The rise continued through the second and third quarters of 1967, but was still a long way from "optimistic 1965."

It appears that 1967's decline in travel could be attributable largely to a decline in consumer sentiment during the vacation planning stages (first and second quarter, 1967). A preliminary analysis of 1967 data collected by Utah State University indicates a large number of Utah's visitors made their final vacation area decisions in July and August, and if consumer sentiment had not been on the rise, travel in these months would likely have been lower than it was.

Among the factors which have affected the *Index of Consumer Sentiment* in recent months are anticipations of increasing prices (which affect expectations about personal expenditures) and the Vietnam situation (which affects expectations about future business trends).

If nation-wide consumer sentiment generally influences out-of-state travel to Utah, care must be taken not to blame or extol local conditions and programs as responsible for major changes in travel. It is necessary to know Utah travel in relation to travel in other areas and states before crediting local influences for these changes.

At this point, if previous assumptions are correct, the travel picture looks brighter for 1968. However, no sound predictions can be made until *Index of Consumer Sentiment* information is collected and analyzed for the fourth quarter of 1967 and the first quarter of 1968. Should the Index continue to rise, it is likely that the Utah tourist industry can look forward to increased out-of-state travel in 1968.

Few people actually live a classic success story, but Professor Delmar (Del) C. Tingey did just that during his distinguished career at Utah State University.

In the early 1920's, the wheat industry of northern Utah and southern Idaho was threatened with extinction because of bunt (smut) infections. Professor Tingey started in 1925 to try to develop bunt-resistant wheat. Because the need was so urgent (in 1929-30, almost 75 percent of the area's wheat was infected), he had to work on two elements of the problem simultaneously. He started to define the various races of bunt that were involved and, at the same time, tried crossing wheats that might provide resistance.

Out of a cross made in 1926, came Relief wheat, which was released in 1931 in small lots. Although not the perfect answer, Relief did permit the area's wheat industry to survive. Continuing research produced Cache (1935) and Wasatch (1942) wheats. These two varieties replaced Relief, and by 1946, only 0.3 of 1 percent of the area's wheat crop graded as bunt-infected. In 1961 another variety on which he had done most of the development work, was released under the name Delmar.

Even today, despite changing technology and new races of bunt, these wheats are grown extensively in Utah and Idaho.

A native Utahn, Professor Tingey joined the Agronomy staff at USAC in 1924 upon completion of his M.Sc. degree. By 1946 he had earned the rank of full Professor. Almost his entire career has been fulfilled in Utah.

In the 1950's, he left wheat breeding work and began to concentrate on his other research interest, weed control. He actually had been doing research on weeds since 1925 when he was assigned a \$3.00 (three-dollar) budget and a plot of ground behind the chemistry building.

During the next few years, chemicals such as the chlorates became



DELMAR C. TINGEY

important control agents. Then in 1945, 2,4-D and similar systemic herbicides became available. By combining a recognition of the potential worth of chemicals with a remarkable awareness of the value of well-timed cultivation, Professor Tingey produced some impressive results. He ultimately worked out effective control principles for virtually all of the perennial weeds that are important in Utah.

Although his wheat breeding work was his most spectacular research response to a critical problem, Professor Tingey's career produced many other valuable results. His interest in the possibilities of applying statistical techniques to biological research led him to invest many hours in finding and studying reference materials as soon as they began to appear. Once he had mastered what information was available, he initiated a course of applied statistics at USAC.

Professor Tingey reached Emeritus status on July 1, 1962. Full retirement came on July 1, 1967. Although his pace has slackened a bit, he is still actively trying to find a solution to the dodder problem in alfalfa.