The destination choice process:
from initial idea until the real experience

"What kind of factors do tourists consider in their destination choice?"

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Author statement

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Authorship statement

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Where I have consulted the published work of others this is always clearly attributed. Where I have quoted from the work of others the source is always given. A list of the references used, is included. An appropriate referencing style is used throughout. With the exception of such quotations this thesis is entirely my own work. I have read and understand the penalties associated with plagiarism as stated in the Student Charter.

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Abstract

The destination choice process is a complex and holistic process where many factors come together at the same time or at different times. It is also a process where many factors are related to each other. For this thesis, the aim was to look if there are clusters of people, which make their destination choice at the same way. These clusters can be characterized as: 'everything-is-planned' seekers, 'rest and security' seekers and 'distance-is-important' seekers. These groups were found by using Q-sort, a method that represents the subjective opinion of different participants for a particular subject. It became clear that these groups had different significant motives that were of importance when choosing a final destination. For every cluster, the awareness set differed in size. Meaning the amount of destinations where they choose from varied. Also, the potential of reducing the carbon emissions that are caused by tourism varied between the clusters, as some clusters are very attached to the same kind of holiday. Furthermore, it is shown in this study that the destination choice involves an amount of sub choices, including transport mode, companions, activities, residence *etc.* This means that the destination is not the only choice that has to be made by potential tourists.

Preface

Dear reader,

Willingly, I am happy to introduce my Bachelor of Tourism thesis. This thesis has been an effort for me the last two months. However, I enjoyed to do my own research and to present my results to you. This Bachelor thesis was written with the supervision of Paul Peeters (Academy for Tourism at NHTV, Breda).

For this thesis it was intended to get a better insight in the destination choice process. However, as this process is very complex and holistically, this was not an easy job to do. I hope that while reading this, you as a reader will get better insights in how this process works. Moreover, groups of different tourists can be recognized for which different motives are important when choosing a final destination.

I would like to thank my supervisor Paul Peeters for his advice and the progress that I have made during the thesis process. Moreover, I would like to thank the people that were a participant for the Q-sort. Without these participants, I could not have done my research.

I hope you enjoy reading my thesis.

June, 2014, Sittard

Shauna Mols

Outline

The destination choice process: from initial idea until the real experience

1 Introduction

Understanding how tourists determine their final destination choice and what the process preliminary to this is important with respect to environmental-, marketing- and strategic planning issues. Furthermore, investigating how tourists select their destination, determining which factors are influencing their choices and what mechanisms are important, helps to get an insight in the demand side of tourism. As Yang stated: "It helps to reveal the nature and patterns of individual tourism demand" (Yang, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, it could help marketers with identifying and analysing the status and position of destinations at different stages in the decision process (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993). Next, it could help them to guide the tourist in a way that promotes short haul travelling. Therefore, understanding the destination choice process may help to create a larger market for short haul travelling, which indirectly influences the carbon emissions that are caused by tourism.

Most of the literature focuses on destination choice, and not a form of combined destination choice, travel purpose, transport mode, length of stay, travel company choice and other factors that could influence one's destination choice. Therefore this research aims to bridge this gap in the literature by looking at the process preliminary to the final destination choice.

Moreover, important for this research to notice is that the final choice for a destination is a complex and holistic process, where many factors come together at different times or at the same time and these factors influence the tourist's choice for a specific destination.

First, the main research question and sub questions with associated hypotheses will be presented. Hereafter, an extensive literature review is done on the concepts that are intertwined with tourism destination choice. After the literature review a theoretical framework is presented with schedules that are known from existing literature. Then, a Q-sort is done with potential travellers to get an insight into what factors are most important for them when considering a potential holiday destination. Moreover, interviews with employees of tour agencies are conducted and a short analysis of travel agency websites is done to get more knowledge about what information is available on the web. After that, a new framework according to the results of this study is presented, that reveals the most important components of what factors potential travellers consider before they actually make a choice of a final destination. Finally, a discussion and a conclusion about this study will be given according to the results that were found.

1.1 Research questions with following hypotheses

From the above introduction, the following main question was formed:

- How is the destination choice determined within the holistic travel choice process?

Moreover, from this main research question, three sub questions were formed to be able to answer the main research question:

- What are the main choices tourists make planning their holiday destination choice?
- What is the order in which these choices are made?
- Are there specific patterns or clusters that can be recognized within the main choice patterns?

For these sub questions, the following hypotheses will be reviewed:

- There are a few main choices to be made by tourists, when planning their holiday destination choice
- There is a specific order in which these choices are made
- There are specific patterns or clusters that can be recognized within the main choice patterns

2 Methodology

For this study, several methods were used to get an insight in how tourists make their destination choice. First, an extensive desk-research was done to get to know more about the concepts that are intertwined with the concept of destination choice. This has been done through the use of databases that were found via the Wageningen online library. Useful articles were searched through to find information that helped with understanding the complex destination choice process. Moreover, Q-methodology was used to search for correlations between different persons and similar point of views about the topic of destination choice. Later on, the method of Q-methodology will be more elaborately described. Furthermore, two short interviews with employees of travel agencies were done to get an insight about the supply side of tourism destination choice. Moreover, a short analysis of three online holiday booking websites was done to get to know more about searching tools that are available for potential travellers online.

The extensive desk-research was used to get more insight about the order of choices that are made within the destination choice process. Moreover, the information that was gained with the literature review was useful for analysing different choices that tourists have to consider before going on a holiday. Therefore, the desk-research related the most to the sub question of: "What is the order in which these choices are made?" However, it also related to the sub question of: "What are the main choices tourists make planning their destination choice?" It can be said that it is very difficult to analyse the specific order in which choices are made, as tourists themselves are not always aware of the specific order they use regarding their choices. What can be analysed easier are the main choices that tourists make referring to their destination choice. These main choices became clearer using Q-methodology and can be related the best to the sub question of: "What are the main choices tourists make planning their destination choice?" Furthermore, it was important to identify specific clusters of people that base their destination choice on the same principles. This was also done using Q-methodology and the sub question that belongs to this subject was constructed as: "Are there specific patterns or clusters that can be recognized within the main choice patterns?" Moreover the interviews with travel agency employees and the short analysis of some booking websites can be seen as useful by all three sub questions that were formulated. The reason for this is that in the interviews and in the analysis main choices, sub choices, different groups of travellers and more information about the supply site became clear. The questions of the interviews with travel agency employees can be found in *Appendix B.* To conclude, with this mixture of methods, it is tried to answer the main research question in this study: "How is the destination choice determined within the holistic travel choice process?" To get an answer on this main question, it is intended to explore and to compare how tourists make their destination choice and based upon this, how this influences the carbon emissions that are caused by tourism.

As said earlier, for this research the main methodology that can be characterized is named Q-methodology. This method searches for a correlation between profiles from different persons, that indicate similar points of view, or segments of subjectivity (Brown, 1993). Factors that result from this Q-analysis represent clusters of subjective opinions of different participants (Van Exel & De Graaf, 2005). Q-methodology can be useful in terms of exploring motives and preferences. Moreover, Q-methodology does not need a large number of respondents, before it can reveal characteristic outcomes (Van Exel & De Graaf, 2005). To determine factors that are important for tourists when choosing a travel destination, Q-methodology can be considered as relevant, as Q-methodology can be used to describe a population of viewpoints. Moreover, because time in this research is limited, Q-methodology can be concerned to be a helpful study method, as no large numbers of participants are needed.

How does Q-methodology work? First, a participant is presented a set of statements, called the Q-set, about the topic that is relevant. In this case, the statements are concerned with the topic of how tourists determine their final destination choice. These statements are opinions. What the participant needs to do is to order these statements from most disagree to most agree within the given rank-order set of -4 to 4 (for this study). There is no right or wrong way to do this, as the outcome has to provide the own point of view of the participant (Van Exel & De Graaf, 2005). In *figure 1* (Watts & Stenner, 2008) an example of how the participants had to rank-order the statements is given.
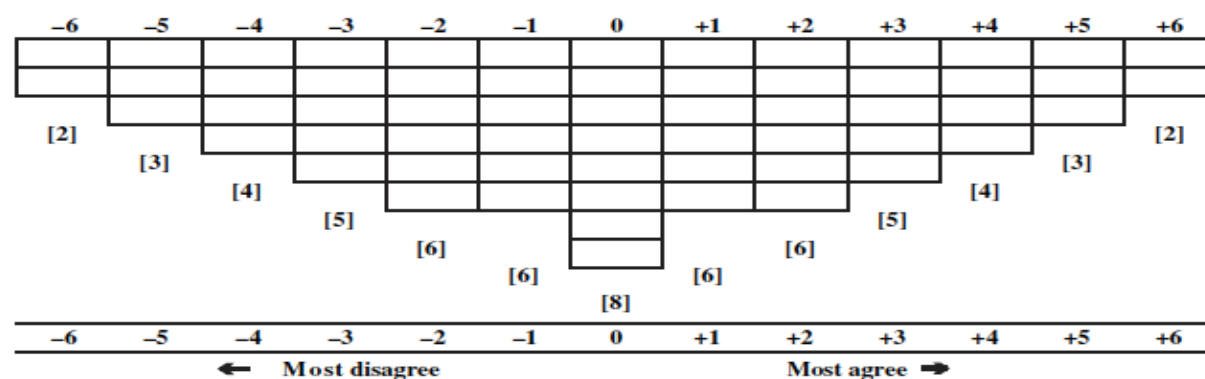
Figure 1

Within the table that can be seen in *Figure A*, the participants had to order the given statements. The outmost left corner of the table has to include the statements that are most disagreed with. In the outmost right corned, the statements where the participant most agrees with have to be filled in. In the middle, the statements have to be filled in where the participant is neutral about. All the statements eventually have to get a spot in the table.

Before one can start with conducting data, the researcher has to find the right participants for the study. The participants for a Q-methodology research are called the P-set. This P-set is not randomly chosen, however the aim is to have a few persons

defining each possible viewpoint about the topic. Most of the time, these are two to four persons per viewpoint. Therefore, it can be said, that the sample of respondents is a structured sample of persons that can be identified as having a clear viewpoint about the topic of research and that it is possible that these persons may eventually define a relevant factor (Van Exel & De Graaf, 2005).

For this study, the number of the Q-set was 42, meaning that the participants had to order all the 42 statements according to their opinion on the given score sheet. All the statements (in Dutch) can be found in *Appendix A.* The P-set was 10, this means that there were 10 participants for this study. The outcomes of these participants were subject to factor analysis, and these resulting factors should eventually indicate certain segments of subjectivity that exist about the topic (Brown, 1993). This interpretation of different factors was done using PQ method (version 2.35) (Schmolck, 2014), which can be considered as useful for analysing the data gained from the score sheets of participants.

Moreover, some interviews with staff of travel agencies were done, to get an insight in how their viewpoints are about how tourists determine their travel choices. The questions of these interviews can be found in *Appendix B.* Also, a short analysis of different booking websites is done, to get more insight in the possible choices for potential tourists that are available on the web.

From these methods, it is intended to get more insight in the process of destination choice. For this research two theoretical frameworks will be presented, one that follows from the literature review and one that follows including the results of the literature and the other results that followed from Q-methodology, the interviews and the website analysis. This means that the first framework will be provided and explained after the literature review as it can be seen as a conclusion of the foregoing and the new framework will be presented in the results section of this study.

3 Literature review

3.1 Destination choice

In the earlier days, Crompton (1977) suggested a two-stage model of the destination choice process, with the emphasis on the roles of perceived situational variables and image. In his study, the destination choice was seen as a function of the interaction between perceived constraints (time, money and travelability) and destination image. This role of interaction between variables and image became widely accepted in the tourism world (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Moreover, in the research of Krumpe and McLaughin (1982), the destination choice process was seen as a constraint-driven conditional model. After evaluating alternatives, an alternative with the least number of constraining attributes was chosen as a place to go for recreation.

In the article of Mansfeld (1992), decision theories for actual travel behavior are outlined and a conceptual framework has been given. The traditional deterministic approach, proposes that the individual (or group), being economically rational, will choose the alternative that is perceived as having the greatest utility or attractiveness. As this theory is criticized for being nonrealistic, other researchers developed a probalistic approach, which is based on the random-utility theory. This theory assumes that choice among alternative destinations is a probalistic matter and that utilities are actually probabilities. Because some sources of tourist information can only be sure in the future, like weather, quality of service, attitude of the host *etc.*, the approach that best can be used is the normative-rational approach, which is based on probability (Mansfeld, 1992). According to this approach, the individual goes through several stages before making a decision. This process works through looking at both push and pull factors of travel behavior (Mansfeld, 1992).

Moreover, in an article by Um & Crompton (1992) the destination choice is conceptualized as a three-stage decision process consisting of: an early evoked set, a late evoked set and a final destination choice. The knowledge that potential tourists have of a destination is often limited and it is confined to symbolic information that is acquired from media or from social relations. From here on images of alternative destinations are formed, which can be seen as a critical element in the destination choice process. The beliefs about a destination's attributes that help to satisfy a potential tourist for a specific destination are called 'facilitators', and those attributes that are not congruent with the tourist's motives are termed 'inhibitors'. According to Um & Crompton (1992), the starting point for a destination choice is an awareness set, which includes all locations that might be considered as potential destinations before any decision process about a trip has been started. Moreover, the second stage consists of an evoked opportunity set of destinations. In the tourism sector, this means that this set includes travel destinations that the potential traveller is aware of and it has a chance greater than zero of visiting within a certain time period (Woodside & Sherrel, 1977).

The last and final stage is the selection of a single destination from the evoked set. Woodside and Sherrel (1977), suggested that for tourism an awareness set should be divided into awareness available set and awareness unavailable set. The available set includes the destinations that are 'available' to visit within some time period. However, this defenition was pretty difficult to implement as it was not clear if they only meant that one has the resource to visit or that they meant that the destination was attractive for a potential traveller (Um & Cromton, 1992). Because of this criticism, an alternative strategy was developed. Instead of the awareness set, the first stage was reconceptualised as being the evaluation of a late evoked set from an early evoked set of destinations. The second stage became the selection of a travel destination from the late evoked set of destinations (Um & Crompton, 1992). The difference between the late and early-evoked set is the period of time that elapses between them, which enables the potential tourist to consider the impact of facilitators and inhibitors and to minimize the size of potential destinations. In conclusion, the evolution of a late evoked set and the selection of a final destination is the outcome of the interaction between attitude toward alternative destinations and situational constraints (Hansen, 1976). From the research that was conducted, it became clear that perceived facilitators were a significant indicator in predicting which destinations evolve from an early evoked set into a late evoked set. The inhibitors were of greater importance in the later stage of making an actual choice.

Among the studies that are conducted by researchers, the destination choice set model of Crompton & Ankomah (1993), which is based on the model of Um & Crompton (1992) is one of the most popular models. As previously mentioned, according to this model, a destination choice process consists of a three-stage process: an awareness set, an evoked set and a final choice. A number of studies have proved that an initial hierarchy or preferences is likely to be there at the awareness stage (Axelrod, 1968; Woodside & Wilson, 1985). Moreover, the action set is brought up in mind, which includes the destination one actually gets information about at a travel agency or tour operator (this can be on and offline information gaining) (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993). It is not clear how an individual narrows down the large number of alternatives from the initial consideration set to the eventual final destination and which principles are used in this process (Hong et al., 2006). Crompton & Ankomah (1993, p. 463) signify that: "if a destination is not in an individual's early consideration set, then it has no chance of being selected". However, for this statement they did not provide any prove.

More recently, Jang & Cai (2002), elaborated on the push-and-pull typology with respect to travel motivations. Motivational factors seem to vary from country to country, this study was done among British tourists, and therefore it can be seen as rare empirical evidence. However, it may provide a better insight into tourist's travel motivations. From this research, five most important push- and pull motivations were found. The most important push- and pull factors can be summarized in the table below as:

Most important push motivations	Most important pull motivations
1. Going to places I have not visited before	1. Standards of hygiene and cleanliness
2. Opportunities to increase one's knowledge	2. Personal safety
3. Escaping from the ordinary	3. The best deal I could get
4. Meeting new & different people	4. Nice weather
5. Being together as a family	5. Destination that provides value for money

Push motivations present what forces within the British people's mind push them to travel, it can be seen as triggers for going at a holiday. Whereas pull motivation suggests how strongly destination attributes appeal. For British travelers, the factor of "knowledge seeking" was the most important factor to motivate travelling overseas; this factor was followed by "escape" and "family and friend togetherness". Among the pull motivators, "cleanliness & safety" was considered as most important for travelling overseas by the British. This factor was followed by "easy-to access & economic deal" and "sunny & exotic atmosphere".

Furthermore, the roles of categorization, affective image and constraints are important when forming a choice set model (Hong et al., 2006). When people are searching for a holiday destination, often it is the case that it is impossible to choose one specific destination, because there are many alternatives and there are many attributes that need to be compared (Hong et al., 2006). As destinations share similar images, categorization can take place. Categorization helps to simplify complex decisions and to create more manageable sets of choices (Hong et al., 2006). For potential tourists it is easier to categorize alternatives based on the similarities of a destination image than on diverse attributes of a destination (Hong et al., 2006). If these alternatives are categorized, they can easily be placed in a group of destinations that share the preferred image. From this selection process, fewer choices remain. This categorization process involves stereotyping and product schema (Hong et al., 2006).

What makes it even harder to find out the actual process of a tourist's destination choice is the concept of multi-destination tour. This concept means that a large proportion of tourists visit more than one destination during a single holiday (Yang, 2013). There are a few reasons why this is done. The first one is to satisfy different needs, as tourists desire to enjoy a mix of activities, benefits and experiences from distinct and multiple holiday destinations (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 1998). Moreover, a multi-destination tour meets the diverse interests of other people within the travel company. As third, it reduces risk and uncertainty aspects that were intended to be there before booking the

holiday. Fourth, multi-destination tour is cost-efficiently and it can maximize utility of people within the travel company (Yang, 2013). An important factor concerning multi-destination tour is the perceived distance between origins and the actual holiday destination. Tourists that are familiar with the surroundings, which mean they are from nearby origins, are less likely to be active in a multi-destination tour (Yang, 2013). Moreover, the travel distance is positively correlated with the amount of destinations visited. So how further the destination is, how more destinations will be visited when undertaken a multi-destination tour (Lue et al., 1993, Oppermann, 1992 and Santos et al., 2012).

The concept of being loyal to a destination is also an important concept to take into account. If tourists are loyal to their destination, this means marketer costs are reduced due to this customers. If tourists are loyal to a destination, it means they have a positive attitude towards that destination, unless we assume they are going there against their willingness. This positive attitude goes along with a positive word of mouth effect, telling friends and relatives about positive experiences one had at that specific destination (Opperman, 2000). Gitelson & Crompton (1984) mentioned five reasons, why tourists undertake repeat visits. These reasons were mentioned: risk reduction, find the same kind of people, emotional attachment to a place, further exploration of a destination and show the destination to other people. Moreover, Bello and Etzel (1985) argued that for people with a high arousal in daily life, that these people are more likely to search a vacation in a familiar environment, thus repeated visits are more likely to happen. Whereas people with a low level of arousal in daily life, will seek more often a high arousal in their vacation, which means a novel trip to them.

3.2 Decision making

Within the concept of destination choice, the decision making process may be considered as very important. The decision for a certain destination can be seen as a decision making process where psychological processes take place. Choices have to be made among alternatives that are considered. Moreover, how do we determine which cues are the most important when making a choice for a specific destination (Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005)? "When making a choice, the decision-making process can be broken into a series of defined stages:

1. Recognition that there is a decision to be made
2. Formulation of goals and objectives
3. Generation of an alternative set of objects from which to choose
4. Search for information about the properties of the alternatives under consideration
5. Ultimate judgment or choice among many alternatives
6. Acting upon the decision
7. Providing feedback for the next decision"

(Carroll & Johnson, 1990; Einhorn & Hogarth, 1981; Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1986; Huber, 1980; Cited in Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005, p1). What is believed, is that the

decision-making process is influenced by both psychological (e.g., motivation, beliefs and intentions *etc.*) and non-psychological factors (e.g., time, marketing mix *etc.*) (Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005). Most of tourism service purchases are considered to be high-involvement extensive decision-making purchases. This is because it involves relatively high costs, both monetary and non-monetary (Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005). For instance, the choice for a certain holiday involves a high-perceived risk of making a bad decision, investing an amount of time searching for the right information and quite an expense. In summary, the ultimate choice of a destination will depend on the interaction of four groups:

1. Internal variables (e.g., attitudes, values, lifestyles, images, motivations etc.)
2. External variables (e.g., constraints, pull factors of a destination, marketing mix etc.)
3. The nature of the intended trip (e.g., party size, distance, time, duration etc.)
4. Trip experiences (e.g., mood, feelings, post-purchase evaluations)

(Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005). Potential tourists will select the destination that maximizes their utility subject to individual or social constraints, moreover, their selection process is a funnel-like one, because they narrow down choices among alternatives and they are influenced by both psychological and non-psychological factors (Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005). Furthermore, a tourism experience is not tangible, except the souvenirs and the purchases that are done at the holiday destination itself. Moreover, the perceived risk when purchasing a holiday will be considered as relatively high, which means that the tourist will be highly involved in searching information in order to reduce uncertainty that is connected to the purchase (Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005). Next, in the article of Sirikaya & Woodside (2005), it is stated that: "The ultimate choice of a final destination depends more or less on the quality and quantity of information available to and used by tourists" (Fodness & Murray, 1997, 1998; Gitelson & Perdue, 1987; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989; Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, & Worral, 1990; Snepenger, 1993; Van Raaij, 1986; Etzel & Wahlers, 1985; Perdue, 1985, Cited in Sirikaya & Woodside (2005), p.12). However, what makes it difficult to explain and understand decision-making is that the process is unobservable and consumers are not always aware of their decisions (Sirikaya & Woodside, 2005).

Decision-making can also be considered in terms of economically thinking. Economically thinking, having more options is positively related to the chance of finding one's desired option (Jessup, Veinott, Todd, & Busemeyer, 2009). However, people can also experience a 'choice-overload', meaning that having too many choices restricts one from choosing the right option (Park & Jang, 2013). In the case of tourism, tourism suppliers offer an extensively wide variety of products, thinking about the different types and compositions of holidays, the on- and offline holiday offers, activities, hotels, products, but also intangible products.

Having too many choices is likely to make the actual choice more difficult, because attractive options are smaller and the information is too much to handle (Park & Jang,

2013). However, choice overload does not always have the effect of negative effects to occur, but it does so when some preconditions are met (Park & Jang, 2013). These preconditions are, lack of familiarity or a certain preference, in the tourism case, lack of familiarity with destinations or lack of preference for a certain destinations. Moreover, the choice overload can occur when there is no obviously dominant option in the choice set. Furthermore, the choice overload can occur when there is no time pressure to make a certain choice (Park & Jang, 2013). To conclude, too many choices can have the effect of making no choice at all or experiencing an increased perceived regret. The tourism industry offers an overload of choices, which can result also in making no choice or an increased perceived regret. The study of Park & Jang (2013) has the outcome that having more than 22 choices increases the likelihood of making no choice. Moreover, people choosing among fewer than 22 choices perceived less regret than when no choice was made.

In order to be able to understand the process of tourism destination choice more clearly, it is important to explain other concepts like mental representations of a destination and the present influence of Internet sources on choices more in to detail. This will be presented below.

3.3 Mental representations

An image of a destination or a vacation site is mentioned in several research reports and acts as a powerful factor within the decision-making process for potential travellers (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Potential tourists have relatively limited knowledge about a destination that they have not visited before (Um & Crompton, 1992). For potential tourists it is hard to find the most important destination attributes, and therefore the image of a destination will be a holistic view in the whole tourism product (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). To understand what is meant by a destination image, a definition was given by Phelps (1986): "as an individual's overall perception of the total set of impressions of a place".

Furthermore, to bring in some psychology, Delleart et al. (2013) have done research about the mental representations of complex decision problems regarding tourist decision-making. When tourists are searching for a holiday, they automatically construct a mental representation of alternatives and the context that they encounter. Through these representations, the tourists are able to evaluate likely outcomes of their choices and to conclude eventually consequences of the different alternatives. However, humans have a limited capacity of the working memory. Therefore, tourists' experiences are also limited with respect to the levels of detail of the decision problem that can be represented in their memory. Consequently, their mental representations will be a simplification of reality and it will include only components what the tourists consider as most important for their specific destination (Delleart et al. 2013).

Moreover, the Internet and social media also help by the formulation of mental representations that one forms about a destination. Nowadays, the Internet as a communication tool has increased in gaining popularity. Especially, sources like social media and other forms of user-generated content (UGC). These social media websites are gaining considerable attention from tourists and potential tourists. Tourists have the option to gain information from "new media", like the Internet and social media, but they also have the option to seek their information in traditional media, such as films, television or books. However, both of these new and traditional media will influence the destination choice of tourists, but another important form of influencing is word of mouth (WOM) (Cairncross & Davies, 2013). Striking is that these new media information is relatively unstructured and the content is not managed by the host organization of a specific destination. Tourists themselves upload the content. Sites such as Tripadvisor.com allow customers to exchange their information and meaning about destinations or tourism products (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Another form of new social media, are the diaries or so called 'blogs' about ones travel experiences, or about a particular hotel or tour. A recently conducted study by Compete Inc. found that over 20 per cent of potential tourists rely on UGC when planning their trips (Sarks, 2007). An important reason for this could be the direct experience of actual tourists with a tourism product in the new social media. These new media forms are interactive, that is why these new social media frames can be seen as a new digital form of word of mouth (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). These social media forms become increasingly important in the world of today, where everyone seems to be connected with the online web. If we see our friends at social media websites, posing at pictures by important touristic attractions, it could arouse a feeling by us to also gain that experience and to make a photo alike. Therefore, these media will also have an influence on the potential choice of a tourism destination.

It is not only the social media that influences tourists' choices. Moreover, there are many developments that give us the opportunity to be connected with places all over the world. What this means is that the images on the Internet and especially street view applications allow us to actually get a gaze in a destination before we have even been there. If we want to actually look in a place like London, we can virtually experience a walk through the streets of London and see if this destination fits us. This type of looking up information about a destination is also connected to the destination image that people construct. Moreover, by the coming of the Internet the formation of an image of a certain destination has become an even more complex than ever before (Choi et al., 2007). According to Mackay and Couldwell (2004) photographs are successful when creating and communicating images of a certain destination, as the image gives a simplified view of a large number of associations and information that is connected with the place (Day, Skidmore & Koller, 2002). However, as a destination image consists of multiple dimensions and experiences a great complexity (Gallarza et al., 2002), it can be argued that the image one gets derived from pictures is not totally correct. This is because these pictures of street view do not give you all the information as if you would

have actually been there. For the real experience of the atmosphere and the cosiness of a destination, the best way to experience it, would be to actually visit the place itself.

3.4 Holistic construct

Considering all these previous terms that are intertwined with tourism destination choice, it is clear that a travel destination can be seen as a holistic construct. This means multiple factors at different times can determine the tourist's choice. Therefore, this research project is intended to make the decision steps more clear, from the first initial thoughts until the end where there has been made a choice for a final destination. Furthermore, it will become clear if there are any clusters of people that make their decision in the same way. This is of importance for marketing- and strategic planning makers to use these sources to create a larger market for short haul travelling. For example, if a tourist wants to have a nature experience in New Zealand, a comparable adventure could be found in Norway. For European travellers, the latter seems to be the most sustainable option. However, it is not clear why there are European tourists that choose for New Zealand for their nature experience. Indirectly, this way of thinking will contribute to the emission rates that are caused by tourism.

3.5 Findings

From the explanations above, some main findings can be concluded:
- Within the travel choice process, three distinct phases with narrowing choice sets can be recognized
- Next to the destination choice, other choices (like transport mode choice, purpose of the trip, companions of the trip *etc.*) are also found to be important choices to be made
- The order of the choices that are important is not well-known, because the process of destination choice is complex and holistically
- The orders and the size of the choice sets may be the same for a specific group, which means these choice sets can be clustered

In the existing literature several frameworks were found about influences that had to do with destination choice. What can be seen below is a combination of three existing frameworks. In the article of LaMondia et al. (2009) the 'other factors' were mentioned, but it was not clear in which set they came into mind. Therefore, it is decided to make a framework where the other factors are influencing all the sets at the same time or at different times, which can be seen below.
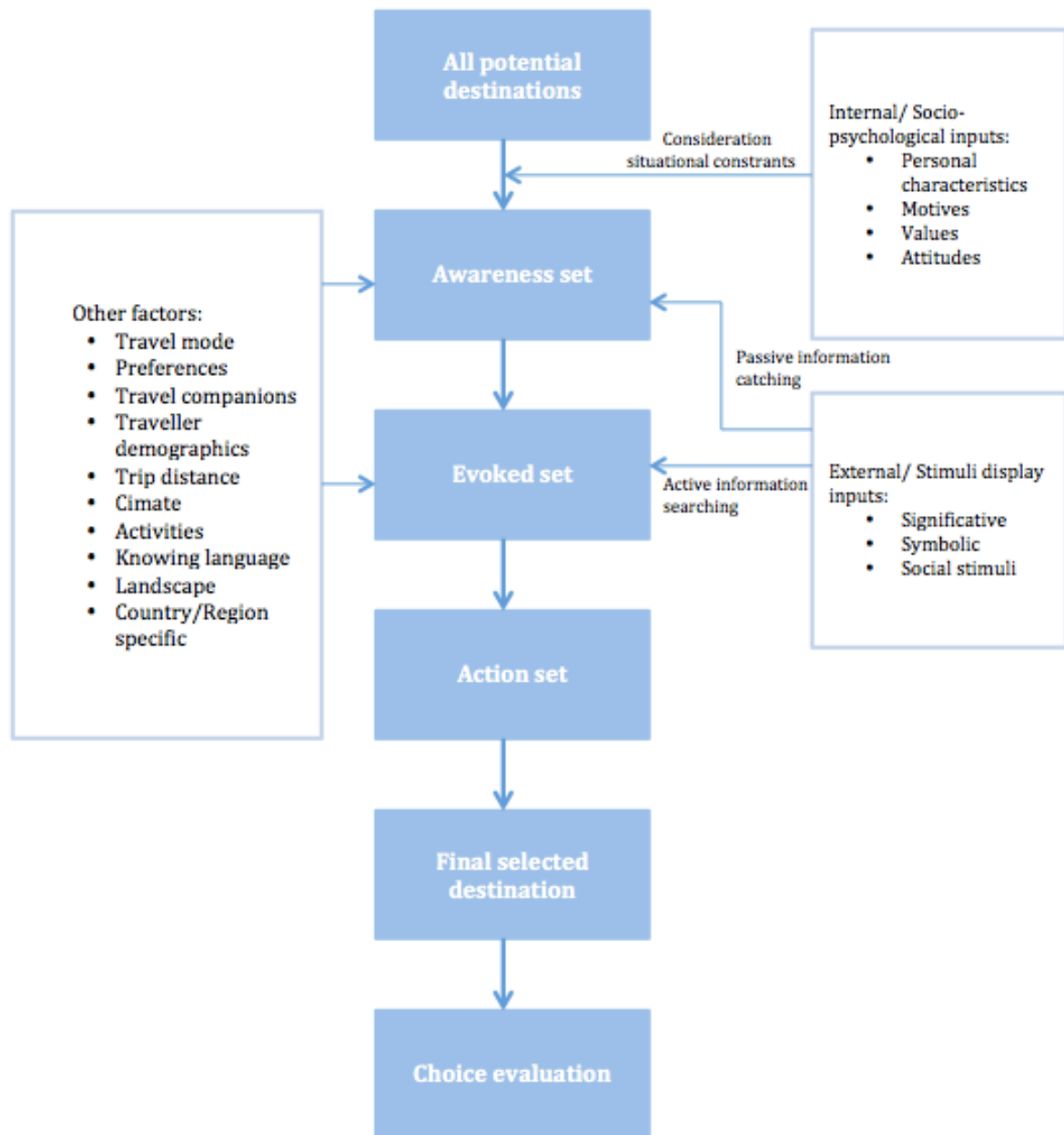
Figure 2: **Framework derived from: Um & Crompton, 1990; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993 & LaMondia et al. 2009**

3.6 Explanation of the framework

3.6.1 Three different sets

In the paper by Crompton & Ankomah (1993), the emphasis was on three different sets: awareness set, evoked set and action set. First, potential tourists experience the awareness set. This set consists of all possible vacation destinations within some period (for example, a year). After the awareness set, the evoked set is experienced. This set comprises the destinations that a potential traveller actually considers as probable destinations to visit in within some period of time (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993). And finally they experience the last set, the action set, which consists of all the destinations that remain in the potential tourists mind after the evoked set, for which a potential tourists contacts travel agencies or tour operators, to get information about that destination (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993). According to Crompton & Ankoman (1993), travellers go through these different stages before they come at a final selected destination.

3.6.2 Internal and external inputs

The internal and external inputs were derived from the paper by Um & Crompton (1990). Internal inputs come from the traveller itself, they include personal characteristics, motives, values and attitudes. However, in deriving the awareness set, people like to include these internal inputs, which means they consider situational constraints. Moreover, the external inputs can be seen as the sum of social interactions and marketing communications that are exposed to a potential tourist (Um & Crompton, 1990). These external inputs comprise of three different stimuli: significative, symbolic and social stimuli. Significative stimuli are derived from actually visiting the destination (this means the tourist already has visited a certain destination. Symbolic stimuli are derived from words, sentences and pictures that are being exposed to the potential tourist about a certain destination. Finally, the social stimuli are derived from face-to-face interactions, also called word of mouth that people exchange with each other about a certain destination (Um & Crompton, 1990).

3.6.3 Other factors

What were missing, were more different factors that had to deal with the choice of a destination. These missing factors were found in the article of LaMondia et al. (2009).

Quite recently, researchers began to look behind the standard factors of personal-, destination-, and trip characteristics. This was in response to the fact that tourists became more demanding and selective about their holidays (LaMondia et al., 2009). Therefore other factors came into sight of factors that are related to the tourism destination choice. According to the article of LaMondia et al, (2009), these factors included: travel mode, preferences, travel companions, traveller demographics, trip distance, climate, activities, knowing language, landscape and country or region specific.

However, for this thesis it is believed that the factors that were presented by Lamondia et al. (2009), are not the only missing factors that deal with the choice of a destination. Therefore it is tried to find out what these missing factors are and which main factors influence the decision choice process.

4 Results and analysis

4.1 Results and analysis Q-sort

Several results were found through the Q-methodology analysis that was done. Several significant statements for a factor were recognized by the program PQ Method (version 2.35) (Schmolck, 2014). These significant statements are marked with an asterisk at the score. These significant statements could be recognized either as positive or negative. If the score is positive it means that the statement is an indicator of what is important for that factor. If the score is negative it shows how the people that belong to a certain factor do certainly not think about the statement given about the destination choice process. Moreover, these results indicate that they are significant by P = <0.01. Furthermore, other statements were added to a factor if the researcher thought they were of importance for that factor and if they were outstanding from the other statements. The statements that are of importance for the factors were translated from Dutch to English, however in *Appendix C* a list of all the statements in Dutch can be found.

The different factors can be given a title that indicates the viewpoint of that certain group. Factor 1 could be named 'everything-is-planned seekers' as the people that belong to this factor, mostly book packaged trips so that they know everything is set. Factor 2 could be named 'rest and security seekers', because for them the most important things are to experience rest and mostly they visit the same destination. Furthermore, factor 3 could be named 'distance-is-important seekers' as they consider the distance as an important value.

The interpretation of this analysis focuses on the factor arrays. Items that are considered to be extreme for that factor (strongly appear to make a difference) are seen as core factors for that factor. In the analysis, the focus was on three different factors, as the number of respondents was low due to the limited amount of time. If more factors were chosen, the overview of factors would indicate too many factors for a too little amount of respondents. The complete overview of the factor arrays can be found in *Appendix C.*

A concentration on few items in the array will prevent any holistic nature of a viewpoint that is created. Moreover, the process of interpretation is in fact never-ending. However, Q-methodology can be constrained by the input of the participant group, as the point of views of the respondents is represented (Watts & Stenner, 2008).

Information about the participants

The number of participants for this study was 10. Mostly this was due to time limitations. The participants can be characterized as four men and six women. Moreover, the ages of the participants differed from each other starting from age 20 till age 61. They come from different environments and have different expectations about their holiday. Furthermore, it is tried to have some participants that prefer the bus as

favourite transport mode and to have some participants that prefer the airplane as their transport mode. Unfortunately, no participant had a camper of caravan with which they travel to their holiday. Moreover, only one participant can be characterized as having a second home.

Most disagree/agree

From the 10 participants that participated in this study, 5 filled in number 19 as most disagree, 4 of them filled in statement 41 and 4 of them filled in statement 24. These statements were characterized as the following:

Statement 19: "Mostly I sleep in a tent while being on a holiday."
Statement 24: "Most of the time I go to my own second home for a holiday."
Statement 41: "Mostly I go on a holiday using a camper or caravan."

Furthermore, 3 of the participants filled in statement number 6 as most agree with and 3 of the participants filled in number 10 as most agreed with. These statements contained the   following:
Statement 6: "I consider it to be important to feel safe at my holiday destination."
Statement 10: "I like to skip my daily routine while being on a holiday."

On the next pages, an overview of the factors will be given by means of tables that include the significant statements for a certain factor and the statements that were included by that certain factor that were chosen by the researcher.

Factor 1: Overview of distinguishing statements for 'everything-is-planned seekers'

Statement	Score
11. Often I book packaged trips, because then I know for sure everything is set	+4*
22. I think it is important to stay in a hotel, apartment or B&B at my holiday	+4
24. Most of the time I go to my own second home for a holiday	-4*
26. For me, the speed of travelling to the destination is important	-2*
29. Most of the time, I choose a destination, because friends or family live there	-3*
40. Mostly, I rent a separate holiday house for a holiday	-3

Potential travellers that belong to factor 1 seem to find it very important to book a packaged trip where everything is already set up for them. Moreover, they prefer to stay in a hotel, apartment or B&B while being on a holiday. The foregoing factors were indicated as positive, however the following statements were considered as negative. The people that belong to factor 1 most of the time do not stay in their own second home while being on a holiday. A reason for this could be that only one out of the ten people that participated could be considered to own a second home. Also, several descriptions by participants were given for statement 24 like: "*Unfortunately I do not own a second home, and if I could afford it to buy a second home, I would not do this*" and "*I just simply do not own a second home*". Moreover, they do not mind the speed of travelling to a certain destination much. Different reasons could be applicable here, maybe they have no desire to travel far away, or they are even afraid to fly for example. Furthermore, it seems that people that belong to this factor do not visit a destination because friends or family live in that destination. Lastly, these people do not book a separate holiday house while being at a holiday.

Statement 22 and 40 were included in the factor by the researcher next to the significant statements. Statement 22 was rated as +4 in the factor array. Next to the other columns of the other factors, this statement could be considered as outstanding. Moreover, the other significant factors were all negative, therefore it is useful to include one more positive statement. Furthermore, statement 40 was rated as -3, meaning this can be considered -also looking at the other ratings for factor 2 and 3- as a relatively negative statement for that factor.

Factor 2: Overview of distinguishing statements for 'rest and security seekers'

Statement	Score
10. I want to skip my daily routine while being at a holiday	+4*
11. Often I book packaged trips, because then I know for sure everything is set	-3
12. Internet and social media have an important influence at my destination choice	-3
15. While being at a holiday, I search mostly for cultural activities	-2*
17. Especially I want to experience rest on my holiday	+3
21. My holidays differ a lot from each other	-2
22. I think it is important to stay in a hotel, apartment or B&B at my holiday	-1*
24. Most of the time I go to my own second home for a holiday	-3*
25. My holidays are always from the same kind	+4*
33. Especially I choose a destination, because I have been there before	+3*
36. Most of the time, I visit the same destination while going on a holiday	+2*
40. Mostly, I rent a separate holiday house for a holiday	+1*

For factor 2, several statements can be considered to be an important indicator for the factor. People that belong to factor 2 like to skip their daily routine while being on a holiday. Moreover, they want to experience rest while being at their holiday. Furthermore, they state that their holidays are always from the same kind and that they choose a destination, because they have visited this destination before. Logically, it follows that they often visit the same destination while going on a holiday. Lastly, it shows that these people mostly rent a separate holiday house for their stay at their destination. For factor 2 also several negative statements could be recognized. People that belong to factor 2 do not like to book packaged trips where everything is already set for them. Moreover, they do not consider Internet and social media of an important influence for their destination choice. Also, it seems that these people do not search for cultural activities while being at a holiday. These people indicate that their holidays do often not differ that much from each other. Furthermore, for these people it does not seem to be that important to stay at a hotel, apartment or B&B while being on a holiday.

Statement 11, 12, 17 and 21 were included in the factor by the researcher next to the significant statements. Statement 11 had a scoring of -3, which can be seen as prominent next to the other columns of factors with scores of +4 and -1. Moreover, statement 12 was also rated as -3, therefore the researcher considered it as a relatively negative statement for that factor. Statement 17, rated as +3, next to the columns of the other factors with scores of 1 and 0, was considered as relatively positive for that factor. Lastly, statement 21, rated as -2, next to the scores of 0 and 1, was considered as relatively negative for factor 2.

Factor 3: Overview of distinguishing statements for 'distance-is-important seekers'

Statement	Score
2. I do not book often at a tour operator, because I like to handle everything myself	-2
5. I am going on a holiday, because this is good for my health	-3*
15. While being at a holiday, I search mostly for cultural activities	+3
20. While being at a holiday, I search especially for activities considering nature	-2
23. I prefer to go to a destination as far as possible away from home	+3*
24. Most of the time I go to my own second home for a holiday	+2*
27. I prefer to choose a destination where they speak a language that I can understand	-3*
28. I like to use a combination of different transport modes to arrive at my destination	+1
30. I consider the distance of my destination as important	+2
32. I prefer to stay as close as possible to my own home while being on a holiday	-4
42. I think it is important to share pictures and stories with friends and relatives after my holiday	+3*

Also for factor 3 several positive and negative scores for statements could be recognized. First, the positive statements will be explained. It seems that people belonging to factor 3 like to search mostly for cultural activities while being on a holiday. Moreover, it seems that these people prefer a destination that is as far away as possible from their home. Most of the time these people like to go to their own second home for a holiday. Also they like to use a combination of different transport modes to arrive at their holiday destination. Furthermore, they consider the distance of their holiday as important. Moreover, they think that it is important to share pictures and stories with friends and relatives after a holiday. Also, some negative statements could be recognized for this factor. These people do not like to book at a tour operator. Also, do these people not consider health improvement as an important reason to go on a holiday. Furthermore, they do not search for activities that consider nature while being on a holiday. For these people it seems not important that they can understand the language of the country they visit. Lastly, they do not prefer to stay as close as possible at home while being on a holiday.

Statement 2, 15, 20, 28, 30 and 32 were included in the factor by the researcher next to the significant statements. Statement 2 had a score of -2, which could be seen as relatively negative next to the other factor scores. Moreover, statement 15 had a score of +3, which can be seen as relatively positive next to the other factor scores. Factor 20 was rated as -2, indicating a relatively negative score. Factor 28 was rated as +1, which can be seen as relatively positive next to the columns of the other scores. Moreover, statement 30 was rated as +2, which can be seen as relatively positive and statement 32 was rated as -4, indicating a relatively negative statements for factor 3.

4.2 Results and analysis interviews travel agency employees

Unfortunately, due to time issues, only two employees of different travel agencies were interviewed.

The first interviewee was an employee of the Dutch travel agency "Reisburo Schoenmaeckers", which is located in Sittard. They also have an online website, which I analysed in the sub chapter below. I will summarize the most important findings for this interview below.

This person told me that they had the option to have mail contact via their website. However, besides the option to have contact by mail, he thought that face-to-face contact is the best choice if you want to know a person's real holiday expectations. Furthermore, groups that still come to a physical travel agency are mostly elderly people or people who do not like to pay via the Internet. Moreover, more specialized holidays are still often booked at a physical travel agency, because they are hard to constitute. This employee thought that 75% of the people who come in at the travel agency already know a destination for their next holiday. Moreover, the travel agency offers alternative options, also if the consumer knows where they want to go. He also assumes that special discount prices do not matter for the consumer, because the tourist already has a kind of picture of their destination in mind. Furthermore, this employee told that for everyone the most important motives and factors that determine destination choice are different. Next, a trend that is gaining more attention are the environmental friendly trips, however, he said that consumers do not attach value to this. And also he told about the narrowing-down process of destinations. It is known to him that potential travellers first have a big set of destinations in mind and mostly this is due to an overload of information, according to him.

The second interviewee was an employee of the Dutch travel agency "D-reizen", which also is located in Sittard. Also for D-reizen I did a short analysis of their website, which can be found below.

This interviewee told me that they have a chat possibility at their website, if something is unclear or you want more information about something, you can chat with an online employee of the travel agency. Moreover, an app is available who offers you Personal

travel Assistant. Moreover, she said that broadly people who want to know a lot of information still come to a physical travel agency. She said, that 70% of the potential tourists do not know the exact destination and 30% do know the destination already. They also offer alternatives for their customers, for example, they discourage a hotel with bad reviews. Nowadays, the budget plays a big role in determining the destination choice, according to her. She thinks that marketing and price campaigns do play a big role, because the price is so important to customers. Moreover, she said that customers already have a segment in their head of their holiday. She said that an important motive to go on a holiday could be considered to escape from daily life. Moreover, a trend that she recognizes is the all-inclusive trend. She thinks this is because with all-inclusive holidays, people know how much money their holiday will cost.

4.3 Results and analysis of different booking websites

These days, many travel agencies can be found on the Internet. This means that it is possible to book holidays online, without going to a physical travel agency to make a holiday booking. This changed the travel industry, as everyone is able now to book their holidays from their couch at home.

For this thesis, some travel agency websites were analysed. In this analysis, the set up of possibilities to book online and how to search for information were compared.

Reisburo Schoenmaeckers

This is a Dutch travel agency, which has 8 locations in the province Limburg, located in the Netherlands. Moreover, they have one special establishment for Business Travellers. Their website can be seen as clear and understandable. Their different supply of holidays is indicated with different sub titles. These sub titles are: air travelling, car travelling, last minute holidays, and holiday rentals, tracking tours, cruises and airline tickets. With these sub titles, potential tourists can make an easy choice if they already know which kind of holiday they are looking for. Under the subtitles of air travelling and cruises, more sub titles can be found with options of regions or destinations. Moreover, this site gives customers the opportunity to compare price levels of other travel agencies and tour operators. Furthermore, as a customer you get the option to ask for 'mobile travel advice'. If you live in Limburg or in Brabant in the Netherlands, you can ask for mobile travel advice. It means that an employee of the travel agency comes to your house and does the same what an employee at the travel agency does with you. This employee will set up a total holiday packet for you according to your wishes. If you want to book a holiday at the website, you get a German choice manual. Here you have to fill in your destination airport, destination, region, dates of travelling, duration of your holiday, kind of accommodation and the travel companions.

<u>D-reizen</u>

D-reizen is also a Dutch travel agency, which has 270 establishments in the Netherlands. They claim to be the "Biggest online holiday shop in the Netherlands". Their choice manual is some more extensive than that of Reisburo Schoenmaeckers. Highlights and last minutes are featured on the home page of D-reizen. From here on you can scroll down, which gives you options to choose from like: city trips, air tickets, car travelling, hotels, and then the option more holidays with further sub choices as: cruises, winter sport *etc.* At the top of the home page there is a similar choice manual like the one of Reisburo Schoenmaeckers. You can choose from: sun holidays, air tickets, city trips, car travelling, and hotels and there is an option for 'our other shops'. From this last option it becomes clear that D-reizen offers also coach excursions, car rentals, cruises, bike holidays and even more. If I click on the option sun holiday, a top 5 of sun holidays pops up at the screen. Above on this page there is a searching manual with options of: country, region or accommodation; travel data, duration of the holiday, travel companions and travel mode.

<u>Neckermann</u>

Nowadays, Neckermann Reizen Nederland is a part of the Thomas Cook Nederland B.V. organization. In the Earlier days, Neckermann has its own travel agencies, however it can now be seen as an online tour operator. The establishment of Neckermann was at 1 November 1970. The supply of Neckermann consists of all thinkable holidays, like air travel holidays, city trips, but also car holidays. Their supply is pretty big, as it consists of holidays to closer destination near or in Europe, but also far distance holidays. At their homepage, last minutes and offers are showed. Moreover, at the right upper corner, there is a square in which a holiday selection can be made. In the selection you can me a choice based on destination, leaving data's, duration of the holiday and company. Based on this a selection will take place. However, they also have the option to search in a broader perspective. Also Neckermann has at the upper side of the page, sub titles, which can help to search more quickly and more efficiently.

What became clear from all three websites is that they offer a big supply of holidays to potential tourists. Moreover, all three websites have main choices, with sub choices beneath the main choices. However, it is assumed, that if a potential traveller already knows the destination, these booking websites can be very useful as it is easier to search in, than for example in travelguids. The reason for this is that you can narrow your choice easily based on price, rating and mostly booked by other people. This may influence choices of potential tourists as in a glance these orders become visible. However, for potential travellers that still have no clue where the next holiday should go to, it is assumed that it is hard to start searching at a website without knowing where the focus should be. For these potential travellers, it might be useful to ask for

information at a travel agency, so that they have a starting point for a holiday destination they should look for.

4.4 New framework

Mostly, the existing literature about tourism destination choices describes phases or steps where the tourists go through and eventually make a choice for a destination. Generally the authors refer to a model of attributes of the destination or any constraints to travel to them (Um & Crompton, 1990; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Dellaert & Ettema & Lindh, 1998). However, what is missing is the actual in-depth explanation about how a destination is selected. What are the actual decision steps concerning a destination choice? As Myers (1979) said: "Not much is known about the temporal aspects of evoked set formation: not only what kinds of information processing takes place, but in what sequence this takes place and over what periods of time" (Myers, 1979 cited in Crompton & Ankomah, 1993, p. 472). In the previous framework, it is stated that internal inputs come up in the mind of tourists in the awareness set or in the evoked set. External inputs should come in to mind in between the awareness set and evoked set.

However, for this thesis it is believed that the order of the three different sets can vary between potential tourists. The destination choice process is very dynamically, as information processing can happen at the same time for different factors or one at a time. Furthermore, in this new framework, the existing factors are showed at the right place with its own important values.

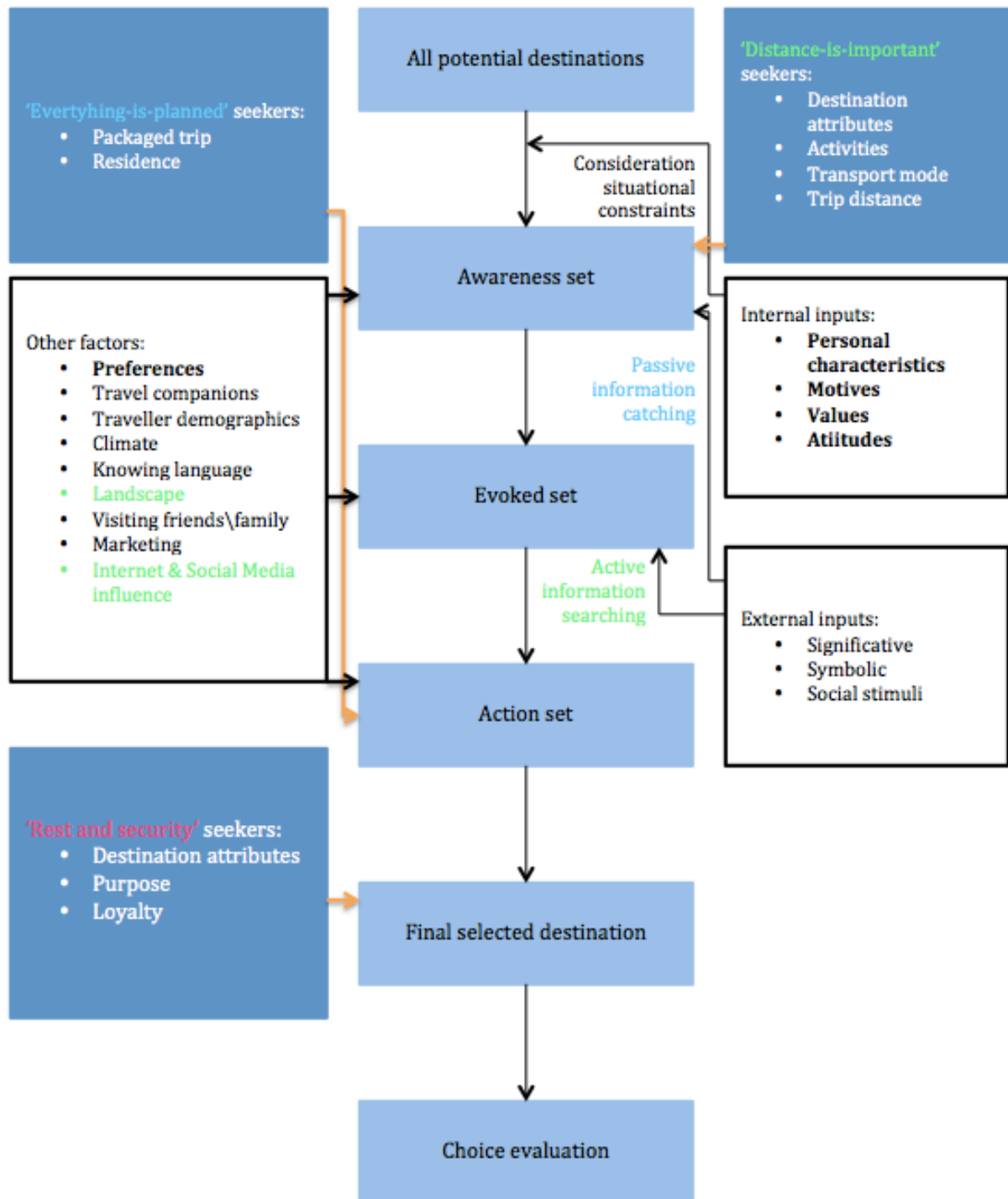Therefore, a new framework with own insights was developed, which can be seen at the page below.

Figure 3: New framework with own insights

4.5 Explanation of the new framework

To explain the new framework, the different factors are given its own colour. From here on, it is shown which elements are the most important for each of the three factors. Furthermore, the thick font shows which elements appear to be important for every factor. From these results, it is decided to place the 'everything-is-planned seekers' at the action set. This is done, because for them it is important to book a packaged trip. Therefore, it is suggested that they make use of passive information catching about all set packaged trips. Furthermore, it seems that the speed of travelling was not of a big value for them. Therefore, they can make use of different transport modes, like a bus or car, and for example not only the airplane. For the 'rest and security' seekers, the destination attributes, the purpose and loyalty motive seem of biggest importance. They have visited their destination mostly more than once and their main purpose to visit a certain destination is to gain energy. For this reason, it is chosen to place the 'rest and security' seekers in the final selected destination phase, as most of the time it is already known for them where their holiday should take place. Moreover, the factor of 'distance-is-important' seekers is placed at the awareness set. It seems that they have the biggest choice set available. However, because distance is important for them and because they like to travel as far as possible away from home, destinations nearby home will be excluded from their destination choice set. Furthermore, it is suggested that they make use of active information searching, because they are searching for a destination that is far away, including cultural activities.

5 Discussion

In this part of the study, the main findings will be discussed to analyse their potential for future implementations.

Within this research, the following hypotheses were tested:
- There are a few main choices to be made by tourists, when planning their holiday destination choice
- There is a specific order in which these choices are made
- There are specific patterns or clusters that can be recognized within the main choice patterns

In the following paragraphs, the main findings for these hypotheses will be given.

From the literature review, it became clear that the destination choice process is a relatively holistic process, where several concepts come into mind and are intertwined with each other. As many researchers have examined the destination choice process, much literature was available. One of the main results found was that there exist several steps within this destination choice process. Moreover, the concepts of push and pull motivations, multi-destination tour and loyalty deal with the process of eventually finding the destination one likes to visit. Furthermore, this research has to deal with decision-making, mental representations and the influence of the Internet on a potential destination for a holiday. Within the destination choice process, three distinct phases could be recognized: the awareness set, the evoked set and the action set. However, the order of these three different sets can be argued. The Q-sort revealed that within the sample of respondents, three groups or factors did emerge, which will be discussed below. However, these three clusters base their destination choice on different motives and thus will not use the three sets mentioned earlier in the same order.

The Q-sort revealed three different factors of people. Factor 1 can be described as people who like to book packaged tours and who want their holidays to be organized, therefore the name of 'everything-is-planned' seekers was given to factor 1. Furthermore, they did not consider the speed of arriving at a particular destination as important, therefore it could be said that these people would not mind to travel by bus or car instead of an airplane. Also, these people do consider their residence as important at their holiday, because for them it is important to stay in a hotel, apartment or B&B while being on a holiday. Then, factor 2 can be described as people who already know where they want to go on a holiday. For this reason, they got the name 'rest and security' seekers. It seems that it is important for them to skip their daily routine in life while being on a holiday and to gain new energy from resting at their destination. The people that belong to this factor often visit the same destination more than once. That is why loyalty to a destination seems important to them. Furthermore, factor 3 can be

described as people who like to do cultural activities at their holiday. They consider the distance as important, because they want to travel as far as possible away from their home. Therefore, they got the title of 'distance-is-important' seekers. Moreover, they use different transport modes to arrive at their destination. For this group sharing stories and pictures with beloved ones about their holiday is also an important value for them.

From here it follows that indeed there are some main choices that need to be made by potential tourists when determining their final destination choice. Relating to this, to eventually find a destination, the actual destination is not the only choice that has to be made. There are other sub choices that relate to the eventually destination choice. These choices are for example the travel mode and residence of a holiday. If one wants to travel by bus, then there is a little chance that their final destination will be relatively far away from home. Moreover, the accommodation of a holiday depends also on the travel mode. If one goes on a holiday with a caravan or camper, then it seems logically that they also sleep in it while being on a holiday. Therefore, one could say that these sub choices relate to the eventual choice of a final destination. However, these sub choices vary for the three clusters and even for every single potential tourist the sub choices that are of importance do vary. As a result from the new framework (*Figure 3*), the most important choices that need to be made next to the final destination choice itself, are the sub choices of which transport mode(s) the potential tourists should use and the trip distance. The reason for this is that within the factor of the 'everything-is-planned' seekers, the transport mode is considered to be still the most changeable choice. Moreover, within the 'distance-is-important' seekers, the distance of the trip is considered to be the most changeable choice.

Moreover, the patterns and clusters that are derived from the Q-sort are only three factors. However, if this Q-sort was done with more people, more different factors could have developed from the Q-sort. Therefore, one has to take into account that the results are only a small indication that is derived from ten people. Furthermore, there might be people with other interests, like going on a holiday with a camper or caravan, for which no participant was found for the Q-sort. Likewise, it could be the case that within these three derived factors, for each participant the most important motives differ.

Furthermore, it seems difficult to tell how these results should help to create a larger market for short haul travelling, and how this will indirectly influence the carbon emissions that are caused by tourism. However, for the three factors that emerged from the Q-sort, various motives were of importance for the different factors. For the 'everything-is-planned' seekers, a packaged trip seems to be important. This trip could be close to their home as well as far away from their home. They mention the statement that speed of travelling is not of a big importance for them. Therefore, it is possible to direct this group of people in such a way that they stay near by their home and travel with a transport mode that is relatively 'good' for the environment. However, the group of 'destination-is-important' seekers see distance as an important value of their holiday.

Therefore, one could say, that it is difficult to guide these potential tourists in a way that they stay close to their home. However, their stay at the destination, in a so-called 'eco-friendly' residence, could compensate CO_2 emissions. But it is up to the tour operators to mention this kind of choice to this group of people. Furthermore, the group of 'rest-and-security' seekers find loyalty to a destination important. They travel more than once to a certain destination. Although it is not known if this destination is close to or far away from their home, it could be argued that for this factor the destination choice is not easily changeable at all.

To recapitulate, for every cluster or group of people, the awareness set differs in size. For the group of 'rest and security' seekers this set is considered to be very small, as most of the time they visit the same destination more than once. For the group of 'everything-is-planned' seekers, the awareness set is considered to be bigger than for the previous group, as they are searching for a packaged trip. Not every destination is offered in a packaged trip where everything is already set. Then for the 'distance-is-important' seekers, the awareness set seems of biggest size of all three groups. The reason for this is that they search destinations as far as possible away from home.

5.1 Implications

What has been said before, understanding the process of destination choice is important with respect to environmental-, marketing-, and strategic planning issues. Furthermore, it creates an insight in to the demand side of tourism. It may also help to create a larger market for short haul travelling. In other words, to eventually reduce the carbon emissions that are caused by tourism travelling, it is needed to know why tourists visit a certain holiday. As was found, this process is complex and many factors come in to sight when looking to this process.

Within this study, three clusters of people can be found related to the destination choice process: the 'everything-is-planned' seekers, the 'rest and security' seekers and the 'distance-is-important' seekers. For tour operators it might help to indicate to which factor a certain customer belongs. From here on, it is easier to know for which kind of destination the person is looking for. Also the tour operator (on- and offline) could provide alternative destinations that influence the carbon emissions caused by tourism in a positive way.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, the main research question within this study was: "How is the destination choice determined within the holistic travel choice process?" To answer this question, it is tried to answer the three sub questions that were formulated for this research. These sub questions with the following answers will be presented below:

- What are the main choices tourists make planning their holiday destination choice?

To start with, it seems that for everyone the internal inputs are of great importance when choosing a final destination. These are the personal characteristics, motives, values and attitudes. As every person is different, it can be said that everyone is searching for something specific while being on a holiday. However, the internal inputs are no choice to be made, these characteristics exist within the potential tourist itself. What one can see is that for every cluster of people -the 'everything-is-planned' seekers, 'the 'rest and security' seekers and the 'distance-is-important' seekers- different main choices exist to be made. For the group of 'everything-is-planned' seekers, it is important that their holiday is a packaged trip and that their residence is an apartment, hotel or B&B. However, they do not mind the speed of travelling that much. Therefore, one could say that their travel mode is still an important choice to be made. Moreover, for them the distance of a holiday seems also a big choice as they can travel by bus, car, train or airplane. For the 'rest and security' seekers, the destination attributes, the purpose and loyalty to a destination are of big importance. However, because they often visit more than once the same destination, there is less space left for changing the final destination. Therefore, it can be said that their main choices are already fixed and not changeable, unless they choose for a different destination than previous years. Moreover, the 'distance-is-important' seekers search for cultural activities in their destination and consider transport mode and trip distance as important. This group prefers to go to a destination as far as possible away from home and considers using a combination of different travel modes. Therefore, for them the biggest choices to be made, is the transport mode or modes and the distance. To recapitulate, the most important choices that need to be made next to the final destination choice itself, are the sub choices of which transport mode(s) potential tourists should use and how far the distance of their holiday will be.

- What is the order in which these choices are made?

In the literature review, three different phases related to the final destination choice became clear: the awareness set, the evoked set and the action set. However, it is better to see these different phases as narrowing down the choices from possible alternatives to a final selected destination. Moreover, it cannot be said that for every person the same choices have to be made. For the 'rest-and-security' seekers, it seems that their choices are already fixed and not easily changeable, as they are often loyal to a destination. Furthermore, it is not clear in which order the choices of transport mode and trip

distance are made within the groups of 'everything-is-planned' seekers and 'distance-is-important' seekers. What is known is that these choices relate to the actual destination choice itself, as travel mode and trip distance are important indicators for where a final destination should be.

- Are there specific patterns or clusters that can be recognized within the main choice patterns?

The Q-sort revealed three specific factors of people that are based on their view about the destination choice process: the 'everything-is-planned' seekers, 'the 'rest and security' seekers and the 'distance-is-important' seekers. In *figure 3*, their specific motives, which they search in a holiday, can be seen including the main choices they made and in which set these different groups start their destination choice process.

With these answers on the sub questions it is tried to answer the main question:
"How is the destination choice determined within the holistic travel choice process?" What can be concluded? The destination choice is not the only choice that has to be made. Within the destination choice process, smaller choices also appear to be important. The most important smaller choices, seems to be the transport mode and the trip distance. Although, it did not become clear in which order these choices were made. Furthermore, the Q-sort revealed three different factors with a subjective view about the destination choice process: the 'everything-is-planned' seekers, 'the 'rest and security' seekers and the 'distance-is-important' seekers, that base their choice for a final destination all on different values.

7 Limitations and suggestions for future research

7.1 Limitations

For this study, a few limitations did arise when conducting the research. One of the biggest limitations was the limited amount of time that was given for conducting the research. Due to these time limitations, only ten participants could be asked for participation to the Q-sort. Moreover, only the basics of the Q-sort were done, because the researcher did not has the insights to do an extensive analysis of the results gained from the Q-sort. Furthermore, a limitation was that only one participant could be considered as having an own second home and that none of the participants had a camper or caravan with which they went on a holiday.

7.2 Suggestions for future research

For future research, my recommendations would be to include someone who has enough knowledge of the Q-sort method to do an extensive analysis. Furthermore, it can be suggested to take more participants in to account, as from here on more factors might develop. Moreover, when taking more participants in to account, the description of factors might be better as this represents a bigger amount of people.

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9 Appendix

Transport mode

1. Ik gebruik meestal hetzelfde vervoersmiddel om op de plaats van mijn vakantie bestemming te komen

38. Ik kies vaak voor verschillende vervoersmiddelen per reis, afhankelijk van wat het meest geschikt is

28. Ik gebruik vaak een combinatie van verschillende vervoersmiddelen om op plaats van bestemming te komen

39. Ik heb een voorkeur voor een vervoersmiddel dat relatief goedkoop is

31. Ik heb een voorkeur voor een vervoersmiddel dat veilig is

34. Ik heb een voorkeur voor een vervoersmiddel dat betrouwbaar is

26. Ik vind de snelheid waarmee ik op een bestemming kom belangrijk

Destination

3. Op een vakantie bezoek ik vaak meerdere bestemmingen

33. Ik kies een bestemming juist, omdat ik er al vaker ben geweest

29. Ik kies een bestemming meestal, omdat daar vrienden of familie wonen

37. Ik kies een bestemming, omdat ik weet dat het er goedkoop vertoeven is

35. Ik kies een bestemming waarvan ik weet dat het er veilig is

27. Ik kies meestal een bestemming waar er een taal gesproken wordt, die ik zelf ook spreek

30. Ik vind de afstand van mijn bestemming belangrijk

25. Mijn vakanties zijn altijd van hetzelfde type

32. Ik blijf het liefst zo dicht mogelijk bij huis als ik op vakantie ga

23. Het liefst ga ik zo ver mogelijk weg van huis als ik op vakantie ga

36. Ik ga meestal naar dezelfde bestemming op vakantie

21. Mijn vakanties verschillen vaak veel van elkaar

Accomodation

22. Ik vind het belangrijk om in een hotel, appartement of B&B op vakantie te verblijven

24. Ik ga meestal naar mijn eigen tweede huis op vakantie

40. Ik huur meestal een apart vakantiehuisje op vakantie

41. Ik ga meestal met de camper of caravan op zoek naar een standplaats op vakantie

19. Ik logeer meestal in een tent als ik op vakantie ben

Activities

20. In een vakantie zoek ik vooral een de natuur op

4. In een vakantie zoek ik vooral naar sportieve activiteiten

17. In een vakantie zoek ik vooral rust

15. In een vakantie zoek ik vooral naar culturele bezigheden

18. Ik plan mijn vakanties vaak tot in de puntjes

16. Ik vind het leuk om nog niks te plannen voor op de bestemming en zie wel wat er op mijn pad komt

Motives

6. Ik vind het belangrijk om me veilig te voelen op de bestemming zelf

9. Ik let op de kosten van een vakantie

42. Ik vind het belangrijk om na de vakantie foto's en verhalen met vrienden en kennissen te delen

10. Ik wil de dagelijkse routine doorbreken tijdens mijn vakantie

5. Ik ga op vakantie, omdat dit goed voor mijn gezondheid is

Decision-making

8. Ik maak veel gebruik van folders en websites van reisbureaus om een bestemming te kiezen

14. Als ik een vakantie boek let ik op hoe milieuvriendelijk de reis is

13. Het beeld van een bestemming dat ik in mijn hoofd heb, heeft een grote invloed op mijn uiteindelijke keuze

7. Ik vind het kiezen van een vakantie nogal lastig

12. Internet en social media hebben een belangrijke invloed op mijn bestemmingskeuze

11. Ik boek vaak pakketreizen, zodat ik weet dat alles geregeld is

2. Ik boek niet vaak bij een touroperator, omdat ik het leuk vind om alles zelf uit te zoeken

- Hebben jullie ook een site waar mensen reizen kunnen boeken? (Hoelang bestaat deze site dan al?)
- Welke hulpmiddelen hebben jullie op de site om klanten het makkelijker te maken een keuze te maken?
- Houden jullie het klikgedrag op de website ook bij?
- Kunt u mij vertellen welke groepen mensen het vaakst bij een reisbureau informatie komen opvragem?
- Weten deze mensen al naar welke bestemming ze willen gaan? (Inschatting % ja/nee)
- Als ze wel al weten naar welke bestemming ze willen gaan, bieden jullie dan nog alternatieve opties aan?
- Vragen jullie aan de klant waarom ze naar een bepaalde bestemming toewillen?
- Weet u of de mensen die naar een reisbureau komen, van te voren al op andere media kanalen informatie hebben opgezocht? Welke informatie kanalen? Is het dan ook zo dat ze via het informatie kanaal op een bestemming komen en dan naar een reisbureau gaan om te boeken?
- Als er bepaalde kortingen zijn voor een bepaalde bestemming, beïnvloedt dit dan volgens jullie de keuze van de klant?
- In hoeverre speelt marketing een rol in de keuze van de klant voor een bepaalde bestemming naar uw mening?
- Als de klant nog niet weet waar hij/zij naartoe wil, hebben deze mensen dan wel al een soort bestemming in hun hoofd of een bepaald soort vervoerswijze?
- Welke vragen stellen jullie aan klanten als ze nog niet weten waar ze naar toe willen (hoe komt u erachter naar wat voor soort vakantie ze opzoek zijn)?
- Welke factoren merken jullie dat het belangrijkste zijn voor het kiezen van een vakantie (travel mode, companions, trip distance, activities, costs etc.)?
- Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste motieven voor klanten om op vakantie te gaan (personal characteristics, motives, values, attitudes)?
- Zijn deze factoren in de loop van de tijd veranderd?
- Zijn er de laatste tijd bepaalde trends op het gebied van reizen zichtbaar? Hebben jullie een idee hoe zo'n trend op gang komt?
- Merken jullie dat als klanten nog geen specifieke bestemming hebben, ze in eerste instantie een aantal bestemmingen in hun hoofd hebben en dat dit er steeds minder worden? Door wat zou dit komen?
- Als mensen voor de tweede keer naar jullie toe komen, hoe vaak is hun bestemmingskeuze dan veranderd? Zo ja, waardoor komt dat meestal?

Appendix C: Factor Arrays for the Q-sort

Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement

			Factor Arrays		
No.	Statement	No.	1	2	3
1	Ik gebruik meestal hetzelfde vervoersmiddel om op plaats van	1	3	2	0
2	Ik boek niet vaak bij een touroperator omdat ik het leuk vin	2	0	0	-2
3	Op een vakantie bezoek ik vaak meerdere bestemmingen	3	2	0	1
4	In een vakantie zoek ik vooral naar sportieve activiteiten	4	-1	-1	-1
5	Ik ga op vakantie omdat dit goed voor mijn gezondheid is	5	1	2	-3
6	Ik vind het belangrijk om me veilig te voelen op de bestemmi	6	3	2	4
7	Ik vind het kiezen van een vakantie nogal lastig	7	-1	-2	0
8	Ik maak veel gebruik van folders en websites om een bestemmi	8	1	0	1
9	Ik let op de kosten van een vakantie	9	3	3	4
10	Ik wil de dagelijkse routine doorbreken tijdens mijn vakanti	10	2	4	0
11	Ik boek vaak pakketreizen zodat ik weet dat alles geregeld i	11	4	-3	-1
12	Internet en sociale media hebben een belangrijke invloed op	12	-1	-3	-2
13	Het beeld van een bestemming heeft een grote invloed op mijn	13	1	1	-1
14	Als ik een vakantie boek let ik op hoe milieuvriendelijk de	14	0	-1	-2
15	In een vakantie zoek ik vooral naar culturele bezigheden	15	1	-2	3
16	Ik vind het leuk om nog niks te plannen voor op de bestemm	16	0	0	0
17	In een vakantie zoek ik vooral rust	17	1	3	0
18	Ik plan mijn vakantie vaak tot in de puntjes	18	0	-1	-1
19	Ik logeer meestal in een tent als ik op vakantie ben	19	-4	-4	-3
20	In een vakantie zoek ik vooral de natuur op	20	1	0	-2
21	Mijn vakanties verschillen vaak veel van elkaar	21	0	-2	1
22	Ik vind het belangrijk in een hotel te verblijven	22	4	-1	2
23	Het liefst ga ik zo ver mogelijk weg	23	-2	-1	3
24	Ik ga meestal naar mijn eigen tweede huis op vakantie	24	-4	-3	2
25	Mijn vakanties zijn altijd van hetzelfde type	25	0	4	-1
26	Ik vind de snelheid belangrijk	26	-2	2	1
27	Meestal een bestemming waar de taal gesproken wordt	27	1	1	-3
28	Vaak een combinatie van verschillende vervoersmiddelen	28	-1	-2	1
29	Ik kies een bestemming omdat vrienden of familie er wonen	29	-3	-1	0
30	Ik vind de afstand belangrijk	30	-1	0	2
31	Ik heb een voorkeur voor een veilig vervoersmiddel	31	2	1	2
32	Ik blijf het liefst zo dicht mogelijk bij huis	32	-2	-1	-4
33	Ik kies een bestemming omdat ik er vaker ben geweest	33	-2	3	-1
34	Voorkeur voor een betrouwbaar vervoersmiddel	34	2	1	2
35	Ik kies een bestemming omdat het er veilig is	35	2	1	1
36	Meestal naar dezelfde vakantie bestemming	36	-2	2	-1
37	Ik kies een bestemming omdat het goedkoop vertoeven is	37	0	0	0
38	Verschillende vervoersmiddelen per reis	38	-1	-2	0
39	Ik heb de voorkeur voor een relatief goedkoop vervoersmiddel	39	0	1	1
40	Ik huur meestal een apart vakantiehuisje	40	-3	1	-2
41	Ik ga meestal met camper of caravan op zoek naar een standpl	41	-3	-4	-4
42	Belangrijk om fotos te delen met vrienden en kennissen	42	-1	0	3