

**AN ANALYSIS OF
NON-ECONOMIC CONSUMER
CHOICE CRITERIA WITHIN
THE BRITISH HOLIDAY
PARK MARKET**

by

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AN ANALYSIS OF NON-ECONOMIC CONSUMER CHOICE
CRITERIA WITHIN THE BRITISH HOLIDAY PARK MARKET

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We hereby certify that this Dissertation submitted by Martyn Steer-Fowler conforms to acceptable standards, and as such is fully adequate in scope and quality. It is therefore approved as the fulfillment of the Dissertation requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions or writings of another.

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF NON-ECONOMIC CONSUMER CHOICE CRITERIA WITHIN THE BRITISH HOLIDAY PARK MARKET

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Very little seems to have been researched, written or published on the reasons for holiday choice, and far less specifically on the purchase of holiday park vacations. Through utilizing quantitative research, this paper broadens the understanding of the decision process and the criteria used, and provides a practical illustration of consumer choice theory in operation. Notwithstanding that it is partly a person's income and the price charged that controls the selection of market and product range, the research focuses upon the purchase process that follows, based upon needs, desires, and features of the products that consumers can afford. Some results are predictable, and others significant, but many are quite surprising. Whilst a consumer's needs vary, their general requirements do not. Much of the criteria used to mould a decision is fixed, common, and shared regardless of consumer profile, and a clear hierarchy in importance can be established. Moreover the research provides some interesting answers not only to why people buy what they do, but why sometimes they don't. The study identifies the existence of a structured choice process, beginning with some early and predictable decisions. In certain

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circumstances consumers draw upon some common criteria, identical in order of importance, whilst on other occasions there are significant variations, that can be accounted for by specific influences and restrictions. The dissertation culminates by establishing a model that explains and summarizes how non-economic choice criteria can be utilized during the purchase of British holiday park vacations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM AREA

Almost a quarter of all British holiday nights¹ are spent in caravans, yet there is little evidence to explain the reason or process for such choice. Whilst the selection from which a consumer might purchase a product is usually determined by their income and the price charged, the choice of the final product is likely to depend upon personal tastes and preferences for those goods². If you were to visit an electrical superstore to buy an appliance, you are likely to disregard unaffordable models from your choice, knowing full well that your income and the price being charged puts those products beyond your reach. Ultimately the final purchase is based upon your needs, the product features, design, and brand image, applied to those that you can afford. The balancing of such elements forms the basis of *non-economic consumer choice criteria*, and helps to provide a way of understanding why people buy what they do. Why they choose one product in preference to another. In relation to holidays these might be the style of vacation, resort, availability of facilities, or type and standard of accommodation.

The importance of such preferences cannot be considered in isolation. Influences and restrictions may also apply to such criteria, for

example when a family may take their holiday, the size of party, or age and make-up of participants. Clearly there are reasons for the choice of holiday park vacations that go beyond simple economics of income and product pricing that influences the purchase decision. This paper sets out to discover what criteria might exist, its various levels of importance, and whether a common pattern prevails.

Eric Marder's promises principle³ suggests that for consumables such as holidays, it might be specific product features that matter to the buying decision, and that general promises about performance and functionality might not play a role as they do for the purchase of durable items. The problem is that little is currently known about the effects of such features, what consumers really prefer, their needs and what is important to them during the selection of their caravan park holidays. Is the date more important than the park location or standards of accommodation? Has an indoor pool greater influence than proximity to a beach, or local attractions? Which features are consumers prepared to give up or trade-off against another, and how great must the gain be? The question is, how might consumer needs and preferences be identified and then explained by existing theory, and can such questions be answered by a specific study?

OBJECTIVES IN ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

This dissertation aims to address the problem through careful considered research and analysis, to measure the importance and effect of product features, establish consumer needs, and define a hierarchy of criteria that consumers use during their selection of holiday park vacations. In this way it might also provide answers to why one product might be chosen in preference to another, and what might influence or restrict such choice. The answers the research could provide are:

- *Which features, needs and criteria consumers use during choosing holiday park vacations, excluding disposable income and price.*
- *The order of importance of such criteria to a consumer during their decision making process*
- *Which influences and restrictions are exerted upon the choice process.*
- *Why people might switch between holiday park products and providers.*
- *How these factors, patterns and behaviour might be explained by existing consumer choice theory.*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE AND THEORY REVIEW

CONSUMER CHOICE THEORY

The basis for much of the theory on consumer choice lies in the belief that a person will naturally desire the maximum benefit from their income⁴. A common application is in helping to explain the purchase of products in terms of the utility and level of satisfaction that might be gained by acquiring them, whilst choice is constrained by income and the prices charged. Such theory is therefore significant to this study as it highlights two important factors that might influence a consumer's behaviour. Firstly a consumer's ability to acquire goods, might be determined by an individual's income and the product price, known as the *budget constraint*, as it defines the *market basket* from which a choice might be possible. This may be illustrated graphically by a *budget constraint* line (Figure 1), that determines the combination of goods affordable given a consumer's income and the prices charged. A second form of influence may be a consumer's preference or taste over various combinations of goods that make up their *consumption bundle*. These might be represented by indifference curves illustrating products providing the same levels of utility. The model demonstrates how the optimum purchase might occur at the point where a consumer enjoys the

maximum utility from the budget available, and would only be willing to give up one good if greater utility and satisfaction can be gained from another.

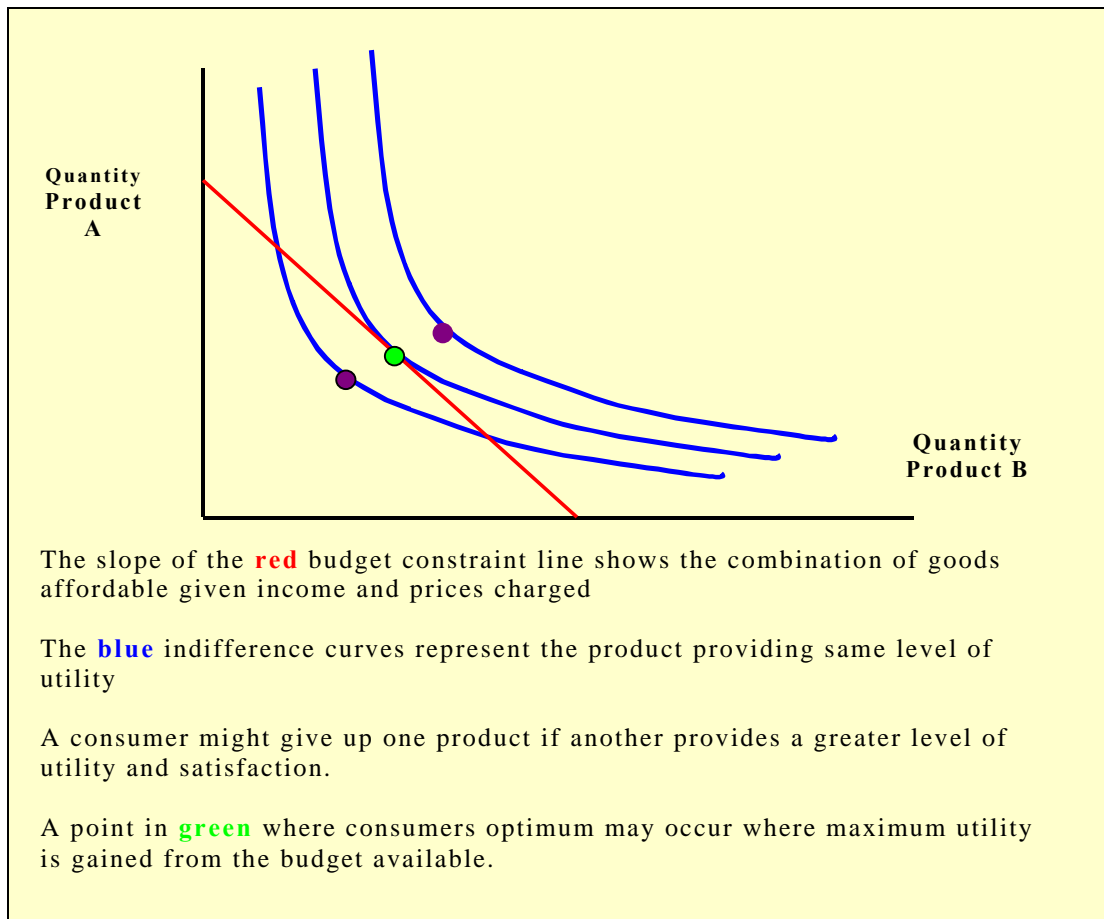


Figure 1 - The Theory of Consumer Choice and Maximum Utility

Through providing a case study as a basis for this research, the choice of market baskets have been primarily pre-determined, concentrating upon consumer's preferences and the influences upon their choice of a particular consumption bundle. Notwithstanding budget constraints, it is clear to see from such theory the significance of a

consumer's preference or tastes in influencing product choice within a consumption bundle.

CONSUMER CHOICE CRITERIA

The concept that taste, utility and satisfaction influence a buyer's preference, is further developed by David Jobber⁵, who explains the various attributes used in evaluating products in terms of a *choice criteria*, a concept central to this research. Whilst it might take the form of economic criteria, often it is technical, social and personal reasons that form the basis of a consumer's decision-making process.

<u>Non-Economic Type of Criteria</u>	<u>Caravan Holiday Purchases</u>
<i>Technical</i>	Level of Comfort Convenience Style of Accommodation Facilities Offered Reliability to Satisfy
<i>Social</i>	Trend and Fashion in Holidays Status Influence of Others Social Belonging Convention
<i>Personal</i>	Self-Image Emotional Feelings Moral Issues Values

Table 1 – Choice Criteria used when Evaluating Holiday Purchases

Technical criteria that concern the potential success of a holiday might include attributes such as facilities, comfort and convenience of

travel. Social criteria relate to the considerations that the decision might have on status and others affected by the holiday purchase, such as family and friends. For example a Caribbean cruise in preference to a caravan park holiday may be a consideration of status and social belonging, as much as a technical consideration of comfort and amenity. Personal criteria include consumer's psychological feelings, how they view themselves, their emotions, morals and values, and how these relate to the product. Not dissimilar to findings through research into leisure activities⁶, a choice of a particular type of holiday may be influenced by emotional criteria and a desire for change or something different. In examining how choice criteria may be influenced or determined, Groucutt, Leadley and Forsyth differentiate between consumer *buying criteria*, and *purchasing criteria*⁷, summarized for holiday park vacations in table 2.

<u>Possible Buying Criteria</u>	<u>Criteria in Purchasing Decisions</u>
Past experience of using a particular brand(s)	The level of helpfulness of the sales staff, and after sales service
Past experience of using a particular product	Presentation in sales brochure
The experience of friends and family	Discounts and offers
The influence of advertising and marketing	Additional charges
Specialist advice	Methods of payment

Table 2 – Influences upon Buying and Purchasing Criteria

John O Shaughnessy⁸ splits the consumer’s “disposition to buy” into three categories: wanting without buying, buying without deciding, and deciding before buying. In purchasing holidays, consumers are able to decide before buying by drawing upon criteria for their choice, but may withdraw from the process should *need inhibitors* prohibit a decision-taking place. In O’Shaughnessy’s model (*figure 2*) the criteria is split into five types: *technical, legalistic, integrative, adaptive* and *economic*. This study will involve that most relevant to holiday choice, technical criteria that embracing the physical attributes that are sought by the consumer.

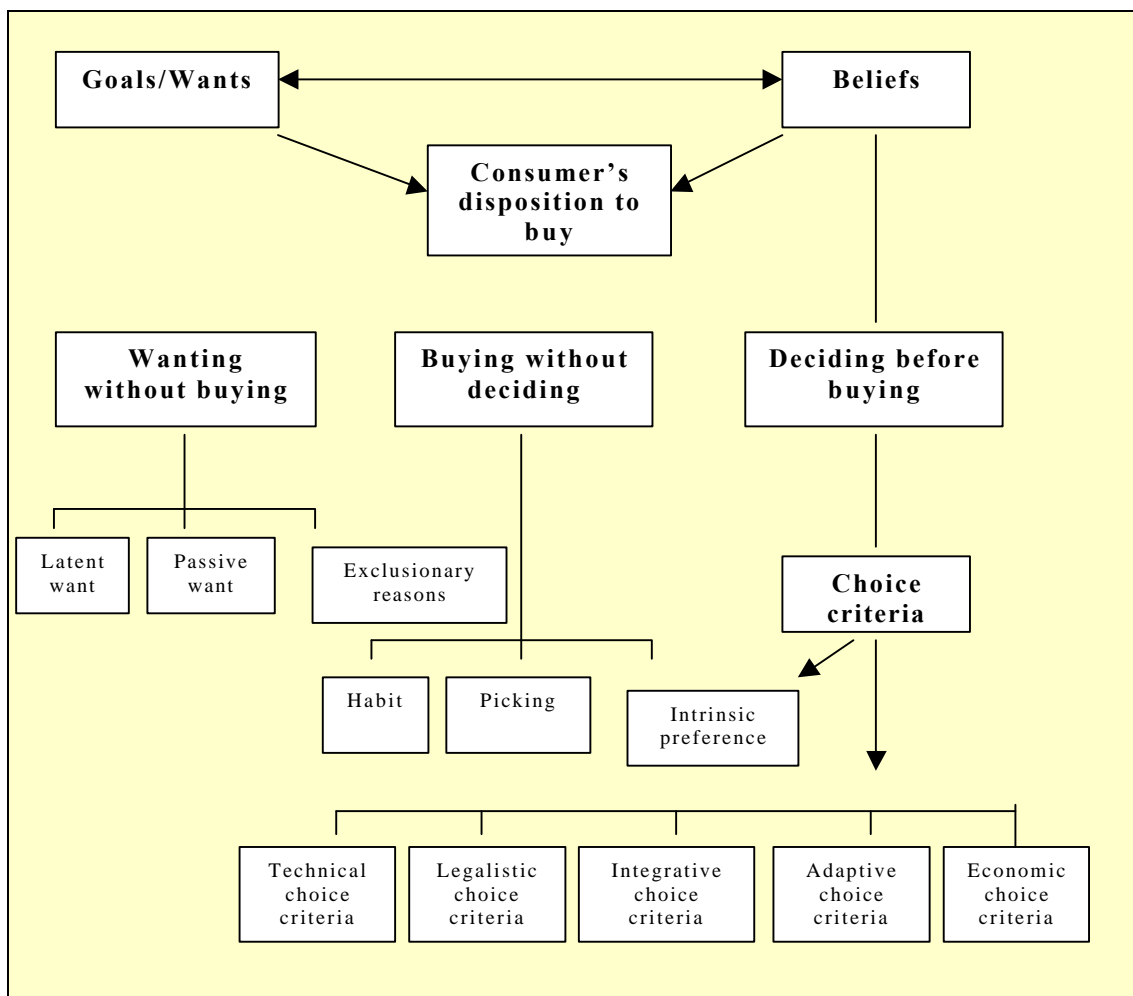


Figure 2 - John O’Shaughnessy’s View of The Consumer

O'Shaughnessy reaches the conclusion that a consumer's choice criteria is often open to revision as "they are apt to result from many uneasy compromises". It may be misleading to expect therefore, that a consumer's wants remain fixed, and in seeking information about their preferences this study should consider:

- a) The possibility that a consumer might not state a preference if they believe it to be unobtainable or out of reach.
- b) A consumer's preferences might vary depending upon the time that they are asked.
- c) There may be possible conflict between intrinsic and extrinsic preferences.
- d) Preferences might vary depending upon the information that is available at any given time.
- e) A consumer's interest in a brand can be so strong that the attributes of an alternative brand may never be properly considered.

According to O'Shaughnessy there is an important distinction between a buying *intention* and a buying *decision*, in that *intentions* always remain conditional upon time, place and circumstances, whereas *decisions* are unconditional and final. Therefore there might be quite different perceptions upon preferences for those who have made a final booking choice, to those who are still deciding.

The benefit of understanding a customer's choice criteria used to evaluate a particular product is that it identifies the appropriate features, needs and benefits a business should focus upon providing. Such knowledge might greatly improve efficiency in product design, development and marketing, and provides the information from which a strategy might be formed to provide and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. As Jobber observes, undoubtedly not all decisions within a specific buying center will use identical choice criteria as they are subjected to personal, social and situational influences. Typically a holiday purchase includes the risk of a poor choice, the affect upon self-image, perceived lifestyle and the influence of social class. Purchasing behaviour might also be influenced by a consumer's position within the life cycle. The holiday needs of young parents with children requiring a high degree of activity and entertainment might vary from those of an empty nester married working couple, or a solitary retired person.

LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT

The process of consumer choice might vary according to whether a purchase requires a high or low level of involvement, a concept first attributed to Krugman.⁹ According to Ehrenberg and Goodhart,¹⁰ consumer goods requiring regular repeat purchase require a low degree of consumer involvement, as their awareness precedes a trial, which if satisfactory leads to repeat purchase. High involvement purchases such as holidays

will require less repetitive but far more detailed information about the brand, what it offers, its advantages and how it meets the needs of the consumer.

Rob Lawson recognizes consumer involvement having three essential dimensions¹¹. The first of these is a degree of *interest* that the consumer experiences, followed by the *focus* towards the product, through advertising, the purchase, and the purchase decision. Lawson identifies a dimension he refers to as *persistence* of the involvement, that could either be enduring or situational. Enduring involvement is long-term, representing ongoing interest in particular products, for example repeat holidays at the same caravan park or resort. Situational involvement is short-term and generally related with the purchase of durables where the consumer collects a lot of information on the options available and carefully evaluates the best buy for their particular circumstances. It is such situational involvement that utilizes a consumer's choice criteria for purchases such as holidays. For purchases capable of providing a high degree of pleasure, such as a holiday, a consumer's involvement in the decision therefore is usually high.

Stanton maintains that a consumer's level of involvement within the decision making process is decided upon during the identification and selection of the alternatives¹². He argues that such a search might be influenced chiefly by four factors:

- ***Self Image.*** Where levels of involvement are directly related to the degree that a decision impacts upon the individual's self-image. A decision to purchase an expensive foreign holiday may attract a higher degree of involvement than for a choice of caravan park, that in turn may be greater than whilst selecting a brand of washing powder.
- ***Perceived Risk.*** The degree of a consumer's involvement may depend upon the element of risk associated with the purchase. Individuals may be sensitive to a choice of holiday and thus have a high level of involvement in its choice, whilst the degree of risk and involvement in choosing washing powder is likely to be low.
- ***Social Factors.*** Involvement is likely to be higher when decisions, which effect social status or acceptance, may be involved.
- ***Hedonistic Influences.*** Holidays are intrinsically linked with relaxation and pleasure, and consequently may attract a higher level of involvement during the choice process than purchases from which less pleasure is derived.

Jobber, also refers to such *hedonic influences*, in a way that connects to traditional consumer choice theory and maximum utility, arguing that such influences play a significant part in the final product choice in order to ensure that the maximum amount of pleasure is gained from the purchase.

THE PROCESS OF CONSUMER CHOICE

Blackwell Miniard and Engel provide a useful framework¹³ for analyzing the consumer purchase process, which they split into seven decision stages:

- *Need Recognition*
- *Search for Information*
- *Pre-purchase Evaluation of Alternatives*
- *Purchase*
- *Consumption*
- *Post-Consumption Evaluation*
- *Divestment*

They argue that a consumer decision-making process consists of a series of steps, whilst individuals interact to influence the purchasing decision, within a *buying center*, often a family household. During those steps consumers receive and use information in reaching decisions about what actions they will take, whether they will buy, and what they will buy. Blackwell, Miniard and Engel explain the process beginning with recognition of a need, want or desire for a holiday, and subsequently a conscious decision to take action.

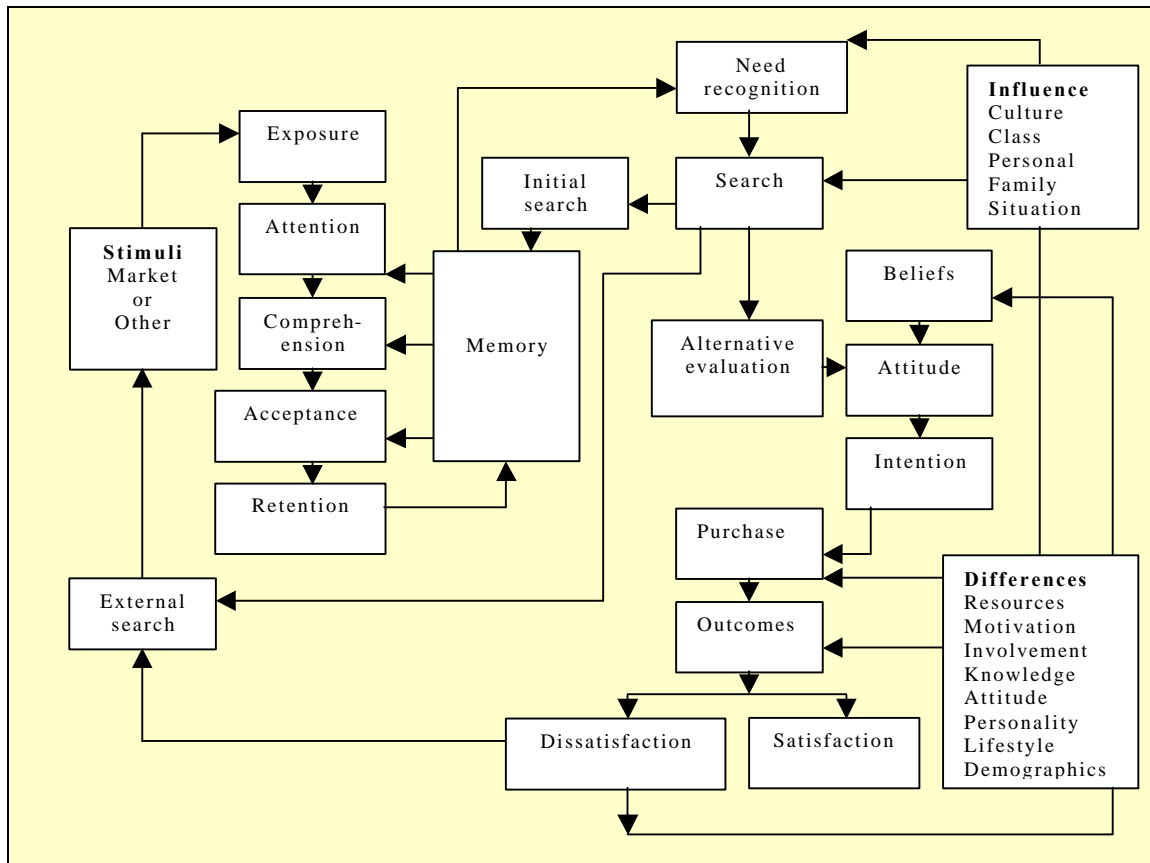


Figure 3 - Blackwell, Miniard and Engel Model of Consumer Decisions

The customer will determine the amount of effort and time that it is prepared to invest to satisfy its need, which in terms of choosing a holiday may be considerable. Literature and theory mostly agree that a consumer's reasons for purchasing, and entering into the decision making process, stems from *basic human needs*. Abraham Maslow¹⁴ was able to explain how the order of five basic needs could be arranged according to the order an individual seeks to fulfill them. Although the *hierarchy of needs* theory developed as part of understanding motivation, it also has a great bearing upon understanding customer behaviour.

<i>Physiological needs</i>	Physical needs from a holiday, such as relaxation, enjoyment and activity
<i>Safety needs</i>	The need for order, security, protection and assurance. Safe park environment, life guards etc
<i>Social needs</i>	Need for affection and acceptance, including warm welcome and loyalty club for repeat visitors
<i>Self-esteem</i>	The need for self-respect and status. Customers being treated as valued guests, minimalising park rules
<i>Self-actualization</i>	Self-fulfillment and achievement. Accomplishing an enjoyable experience for all the family

Figure 4 – Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

Once needs are established the various alternatives can be identified, styles and types of holiday, brands and desirable locations, which may be evaluated in terms of potential advantage, disadvantage, cost and affordability. The final decision whether to purchase will be based upon balancing needs against the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. Blackwell, Miniard and Engel reason that the buying process concludes with a post consumption evaluation. This might involve reassurance within the buying center that the decision was a sound one, re-examining the holiday brochure, intended destination, facilities expected, and a post evaluation of their experience once their holiday has been completed.

Groucutt, Leadley and Forsyth reinforce the significance of such post purchase and consumption satisfaction to the repeat purchase decision.¹⁵ They cite a real-life example of a couple deciding to take a two-week vacation...seeking sun, sand and quietness at a reasonable price...only finding the resort to be full of discos, the beach too small, and an overflowing dining room. Clearly the product's performance was quite different from their expectation, which Groucutt, Leadley and Forsyth (2004) refer to as *cognitive dissonance*, and unlikely to encourage a repeat purchase. They explain how one survey revealed that a typical business might only hear from 4 per cent of its dissatisfied customers. The other 96 per cent "just quietly go away and 91 percent never return. However, there is perhaps worse to come. Dissatisfied customers tell 11 to 15 people about their experience, who in turn tell another 11 to 15 people, and so on. On the other hand, satisfied customers only tell 5 to 7 people about their experience, who in turn tell another 5 to 7 people, and so on."

Undoubtedly, one of the earliest contributions to understanding the consumer decision-making process was made by John Howard. For almost three decades he defined and refined three major types of problem solving attributed to the consumer purchasing process.¹⁶ Howard categorized these as *extended*, (EPS), *limited* (LPS) and *routine* (RPS) problem solving.

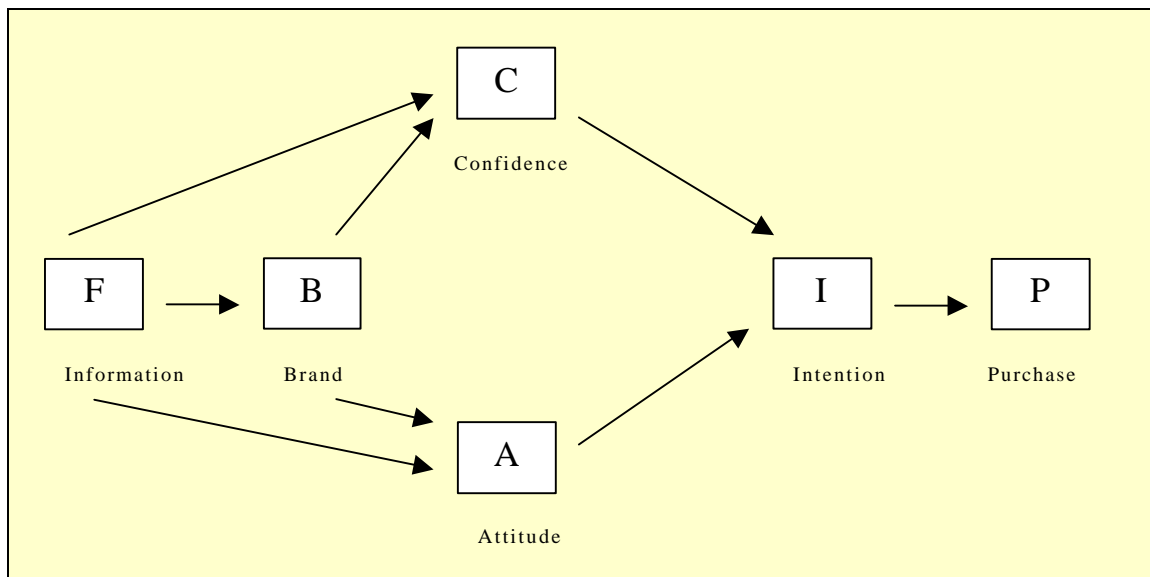


Figure 5 - Howard's Consumer Decision Model (1989)

Each category represents a buying situation that varies according to the degree of intellectual challenge that it demands of the consumer, largely determined by the *familiarity* of the task faced. Limited problem solving might be required in deciding between unfamiliar brands, and routine in situations where a consumer is willing to buy any brand provided it meets certain minimum criteria. Typically extended problem solving is applied where decisions require a high level of involvement, for innovative, one-off or first time purchases such as holidays, during which consumers choose between different products within a strict criteria.

Woodside and Mote talk of household roles differing according to the product type being considered.¹⁷ Typically although it might be the housewife who is expected to take the role of the decision maker within a holiday purchasing decision, an influence considered by this dissertation,

all participants within the process must be considered, in addition to those who have needs that might not be completely met. As Moore-Shaw and Wilkie¹⁸ point out, product choice may not always suit everybody within the buying center, but families work extremely hard to minimize the effects of disagreements over product choice.

BRANDS, FEATURES AND PRODUCT IMAGE

Kelvin Lancaster¹⁹ in his analysis of consumer behaviour found that consumers often want not so much a specific product but a *particular bundle of characteristics*. Paul Krugman²⁰ in explaining his interpretation of Lancasterian Consumer Theory illustrates the principle with the requirements of the business traveler. In purchasing a laptop computer they might care about low weight, long battery life, and high computing power, rather than the logo on the case, and trade-off between those needs. A similar situation might exist for consumers choosing their holidays, weighing specific dates, locations, facilities and standards of accommodation, in preference to brands or holiday type during their decision making process.

The desirability of holiday location might have a significant influence upon the decision making process, yet Herrington²¹ in his work on 'Understanding Consumer Choice of Secondary Supermarkets' also highlights the importance of *proximity* to consumers in their purchasing decision. A growth in regular short breaks coupled with the ease and

comfort of modern travel has placed an even greater emphasis upon the accessibility of domestic holidays. Such influences should be considered within the research. Travel time and distance to Park, and the complications of foreign travel might have a significant influence upon eventual holiday choice. Herrington further recognised the central role of *retail image* and *company choice*, a concept supported by Kuusela, Spense and Kanto²² in their ideas of an *evoked set* or short-list of brands which are evaluated by consumers in their purchasing decision. Consumers may switch to a new brand if it promises to provide a greater level of satisfaction. If they don't it is usually due to the expected cost or risk involved in changing outweighing any perceived benefits or advantages that may be gained. Creusen and Schoormans²³ explain such consumer choice, as being influenced by the *distinctive imagery* of brands on a consumer's preferences. Research must consider the role of brand imagery within the holiday park market, and the part it plays in a consumer's choice process. Blackwell Miniard and Engel²⁴ believe that understanding such levels of involvement is critical to understanding how a brand might influence such a decision in this way.

EXISTING RESEARCH

Despite regular research into spending patterns and the market prospects of domestic tourism, very little information is publicly available that explains the reasons for consumer choice of holiday park vacations, and the influences and criteria that makes up such a choice. In 1998 MEW Research provided a study²⁵ into the market prospects for caravan holidays, commissioned jointly by the British Holiday and Home Parks Association and English Tourist Board. Its objectives were to “assess how the market demand for the caravan park sector might change over the next 5 to 10 years ... and what needs to be done to protect or improve (the) business”. The research is useful in that it provides some indication of the motivation for consumers taking these particular types of holiday, including their likes and dislikes, factors that determine choice, and why they might prefer caravans to other holidays.

MEW’s research was qualitative, based upon twelve focus groups carried out across the South East, Midlands and North West England, segmented by social class and life-stage, into family and empty nester groupings. It was found that the great majority rented a caravan at least once a year, and for families with older children and over 55’s it was usually a secondary holiday, a weekend or short mid-week break, and their main holiday usually being taken abroad. For families with younger children this was usually a main holiday, having to arrange breaks around school holidays, whereas the over 55’s and families with pre-school

children preferred to avoid peak season, and rented caravans during shoulder months. Significantly the survey identified a desire for consumers to return to the same site, “feeling more secure with what they knew”, staying with “one site for 3-4 years and then trying another”, and children were often influential in the decision-making process. MEW found that the majority of the group had had “happy childhood experiences” with caravan holidays preferring a different type holiday during their teen and early adult years, returning to caravans when they had their own children. Significantly the study concluded that the factors determining a consumer’s choice primarily were:

- Size of park and facilities available
- How crowded the park appears in the brochure
- Park location; to sea, beaches, places of interest
- Holiday price and perceived value
- Size and standard of accommodation
- The degree by which children could be pleased

Other features considered by consumers as being important to the enjoyment of the product, once their choice had been made, included:

- Park appearance
- Friendly staff
- Level of security
- Transport to local amenities

- Acceptance of pets
- Gardens, grounds and barbecue areas
- Play equipment
- Equipment hire

The MEW Research concluded that families tended to want more entertainment than Empty Nesters, in order to keep their children happy, and thus ensure the parents also enjoyed the holiday. The importance of facilities tended “to depend on the attitude of the parent towards their children and their needs”, some seeing it as an opportunity “to spend time with their children to do things together, often off-site”, and others wishing for their children to be “taken off their hands, so (that) they, the parents, could have a holiday too”. Predominantly families chose parks within easy reach of the beach, and with facilities such as a pool that could act as a ‘safety-net’, whereas Empty Nesters particularly chose parks with indoor facilities, and entertainment preferably without the presence of children, which was cited as a reason for them “usually” avoiding school holiday times.

From a wealth of research and experience within the holiday park industry, James Hoseason cites five fundamental factors that he sees as having possible influence upon consumer choice²⁶.

- **Convenience** can be a major feature and many holiday park operators “go to great lengths to make it easy and convenient to

book their product”. Convenience too in terms of how far to travel and how demanding it may be to reach the holiday park. Hoseason cites Center Parks’ big conviction that their clientele should not travel further than 90 minutes, which meant that they located their parks within that distance to major conurbations. Convenience too in terms of the benefits, and the enjoyment, and the range of the experiences the customer can enjoy without undue travel or cost after arrival.

- **Reputation** can be a significant feature of consumer choice criteria, driven usually by editorials in newspapers, TV and radio, or by the “admiration expressed by those who have visited the park, or friends of those who have”.
- **Recommendation** may be the most powerful influence of all. When consumers are on the threshold of a new buying experience, they are greatly influenced by the views of those who recommend for, or who recommend against that product.
- **Quality** reflected in “institutional-made awards may make a marginal difference in the customer’s decision-making compared with a wider influence of reputation and standing”. Hoseason makes the point that on an international scale the USA and Switzerland have no government inspections, but their businesses rely purely upon reputation and standing, and unsurprisingly these countries have the highest standards in the world.

- Finally. **Standing** to a degree that “consumers are able and proud to brag about their holiday experience, possibly succeeding to the point where a holiday park becomes fashionable”.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

AIM OF RESEARCH AND SELECTED METHODOLOGY

In choosing an appropriate design for the research, the concepts of *validity* and *reliability* have to be carefully considered. For the highest degree of validity²⁷ to be maintained it is important that the most appropriate design that best addresses the aims and objectives of the study is utilized to:

- *Identify the non-economic consumer choice criteria used for selecting caravan park holidays.*
- *Discover the reasons and rationale for holiday choice.*
- *To establish whether patterns exist in the hierarchy in importance of consumer's needs, wants and desires.*

Qualitative research that produces data in the form of descriptions will be difficult to analyze in a way that identifies patterns, should they exist. A *quantitative* type of research on the other hand, which might provide confidential answers from questionnaires, may be given numerical values to help evaluate the results. A quantitative questionnaire therefore might achieve all these aims, whilst maintain a high degree of reliability that is

consistent with normal consumer behaviour. Numerical data will furthermore provide *descriptive statistics*, which enable comparisons through bar graphs, pie charts and simple table ranking. Should *inferential statistics* occur to suggest that relationships between data might exist, the study will consider scatter plots, correlation and other tests of significance. Starting with the hypothesis that a common non-economic consumer choice criteria exists for park holiday purchases, this research in part will become *hypothetico-deductive*, in that it will seek to test the result data to support or reject the theory that a common consumer choice criteria may exist.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The choice of market baskets has been pre-determined for this study, in that it is wholly concerned with consumers of holiday park vacations. As it would be impractical to expect any form of survey to question the total population taking caravan park holidays, it is important that a selected sample is as representative of the population as possible. For this reason this research has utilized a study company as a *typical provider*, as it is representative of the market and offers a broad range of accommodation, varying park sizes, and facilities over a choice of fourteen locations. In providing a pre-determined typical provider, the study is able to concentrate upon consumer's preferences and influences upon a product choice within their existing consumption bundle. In

addition to examining consumer's reasons for holiday selection, it is also important to explore why they might disregard one product in preference to another. There are therefore two population samples that will be important to the research:

- ***Takers:*** *The total number of consumers who booked with the study company in the most recent year*
- ***Enquirers:*** *The number of consumers recorded as showing an interest in booking with the study company by requesting a brochure, but purchased an alternative product, or did not complete a purchase.*

Company statistics²⁸ show that there were 42,887 *takers* of holidays at the study company during 2003, and a total of 18,816 *enquirers* that showed an interest in the product without purchasing. *Showing an interest* might be defined as anyone who requested the company brochure, without eventually purchasing a holiday. It is worth noting that a significant number of *takers* were derived from repeat bookings, direct mailed brochures and newspaper inserts, to consumers who may or may not have had an interest in holiday parks. Those who did not purchase from this marketing activity therefore cannot be considered *enquirers*. Careful consideration was also given to stratified sampling. As this research is intending to examine the reasons why people book holiday park vacations, it was beneficial that resultant data could be examined by sub-groups. If

Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001) are right, then the influence of difference factors such as gender, age, children and previous holiday experience should be measured and their effects upon choice and criteria used recorded. With this in mind it is important that the research should divide the sample population into as many sub-groups as possible, to test probable causes for variations in choice.

In theory stratified sampling can require substantially higher levels of sampling. However for the purpose of this research if a sample size is achieved that is representative of the overall population, stratified sampling and the division by sub-groups should reflect a significant, if not similar, level of confidence in any findings produced.

NEGATION OF BIAS

In the interest of accuracy and reliability a postal questionnaire was chosen in preference to self-administered or group interviews. Postal questionnaires provided the advantage of speed and a scale that was necessary for the study to be truly representative of the population. In using *simple random sampling* eight hundred Takers for 2004 were randomly selected from holidays booked, and spread over a number of weeks in order that each member of the population had equal chance of being included in the sample. For the supplementary research, the computer held records for 2004 Enquirers were electronically checked against bookings. Matches were removed to leave a database of Enquirers

who had showed an interest in taking a holiday but had either not booked or had chosen an alternative product. A random sample of five hundred from this data was offered to participate in the survey.

Through carefully prepared simple random sampling questionnaires, the interview and respondent effect bias²⁹ was largely negated, but it was important that respondents knew the study purpose. Although this was likely to have some affect of bias upon results, it was offset by the advantage of privacy and independence that the survey provided, and likely bias was considered insignificant.

PILOTING THE SURVEY

The aim of questionnaires must be to motivate respondents to provide complete and accurate information³⁰. For this purpose careful concern should be applied to the questions and manner in which they are presented, together with sufficient incentivisation in order to produce adequate reaction without skewing of response data. The following steps were taken in the development of the proposed research questionnaires:

- *Determination of the information required*
- *Ascertaining the question content required to obtain the desired information*
- *Establishing the form of response*
- *Choosing neutral wording*

- *Selecting the physical character of the questionnaire format*
- *Testing and revision as required*

With these objectives established a pilot of 60 questionnaires was distributed to ‘takers’ with holiday confirmations on January 21st 2004, in order to determine the consumer’s interpretation of questions, the effectiveness of methodology (choice, hierarchical, confirmatory), and the response conversion rates. A stamped addressed envelope, questionnaire, and an incentive of a free holiday draw for participants responding within 21 days was carried in an envelope separate from the holiday confirmation in order to maintain confidentiality and independence from the study company. To reduce the risk of bias or skewing of results through predominantly satisfied customers responding to such incentives, or results emanating from families with lower disposable incomes, randomly chosen bookings were used. Remarkably a total of 31 completed questionnaires were received from a survey size of 60, establishing a conversion rate of 1 in 1.9 or 52%.

SAMPLE SIZE AND CONFIDENCE

For the findings of the research to have only a 5% chance of being untrue, it is proposed that a 95% *significance* or *confidence level* be used. It is important that the confidence interval, or range within which answers

would be certain to fall, remains as low as possible, but has to be balanced against a survey size that is practical.

The pilot survey for *Takers* suggested that 1 in 1.9 respond to an incentivised questionnaire, which would require the following sample size³¹ based on a population of 42,887 and a confidence level of 95%:

Confidence Interval	Sample Size Required	Questionnaire Survey Size
3	1,041	1,978
4	592	1,125
5	381	724
6	265	504
7	195	371

Table 3 – Sample size and confidence interval

In order that the research survey into those who booked achieved a confidence interval of 5 for the population size of 42,887 a sample size of 381 completed questionnaires was required to maintain a confidence level of 95%. Such a level provides practical research and a 95% assurance that the true percentage of the population would fall between plus-and-minus 5 of any finding. As the results of the incentivised pilot survey suggested a respondent rate of one in two, the minimum survey size is 724, and it was concluded that a survey of 800 *Takers* would be sufficient to provide the data required to establish the consumer choice criteria for purchased holidays, and a survey of 500 *Enquirers* for the reasons for not purchasing.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The work by Eric Marder on the Laws of Choice³² is also helpful to the proposed research methodology. His first law, that congruent choice situations have equal choice vectors suggests that providing that the choices offered within the questionnaire are the same as might be available in a real-life situation, then any answers will be a true reflection of consumers behaviour. This, as obvious as it seems, has implications for any questionnaire design. Marder was interested in how many variables research had to measure, and concluded to his surprise that in fact we only need to measure a few basic variables. Most research can use two kinds of variables: *core-variables* that are measured directly, and *construct-variables* that are defined as an almost unlimited number of functions of the core-variables. Marder identifies 5 core variables:

- *Beliefs*
- *Desirability*
- *Choice*
- *Awareness*
- *Factual Reports*

This research concentrated upon a number of construct-variables or functions of the core variables *desirability* and *choice*. In his *single-criterion principle* Marder insists that an analysis must use only a single criterion, and only a single measure for any variable.

The research was based upon two postal questionnaires. The first and most significant one to *Takers* was designed to measure the consumer choice criteria used when booking a typical holiday park vacation (questionnaire **A**), and secondary research was designed to determine the possible reasons why *Enquirers* chose not to buy (questionnaire **B**).

Questionnaire **A**, (Appendix 2), consisted of 52 questions split into 7 sections, aiming to investigate specific areas of study:

- **About You** (gathered consumer's personal details including gender, age, area of the country in which they live, and whether they had ever stayed at holiday parks before)
- **Before You Chose Your Holiday** (build up a picture of *pre-determined* decisions made before the choice of holiday had begun. Such information included whether the customer had decided upon the West Country as a holiday location, a particular company, park or resort. This section also enquired if it was to be their main holiday, and whether friends and colleagues also typically took caravan park holidays)
- **Your Chosen Holiday** (gathered information on their holiday choice, park location, type of accommodation, and number and make-up of party members. Included in this section also were questions to ascertain their repeat-purchasing behaviour, and length of the decision making process)

- **Those Who Took Part in Deciding the Holiday** (investigated those who were involved within the decision process, identified who's wishes were not completely met by the final holiday choice, and measured those who had the greatest influence)
- **Your Needs and Benefits** (was designed as three sections. The first to measure consumer's needs that are predominantly fixed and less likely to be changeable by either customer or holiday operator. These included holiday date, type and standard of accommodation, facilities and location, ranked from most down to of least importance in the consumer's criteria. The second measured the consumer's perception of the value that benefits made to the final choice, once again ranked from most to least important. Finally the influence of the park facilities was measured on a scale of importance from 'very', 'quite', 'not' or 'never considered' during the consumer's decision process)
- **Restrictions on your Choice** (identified the possible restrictions or influences upon the holiday choice. For example whether customer's decisions were affected through a dislike of foreign travel, fixed school or work holiday dates, or the ages of their children)

- **Brand Choice** (The final section was designed to measure how consumers viewed the strengths and attributes of both the study company products and the leading competitor brands. This included how many were considered, those previously tried or experienced, and specifically what was perceived to be the main strengths of the eventual brand purchased)

Questionnaire **B**, (Appendix 3), consisted of 18 questions in 3 sections, and was designed to ascertain whether the consumer had yet booked a holiday, and if so, to provide the reasons for their alternative choice.

- **Your Current Position** (ascertained whether a choice had been made, if it were a holiday park, its location and provider)
- **Please Tell Us Why You Did Not Choose a holiday with the study company** (was designed to discover the criteria that was important to consumers in their holiday choice, that was not provided for or satisfied by the study company products)
- **I Have Not Yet Made a Holiday Purchase** (investigated the consumer's position within the decision making process, for example whether they were still deciding, waiting for a last-

minute bargain, could not find anything suitable or had
withdrawn from the process as their needs had changed)

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION & ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

DATA COLLECTED

In total 457 questionnaires were received that were correctly completed, represented by a 319 response from Takers, and 138 from Enquirers, Table 4. This was calculated³³ to be sufficient to provide results with a confidence level of 95% certainty, within plus or minus 5.47% accuracy for all Takers' data, and within plus or minus 8.31% accuracy for the Enquirers data.

	Takers	Enquirers
Confidence Level	95%	95%
Sample Size	319	138
Population	42,887	18,816
Confidence Interval	5.47	8.31

Table 4 – Summary of Reliability of Results

Such a level of accuracy and reliability is particularly pleasing considering the level of practicality the research has been able to maintain.

TREATMENT OF DATA

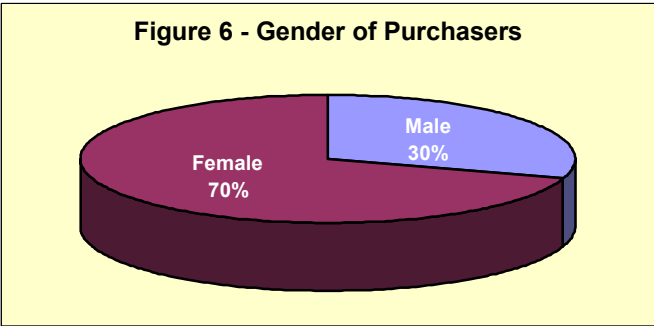
In the preparation and analysis of the data collected, it was felt important that outliers be removed in order to avoid a skewing of averages, and all results were rounded up or down to the nearest first decimal place. The data was entered into Microsoft Excel to form a master spreadsheet, from where it was analyzed, and results transferred into further spreadsheets for sub-groups of stratified sampling by:

- Age Group
- Gender
- Number of Children
- Previous Purchase Experience
- Number within Buying Center

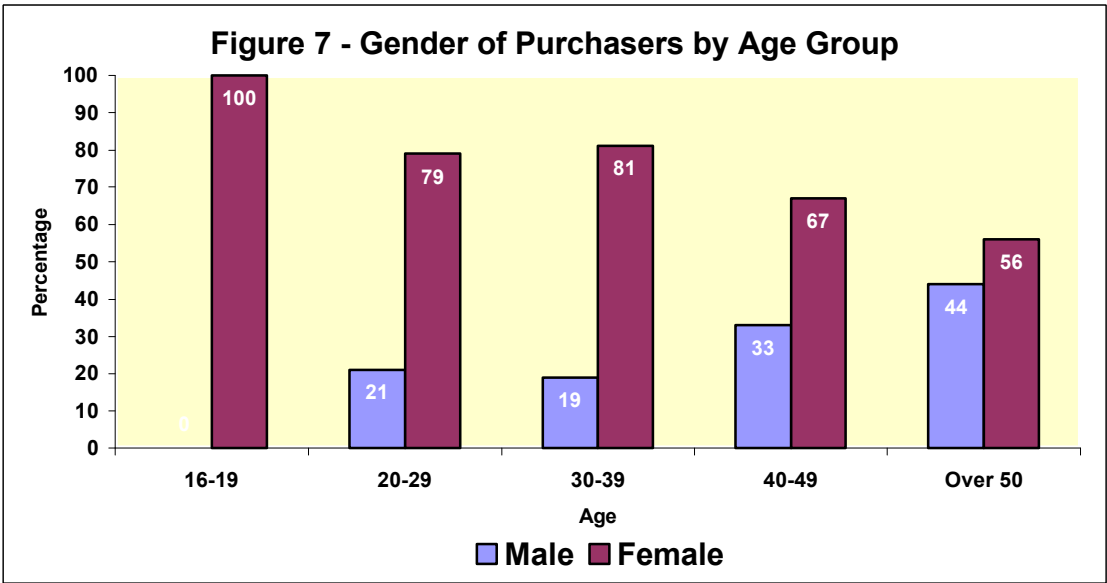
In addition to quantitative data collected, affirmative answers were represented by the number 1. Cumulative totals were calculated using Excel auto-sum, and averages where appropriate through the formulae function. Results showing significance were tabulated or converted into pie charts and bar graphs using Excel graph, and given values illustrated wherever possible. A synopsis of results is provided in Appendices 2 and 4. Testing was also carried out for possible correlation between results using Stat-Pro, including for example, origin, destination and previous purchases experience. Only cursory comment has been made to obvious relationships, such as between purchaser age and groups with children, and the paper concentrates on findings considered specifically significant to the study question.

THE PURCHASER PROFILE

Significantly seventy percent of all purchases were made by women, although a clear pattern emerged showing a tendency for men to become purchasers the older they became, as Figure 7 shows. Indeed by the time they were fifty, the gap between male and female purchasers had fallen to merely twelve percent.



Whilst work commitments and limited purchasing time and opportunity cannot be ruled out as an explanation for such a trend, it is nevertheless



interesting to note that there are only eleven percent more of men in work than women,³⁴ yet the disparity between genders of thirty year olds was as great as sixty-two percent. One possible explanation for this trend might be that women are more predominantly in control of the household budget, including the purchase of luxury items such as holidays, or it may be that men are quite simply less inclined to take an interest in holidays or the purchase process until later in life.

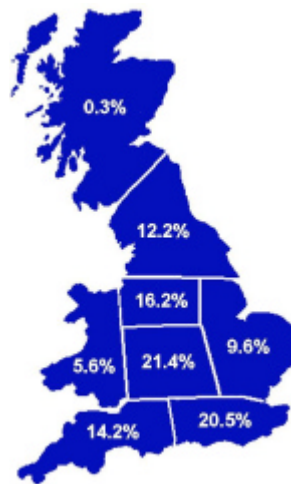
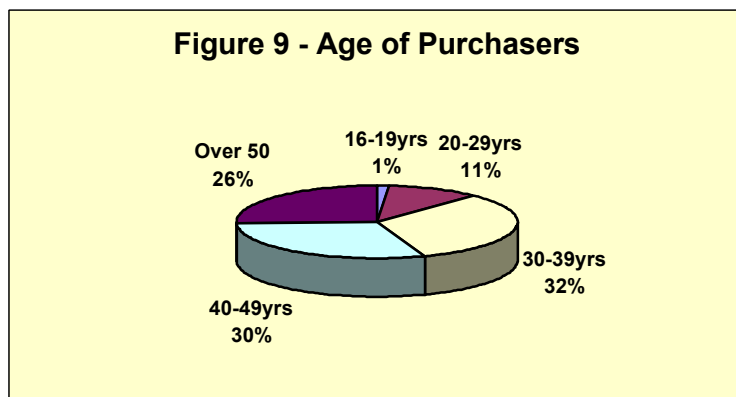
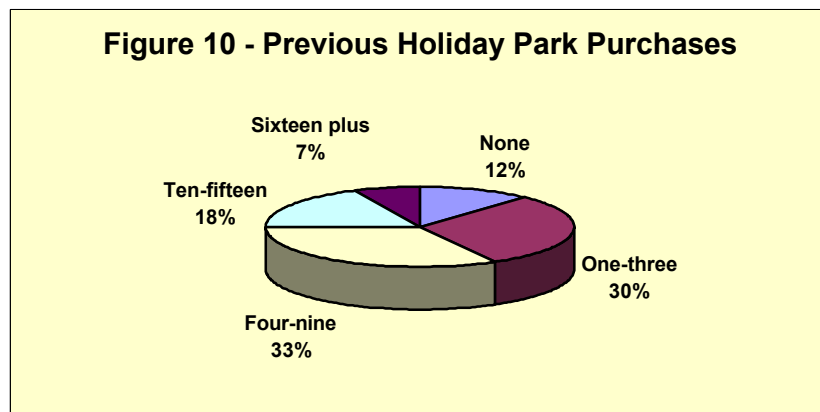


Figure 8 shows the distribution of consumers within the UK (none were received from overseas), of which almost a third proved to be aged

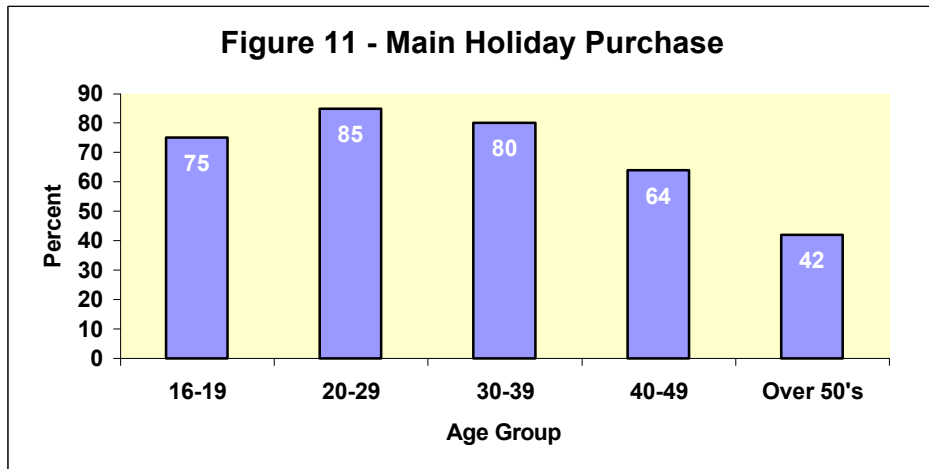


between thirty and thirty-nine, and surprisingly more than a quarter were over fifty (Figure 9).

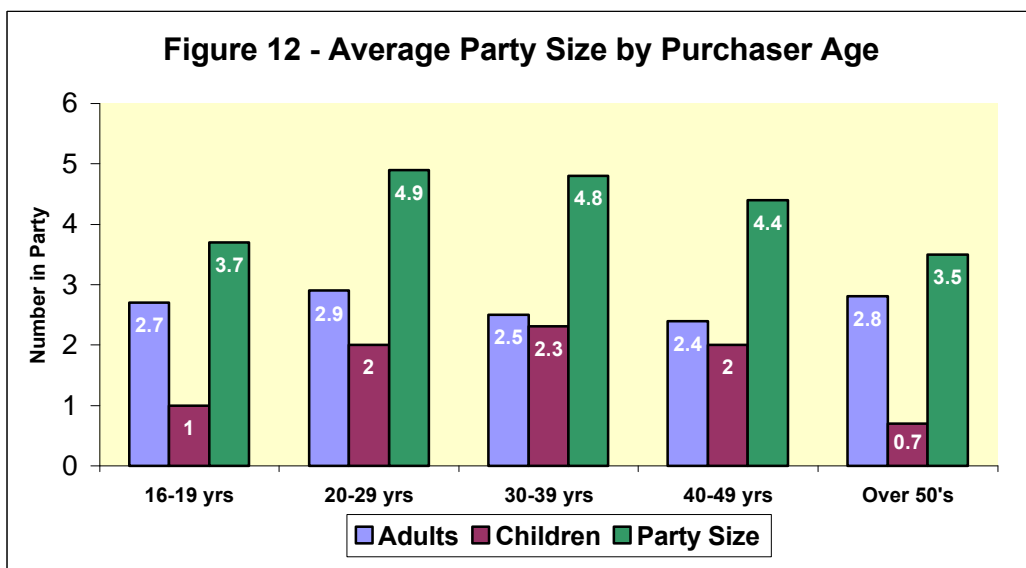
Only twelve percent of consumers were first-time buyers, and had no previous experience of holiday park vacations, whilst the average number of previous similar holiday purchases was between six and seven. Of the ten percent who had holidayed at a park only once previously, nearly a third were under thirty, suggesting that they might have a further five or six such holidays with their children or grandchildren in the years to come. Whilst a third of all repeat purchasers had holidayed at parks between four and nine times, shown in Figure 10, seven percent benefited from in excess of fifteen previous purchases.



For more than eight out of ten purchasers in their twenties and thirties, it formed their main holiday, as was the case for two thirds of all customers (sixty-six percent). However this fell significantly through the age groups (Figure 11) to a point where for over half of the over fifties it became their second vacation.



The average size of holiday party was 4.3 consisting of 2.6 adults and 1.7 children. This only varied significantly within the highest and lowest age groups, as might be expected. For example the average party booked by a person over fifty consisted of 0.7 children (Figure 12), and holidays purchased by sixteen to nineteen year olds typically had only 1 child compared with the average of 1.7.



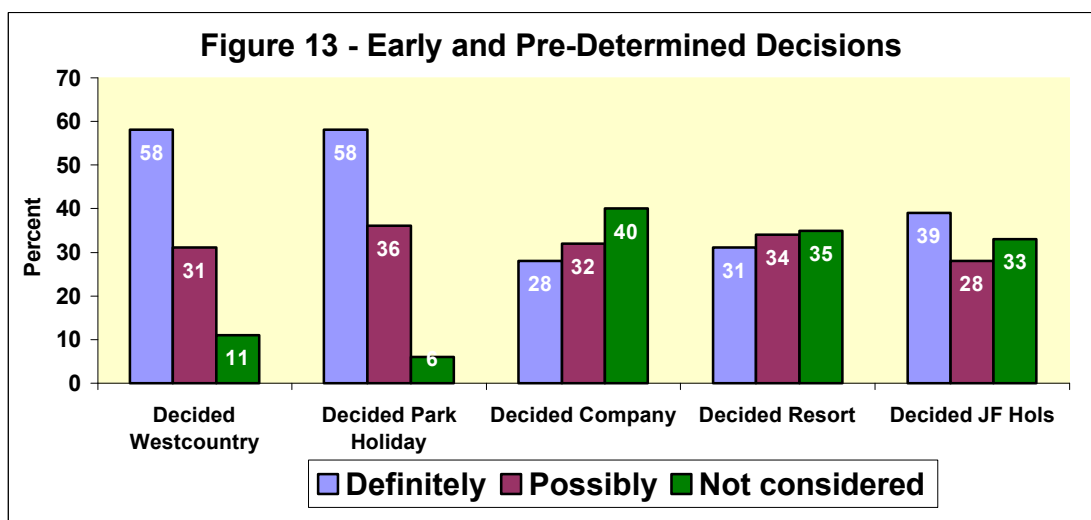
The typical purchase of a holiday park vacation therefore is made within the home by a women in her thirties with a partner and one to two children. She is likely to have had at least four similar holidays previously, and the purchase would be the main annual holiday.

EARLY AND PRE-DETERMINED DECISIONS

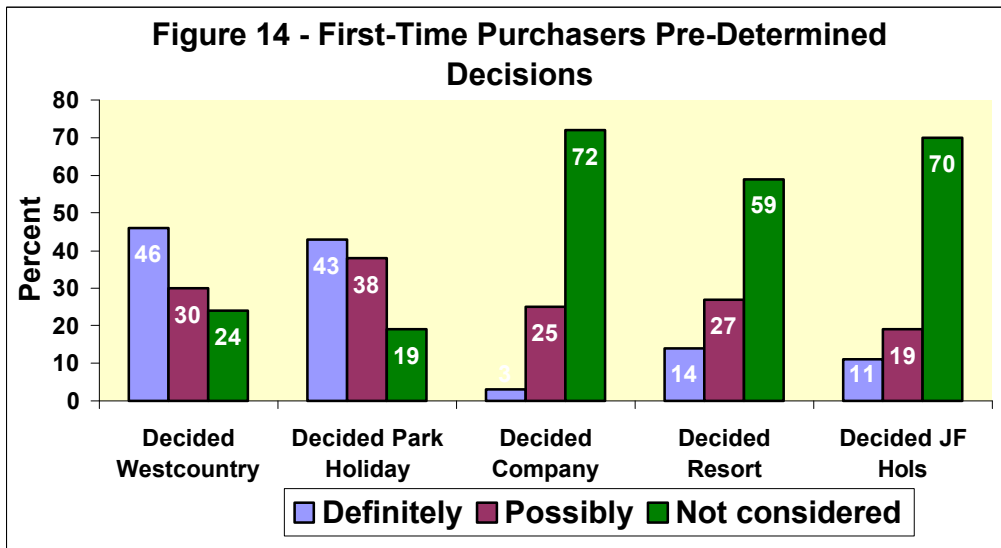
The next section of the research was designed to provide a picture of the consumer choice criteria that had been determined at an early stage in the decision process. The study refers to these as early or *pre-determined* decisions. For example a consumer may have unanimous agreement within the family on a particular part of the country in which they desire to holiday, but may not have decided upon the facilities required, the company, type of vacation or the timing of their visit. Pre-determined decisions seem less likely to be changed and influenced during the final decision making process, but may depend in the first place upon factors such as age or previous experiences.

The research produced some interesting findings. The two most significant pre-determined decisions were the type of holiday and regional destination consumers were seeking. Fifty-eight percent of all purchasers, Figure 13, indicated that before they chose their vacation, they had decided that they would *definitely* be holidaying in the West Country, and that it would definitely be at a Holiday Park. In fact including those who answered *possibly*, ninety-four percent were decided upon their type of

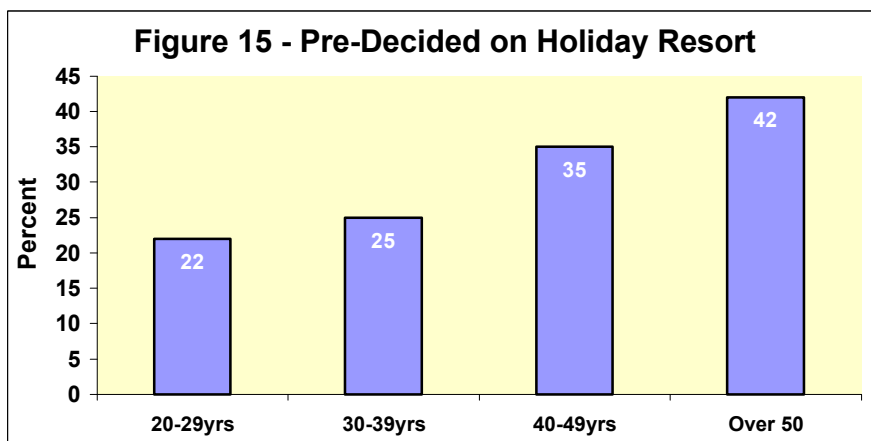
holiday, and only eleven percent had not yet considered and decided upon the West Country as their destination. Consumer's responses indicated how they were far less decided upon their choice of a Company or specific Resort, and the status of their decision was shared far more equally between definite, possibly or not even considered, responses.



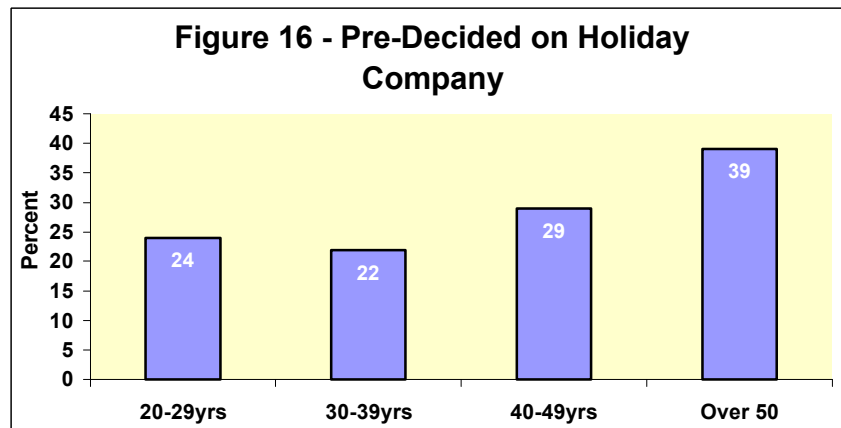
In analyzing the same results by the sub-group *first-time* holiday park purchasers, shown in Figure 14, predominantly the choice of resort and company had not been considered. Seventy-two percent of all first-time purchasers had no pre-determined idea of holiday company before their decision process had begun, and fifty-nine percent none of the resort.



Further stratified analysis of the results revealed a relationship between age and the likelihood of a pre-determined decision. Not surprisingly the results, summarized in Figure 15, show the older and greater the experiences of a consumer, the clearer they are on where they would like to go and whom to stay with.

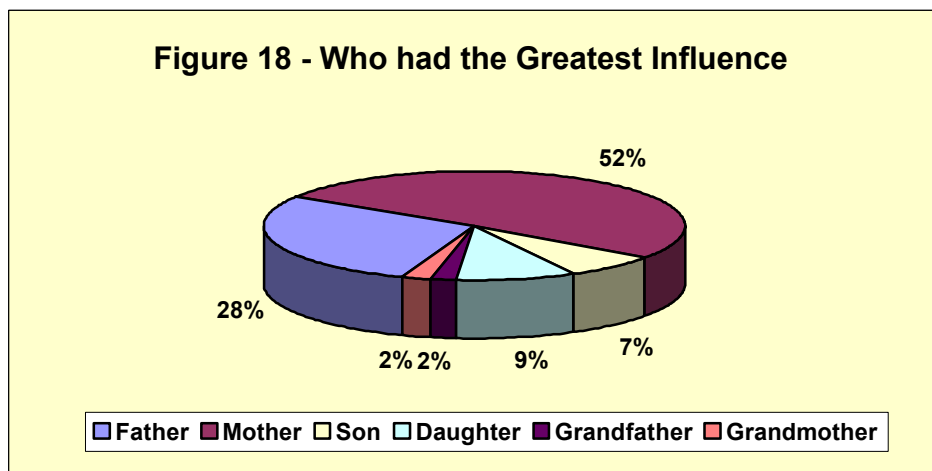
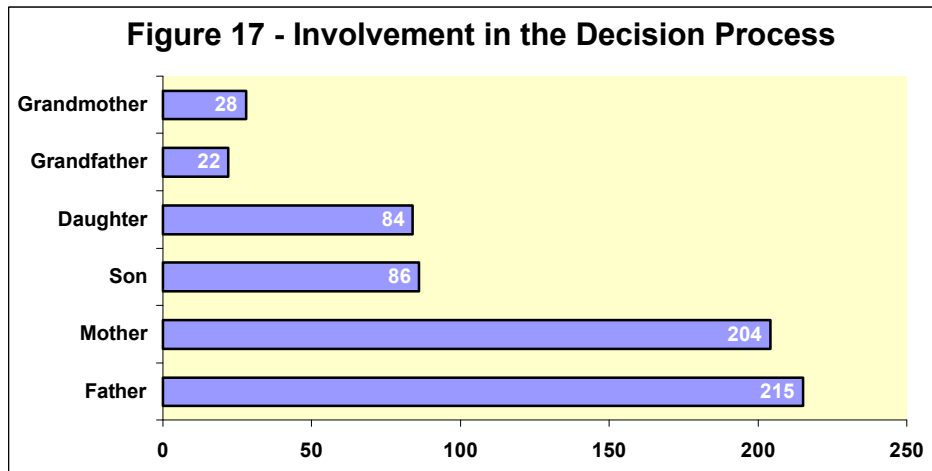


The percentage of those who had definitely decided upon a holiday resort and company, shown in Figures 15 and 16, virtually doubled between the ages of twenty and fifty.

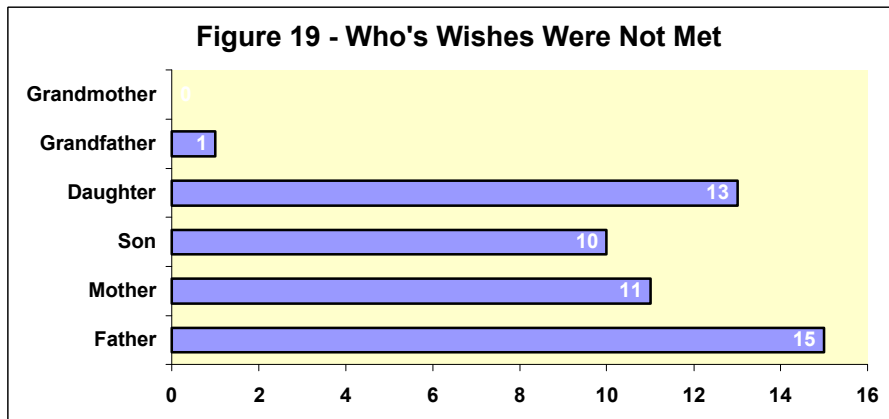


PARTICIPANTS IN THE DECISION PROCESS

It is not possible to begin to fully understand the purchase decision and appreciate why consumers choose to buy what they do, without knowing who are involved within the process, the various roles they play, and influences that they may have. The next section of research addressed such issues and provided a better understanding of the interactions of those within the decision process. The first set of results illustrated in Figures 17 and 18 show an almost equal likelihood of a mother or father playing a *role* in the decision process, despite the mother having the greatest *influence*. These are followed by virtually identical secondary levels of *involvement* by a son or daughter.

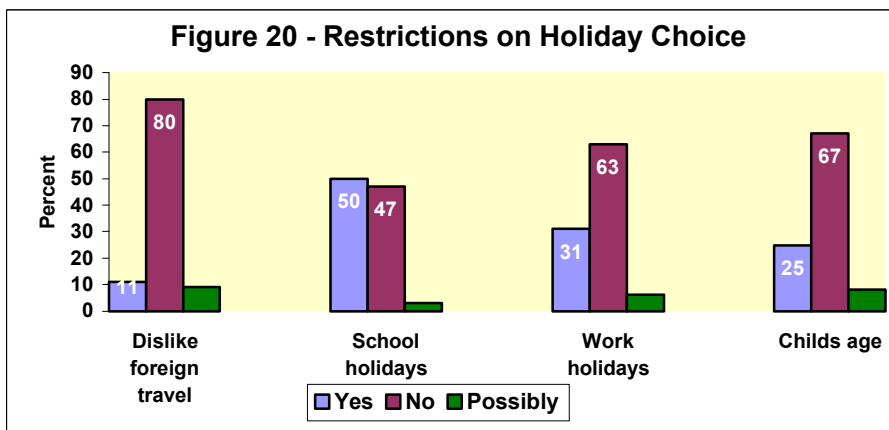


In ninety-one percent of decisions all participants' *wishes* were fully met, but interestingly for those that were not, Figure 19, this was just as likely to be the children as the mother or father, despite parents having the greatest influence on the purchase. Other groups that were likely to participate in the choice included grandparents, although their influence as predominant decision maker was likely to be less than two percent.



RESTRICTIONS & INFLUENCES ON CHOICE

The greatest restriction on holiday choice was fixed school holiday dates, Figure 20. Half of all purchasers felt that school holidays influenced their choice, which presumably was the time that they could take it, and this rose to sixty-one percent for purchasers with children.



Two thirds of all respondents did not believe work holiday dates or children's ages to be a restriction or influence upon their holiday

choice, and eight out of ten purchasers disagreed that they were drawn to domestic holiday parks through dislike of foreign travel. Several respondents specifically quoted travel distance, acceptance of pets and avoiding children during busy peak weeks as further influences upon their holiday choice, and other restrictions cited included:

- Location
- Accommodation size
- Disability
- Liked Cornwall
- Local Chemist
- One Parent Family
- Pregnancy

Of all purchasers, interestingly eighty-one percent had friends who also took holiday park vacations. This may suggest that some influence exists from acquaintances with similar status and ultimately might strengthen a consumer's social belonging.

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The length of the decision making process varied greatly. Some respondents noted that their purchase choice was made in minutes or hours rather than days, whilst a few stated that it took as long as twenty weeks. The removal of such outliers revealed that the average length of a consumer's choice took 8.8 days. Only five percent of purchasers took the trouble to visit or ask assistance from Travel Agents, and for the ninety-five percent their whole decision process remained within the *buying*

center of their family household. Table 5 provides a statistical summary of results.

Time Taken	The average time taken in choosing and purchase excluding outliers	8.8 days
Assistance	The percentage of those who visited a Travel Agent prior to holiday choice	5%
Alternatives	The percentage of purchasers who considered alternative suppliers	52%
Selection	The average number of alternatives considered excluding final choice	2.5
Experience	The proportion of purchasers with some previous experience of the supplier	53%

Table 5 – Summary of Decision Process Key Statistics

Just over half of all purchasers indicated that they had considered alternative companies and products during their choice process, and on average between two and three different suppliers had been contemplated in addition to their final choice. Fifty-three percent of all purchasers had had at least one previous similar holiday, averaging 3.2 repeat purchases each at 1.7 park locations. Of all purchases, fifty-two percent were for caravan holiday homes, forty-one percent for chalets, and the remainder seven percent were for in cottages or apartments.

NEEDS & CONSUMER CHOICE CRITERIA

The *needs* of a consumer booking a holiday might include the particular facilities that they require, a certain standard or type of accommodation, a specific holiday date that is available or a selective

park location. Such *needs* and requirements may compete with one another on levels of importance, and one may be given up in preference to another that is of greater value. The final order of such needs forms part of a consumer's *choice criteria*. Respondents ranked these in order of importance to them, from one to five, and the final scores provided an overall *hierarchy of needs*, shown in Table 6, that make up a consumer's requirements.

1 st	Holiday Date
2 nd	Park Location
3 rd	Standard of Accommodation
4 th	Facilities Available
5 th	Type of Accommodation

Table 6 –The Hierarchy of Needs within the Choice Criteria

For all purchasers, *holiday date* was by far the most important criteria to be met, and remained so consistently within all sub-groups with the exception of the twenty to twenty-nine age groups, where interestingly it was least important. The second, and once again remarkably consistent of criteria, was holiday park *location*, followed by the *standard* of caravan or chalet, the *facilities* required or that were attainable. By far the least of all consumers' needs, was the *type* of accommodation available.

An analysis of various sub-groups produced some noteworthy results, and these are reproduced in Tables 7 and 8. For those purchasers without children, *facilities* became of least importance, and whilst the

holiday date remained a priority the park *location* became of greatest significance.

	All Purchasers	1 st Time Purchasers	With Children	Without Children
Holiday Date	1 st	2 nd	1 st	2 nd
Type of Accommodation	5 th	5 th	5 th	4 th
Park Location	2 nd	3 rd	2 nd	1 st
Facilities Available	4 th	1 st	3 rd	5 th
Standards of Accommodation	3 rd	4 th	4 th	3 rd

Table 7 – The Hierarchy of Needs for Sub-Groups

Interestingly for first-time holiday park purchasers, and those in their twenties, facilities rose from fourth or fifth place to being the most important holiday requirement for such groups.

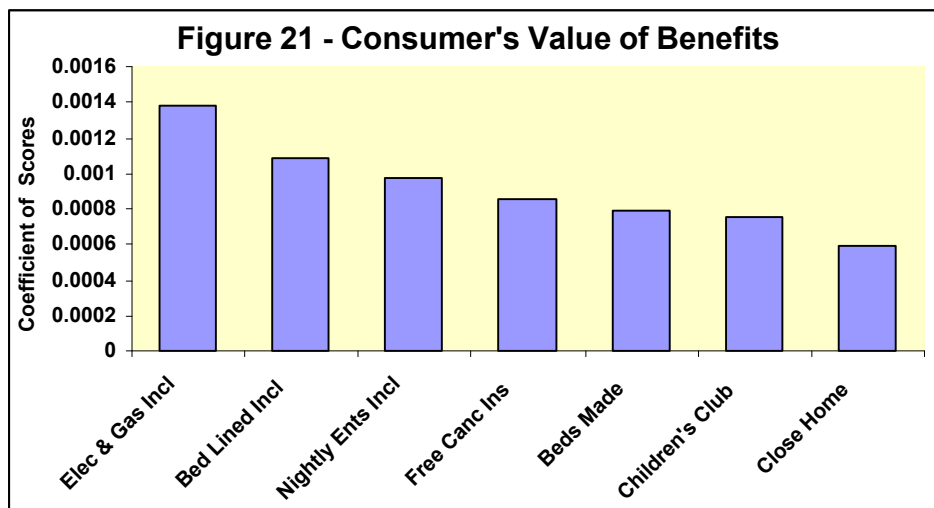
	Aged 20-29	Aged 30-39	Aged 40-49	Aged Over 50
Holiday Date	5 th	1 st	1 st	1 st
Type of Accommodation	3 rd	5 th	4 th	3 rd
Park Location	2 nd	3 rd	2 nd	2 nd
Facilities Available	1 st	2 nd	5 th	5 th
Standards of Accommodation	4 th	4 th	3 rd	4 th

Table 8 – The Hierarchy of Needs for Purchaser Age-Groups

Facilities therefore seem to become noticeably less important the older the purchaser becomes, and whilst a fixed holiday date is of paramount importance to consumers who are over thirty, it matters little to those in their twenties whom might have very young or no children to constrain them.

BENEFITS & CONSUMER CHOICE CRITERIA

The research followed on to measure consumer's perception of the value that *benefits* make to the final choice. Once again respondents were asked to rank in hierarchical order, the *benefits* from the greatest to least importance. Coefficients of aggregate scores shown in Figure 21 provide a comparison of the value of specific benefits to consumers during the decision making process.



The importance of *benefits* varied considerably. A clear order in their perceived influence emerged that intriguingly changed little between sub-groups. Above all, it was not surprising to find, that purchasers valued free gas and electricity the most, followed by the provision of bed linen. Many parks charge extra for these services, and in cases where bed linen can not be hired, would involve customers packing bulky bedding into what is likely to be already cramped vehicles. The next benefit of importance within the hierarchy for all purchasers, shown in Table 9, was nightly entertainment, closely followed by free cancellation insurance, beds made on arrival and the provision of a children’s club. Interestingly when analyzing the result data by sub-group it was almost without exception, the importance of the children’s club that was only likely to alter its position, and depending upon whether consumers had children varied from being ranked fourth to sixth place.

1 st	Gas & Electricity Included
2 nd	Bed Linen Provided
3 rd	Nightly Entertainment
4 th	Free Cancellation Insurance
5 th	Beds Made on Arrival
6 th	Children’s Club
7 th	Closeness to Home

Table 9 – The Hierarchy of Benefit Value - All Consumers

Not surprisingly the value of being close to home was least significant, and did not alter during further analysis of sub-groups. Whilst clearly purchasers value the location of their destination park, which was the

second most important of their needs, they are not greatly concerned about the distance that they travel to ensure that these desires are met.

DESIRES & CONSUMER CHOICE CRITERIA

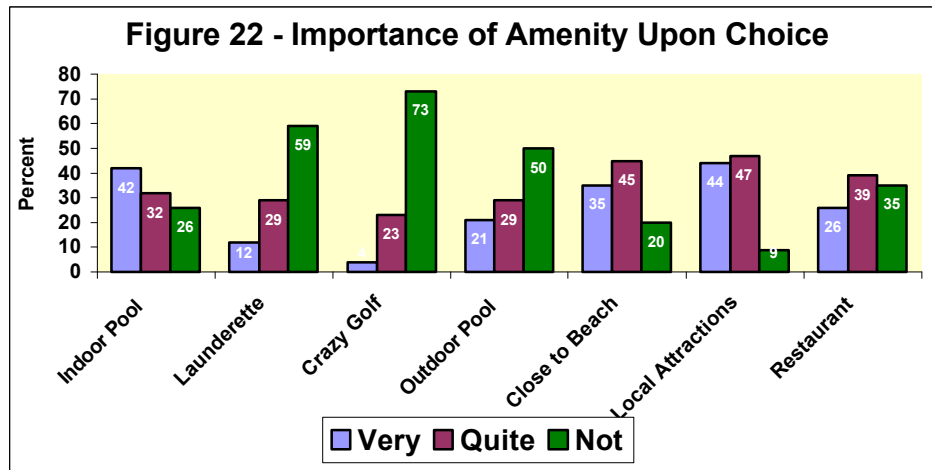
The needs of the consumer considered the facilities on the park in generalized terms. The effect of individual facilities that reflect consumer’s specific desires and sets of characteristics were deserving of a separate section of research. Purchasers were therefore invited to indicate the level of importance of seven desires, marking each accordingly as either *very important*, *quite*, *not*, or *not considered*.

How important to your holiday choice were	Very	Quite	Not	Not Considered
Indoor Pool	42%	32%	17%	9%
Launderette	12%	29%	33%	26%
Crazy Golf	4%	23%	41%	32%
Outdoor Pool	21%	29%	34%	16%
Closeness to Beach	35%	45%	16%	4%
Local Attractions	44%	47%	8%	1%
Restaurant	26%	39%	26%	9%

Table 10 – Importance of Amenities to Consumer Choice

Overall results are shown in Table 10, but for the purpose of this analysis, *not important* and *not considered* responses have been treated as a single categorization. By far the strongest of consumer’s desires, Figure 22, were for local attractions and proximity to a beach. The strength of these desires was maintained throughout all sub-groups regardless of age,

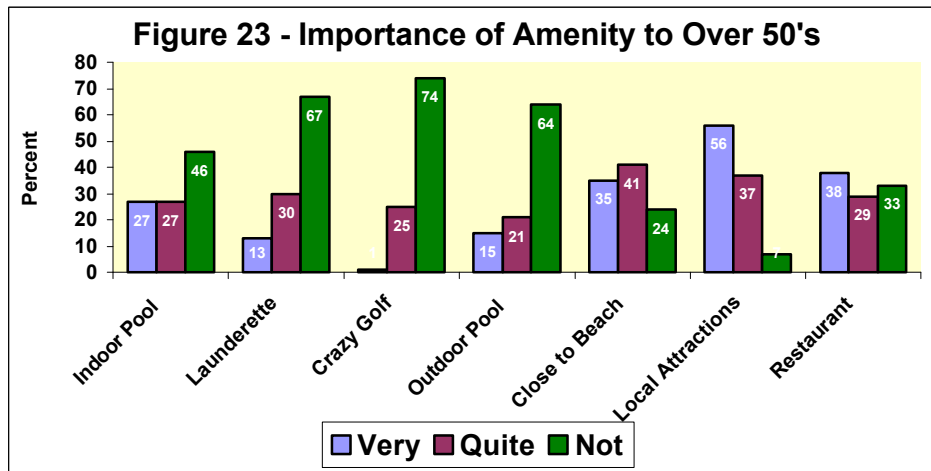
children or number of previous purchases. In examining the overall pattern, Table 11 summarizes the importance of desired amenities to the purchasing decision based on being felt *very* or *quite* important.



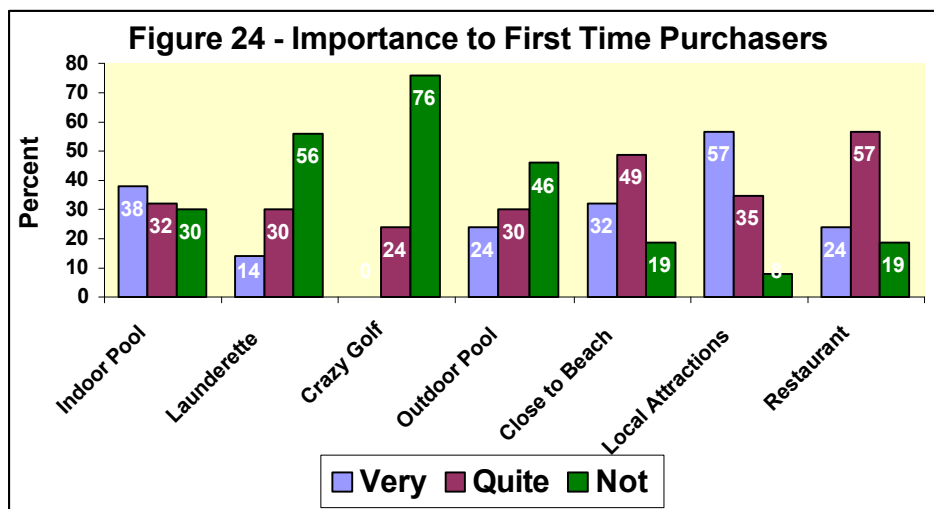
For all purchasers, the provision of an indoor pool was the most important on-park facility, although it was noticeably less desired the older purchasers became, Figure 23, and the less likely they were to have children in their party. A similar pattern emerged for the importance given by consumers to the provision of an outdoor pool.

1 st	Local Attractions
2 nd	Close to Beach
3 rd	Indoor Pool
4 th	Restaurant
5 th	Outdoor Pool
6 th	Launderette
7 th	Crazy Golf

Table 11 – The Hierarchy of Purchaser’s Desires



Facilities such as crazy golf were the least important to consumers in deciding their final holiday choice, and surprisingly a half of all purchasers believed that a park launderette was not significant. Interestingly the significance of a restaurant varied noticeably, and was likely to be desired and perceived far more by first time purchasers, Figure 24, than by regular holiday park vacation purchasers.



EFFECT OF BRANDS UPON CONSUMER CHOICE

The final part of this section of research considered the consumer's experience of brands, and their perception of the strengths and attributes of the purchased, and competitor products. Ten brands had been carefully chosen to represent leading national, regional and provincial providers, offering a minimum of four or more parks. Table 12 records the degree of brand awareness, and whether purchasers had any previous direct experience or had considered them during their holiday choice.

Your brand knowledge and involvement	Know About	Tried	Considered	Requested Brochure
Haven	97%	50%	41%	43%
British Holidays	42%	17%	15%	18%
Park Dean	22%	4%	6%	9%
Pontins	93%	27%	15%	14%
Woolacombe Bay	24%	5%	7%	8%
Hoseasons	87%	23%	20%	22%
Blakes	39%	5%	3%	6%
Butlins	94%	43%	14%	17%
Weststar	11%	5%	3%	5%
Park Resorts	23%	6%	5%	7%

Table 12 – Level of Brand Knowledge and Involvement

Not surprisingly almost nine out of ten purchasers recognised four of the brands; Haven, Butlins, Pontins and Hoseasons, yet only Haven and Butlins had been tried by almost half of them. Conversely, compared with the overall level of product awareness, Weststar and British Holidays had a disproportionately high level of previous consumer experience.

This research has established that purchasers consider between two and three competitor brands, and results from Table 11 indicate these likely to be Haven, Hoseasons and British Holidays. As might be expected, respondent's level of interest in alternative brands, fell directly in line with those from whom they requested holiday brochures. Interestingly, although Pontins had been experienced by only twenty-seven percent of consumers compared to Butlins forty-three percent, Pontins was found to be a more likely alternative purchase, and therefore in alignment to that of the study company.

Respondents were also invited to indicate the level of importance of some of the attributes of their chosen brand. Table 13 shows consumer's perception of the study company's attributes, and what they found important during their selection.

How important to your holiday choice were	Very	Quite	Not	Not Considered
Specific facilities	30%	47%	15%	8%
Family firm	22%	39%	24%	15%
Looked good in brochure	35%	51%	9%	5%
Park locations	58%	36%	5%	1%
Established 50 years	20%	34%	29%	17%
Friend's recommendation	17%	14%	17%	52%
Had been before	29%	15%	10%	46%
Benefits being offered	39%	44%	11%	6%

Table 13 – Consumer's Perception of Brand Attributes

This research has previously identified park location to be the second most important of consumer's needs, and it is not surprising to discover park location therefore to be the most appealing attribute of the

brand. For only one percent of all purchasers location formed no part of the choice criteria.

The second most important attribute to purchasers were benefits being offered, previously identified to be particularly free gas and electricity, bed linen, and nightly entertainment. These were closely followed by how the holidays were perceived in the brochure, and it is worth noting that of the five percent of purchasers who did not give this some consideration, a proportion are likely to have booked over the telephone or internet without any sight of the holiday brochure. Based upon what consumers perceived to be very important to their holiday brand selection, specific facilities were found to be only half as significant as the park location, followed by previous brand experience, and that it was a family firm that had been established for over fifty years.

1 st	Park Location
2 nd	The Benefits Offered
3 rd	Appearance in Brochure
4 th	Specific Facilities
5 th	Previous Brand Experience
6 th	Family Firm
7 th	Established 50 Years
8 th	Friends Recommendation

Table 14 – The Hierarchy of Brand Attribute Importance

Table 14 sets out a conclusion of the findings as a hierarchy of the importance of brand attribute. Although previous brand experience was

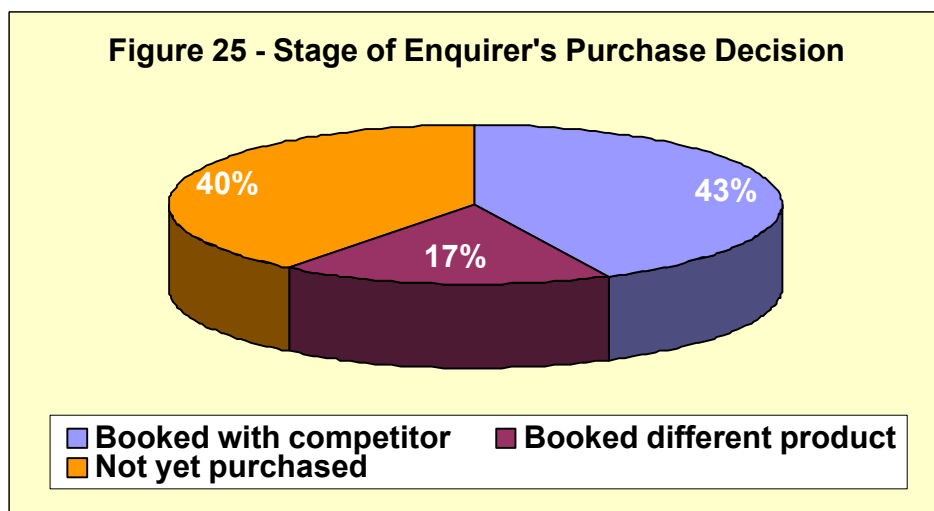
important to only twenty-nine percent of all purchasers, the research had previously discovered that fifty-three percent of all consumers had purchased the product on at least one previous occasion. It is significant therefore that for nearly fifty-five percent of repeat visitors, their previous brand knowledge was *very* important to their final choice. Perhaps surprisingly friends recommendation of the brand was only important to 31% of purchasers, but significantly it is not known what proportion of consumers had taken or were able to receive such advice to measure its effectiveness upon their ultimate choice of brand.

ANALYSING THE REASONS FOR NOT PURCHASING

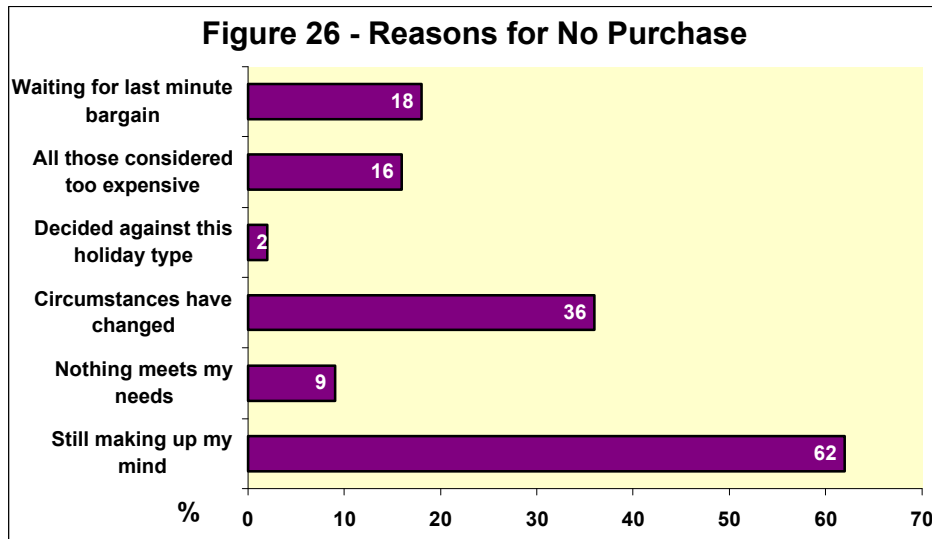
Supplementary research in the form of an Enquirers Questionnaire (Appendix 4) was undertaken to determine the reasons why consumers who had shown an interest, chose either not to buy, or purchased a competitor product. It attempted to examine the ways in which the choice criteria may have varied from those who had purchased a study company holiday, and to identify the reasons for them making an alternative choice.

Sixty percent of those who had shown an interest in the study company product but not booked, had completed the purchase of a competitor product, Figure 25. Surprisingly the proportion of interested consumers who had not purchased or completed their choice process was as high as forty percent. More than a third of these stated that their circumstances had changed, and two percent had just decided against a

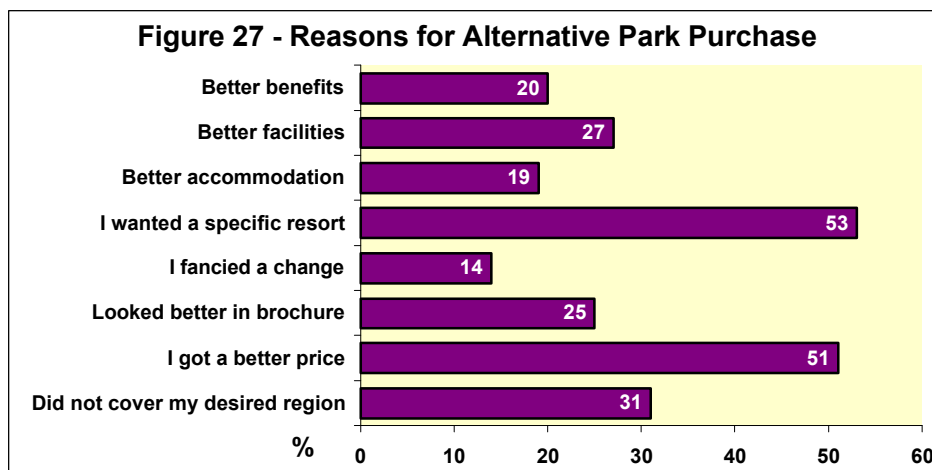
holiday park type of vacation altogether. The reasons given for consumers not having booked are highlighted in Figure 26. Interestingly sixty-two percent of those who had not made a purchase were still undecided, and had not ruled out a purchase with either the study company or a competitor.



Of the total number of consumers who had not purchased a holiday, only nine percent were unable to find a product to satisfied their needs, although sixteen percent stated that they could find, but not afford, the product that did. Significantly almost one in five consumers were delaying their purchase in anticipation of cheaper last-minute offers.



It is worth noting that almost thirty percent of alternative purchases were not holiday park vacations, and of those that were, just under a third were unable to book with the study company as they did not provide a region they desired.



The reasons given by respondents for purchasing a competitor's product in preference to one with the study company varied enormously. Most fancied a specific resort or location not offered by the company, or found

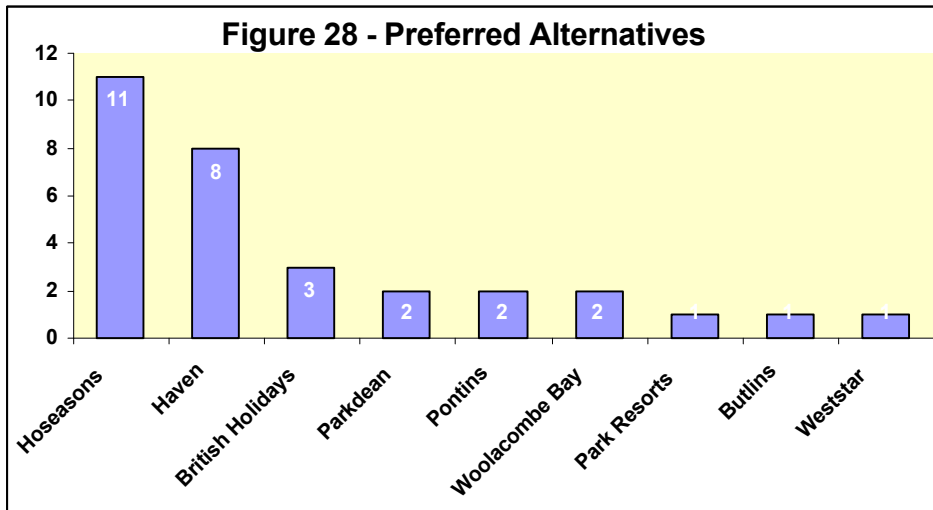
what they perceived to be a comparable holiday at a better price. Figure 27 sets out respondents reasons given for making an alternative purchase. Of those that specifically purchased a competitor holiday park product, twenty-seven percent said they did so because of better facilities, a quarter because it looked better in the brochure, and twenty percent because they got additional benefits. Many referred to better facilities as “teenage clubs for children”, “action-packed daytime activities”, “fun pools” and location to a beach. Other facilities cited were:

- Child-free pool
- Half board
- Water-park
- Cable TV
- Great shows
- Superior beds

Most of those who believed they made an alternative choice due to additional benefits, stated “money off”, but a few quoted “disabled friendly” or “pets” as the additional benefit of particular importance to their purchase decision. Other benefits included:

- Small park
- Quiet park
- Free club pass

Of the purchases cited, forty percent were with small family parks or from owners of private caravans, and six percent self-catering cottages. Of the remainder, summarized in Figure 28, the two competitors purchased from by far the most were Hoseasons and Haven.



Interestingly the major competitors from whom respondents purchased, closely matched those identified within the central research. Those who booked a completely different type of product, were most likely to have purchased a foreign holiday, and the reasons given varied between “guaranteed sun” and “cheap foreign holiday” for their decision.

CHAPTER 5

ALIGNMENT TO THEORY AND LITERATURE

THE BUYING CENTER

Understanding a consumer's decision process, provides considerable insight into the rationale behind a *typical* choice. Of course, what is likely to happen is not necessarily the same as what will take place. This paper does not involve itself with prediction, but rather in understanding the typical consumer's choice process and the possible criteria used. Whilst the research identified several groups of purchaser, the most significant were women in their thirties, with a partner and two children. Clearly the *buying center* to which David Jobber (2001) refers is predominantly 'the home', and certainly helps explain the degree of consistency in the criteria used. As Jobber suggests personal and social influences are likely to be similar in comparable buying centers.

THE CHOICE PROCESS

Not surprisingly the choice process matched a pattern similar to that identified by Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001), which began with the recognition of a *need*, followed by a *search* of information, *evaluation* and *purchase*.

The research highlighted some significant elements of a consumer's profile, in that they were inarguably seen to mould their perception of products and influence requirements. These included the extent of their knowledge, product awareness and involvement, and the affect of personal, family and situational factors. Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001) saw these as differences or influences that impact upon need recognition and the search process, ultimately leading to an evaluation of alternatives.

In this instance fifty-two percent of consumers were found to consider more than two alternatives, but the decision was not a solitary one, rather an *interaction* between individuals. It was found that the male and female members of the household held equal influence and levels of involvement in the final choice, and all consumers of the product were consulted. As Moore-Shaw and Wilkie (1988) observed, it also became clear that families work extremely hard to minimize the effects of disagreements over product choice, a finding substantiated by ninety-one percent of all participants whose wishes were fully met.

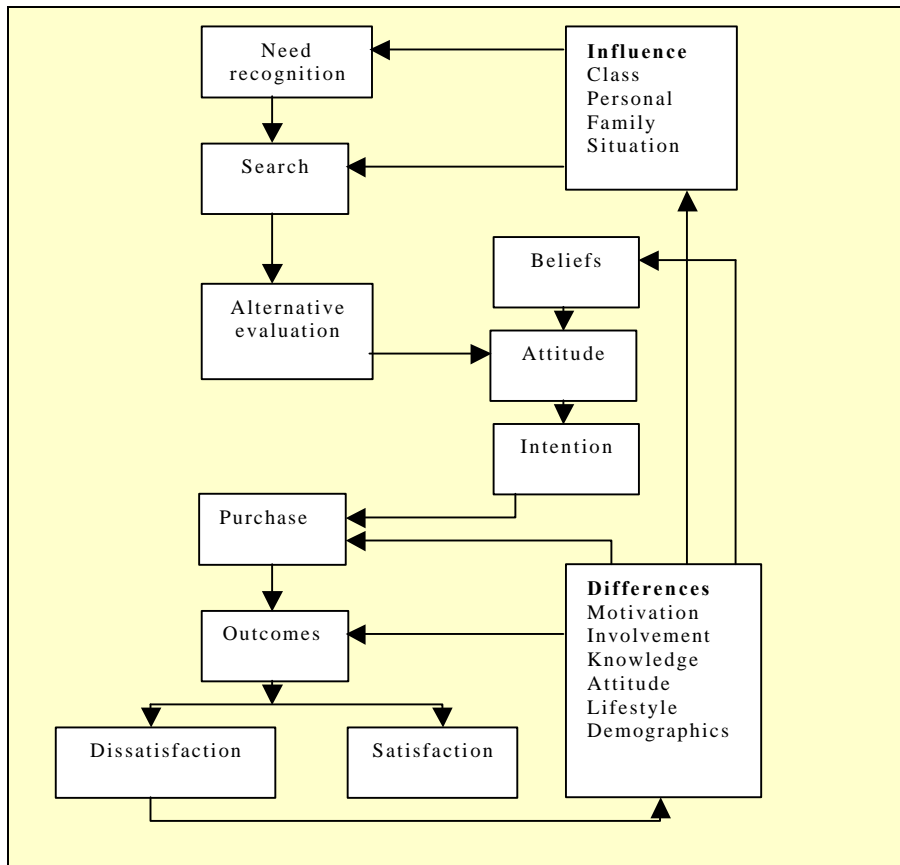


Figure 29 – Findings recognised within the Blackwell, Miniard and Engel’s Consumer Decision Model

The findings were found to particularly support the existence of personal, family and situational influences upon the decision process. Blackwell, Miniard and Engel’s model (2001) shown in Figure 29, saw these as impacting upon need recognition and search or evaluation of alternatives. This research significantly has in addition recognised that such criteria influence *desires*. For example a family experience and brand awareness affects what there are likely to be, such as facilities, proximity to beach or local attractions, and so on. Furthermore such

personal experiences impact upon their perception and susceptibility to product *benefits*.

LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT

The interaction of such people during a process taking almost nine days to complete, suggests a high level of involvement, much in line with Stanton, Etzel and Walker (1998) who predicted similar levels of involvement for products intrinsically linked with hedonistic influences such as relaxation and pleasure.

Although most purchasers had experience of similar products, the final choice was found to be equally divided between first-time and repeat purchase of the specific study brand. Such a level of repeat purchase was what Rob Lawson (2002) referred to as enduring levels of involvement, representing an on-going interest in a particular product. Brochure requests by either *enquirers* or *takers*, represent the first of Lawson's dimensions, the degree of *interest* that a consumer displays.

Significantly the research also established that a consumer's choice criteria does not solely consist of *needs*, but additionally product features and *benefits*, and *desires*. These too formed part of Lawson's second dimension, referred to as *focus* towards the product. Interestingly the results have demonstrated a two level *persistence* in involvement. Half of the consumers studied had experienced enduring involvement in repeat purchases with the same supplier. Others were repeat purchasers of

similar products, and had considerable past experience, whilst the remainder were *situational* and carried out careful first-time evaluation of the best product to match their particular circumstances and requirements.

BRANDS, PRODUCT FEATURES, NEEDS AND WANTS

The results provided a hierarchy for product benefits. Although these may vary from brand to brand, it was apparent that the order rarely changed for a specific product between differing consumer profiles and during the analysis of sub-groups. Such patterns are completely consistent with Eric Marder (1997) who in his promises principle suggested that for consumables such as holidays it should be specific product features, not general promises, that matter during the buying decision.

Such features were clearly not the only important criteria being used. Krugman (1999) in his explanation of the Lancasterian theory supports the finding that consumers often want not so much a specific product, but a particular bundle of characteristics, which proved to be various needs, benefits and product features. These were in line with current theory, and what both Jobber (2001) and O'Shaughnessy (1987) refer to as *technical* and *personal* criteria.

Furthermore the research established that purchasers considered between two and three competitor brands, directly reflect by the companies from which they requested brochures. Results supported the existence of an evoked set, in the same way as was put forward by

Kuusela, Spense and Kato (1998). They too recognised that a short-list of brands were evaluated by consumers during their purchasing decision, who may switch to a new brand if it promised to provide a greater level of satisfaction, or in terms of choice theory, better value. The findings were that indeed beside switching brands because their needs could not be satisfied, purchasers stated significantly that they switched when they found what they believed to be a comparable holiday at a better price, and therefore perceived it to be greater value.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

THE STUDY PROBLEM

Whilst the results and analysis speak volumes, this chapter sets out to draw upon some of the significant findings in order to conclude a resolution to the study problem.

- *Does a common order of importance for criteria exist during the decision making process?*
- *Which features, needs and criteria are used by consumers during choosing holiday park vacations, excluding disposable income and price?*
- *What influences and restrictions are exerted upon the choice process, that might change the order of criteria, should it exist?*
- *Why might people switch products within holiday park consumption bundles?*

COMMON CHOICE CRITERIA

The results have demonstrated with considerable clarity, that consumers in choosing their holiday park vacations use some common criteria. Whilst their needs may vary, their general *type* of requirement

does not. For example specific dates may differ, but the *importance* of holiday date remains the same.

Furthermore it seems that these criteria are not simply the *needs* of the consumer, but product features, benefits and influences, which all have an effect upon a consumer's ultimate choice.

What is also clear is that a common hierarchy of importance exists for the elements of each set of criteria. For some of these the hierarchy did not change within differing consumer profiles, but for others there were variations. These were proved to depend upon consumer's age, previous experience, number in party, children, and brand awareness, and are the factors that make up the *consumer profile*. Moreover, it seems that it is this profile that moulds a consumer's *perception* of products and influences their requirements.

HIERARCHY OF CHOICE CRITERIA

It was evident from the findings that there were at least three groups of criteria being used by consumers. The first related to their personal and party requirements, or *needs*. A second were connected to their *desires* or aspirations of the product, and a third with their perception of the sales features or *benefits*.

Such groups, Figure 30, although distinct and separate, experienced a degree of interaction with one another. For example a person's *needs* that might include a specific park location were likely to have an effect

upon how their *desires* could be met, such as their proximity to a beach and availability of local attractions.

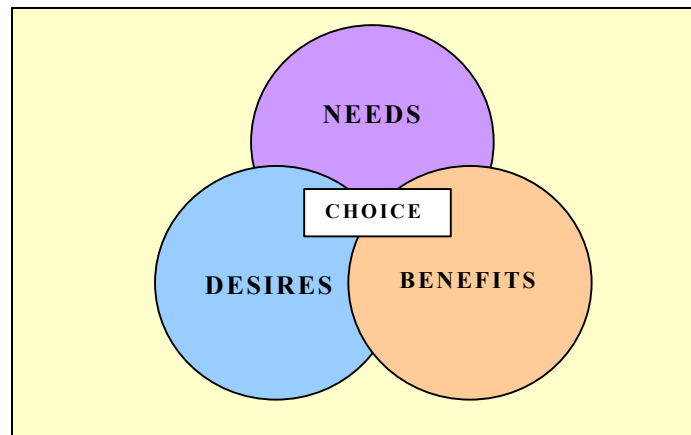


Figure 30 – Interaction of Consumer Choice Criteria

The importance of the elements that make up the criteria, was found to be largely determined by the profile of the consumer, such as their age, experience, number in group, whether they had children, and their brand awareness. It was noted that sometimes variations of consumer’s profile produced changes in the order of the importance of the elements of the criteria. This led to one further significant finding, that the lower an element appeared in the hierarchy of importance, the more susceptible it was to change its position in differing consumer’s profiles. The greatest of all consumers’ *needs* for example were the holiday date and park location, Table 15, and unlikely to change whatever a consumer’s profile. Whilst on the other hand facilities were changeable, from being ranked fourth in importance for all purchasers, to being far more significant to

first time and younger purchasers, but of the least significance for older groups with no children.

1st	Holiday Date
2nd	Park Location
3rd	Accommodation Standard
4th	Facilities
5th	Type of Accommodation

Table 15 – Hierarchy of Consumer’s Needs Criteria

A threshold seemed to exist within each hierarchy, which separated criteria by susceptibility to change. Whilst holiday date and park location became the most fixed of all consumers *needs*, the attractiveness of local attractions and proximity to a beach were so for their *desires*.

1st	Local Attractions
2nd	Proximity to Beach
3rd	Indoor Pool
4th	Restaurant
5th	Outdoor Pool

Table 16 – Hierarchy of Consumer’s Desire Criteria

Product features and *benefits* that formed a further group of criteria, although more specific and open to variation between product and brands, nevertheless demonstrated a common hierarchy of importance and value perceived by purchasers. For the subject brand these were inclusion of consumables that could have otherwise have incurred additional cost, such as gas and electric, cancellation scheme and entertainment, and the convenience of providing bed linen and making beds ready for arrival, so

that visitors could have more time free time to enjoy the facilities and surroundings of the holiday park.

1st	Gas & Electric Included
2nd	Bed Linen Provided
3rd	Nightly Entertainment
4th	Free Cancellation Scheme
5th	Beds Made on Arrival
6th	Children's Club

Table 17 – Hierarchy of Consumer's Benefit Criteria

REASONS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE PRODUCT SELECTION

Consumers seem to purchase alternative products primarily for two reasons. Either they perceived that their needs, wants and desires are better catered for by a different provider, or they decide to change consumption bundles altogether, purchasing for example a hotel based foreign holiday. The most common reason given for buying a similar product from a competitor seemed to be that the second of their vital needs were not adequately met, namely they could not go to their most desired location. In fact so strong was this need that excluding economic reasons it was cited as the major deciding factor for two out of every three alternative purchases, followed by their requirement for specific facilities.

A further significant reason for an alternative choice, apart from differing needs and desires, was a consumer's perception of how a product looked in the sales brochure. These were what Blackwell, Miniard and

Engel (2001) referred to as ‘beliefs and differences in attitude’, and Groucutt, Leadley and Forsyth (2004) explain as the ‘influence of advertising and marketing’. However the reasons seem more complex than just attitude and beliefs, and can be better understood if explained in terms of *perception* and *interpretation*. For example, no less than a quarter of consumers purchasing a competitor product cited that ‘it looked better in the brochure’ as their reason for making an alternative choice.

Such views are highly personal and may not necessarily be based upon what is seen to meet needs and desires, but create a particular *feeling* about ‘the holiday dream’, created through interpretation of images and text, in conjunction with a consumer’s own cultural background, knowledge, values and beliefs.

Finally it is also notable that despite the importance to consumer choice, *holiday date* was not seen as significant in the purchase of a competitor product, primarily because the research was conducted at a time when all dates remained available. However it would be reasonable to suggest that *date*, the greatest of all consumer *needs*, to be highly significant to the choice of a competitor product once availability is depleted during later months.

THE CHOICE PROCESS AND THE QUESTION ANSWERED

The research has provided evidence to suggest that the decision process follows a formalized logical path, which begins with some *early* and *pre-determined* decisions.

It has shown how consumers predominantly decided their style of holiday and regional destination at an early stage, and that such decisions were found unlikely to change during the remainder of the process.

These together with the choices that followed, were evidently determined by the consumer's *profile*, largely because it shaped their needs and desires, but furthermore provided influences and restrictions upon the decisions that were made.

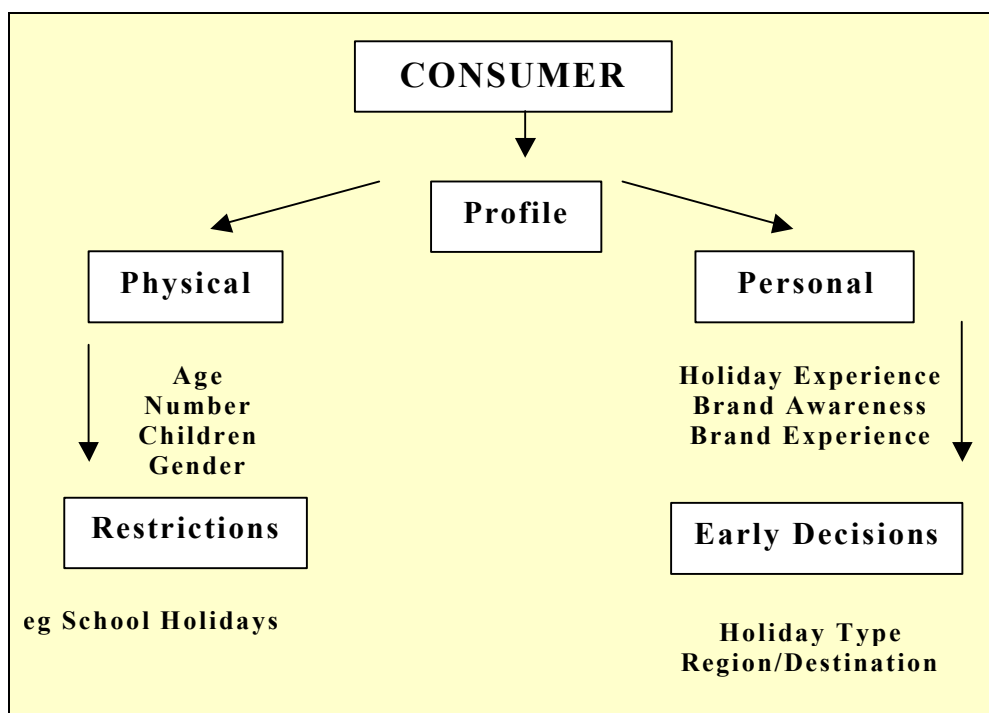


Figure 31 – Consumer's Profile Influence upon Early Decisions

Figure 31 illustrates how a consumer's choice might begin. Their individual group profile forms a platform upon which their perception of their needs and desires, and the strengths of the product benefits are judged. They are characteristics that relate not merely to the purchaser, but the total group involved with and contained within the *buying center*. Such a profile is not merely confined to *physical* aspects such as number, age and gender, but also to *personal* experiences of previous holidays and first-hand knowledge or awareness of brands. For example *physical* attributes such as age or family, may restrict the time a holiday may be taken for a typical family with children at school, and equally the timing of a quieter vacation for a couple over fifty. Furthermore personal attributes such as holiday *experience* and brand awareness, seem to influence the pre-determined decisions such as the type of holiday that they are taking or the region they desire. Hence it is the combined profile that shapes their needs and desires, and in turn influences the perception of product benefits.

Figure 32 combines and develops such ideas further based upon the common hierarchies that exist, together with the restrictions and early decisions that have been identified, into a model to illustrate the operation of non-economic consumer choice criteria and the choice process.

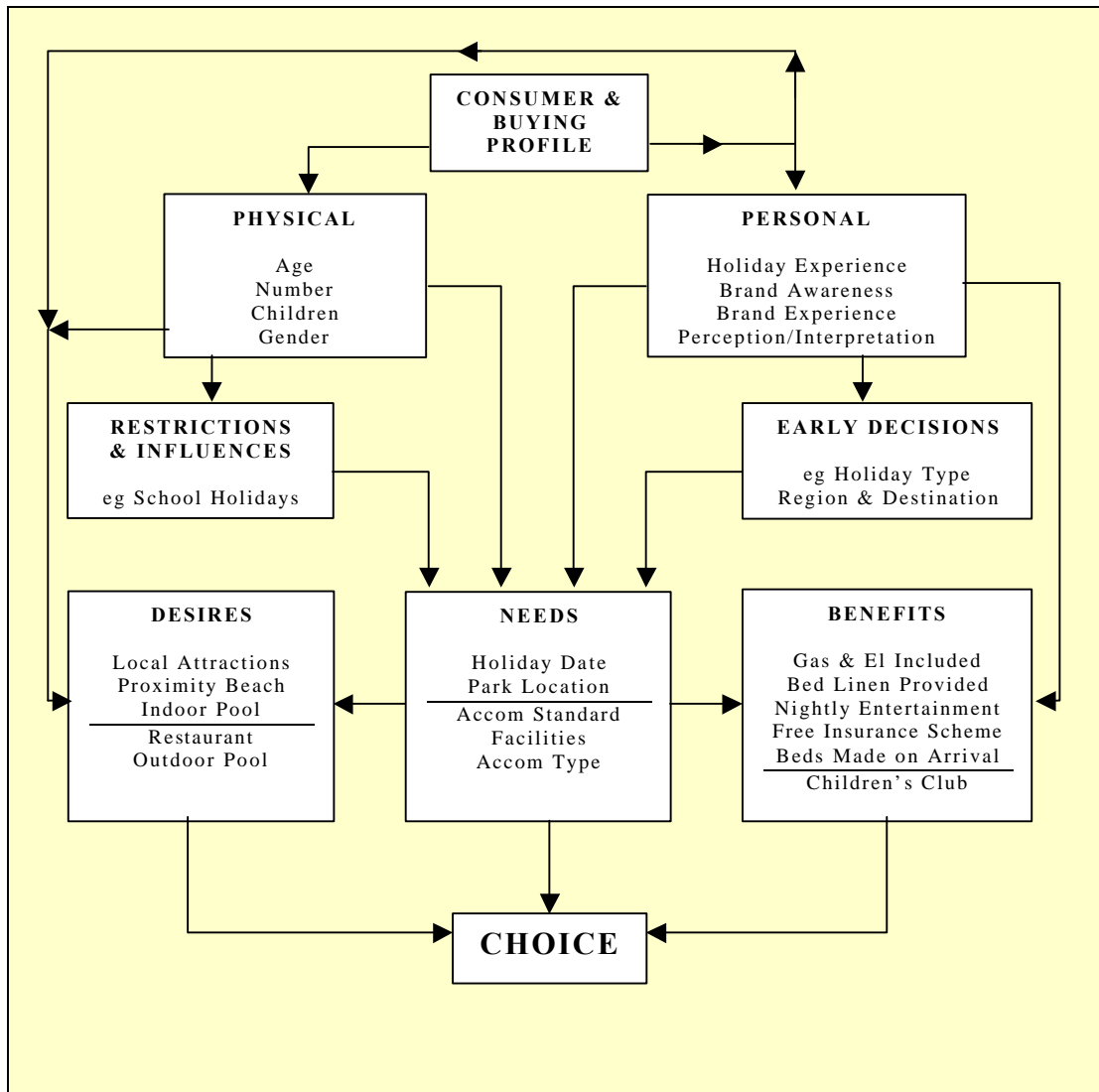


Figure 32 – A Model for Understanding Non-Economic Consumer Choice Criteria

Any physical characteristics of those within the buying center such as gender, age and children, may restrict or influence a purchaser's *needs*. It could be crucial for example for children to holiday within school holidays, or important to older couples avoiding such dates. Those needs may too, impact upon their *desires*. Which attractions and facilities are suited, or the importance of proximity to amenities such as a beach.

Personal characteristics of the group may partly emanate from what Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001) refer to as the 'post consumption evaluation', including holiday and brand experience. Such awareness combined with social and cultural influences seem to create a purchaser's perception of their wants, and their interpretation of what is 'on offer', and partly account for why they might choose one product in preference to another.

From those personal characteristics some early decisions may be taken, that are unlikely to change. For example the type of holiday, the general region, or destination. These early decisions likewise define certain *needs* such as location and type of accommodation. Personal characteristics, knowledge and experiences influence consumer's interpretation of product features, and perceived importance of *benefits* offered. It is evident that together, *needs*, *desires* and *benefits* form a set of choice criteria that seem to determine and shape eventual holiday choice.

Finally in closing it is perhaps worth noting, that although the eventual model produced from results of this specific research shown in Figure 32 was specifically into non-economic consumer choice criteria for holiday park vacations, such a model might equally be significant for other types of purchases. After all, whilst specific criteria may depend upon the *kind* of product, possibly the *type* of criteria such as needs, desires and benefits, their importance, the influence and restriction of

consumer's profile, and the structure of the decision process it has identified, may vary very little.

CHAPTER 7

FUTURE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FURTHER RESEARCH

There are principally four recommendations for further research emanating from this study. Some are of value to the understanding of consumer choice. Others are of importance to efficiency for future marketing and strategy.

Whilst the levels of validity and reliability of the full survey results, and conclusions drawn for all purchasers, is extremely good, the accuracy of data and the inferences made from the smaller sub-groups may prove less reliable. Justifiably it deserves further similar research, using far larger sample sizes if possible of between four and five hundred for each sub-group. This will ensure levels of accuracy that are in line with the main research, and provide results for sub-groups that have only a five percent chance of being inaccurate, and which are likely to reflect the choices of the total population between plus-and-minus five of any finding.

Although the benefits such as gas, electricity, bed linen, entertainment and cancellation insurance, were viewed as most significant for the study brand, they can only be seen as partly representative. Far

broader research is required to include other attributes of wider holiday park products that might be perceived by the consumer as benefits. It is recommended that a further study should be undertaken, starting with defining what consumers recognise as being benefits, and applying these to further research to measure their effect. The benefits used in this paper reflect those sales benefits currently cited and used by the study company. There may well be additional existing and potential benefits that are considered important by consumers in deciding their holiday choice, that could be of significant importance to future sales and marketing strategy.

Further work that examines the relationship between the several groups of criteria now identified may also be of value. For example this research now begs the question, ‘which group is most significant to the decision process?’ Does a common hierarchy also exist between the *groups* of choice criteria? Which groups are strongest, and which are the more likely to be traded off against one another?

Finally, whilst this work has specifically examined non-economic consumer choice criteria used in deciding holidays, it has rightly ignored alternative unaffordable market baskets. However, even in choosing between two affordable products there is likely to be some economic criteria that forms part of the choice process. For example one product may well be chosen in preference to another because it is seen to provide greater value for money, not necessarily because it has unrivalled facilities, or provides better for a consumer’s needs. Moreover a choice may be made due to incentives such as early-bird discounts or last minute

clearance offers. It is strongly recommended that future work is undertaken to measure the likely effect of such economic criteria, and in doing so will not only provide value to future marketing strategy, but provide a wider and far better understanding of the reasons behind consumer choice.

SOME FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic reasons aside, one further advantage in researching the consumer choice criteria used to evaluate a particular product, is that it identifies the appropriate features, needs and benefits a business should be striving to provide. This work has produced some significant results that could be useful in improving the efficiency of product design, development and marketing, and the basis of a sales strategy that could be developed to provide and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. Such strategy should focus upon the common consumer *needs, benefits* and *desires* that have been identified; the *restrictions* and *influences*; and importance of the consumer's *profile*.

Finally this research strongly suggests that any business providing holiday park vacations should consider developing more concentrated and targeted marketing, that better matches products and benefits to the different requirements of varying consumer groups, such as those highlighted. For example marketing holidays for the over fifties, could focus upon offers outside school-holidays, and provide specific facilities

that the consumer group most desires. Marketing material need provide less for activities and amenities such as indoor and outdoor pools, and concentrate more upon the merits of location, local attractions and restaurants. Sales and marketing should also appreciate how probable it is that this particular consumer group would have had considerable previous holiday park experience, be as likely to be a male purchaser as a female, and the purchase be a second supplementary holiday to an annual foreign vacation.

This research has provided the evidence and results to enable such considerations to now take place, and be used to provide far more efficient and effective marketing. Only by recognizing and providing for individual needs, is a business able to move closer toward a strategic and sustainable competitive advantage.

In closing however, it must be recognised that consumer needs do not remain fixed or static, but forever change. Tastes and desires therefore, and needs and wants alter, and so too must products and styles in order to meet these demands. To be of any value or benefit to a marketing strategy, consumer choice criteria will always require continual re-evaluation and assessment!

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE 'A' LETTER

Dear Holidaymaker

I am a postgraduate student studying for my Masters degree at the University of Liverpool.

My research is into factors (other than price) which might have an affect on your holiday choice.

I would be most grateful if you could assist me by completing this short questionnaire and returning it in the pre-paid envelope before the 20th May 2004. It should take no longer than 3 to 4 minutes.

A Holiday Park Group has kindly agreed to draw one from those completed by May 20th to receive a **free holiday**.

Many thanks for your time

Please provide your phone number so that
you can be contacted if you win the draw

APPENDIX 2

RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 'A'

ABOUT YOU

	please tick				
	Male	Female			
1 Gender	96	224			
	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	over 50
2 Age group	4	34	103	95	81
3 Which county do you live in?					eg Essex, Surrey etc
4 Have you stayed on a holiday park before?	No of times		eg 0, 1, 2 etc		
	1754				

BEFORE YOU CHOSE YOUR HOLIDAY

Before you chose your holiday had you decided upon any of the following:

	Definitely	Possibly	Not yet considered
5 Would be holidaying in the West Country (tick one)	178	94	35
6 Would be holidaying at a Holiday Park (tick one)	182	111	19
7 Would be holidaying with a particular company	87	98	121
8 Would be holidaying at a particular resort (tick one)	96	106	106
9 Would be holidaying with this company	122	89	103
		Yes	No
10 Did you visit a Travel Agent before you chose your holiday?		17	299
11 Is this your main holiday?		208	108
12 Do any of your friends take caravan park holidays?		255	59

YOUR CHOSEN HOLIDAY

13 Which holiday park did you choose? please tick one

Ilfracombe	43	Perran View	10
Devon Coast	6	Tolroy	16
Golden Coast	3	St Ives	40
Sandaway	21	Kenegie	5
Combe Martin	30	Killigarth	22
Westward Ho!	12	Trelawne	45
Widemouth Bay	24	South Bay	38

14 Is this your first time at this park? Yes No
 216 100
 please tick one

15 What type of accommodation did you book? Caravan 162
 Chalet 130
 Other 24

16 How many people in your party? Adults 829 Children 545 Ages

17 How long did your holiday decision take from first thought to the final booking? Weeks Days 2674 eg 2 wks 3 days

18 How many times have you holidayed with this company before? No of times 542 eg 0, 1, 2 etc

19 How many of this company's Holiday Parks have you stayed at? Number 293 eg 0, 1, 2 etc

THOSE WHO TOOK PART IN DECIDING THE HOLIDAY

	20 What is your position within the household? Tick one	21 Tick all who played some part in the holiday choice? Tick any	22 Who's wishes were <u>not completely</u> met by the final holiday choice? Tick any	23 Who had the <u>greatest</u> influence on the decision? Tick one
Mother	194	204	11	158
Father	88	215	15	88
Son	7	86	10	23
Daughter	14	84	13	28
Grandmother	5	28	0	7
Grandfather	1	22	1	6
Other	25	5	12	28

YOUR NEEDS & BENEFITS

24 Please rank these NEEDS from 1st down to 5th in order of importance to you in reaching your holiday choice

eg 1st 2nd 3rd 4th etc

1st = Most important
5th = Least important

Holiday Date	737
Type of Accommodation	950
Park Location	822
Facilities on the Park	928
Standard of Accommodation	906

25 Please rank these **BENEFITS** from 1st down to 7th in order of importance to you in reaching your holiday choice

1st = Most important
7th = Least important

eg 1st 2nd 3rd 4th etc

Nightly entertainment	1016
Beds made on arrival	1261
Free cancellation scheme	1175
Closeness to home	1678
Bed Linen included	925
Children's Foxy Club	1307
Electric/Gas included	725

How important were the **FACILITIES** upon your final choice?

Was very important Was quite important Was not important Not even considered

26 Indoor swimming pool (tick one)	129	99	53	28
27 Launderette on-park (tick one)	37	92	104	81
28 Crazy Golf (tick one)	12	72	128	97
29 Outdoor pool (tick one)	65	89	104	51
30 Closeness to beach (tick one)	110	143	51	11
31 Local attractions (tick one)	139	148	25	3
32 Restaurant on-park (tick one)	83	122	81	28
33 Other _____				

RESTRICTIONS ON YOUR CHOICE

Did any of the following <u>restrict</u> your choice of holiday?	Yes	No	Possibly
34 Dislike of foreign travel (tick one)	35	244	30
35 Fixed school holiday dates (tick one)	155	146	11
36 Fixed holiday dates at work (tick one)	96	198	19
37 Ages of children (tick one)	76	201	23
38 Other _____			

BRAND CHOICE

Why did you chose this company?	Was very important	Was quite important	Was not important	Not even considered
39 Specific facilities (tick one)	91	141	45	24
40 Family firm (tick one)	66	117	72	45
41 Looked good in brochure (tick one)	107	155	28	12
42 Park locations (tick one)	178	112	14	4
43 Company established 50 years (tick one)	60	101	87	53
44 Friend's recommendation (tick one)	49	41	50	148
45 Had been before (tick one)	116	43	28	107
46 Benefits being offered (tick one)	118	133	34	20
47 Other _____				
48 How many other holiday companies (not including this one) did you consider before deciding on your final holiday?	Number <input type="text" value="425"/> eg 0, 1, 2 etc			

	49 Which of these brands have you heard of?	50 Which of these brands have you tried?	51 Which of these brands did you consider?	52 Which of these brands did you get brochures from?
	Tick any	Tick any	Tick any	Tick any
Haven Holidays	308	160	131	138
British Holidays	135	55	49	58
Park Dean Holidays	69	12	18	28
Pontins	296	85	47	44
Woolacombe Bay Holidays	78	17	21	25
Hoseasons	278	72	65	69
Blakes	123	15	8	19
Butlins	301	138	46	53
West Star Holidays	34	17	11	15
Park Resorts	72	20	15	22
Other (please specify)				

Many thanks for completing this questionnaire

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE 'B' LETTER

Dear Holidaymaker

I am a postgraduate student studying for my Masters degree at the University of Liverpool.

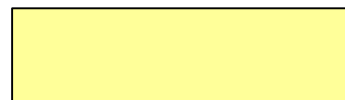
Your information could be important to my study, as I believe that you might have recently requested a specific holiday park brochure, but chosen an alternative holiday.

I would be most grateful if you could assist me by completing this confidential short questionnaire and returning it in the pre-paid envelope before the 20th May 2004. It should take no longer than 3 to 4 minutes.

A Holiday Park Group have kindly agreed to draw one from those completed by May 20th to receive a **free holiday**.

Many thanks for your time

Please provide your phone number so that
you can be contacted if you win the draw



11 The FACILITIES were far better 16 (tick if applies)

example

example

12 I got some extra BENEFITS 12 (tick if applies)

example

example

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU HAVE NOT YET CHOSEN A HOLIDAY

I have not yet chosen my holiday because ...

13 I am still making up my mind 34 (tick if applies)

14 I cant find anything suited to my needs 5 (tick if applies)

15 My circumstances have changed 20 (tick if applies)

16 I have decided against this type of holiday 1 (tick if applies)

17 All those I looked at were too expensive 9 (tick if applies)

18 I am waiting for a last minute bargain 10 (tick if applies)

Many thanks for completing this questionnaire

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