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Destination positioning opportunities using personal values: Elicited through the Repertory test with Laddering analysis

ABSTRACT

While in many travel situations there is an almost limitless range of available destinations, travellers will usually only actively consider two to six in their decision set. One of the greatest challenges facing destination marketers is positioning their destination, against the myriad of competing places that offer similar features, into consumer decision sets. Since positioning requires a narrow focus, marketing communications must present a succinct and meaningful proposition, the selection of which is often problematic for destination marketing organisations (DMO), which deal with a diverse and often eclectic range of attributes in addition to self-interested and demanding stakeholders who have interests in different market segments. This paper reports the application of two qualitative techniques used to explore the range of cognitive attributes, consequences and personal values that represent potential positioning opportunities in the context of short break holidays. The Repertory Test is an effective technique for understanding the salient attributes used by a traveller to differentiate destinations, and Laddering analysis enables the researcher to explore the smaller set of consequences and personal values guiding such decision making. A key finding of the research was that while individuals might vary in their repertoire of salient attributes, there was a commonality of shared consequences and values. This has important implications for

DMOs, since a brand positioning theme that is based on a value will subsume multiple and diverse attributes. It is posited that such a theme will appeal to a broader range of travellers, as well as appease a greater number of destination stakeholders, than would an attribute-based theme.

KEY WORDS: Repertory test, construct elicitation, laddering, destination positioning, decision sets

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s there has been a rapid growth in branding initiatives by destination marketing organisations (DMO), the public face of which are the place name, a positioning slogan and representative visual imagery. DMO interest in brand positioning is underpinned by a marketing orientation that recognises consumers have an almost limitless range of destinations from which to choose. For example, Baker (2007, p. 16) noted that in the USA alone there are approximately 20,000 cities, over 3,000 counties, and 12,800 designated National Historic Districts: “No wonder most small and mid-sized cities find it hard to be seen and heard in this crowd!” Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2002) observed that 70 % of international travellers visit only 10 countries, and over 90 NTOs compete for the remaining 30% of international arrivals. The number of destinations a consumer actually considers in decision making will likely be within the range of two to six (see Howard & Sheth 1969, Woodside & Sherrell 1977, Crompton 1992). For a discussion on how this proposition has been supported in the extant literature see Pike (2006), whose longitudinal study identified a strong relationship between stated destination preferences and actual travel. A major

challenge facing DMOs therefore is achieving differentiation against the myriad of competing places offering similar features, by positioning their destination into consumers' decision sets.

Very few tourism products are unique, (see Murphy & Pritchard, 1997) and there is a danger some destinations will become commodities, and therefore increasingly substitutable (Gilbert, 1990). Plog (2000) lamented the increasing sameness of destinations due to the impact of globalisation. This 'modernity' has all but destroyed any opportunities for travellers to experience 'different' attractions (Dann, 2000). The standardisation of facilities that has enabled mass tourism thus provides travellers with familiarity: "As a result, countries become interchangeable in the tourist's mind. Whether he is looking for good beaches, restful forests, or old cities, it becomes relatively unimportant to him where these happen to be found" (Cohen, 1972, p. 172). Therefore, the efficacy of competing on the basis of attributes must be questioned given in any travel situation there will be numerous destinations offering similar features.

Positioning can be a source of competitive advantage for organisations (Porter 1980, Hooley, Saunders & Piercy 2004). Porter suggested a competitive strategy was one that positioned a business to make the most of strengths that differentiated the firm from competitors.

Positioning was first introduced as a marketing strategy in 1969 (see Trout & Ries, 1979), and has been defined as "establishing and maintaining a distinctive place in the market for an organisation and/or its individual product offerings" (Lovelock, 1991, p. 110). The concept of market positioning theory is based on three propositions (Ries & Trout, 1986). First, we live

in an over-communicated society, confronted with increasing loads of information every day. Second, our mind develops a defence system against this clutter, in the form of selectivity of what we notice, read and retain. Third, the way to cut through the noise in the marketplace is through a focussed message.

While effectively positioning a destination into consumer decision sets represents a potential source of advantage for destinations (Pike & Ryan, 2004), the process is also beneficial for travellers, since understanding consumer needs is fundamental to the process. A meaningful proposition helps simplify a consumer's decision making (Ries & Trout, 1986). Effective positioning offers the decision maker consequences to solve a problem, in a way that is different to rivals (Chacko 1997, DiMingo 1998).

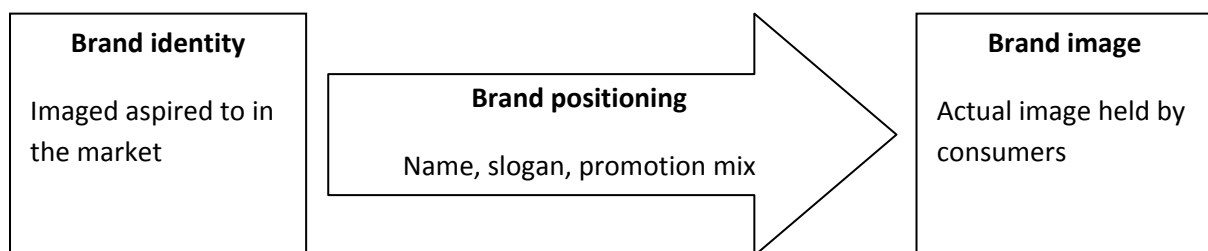
A key challenge for DMOs in the positioning process is the design of a succinct theme to cut through the noise of competing places offering similar attractions and be noticed by the right audience, for the right reasons, at decision time. Developing a focused proposition is arguably the greatest challenge in branding (Gilmore, 2002). To be effective, the range of differentiated features emphasised is small (Aaker & Shansby 1982, Crompton, Fakeye & Lue 1992). Such a narrow focus is at the heart of positioning, since a brand is "a singular idea or concept that you own inside the mind of a prospect. It's as simple and as difficult as that." (Ries & Ries, 1998, p. 172). Since a destination usually comprises an often eclectic and diverse range of features, trade-offs must be made about which feature(s) to include and which to exclude. What is required is an understanding of the decision criteria used by the consumer when differentiating destinations in the decision set under consideration. In

particular, which destination attributes are important in decision making? Not all attributes that differentiate a product from competitors are actually important to the consumer, and not all important attributes are used in decision making (Myers & Alpert, 1968). From all the attributes that might be considered important to a traveller, a smaller subset will be salient during the decision process, and from these there will be one or a few that will be determinant in the final choice.

While branding emerged in the marketing literature during the 1940s (see for example Guest, 1942), the first journal articles explicitly relating to destination branding did not appear until 1998 (see Dosen, Vransevic & Prebezac 1998, Pritchard & Morgan 1998). Pike's (2009) review of 74 academic destination branding publications between 1998 and 2007 highlighted the growth of interest in the reporting of cases studies about destination brand strategy development. However, relatively few research papers addressed brand positioning, such as those by Nickerson and Moisey (1999) and Kendall and Gursoy (2007). Pike identified a research gap in the area of DMOs' development of positioning themes to suit the needs of different markets. DMOs face a number of challenges in developing a succinct and meaningful positioning theme for heterogeneous and increasingly dynamic markets, including for example (Pike, 2005): the politics of decision making, the expensive nature of marketing research in diverse markets of interest to stakeholders, the range and diversity of local attractions and amenities, and the difficulty in differentiating against destinations in the competitive set that offer the same features. A single minded proposition might also be risky for a destination, since trade-offs must be made about i) which segments to target, and ii) which stakeholders' attribute(s) to include. It is simply not possible to tell the whole story about a place in a way that will appeal to everyone.

Following Aaker (1996), the core constructs in the destination branding process are brand identity, brand positioning and brand image, as depicted in Figure 1. The brand identity, which has an internal organisation orientation, represents the self-image aspired to in the market. Brand image has an external market orientation, and stands for the actual image held by consumers. Brand positioning is the attempt to enhance congruency between brand identity and brand image. Of the three constructs, destination image research has emerged as one of the most widely reported fields in the tourism literature.

Figure 1 – Destination branding elements



Destination image research methods

Pike's (2002, 2007) reviews of the first 35 years of destination image research tabled 262 studies. Of these, 187 used structured quantitative methods requiring respondents to rate the destination(s) of interest across a battery of mostly cognitive attributes scale items. A key difference between the analysis of destination image and destination position is that the latter requires a frame of reference with a competitive set of other destinations. In this regard, 129 studies analysed the image of a destination in isolation, which while providing a measure of

congruence with brand identity, does not identify unique strengths relative to competing places, which form the basis of positioning.

Of the 187 structured destination image studies, less than half used qualitative methods to bring the consumer into the scale development process. Even though there is yet no accepted destination image scale the most popular technique for questionnaire design has been by literature review, which runs the risk of not being relevant to the cultural context and travel situation. Two related techniques with potential to better understand destination choice decision making, but which arguably have been under reported in the tourism literature, are the Repertory Test and Laddering analysis, both of which are underpinned by Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory (PCT). The Repertory Test is particularly suitable for identifying the range of salient attributes individuals use to differentiate a competitive set of brands. Descriptions of salient attributes are provided in the consumer's language (Stewart & Stewart 1981). Laddering analysis was originally developed by Dennis Hinkle, one of George Kelly's PhD students, as an extension of the Repertory test (see Hinkle, 1965). It is important to note that many marketing researchers attribute the technique to Means-end theory (see Gutman, 1982), which focuses on the links between a product's attributes and their consequences for the consumer. Although Gutman referred to the work of Kelly and Hinkle in early publications, their influence on the development of Means-end theory, and laddering, appears to have been lost by marketing academics.

The aim of this research was to examine the efficacy of combining the Repertory Test and Laddering Analysis to identify potential destination positioning opportunities based on abstract personal values. Specifically, the objectives were to i) identify salient attributes that

differentiate destinations for a specific travel situation, ii) explore the consequences of these attributes and the personal values that underpin such information processing and decision making, and iii) identify the linkages between attributes, consequences and values.

METHOD

Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory viewed individual man as a scientist whose ultimate aim was to predict and control his environment. At the core of PCT is constructive alternativism, which proposed we have the creative capacity to interpret our environment, rather than simply respond to it in a stimulus-response manner. We all construe the universe in different ways, and it is open to reconstruction. Our individual construct system is the only model used to guide our behaviour (Jankowicz, 1987). Anticipation is at the heart of construing: "If we were not anticipating regularities in behaviour, why should we become upset about sudden change?" (Landfield & Leitner, 1980, p. 5). We have a repertoire of constructs that we continually test and amend through life experiences, in an attempt to aid our predictive efforts. Kelly's (1955, p. 46) fundamental postulate was that "a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events". Kelly designed the Repertory Test to operationalise PCT. As such the technique has strong face validity.

Although Kelly (1955) developed the Repertory Test for application with a single individual, a strength of the technique is the degree of flexibility in application and analysis (Frost & Braine, 1967). For example, the potential of the technique to provide group data was promoted by Kelly. Using a structured interview, the Repertory Test explores a person's

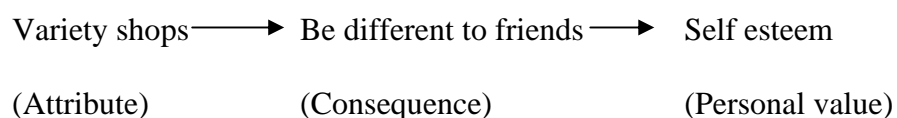
construct system through conversation (Fransella & Bannister, 1977). Originally developed for use in Kelly's field of clinical psychology, the Repertory Test has been adapted for use in a diverse range of other domains. Examples include investigations into the perceptions of: management training needs (Honey, 1979), counselling (Jankowicz & Cooper, 1982), information systems attributes (Whyte & Bytheway, 1996), software quality (Wilson & Hall, 1998), retail store attributes (Mitchell & Kiral, 1999), technology (Frewer, Howard & Shepherd 1998), managerial jobs (Smith, 1980), museums (Caldwell & Coshall, 2002), bread (Hersleth et al, 2005), and fruit (Jaeger, Rossiter & Lau 2005) for example.

While the technique has not been widely reported in the tourism literature, destination image applications have included: seaside resorts (Riley & Palmer, 1975), countryside places (Palmer, 1978), pre and post travel images (Pearce, 1982), holiday photos (Botteril & Crompton, 1987), images of Austria (Embacher & Buttle, 1989), images of Japan (Botterill, 1989), and domestic destinations (Walmsley & Jenkins 1993, Young 1995, Pike 2003).

Laddering Analysis was developed by Hinkle (1965), one of George Kelly's PhD students, as an extension of the Repertory Test. However, the technique has commonly been used by marketing researchers to operationalise Means-end Theory, the underling convention of which is a cognitive hierarchy of means that serve ends (see Gutman 1982, Reynolds & Gutman 1984). Laddering facilitates understanding of how cognitive attributes (A) are perceived to provide benefits or consequences (C), which in turn satisfy personal values (V). The output is an A-C-V hierarchy showing linkages between attributes, consequences and values. Researchers either ladder up from an attribute or ladder down from a benefit. In the

example shown in Figure 1, an individual might differentiate destinations on the basis of the variety of shops (salient attribute), which offers the potential benefit of obtaining fashion items that friends don't have (consequence/benefit), to enhance self esteem (personal value). In this way consumers are thought to consider certain brands (pull) that will achieve a desired outcome (push). An understanding of consumer values therefore aids understanding of buyer behavior, through an understanding of linkages between the product and the relevant role it plays in the consumer's life (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988).

Figure 1 - Example of a means-end ladder



An attitude is an enduring organization of beliefs about a specific object, whereas a value transcends specific objects and situations (Rokeach, 1968-69). Rokeach (p. 550) defined a value as “an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct or a particular end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence”. Therefore, while the cognitive attributes and consequences elicited from the Repertory Test are brand specific, the higher order consequences and values elicited from Laddering analysis are not. A value is a preference for a mode of behavior (instrumental value system), or a desired state of existence (terminal value system). Rokeach's views that i) the role of these value systems is to help us choose between alternatives in daily life, and ii) personality factors aside, similarities in value systems will occur in a population, is in keeping with Kelly's (1955) PCT and commonality corollary. Lamenting the lack of attention

towards values research in consumer behavior at the time, Vincent, Scott & Lamont (1977, p. 48) suggested that a major implication to marketers was that the knowledge of consumer value orientations could provide useful market segmentation variables beyond demographic and psychographic differences, since Rokeach's research found significant relationships between values and attitudes, and values and behavior. Using Rokeach's value scale to examine values of visitors and non-visitors to tourism attractions, Pitts and Woodside (1986) found values were associated with differences in attitudes and behavior. It is suggested therefore that the use of the Repertory Test to elicit attitudes, combined with the use of Laddering Analysis to elicit values, provides an effective means of understanding the links between attitudes and values and future travel behavior.

Since the work of Gutman and Reynolds in the 1980s, Laddering Analysis has been reported in the marketing literature across a wide range of interests, including for example: fashion (Botschen & Hemetsberger, 1998), international market segmentation (Vriens & Hofstede, 2000), on-line newspapers (de Souza Leao & de Mello, 2007) and choice of employer (van Rekom & Wierenga, 2007). The technique has also attracted interest from tourism researchers, with studies tending to focus on the areas of market segmentation (Pitts & Woodside 1986, Madrigal & Kahle 1994, Blamey & Braithwaite 1997), motivation (Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom 1996, Thyne 2001), visitor experiences (Higham & Carr 2002, Naoi, Airey, Iijima & Niininen 2007) and destination/product choice (Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey 1993, Klenosky 2002, Watkins & Gnoth 2011). As with the Repertory Test, Laddering Analysis is emic rather than etic, and ideographic rather than nomothetic. As such, the technique enables participants to express and define associations between attributes, consequences and values in their own terms. The purpose of this study was to combine the

Repertory Test to elicit salient destination attributes, with Laddering Analysis to identify underlying consequences and personal values, and identify implications and opportunities for destination differentiation.

While attribute importance can vary between travel situations (Barich & Kotler 1991, Reynolds & Gutman 1988, Crompton 1992), destination image studies have generally been undertaken without explicitly defining the context in which the traveller decision is being made (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). Indeed only 37 of the 262 destination image publications tabled by Pike (2002, 2007) featured an explicit travel context. As discussed in the introduction, the travel situation of interest in this study was short break holidays, defined as a trip away from home by car of between one to four nights.

Since qualitative research requires information-rich participants, of interest were consumers with short break experience, who were likely to take such a holiday in the following 12 months. A convenience sample frame comprising staff and post graduate students of a marketing school were sent an email invitation to participate. While no tangible incentive was offered, it was suggested that participation would enhance staff and student understanding of the Repertory Test and Laddering Analysis. Following Patton (2002), the sampling aim was to keep interviewing until a point of data redundancy, where the addition of any new participants would not yield any new information. A previous application of the Repertory Test by the author (Pike, 2003) found that half of all data was elicited from the first two participants and that the addition of any new information ceased after 8-10 interviews. A total of 20 interviews were held during February and March 2009. The sample consisted of

fourteen females and six males. Eight were staff and twelve were either part time or full time post graduate students; fourteen were aged under 45 years and six were over 45; ten were single, seven were married with dependent children and three were married with no children; ten earned less than \$75,000 per annum and ten earned \$75,000 or more. All but one participant had taken a short break during 2009, and all indicated a likelihood of taking a short break in 2010.

Prior to the interviews each participant was emailed an information sheet briefly outlining the purpose of the research. Since the context of the consumer behaviour is essential in laddering (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988), participants were advised to think about short break holidays. Kelly defined a construct as “a way in which things are construed as being alike and yet different from others” (Kelly, 1955, p. 105). The triad card method is commonly used to elicit constructs. Kelly’s (1955) minimum context card form of triad presentation was used. This has been the most common approach in Repertory Grid (Fransella and Bannister (1977), and has been employed in tourism applications (see Botterill and Crompton 1987, Pearce 1982, Pike 2003). Elements are presented to participants in sequential sets of three verbal labels printed on individual cards, or triads, since Kelly believed three elements to be the minimum required. Kelly acknowledged that two objects could be differentiated between, but argued that without a reference to similarity, the difference would probably represent a chaotic heterogeneity. Dyads have been utilised in an environmental image study by Smith (1989), who reasoned that elderly participants find this easier to understand than triads. Botterill and Crompton (1996) used a mix of triads and dyads.

An element is the object of interest, which in this study was short break holiday destination names. The list of elements can either be supplied by the researcher or elicited from the participant. It was decided to use the latter approach in this case, given the sheer number of short break destinations available to Brisbane residents. Each participant was invited to write down their own list of nine elements, by using the following questions, in the context of short break holidays by car. It was felt this mix of questions would elicit destinations that were meaningful to the individual, represented in their decision set as well as less favorable places. Elements should be broadly representative of the domain of interest, be meaningful to participants, represent a realistic choice set as well as non-preferred destinations.

1. Write the name of the first destination that comes to mind when thinking about your next short break holiday by car
2. Write down the name of the next destination that comes to mind
3. Write down the name of the destination that next comes to mind
4. Write down the name of a destination you have visited for a short break but did not like
5. Write down the name of a short break destination someone has talked about favourably
6. Write down the name of another short break destination someone has talked about favourably
7. Write down the name of a short break destination someone has talked about unfavourably
8. Write down the name of an expensive short break destination
9. Write down the name of a cheap short break destination

Following Embacher and Buttle (1989), at the start of each interview a practice example using a triad of car brands was used to demonstrate the technique. The purpose of this was simply to familiarize participants with the format of the interview. A balanced incomplete design formula (see Burton & Nerlove, 1976) was used to reduce the number of possible triad combinations from 84 ($n(n-1)(n-2)/6$, where n = number of elements) to 24, which is more manageable. Previous studies have shown that when using the ‘no repeat’ rule, participants use only around 8-12 triads (See Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). In a balanced incomplete block the number of triads required is calculated by: $b = \lambda n(n-1)/6$, where b is the number of triads, λ represents the number of triads in which each pair of elements appears, and n is the number of elements. Two further conditions were considered: $rn=3b$ and $\lambda = 2r/n-1$, where r is the number of replications of each element. With $\lambda = 2$, the number of triad combinations was reduced to 24. The following random order of triad combinations was provided by Burton and Nerlove (1976):

1,2,3 4,5,6 7,8,9 1,4,7 2,5,8 3,6,9 1,5,9 2,6,7 3,4,8 1,6,8 2,4,9
 3,5,7 3,4,5 6,7,8 9,1,2 3,6,9 4,7,1 5,8,2 3,7,2 4,8,9 5,6,1 3,8,1
 4,6,2 5,7,9

On presentation of each triad, subjects were asked one question: “When thinking of a short break holiday, in what important way are two of these destinations alike, and different to the third?” Participants were advised that there are no wrong answers, because in previous applications more than one person needed to be reassured their response was alright.

Following the completion of the first triad, participants were instructed that they would not be permitted to repeat any statements, and that the interview would end when they could think of no new similarity/difference statements. While both the positive and negative semantic poles were recorded, following Reynolds and Gutman (1988) participants were asked which pole of the distinction was preferred. It was at this point that laddering commenced by asking “Why is that important to you?”

The simplicity of responses is an advantage of the Repertory test (Burton & Nerlove, 1976), with one researcher’s data able to be interpreted quickly by another because “there is very little waffle” (Stewart and Stewart 1981, p. 27). For example, a common response in this study was “good beach”, which is representative of a salient cognitive attribute. This response then formed the basis of the Laddering Analysis. The laddering procedure was used per triad, immediately following the elicitation of a salient attribute. The question “why is that important to you on a short break” was repeated to move upwards from the cognitive attribute to consequence statements and ultimately the more abstract value statement. When a value statement had been reached, a new triad was used. Occasionally there was a need to ladder down from a consequence statement to elicit the cognitive attribute, and then ladder back up to the level of values. At the point when a participant could not identify any similarity/difference, one further triad was used. When no more similarity/difference statements were elicited, a final question asked whether there were any other important destination features not already mentioned. All participants were able to reach the level of values for each completed triad. The ‘no repeat’ rule’ was applied at the level of attributes but not for consequences of values.

Reynolds and Gutman (1988) were critical of many previous applications of laddering analysis in the marketing literature and so provided a detailed account of the procedure. While the process used relied on content analysis of spreadsheet data in this case, readers should note that for larger samples, where generalizing is an aim, there is a freely available DOS based *LADDERMAP* software developed by Chuck Gengler (see Peffers & Gengler, 2003). The length of the interviews ranged from 21 to 56 minutes, with a mean of 42 minutes.

INTERPRETATION

The first stage of interpreting the data involved coding the salient attributes to enable the development of themes based on common wording. For example, responses such as ‘more nature’, ‘natural attractions’, ‘beautiful scenery’ and ‘undeveloped’ were grouped by a simple cut and paste method in the theme ‘natural environment’. In this way the total 200 verbal labels elicited from participants were reduced to 16 theme codes that had been mentioned by at least six of the 20 participants. The reliability of these codes was verified by three co-researchers who were asked to follow Guba’s (1978) guidelines, where themes should feature internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. The same process was used to develop seven summary consequences codes and eight values codes. These codes and summary themes are shown in Table 1, where the fraction in brackets indicates how many of the 20 participants had elicited a verbal label represented in that code. Participants elicited a mean of nine attributes, ten consequences and four values. The personal values are consistent with the 18 items in Rokeach’s (1968-69) Terminal Values Scale.

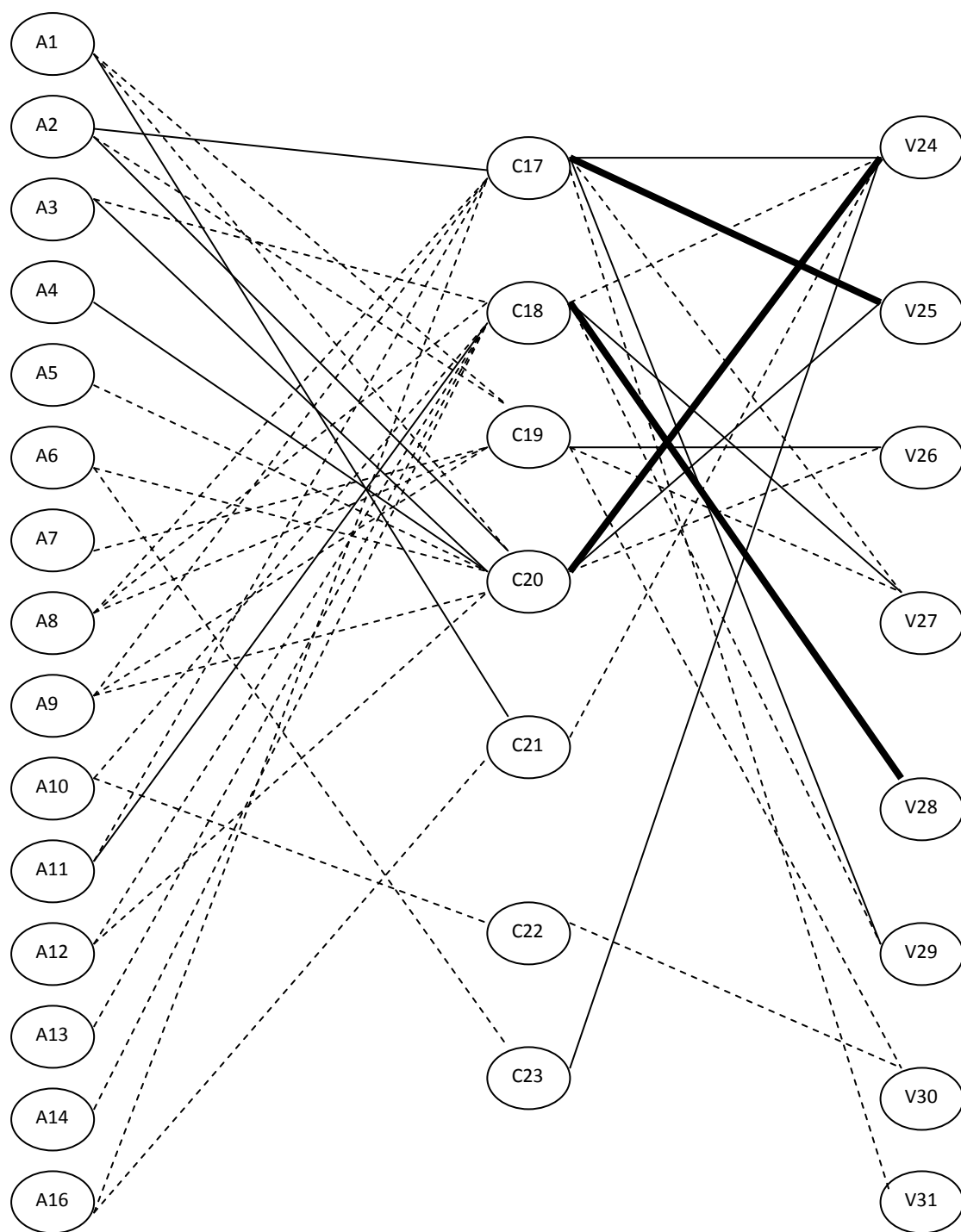
Table 1 – Summary content codes

Values	V24. Happiness (18/20) V25. Healthy life (11/20) V26. Get closer to family/partner (10/20) V27. Self-fulfilment (9/20) V28. Broaden my mind (9/20) V29. Rewarding self (7/20) V30. Status/enhance my credibility (6/20) V31. Safety (6/20)
Consequences	C17. Refresh/recharge/relax (20/20) C18. Opportunity to try something new (20/20) C19. Break from routine/get away from it all (15/20) C20. See more/do more/eat more (12/20) C21. More time at destination (9/12) C22. Brag value (8/20) C23. Exciting (6/20)
Attributes	A1. Closer to home (16/20) A2. Beach (14/20) A3. Metropolitan cities (14/20) A4. Pleasant climate (11/20) A5. Good value for money (10/20) A6. Lots to see and do (10/20) A7. Air travel required (10/20) A8. Less developed (10/20) A9. Good accommodation (9/20)

	A10. Good shopping (9/20)
	A11. Not previously visited (8/20)
	A12. Cafes/restaurants (8/20)
	A13. Different culture (8/20)
	A14. Natural environment (8/20)
	A15. Well known place (7/20)
	A16. Friendly people (6/20)

The hierarchical value map shown in Figure 2 was then developed by constructing chains of elements from the individual and aggregate data. While the term *ladder* is used to denote an individual's data, *chain* is used to refer to a sequence of linkages between elements in aggregate form. Only chains representing the ladders of at least two participants, 10% of the sample, were used. Reynolds and Gutman (1988) suggested a cut-off of 5% would suffice for larger samples. In line with the study aim, the eight personal values represent potential positioning opportunities for destinations interested in this geographic segment. Each of these core values subsumes a larger range of consequences and attributes.

Figure 2 - Hierarchical value map



Key

---- 2 to 4 relations — 5 to 9 relations — 10+ relations

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

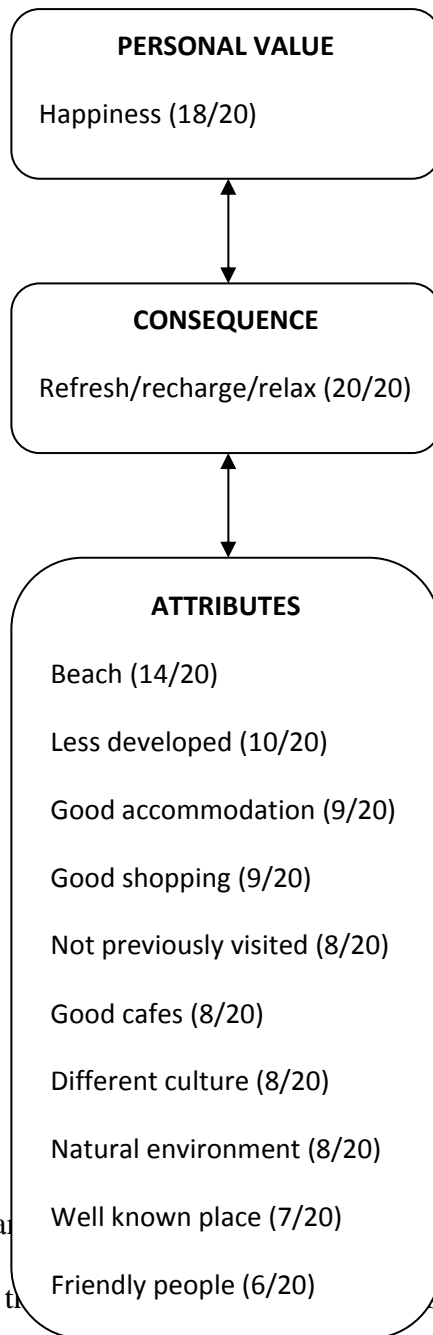
One of the greatest challenges facing destination marketers is positioning their destination into consumer decision sets, which are thought to be limited to between two and six places for a given travel context. To achieve this DMOs must somehow differentiate their destination against the myriad of competing places that offer similar features. A marketing orientation dictates a focus on the needs and wants of the consumer rather than on product features, and so the positioning theme must be developed on the basis of something that is meaningful to the target. Since positioning requires a narrow focus, marketing communications must present a succinct and meaningful proposition, the selection of which is a major challenge for DMOS representing a diverse product range. The purpose of this paper has been to present researchers and practitioners with an effective and efficient method for eliciting destination positioning opportunities from consumers. A combination of two qualitative techniques was used to) identify salient attributes that differentiate destinations for a specific travel situation, ii) explore the consequences of these attributes and the personal values that underpin such information processing and decision making, and iii) identify the linkages between attributes, consequences and values.

A marketing orientation is a philosophy of making all decisions with the consumer in mind. Therefore it is proposed that consumer values-based positioning strategy is likely to be more effective than a product centric attributes-based approach. The combination of the Repertory Test and Laddering Analysis facilitates an understanding of how consumer values that motivate decision making are linked to destination attributes and benefits. Using values in brand positioning is an opportunity to connect with consumers based on their motivations rather than on product attributes. A destination positioning theme focusing on a personal

value is likely to appeal to a broader range of travellers than positioning that focuses on one or a few cognitive attributes. Figure 3 shows an example of this, where ten attributes shared the same consequence (refresh/recharge/relax) and one value (happiness). It is argued that this approach will also offer benefits to the demand-side politics of DMO decision making, since a value-based proposition will subsume a broader range of stakeholders' attributes.

The Repertory test generated 16 destination attributes, and the use of Laddering analysis identified seven consequences and eight values, in the context of short break holidays. The Hierarchical Value Map provides destination marketers with a foundation with which to develop a structured measurement tool to evaluate how their destination is perceived relative to the other destinations in the competitive set. One of the most interesting findings was that while different individuals might vary in their list of attributes, there was a commonality of consequences and values. While each of these represents potential positioning opportunities, it is proposed the more abstract higher order consequences and values offer supply and demand side advantages over the use of cognitive attributes. Firstly, from the demand perspective, the approach would appeal to a broader range of travellers within the target segment. This is particularly practical for smaller DMOs, where budgets preclude the development of multiple positioning themes to suit different groups. Secondly, from the supply perspective, a higher order benefit subsuming a broader range of tangible features would be more inclusive for a broader range of stakeholders such as local business and travel intermediaries. However, since these consequences and values are not destination specific the DMO must ensure the theme selected is relatively unique.

Since generalising was not a limitation. However, one of the limitations is the ability to elicit generalisable data from a small number of participants. Such data can then be used in the development of scales, tested through a larger structured survey requiring participants to rate the perceived performance of a competitive set of destinations for a specific travel context. It is however suggested that researchers in other parts of the world who are interested in



destination positioning, destination image, segmentation or motivation could screen the attributes, consequences and values through local focus groups.

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