# Travel Decision-making: The Role of Habit

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# TRAVEL DECISION MAKING - THE ROLE OF HABIT

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*The complexity of travel decision making is widely recognized and has previous been studied by the means of grand models and process studies. This study has used the Self-Reported Habit Index of Verplanken and Orbell (2003) to measure habit strength in 23 statements concerning travel decision making. The four sub-decisions of particular interest in this study were; where and when to go on vacation, what to do, as well as how to travel to the chosen destination. The developed instrument unfolds a well recognized structure of travel behavior, results which validate the statements of SRHI and its applicability to the field of tourism. This research adds to the field of travel decision making by emphasizing the possibility to identify sub-decisions that are made out of habit and to use habit as a platform for tourist segmentation.*

## INTRODUCTION

Travel decision making has been of great research interest for a long period of time (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002; Decrop & Snelders, 2005). Grand high-involvement decision making models (Andreasen, 1965; Nicosia, 1966; Engel et al., 1990), theories about decision making strategies and tactics (Festinger, 1957; Davis, 1970; Kahneman & Tversky, 1972) developed by consumer behavior researchers and cognitive psychologist have been adopted, adapted, tested and used by tourism researchers (e.g. Fodness, 1992; Fodness & Murray, 1998; 1999).

Consumer behavior in tourism (Wahab et al., 1976) and travel behavior models (Mathieson & Wall, 1982) do therefore advocate a stepwise decision making process initiated by a perceived need to travel.

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The complexity of travel decision making can be explained by 1) the uniqueness of making travel decisions (Gitleson & Crompton, 1984), 2) the number of fields of influence (Schmoll, 1977), and 3) the fact that many travel decisions are family decisions (Kozak, 2007).

Grand decision making models have be criticized of being outdated and not empirically validated. (Swarbrook & Horner, 1999). Their popularity decreased in the 1980s and was replaced by piecemeal studies with a focus on individual decision making strategies (Fodness, 1992; Nichols & Snepenger, 1988), tactics and the influence strategies people use in group decisions (spouses and children). It has been concluded that tourist information search strategies are complex phenomena. Tourists combine different information sources (Fodness & Murray, 1998) and the search strategies used are both situational and socio-economic conditioned (Fodness & Murray, 1999). On a family level, studies by Kozak (2007) concerning spouses involvement in travel decision making concluded that it is very important to incorporate the role played by spouses in the decision making process. Another study within this line of research would just validate the complexity in travel decision making. By presenting another perspective on travel decision making, this paper will enhance the theory in this field.

Previous studies have most often framed travel decisions as one decision consisting of different steps or phases (Moutinho, 1987). The fact that tourists collect information about different aspects of their travel has also been recognized and studied (Fodness & Murray, 1998). However, travel decision making is not just one single decision, but consists of many sub-decisions (c.f. Tay et al., 1996; Woodside & MacDonald, 1994; Dellaert et al., 1998; Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000) of which some may be preceded by an extended decision making process while other sub-decisions may be made out of habit.

Habit as a multidimensional and abstract concept, much more comprehensive than repeat behavior, has caused intensive discussion about how to operationalize and measure it (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Verplanken, 2006). Eagly and Chaiken (1993: 181) wrote "…the role of habit per se remains indeterminate … because of the difficulty of designing adequate measures of habit". One of the most recently presented measurements for habits is the Self-Reported Habit Index (SRHI) developed by Verplaken and Orbell (2003). Its usefulness has been proved when measuring several different habits, for example eating behavior (Brug et al., 2006), transportation mode choice (Verplanken et al., 2005), and leisure activities (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003). The SRHI has however not been tested in the field of tourism. This study focuses on

habit as a multi-dimensional concept and the aim is, consequently, to identify sub-decisions tourist make out of habit and to adapt the SRHI to the field of tourism.

This paper is structured as follows. Firstly, the complexity of travel decision making is exposed and the four sub-decisions of interest in this study are sorted out and discussed. The literature on habit as a theoretical concept is reviewed and measurement issues are then put in focus. The structure of our empirical study is presented in section five. A self-administered questionnaire built on the Self-Reported Habit Index of Verplanken and Orbell (2003) was applied to fit the field of travel decision making. Empirical results based on a survey carried out in two Nordic countries, and suggestions for future studies are presented in the last two sections.

## TRAVEL DECISION MAKING – FOUR SUB-DECISIONS

Individual decision making, whether it concerns vacation or some other issues, can be performed in different ways depending on the amount of effort that goes into the decision (Solomon et al., 1999). On the one end of the continuum is the habitual decision-making approach (see figure 1), where every decision is made very fast and with a low mental effort. This type of decision making can be effective in many cases, when it minimizes the amount of time and energy a person spend on a purchase decision. It also reduces risk because the consumer knows that she has been satisfied with the decision in the past. As a traveler, the individual perceives herself to have high knowledge of available alternatives and a low need of additional information to make a decision (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981).

On the other end of the continuum, an extensive decision-making approach is found, where more time and effort will be put into the decision. This approach is very similar to the traditional decision-making perspective where the consumer goes through the stages: Problem recognition – Information search – Evaluation of alternatives – Product choice – Outcomes. In between these two ends of the continuum, decisions characterized by limited problem-solving are identified. This is a more straightforward and simple way of making decisions, and the consumers use different heuristics or mental rules-of-thumb to make a decision without any substantial cognitive effort (Björk, 1993).

**Figure 1.** Decision-making continuum
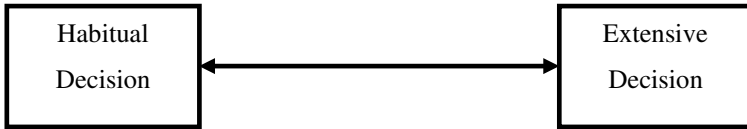
| Habitual Decision | ←——————→ | Extensive Decision |
|---|---|---|

| High | Perceived knowledge about available alternatives | Low |
|---|---|---|
| Low | Perceived need for information | High |
| Low | Involvement | High |
| Low | Mental effort | High |
| Short | Length of time to each decision | Longer |

Source: Solomon et al. (1999), Mayo and Jarvis (1981)

The decision making process of going on vacation can be seen as an overall decision making process that includes several different decisions that all are results of separate "smaller" decision making processes. The decision making approach used by the individual in these separate sub-decisions might be different depending on what kind of decision that is in focus and may also have an impact on how the individual respond to different marketing activities.

Earlier research in the travel area has focused a lot on destination choice, where the travel decision behavior is equal to the choice of where to go on vacation. Consequently, travel decision behavior has been assumed to be a trade-off process among different destination attributes (see Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). As stated before, to go on vacation does not involve one single decision, but consists of several sub-decisions that a person needs to consider; where to go, when to go, what to do while on vacation, and how to get to the chosen destination. These are complex multi-faceted decisions where the choices for different components are interrelated and develop in a decision process over time (Crompton, 1992; Dellaert et al., 1998; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002).

Decisions concerning *where* to go on vacation involve what place or destination to visit or if you make the choice of staying at home. This

decision is influenced by many different factors. It can for example be based on the activities that you want to perform, a special scenery that you want to experience, or on emotional ties. Regarding *when* to go on vacation, this decision involves what time of the year a person choose to have vacation. This can to a great extent be controlled by external factors and not always the individual herself. For example, the structure of many workplaces is to have the employees take out most of their vacation during the summer. Though, some activities that a person likes to perform may be very seasonable dependent, e.g. skiing or outdoor swimming, and one has to travel quite far to be able to carry out these activities when they are "off season". In this case, the individual's wish to carry out a certain activity will influence when to take vacation. Concerning *what* to do during the vacation, there are endless of activity alternatives for an individual to choose from. On the one end of the scale there are people who prefer to be very non active and the activities that they do perform are quiet and calm, while on the other end there are people who are adventurous and has a very active vacation. Further, the decision of what to do during the vacation can also be influenced by where the person has chosen to spend her vacation. The fourth decision regarding vacation involves *how* to get to the chosen destination, e.g. what means of transportation to use. This too opens up for a lot of different alternatives for the individual to choose from. He or she can for example go by foot, bike, car, bus, boat, or air plane. Depending on which alternative that is chosen, the positive and negative effect for the individual herself and on our environment differs.

According to Decrop and Snelders (2005), habitual decision making can be connected to one particular vacation sub-decision which does not mean that other vacation decisions are made by habit. For example, a decision of going skiing (*what* to do) may be made by using an extensive decision making approach where the individual compare different alternatives and search for information before making the final decision. As soon as the decision of going skiing is made the decision of going to the Alps (*where* to go) may come by routine because "when I go skiing, I always go to the Alps". This suggests that travel decision making can not necessarily be adhered to one place on the decision-making continuum presented in Figure 1.

## HABIT – A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONCEPT

The habit construct was developed by learning theorists in psychology (e.g. Hull, 1943) and can be defined as "learned sequences of acts that become automatic responses to specific situations, which may be functional in obtaining certain goals or end states" (Verplanken et al., 1997: 540). The individual is usually not "conscious" of these sequences. This means that when a goal that is associated with a habit is activated, responses that are connected to specific situations or cues become more accessible. This cue then automatically triggers the habitual response (e.g. Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000). Tracing the concepts of automaticity and habits back in time we end up with William James and his thoughts about skill acquisition and the importance of habits in every day life. In 1890 James stated that activities that are practiced frequently and consistently require less and less conscious effort over time and that a habit is developed when a behavior is not consciously attended (Wegner & Bargh, 1998). Habits have thus a history of repetition and the more frequent we perform a behavior the more likely it is to be habitual (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Aarts et al., 1998). Gärling and Axhausen (2003: 2) define habit as "the repeat performance of behavior sequences". There is however no theory saying that frequency is related to habit strengths, in other words, it is not possible to say that a habit becomes stronger when an activity is performed more frequent (Verplanken et al., 2005; Verplanken, 2006).

Habit can be characterized as behavior that is originally intentional, is possible to control to a limit degree, is executed without (or little) awareness, and is efficient (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003). This implies that even a complex behavior, with sufficient repetition and practice may need less involvement, information search and cognitive effort and thus become habitual (Ajzen, 2002; Ouellette & Wood, 1998). Past solutions are reused (Gärling & Axhausen, 2003). Habits do not develop randomly, but are formed because they are beneficial to us. They develop in a stable situation and because the action appears functional or efficient or gives us pleasure (Verplanken et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2002). According to Verplanken et al. (1994; 1997), a person using a habitual decision making process usually base the choice on knowledge and attitudes that already exist in her mind. As habit strength increases, the depth of the information needed prior to making a decision decreases and the habit might not be easily changed just using traditional persuasive communication. A successful change involves breaking a habit and developing a new behavior. This implies that a person with a strong habit needs less

information about different options before making a decision than a person with a weak habit or a person using an extended decision making approach and consequently the behavioral change process might look different depending on the decision making process used by the individual. There exists a tradeoff between attitude and habits. When habit is weak, the attitude-behavior link is stronger than when habit is strong (Verplanken, 1994).

## HABIT – MEASUREMENT ISSUES

The problem of measuring habits is well known by researchers in the field of social psychology (Mittal, 1988; Eagly & Chaiken 1993; Verplanken et al., 2005; 1994) and most studies have been done on daily or weekly behavior. Decisions regarding where and when to go on vacation, what to do during vacation, and how to get to the chosen destination can be assumed to be decisions that an individual does not have to consider on a daily or weekly basis, i.e. not a very frequent behavior. However, Hogarth (1987: 69) states that "many of us have used … 'unthinking' strategies concerning, for example, choice of vacation ('We liked it last year')" and we believe that vacation decisions can be of more or less habitual nature. At least some of the sub-decisions, which studies of destination loyalty and repeat visitations are a proof of (Alegre & Cladera 2006).

One of the most recently developed measurements for habit strength is the Self-Reported Habit Index (SRHI). However, it has mostly been used to measure to what degree a daily or weekly choice or behavior is habitual. To measure habit strength in infrequent vacation decisions by using this index is not yet done, but as the habit construct is to be considered as different from frequency of occurrence (Verplanken, 2006) we do not see this as a problem. Tests made with the SRHI have been proven to be reliable and valid and gives a more complete account of habit than for example behavioral frequency measures (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003; Verplanken, 2006).

To be able to measure habit it is necessary to operationalize the theoretical construct. A common way for social psychologist to measure habit has been to use the measurement of self-reported frequency of past behavior (SRF), where respondents are asked how many times they have performed a behavior in the past (e.g. Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Ouellette & Wood, 1998). This reasoning says that there is no distinction between past behavior and habit. Ajzen (2002) has however criticized the effect of

previous behavior on future behavior, saying that there is no rule that says that repeated behavior involves habituation. It does not matter "how often we have climbed the same mountain" because it is still difficult to see if this behavior is habitual in the sense of being an automatic response to a specific cue or situation. (Ajzen, 2002: 109). Other problems that arise when using SRF as a measurement of habit are that it can not be taken for certain that there is a linear relation between behavioral frequency and habit, it can for example be questioned how many trials it takes to form a habit. Additionally, behavioral frequency does not keep on strengthening a habit after it has been formed. According to behaviorist models, repetition and reinforcement is necessary to keep an established behavior, but they do not say that repetitions will strengthen the habit, which is the suggestion of self-reported frequency measures. Another problem involves the difficulty for a respondent to accurately report a behavior made in the past, especially if the behavior is habitual. (Verplanken et al., 2005; Verplanken, 2006) Other studies have concluded that past behavior is the primary predictor of future behavior when habits are developed by repeated behavior in a stable context, whereas behavior which is new or developed in an unstable or difficult context more likely is predicted by intentions (e.g. Ouellette & Wood 1998; Wood et al., 2002).

Some researchers have used a variant of self-reported frequency measure in their studies called self-reported habit frequency (SRHF) (e.g. Mittal, 1988). They have asked respondents how often a certain behavior was conducted in the past "without awareness" or "by force of habit" (Verplanken et al., 2005: 236). This method suffers from the above mentioned problems, but also the fact that two questions are asked at the same time (i.e. a frequency estimate and the question to what degree a behavior is habitual). As a consequence to this, Verplanken et al. (2005) also discuss two alternative measures of habit strength; the Response Frequency Measure and the Self-Reported Habit Index.

The Response Frequence (RF) Measure (Verplanken et al., 2005; Verplanken, 2006) was developed to be used in research concerning measurement on travel mode choice. Each respondent was given a number of different destinations and then asked what transportation mode they would choose when going to each and every destination. Every decision was supposed to be made on top of mind, meaning that each respondent was told to respond as quickly as possible without giving much thought to the answer. The idea behind RF measure is that general habits such as taking the car or bike are represented as behavioral schemas and when a schema is activated the dominant travel mode choice

to that schema would be chosen by the respondent. For example, going to work may activate the travel mode of taking the bike.

The Self-Reported Habit Index (SRHI) was developed by Verplanken and Orbell (2003) and they stress the importance of considering habits as a psychological construct and not just frequency of past behavior. The SRHI broke down the habit concept into a number of different components that characterize habits; a history of repetition, automaticity (lack of awareness, lack of control, mental efficiency), and expressing self-identity. A history of repetition is seen as the core component of habits, while lack of awareness, lack of control, and mental efficiency all represent different features of automaticity that are typical for habitual behavior. Self-identity is finally included because habits can be considered to be idiosyncratic behaviors and a part of how we organize our life. This might be a part of a person's self-description or personal style, and therefore some habits may be seen as descriptive of a person and consequently expressing his or her identity. The concept of habit is broken down into these five components because they are easier for respondents to reflect on, compared to reflecting on a direct question (e.g. "To what extent is behavior X a habit?"), which likely would have responses lacking of validity and reliability. The SRHI measurement has been used in a variety of studies, for example when measuring the habit strengths of listening to music, watching a TV soap series, and buying on impulse.

The SRHI was used in this study because a multi-item construct with the five above mentioned components seems to be the most relevant to use as measurement in the framework of tourists' decision making. It can be difficult for individuals to recall frequency in behavior and consequently we did not want to use a measurement that made the respondents focus on frequency estimates in our study. As a habit is viewed as different from frequency occurrence (Verplanken, 2006) and the SRHI does not focus on the frequency aspect, we found the index to be a valid instrument to use. Continuing, the measurement had to be possible to use in a self-administered questionnaire, which is the case of the SRHI.

## EMPIRICAL STUDY

This exploratory study was made with the purpose of identifying habitual travel decisions and to test the usability of SRHI on travel decision making. Respondents were chosen through convenience

sampling and a total of 47 respondents from Sweden and Finland took part in our study. A questionnaire was developed where the four different questions regarding vacation (where, when, what, and how) were operationalized by the means of 23 statements, e.g. "To go abroad on my vacation is something…", "To have my vacation during the summer is something…". Every statement was then followed by the SRHI (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003), which consists of 12 items that characterize the five components of habit (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The SRHI measures

| | Behavior X is something… | Components of habit |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | I do frequently. | History of repetition |
| 2. | that belongs to my (daily, weekly, monthly) routine. | |
| 3. | I have been doing for a long time. | |
| 4. | I do automatically. | Lack of awareness |
| 5. | I do without thinking. | |
| 6. | I have no need to think about doing. | |
| 7. | I do without having to consciously remember. | Lack of control |
| 8. | I start doing before I realize I'm doing it. | |
| 9. | that makes me feel weird if I do not do it. | Expressing self-identity |
| 10. | that's typically "me". | |
| 11. | that would require effort not to do it. | Mental efficiency |
| 12. | I would find hard not to do. | |

The SRHI was translated into Swedish and the respondents answered by using a five point Likert–type scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The research set up

|  | Where to go for a vacation | When to go for a vacation | What to do on vacation | How to travel to the destination |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of statements | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| Number of items per statement | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Scale used | 5-point Likert 1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree | 5-point Likert 1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree | 5-point Likert 1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree | 5-point Likert 1 = strongly agree 5 = strongly disagree |

Accordingly, twenty three statements were used to measure five dimensions of habit linked to four sub-decisions.

## FINDINGS

The reliability of the summated scales based on the 12 items used to characterize the five components of habit is accepted. The calculated Cronbach's Alpha exceeds the cutoff value of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978) (Table 3). Habit is in this study not binominal distributed. A choice can according to Verplanken et al. (2005) be habitual to a certain degree. In this study, we interpret the behavior as habitual when the SRHI is below three (3). The index and average index for each sub-decision is calculated and the results are illustrated on an aggregated level in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Cronbach's Alpha and Habit Index

| Sub-decisions | Statements | Cronbach's Alpha | Habit, Index |
|---|---|---|---|
| Where to go | To go abroad on vacation… | 0.930 | 3,437 |
| | To stay at home during my vacation… | 0,958 | 3,230 |
| | To visit different places during my vacation… | 0,870 | 2,422 |
| | To visit the same place during my vacation…. | 0,966 | 3,178 |
| | | | Average Index 3,066 |
| When to go | To have vacation during summer time … | 0,945 | 1,820 |
| | To take vacation at different times throughout the year… | 0,953 | 2,876 |
| | To never take out vacation…. | 0,940 | 4,602 |
| | To take my vacation at approximately the same time every year… | 0.961 | 2,270 |
| | To go on vacation during the winter time… | 0,975 | 3,161 |
| | | | Average Index 2,945 |
| What to do | To do the same type of activities during my vacation… | 0,961 | 2,916 |
| | To practice my hobby during my vacation… | 0,955 | 2,731 |
| | To go camping during my vacation … | 0,963 | 4,187 |
| | To go on a chartered tour during my vacation… | 0,977 | 3,678 |
| | To take part in an eco tourism activity | 0,975 | 4,251 |
| | To experience something new during every vacation… | 0,971 | 2,348 |
| | Continued ... | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | To take the day as it comes during my vacation…. | 0,969 | 3,096 |
| | | | Average Index 3.315 |
| How to travel | To go by car to my vacation destination…. | 0,957 | 3,035 |
| | To go by airplane to my vacation destination… | 0,966 | 2,982 |
| | To use a non-motor driven vehicle (e.g. bike, walking) to get to my vacation destination… | 0,982 | 4,509 |
| | To take the boat to my vacation destination… | 0,985 | 4,105 |
| | To take the bus to my vacation destination… | 0,970 | 4,189 |
| | To take the train to my vacation destination… | 0,962 | 4,127 |
| | To use the same mean of transportation to get to my vacation destination…. | 0,975 | 2,722 |
| | | | Average Index 3,667 |

The most habitual sub-decision is "when to go" (2,945) followed by "where to go" (3,066) and "what to do" (3,315). The least habitual sub-decision is "how to travel" (3,667). A more fine-grained analysis of the four sub-decisions shows that to take a vacation during summer time (1,820) and to have a leave at approximately the same time of the year (2,270) are two very habitual travel decisions. Results, which seem plausible considering that June, July and August are the most popular months for vacation in both Finland (Statistics Finland, 2007) and Sweden (Nutek, 2007). The habit to take vacation at different times throughout the year (2,876) is interpreted as the time of "winter holiday", Christmas, New Year, and Eastern vacations.

The results do also reveal that the tourists have an inclination to make habitual decisions about visiting different places during vacation (2,422), as well as to experience "something new" (2,348). Our results also show that activities linked to ones hobbies (2,731) are decided on a habitual

basis, as well as the decision to do the same activities (2,916). Similar habitual decision making is identified when it comes to the sub-decision of transportation, especially when we study the choice of using the same transportation mode (2,722) and traveling by airplane (2,982).

Our interpretations and analysis show that the potential of SRHI as a traveler segmentation base can be recognized by the means of a cluster analysis. Three significant different segments of travelers were identified. One segment of travelers is those who have a high degree of habitual decision behavior (= low center value, i.e. close to 1). A middle segment can be identified as well as a segment of respondents with a low level of habitual decision behavior (= high center value, i.e. close to 5) (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Three clusters of travellers based on their habitual behaviour

| Sub-decisions | Statements | Cluster 1 - center - number (n) | Cluster 2 - center - number (n) | Cluster 3 - center - number (n) | Sign. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | To go abroad on vacation… | 2,13 10 | 3,26 16 | 4,50 15 | 0.000 |
| | Age | 43,10 | 44,75 | 35,67 | 0.076 |
| Where to go | To stay at home during my vacation… | 3,24 12 | 4,72 12 | 2,04 15 | 0.000 |
| | To visit different places during my vacation… | 2,36 23 | 3,21 14 | 1,37 9 | 0.000 |
| | To visit the same place during my vacation…. | 1,78 12 | 3,01 16 | 4,68 13 | 0.000 |
| | | | | | |
| | To have vacation during summer time … | 2,18 10 | 1,23 31 | 4,31 6 | 0.000 |
| | Continued .... | | | | |

| When to go | To take vacation at different times throughout the year… | 4,33 13 | 2,76 12 | 1,51 21 | 0.000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Women Gender   Men | 10 3 | 3 9 | 14 7 | 0.019 |
| | To never take out vacation…. | 4,80 36 | 2,67 2 | 1,42 1 | 0.000 |
| | To take my vacation at approximately the same time every year… | 2,45 22 | 1,29 16 | 4,25 6 | 0.000 |
| | To go on vacation during the winter time… | 3,06 19 | 1,19 10 | 4,61 15 | 0.000 |
| | | | | | |
| What to do | To do the same type of activities during my vacation… | 4,32 13 | 1,65 11 | 2,71 21 | 0.000 |
| | To practice my hobby during my vacation… | 2,64 31 | 4,82 6 | 1,33 7 | 0.000 |
| | To go camping during my vacation … | 4,84 30 | 1,73 5 | 3,44 10 | 0,000 |
| | To go on a chartered tour during my vacation… | 1,90 10 | 4,67 22 | 3,28 10 | 0,000 |
| | To take part in an eco tourism activity | 4,86 30 | 3,03 13 | 2,00 1 | 0,000 |
| | To experience something new during every vacation… | 4,25 6 | 2,48 25 | 1,12 12 | 0,000 |
| | Continued ... | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | To take the day as it comes during my vacation…. | 1,71 10 | 2,77 19 | 4,35 16 | 0,000 |
| | | | | | |
| How to travel | To go by car to my vacation destination…. | 3,01 15 | 1,98 14 | 4,42 11 | 0,000 |
| | To go by airplane to my vacation destination… | 4,16 16 | 2,54 22 | 1,17 5 | 0,000 |
| | Women Gender Men | 9 7 | 16 6 | 1 4 | 0.085 |
| | To use a non-motor driven vehicle (e.g. bike, walking) to get to my vacation destination… | 4,98 32 | 3,55 5 | 2,43 5 | 0,000 |
| | To take the boat to my vacation destination… | 1,64 6 | 4,94 28 | 3,33 11 | 0,000 |
| | To take the bus to my vacation destination… | 2,73 11 | 4,96 24 | 3,88 8 | 0,000 |
| | To take the train to my vacation destination… | 1,92 2 | 4,91 23 | 3,32 17 | 0,000 |
| | To use the same mean of transportation to get to my vacation destination…. | 2,58 24 | 4,38 10 | 1,27 9 | 0,000 |
| | | | | | |

A follow-up analysis based on empirical Analysis of variances and Chi-Square tests show that the decision to go abroad is among older people (segment 1, 2) more habitual than the younger ones (segment 3). We do also recognize the difference between men and women when it

comes to the decisions "To take vacation at different times throughout the year…", and "To go by airplane to my vacation destination…". These differences were identified even though our data set is rather small and homogeneous. The full segmentation potential of our approach is though to be proven in future studies.

The dynamic of habitual travel decision making on an individual level is not explicitly presented in this article. The figures presented in Table 4, the number of members in each cluster, do however indicate the volatile habitual travel decision structure.

The SRHI also enabled us to explore tourists' profiles in our data set. A cross-table analysis of the correlation matrix (appendix) consisting of 23 sub-decisions depicts the following travel decision profiles (correlation values in brackets).

> *The winter charter tourist to the sun-belt*
> The sub-decision to *travel abroad* on vacation is linked to the decision to have vacation during the winter season (0,479) and to take a charter tour (0,472) by airplane (0,398). Decisions about activities practiced during these trips are to experience something new (0,508). There is a strong correlation between the decision to take vacation during winter time and to take vacation during different time periods (0,704). Winter vacation in Finland and Sweden is usually associated with a vacation during Christmas time, New Year, a week of winter sport holiday, and/or during Eastern.

> *The summer tourist, second home and camping*
> The sub-decision to *stay at home* during *summer time* (0,484) and to take vacation at approximately the same time of the year (0,372) constitutes another sub-decision pattern. The decision to stay at home during vacation is also correlated to the decision to do the same thing (0,372), to practice ones hobbies (0.339), and to use the same mean of transportation (0,339). We interpret this group of people as second home owners.

> Furthermore, there is a strong link between practice ones hobby, camping (0,403) and to experience new things (0,355). These results describe a third group of travelers, campers who travel from one place to another during summer time.

This study has identified the habitual travel behavior linked to four sub-decisions, significant different clusters of travelers, and well recognized segments of travelers when it comes to travel behavior in Finland and Sweden. The usability of SRHI (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003) in a tourism context has not previously been proved. A gap we fill in this study. We are now, encouraged by the well recognized travel patterns we identified using an adapted SRHI, prepared to advocate this measure to be used to uncover habitual travel behavior.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

This paper adds to the tourist decision making literature by empirically prove the existence of habitual sub-decisions within the framework of travel decisions. The SRHI scale developed by Verplanken and Orbell (2003) has not previously been tested on travel behavior. Of the four sub-decisions analyzed in this paper, the decision "when to go" was on an aggregated level the most habitual. This paper identified three clusters of travelers based on their habitual decision making structure. The 23 statements used to measure the habitual decision behavior linked to the four sub-decisions gave us a unique possibility to identify decision pattern based on a correlation analysis. We identified two travel decision profiles "the winter charter tourist" and "the summer tourist".

We are encouraged to advocate the use of the SRHI instrument, despite its somewhat heavy structure. The reliability of a very lengthy questionnaire considering the respondents interest in completing the questionnaire must be discussed. Our respondents found the 23 statements we used to measure the four sub-decisions as relevant. Still, we want to stress that this was an exploratory study and follow-up studies are very welcomed in order to validate the instrument. We also want to stress the fact that we only used four sub-decisions to be analyzed in this study. Other sub-decisions linked to, for example, information behavior and travel budget could be included in a future study. The SRHI consists of 12 items characterizing five habitual components. The validity of the SRHI scale is claimed to be high. The travel pattern of Finns and Swedes on an aggregated level is well known. The results of the cluster analysis are in no contrast to what could be expected. The inter-linked sub-decisions found could therefore be further analyzed. The full potential of all analysis is not presented in this article. The aim was to identify sub-decisions tourists make out of habit and to adapt the SRHI to the field of tourism.

Since our study showed that it is possible to segment travelers into three different clusters regarding to what degree their decision making is habitual, further studies should look more in detail to what characterize the member of these groups. As an individual with a strong habit look for less information prior to a decision than an individual with a weak habit, it is relevant to identify characteristics for groups using different decision making approaches. It is of importance to marketers in the field of tourism to know in what way their customers make decisions so they can have the right content and timing in their external messages.

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## APPENDIX

# CORRELATION MATRIX

| Variable list | |
|---|---|
| **No.** | **Statements** |
| 1 | To go abroad on vacation… |
| 2 | To stay at home during my vacation… |
| 3 | To visit different places during my vacation… |
| 4 | To visit the same place during my vacation…. |
| | |
| 5 | To have vacation during summer time … |
| 6 | To take vacation at different times throughout the year… |
| 7 | To never take out vacation…. |
| 8 | To take my vacation at approximately the same time every year… |
| 9 | To go on vacation during the winter time… |
| | |
| 10 | To do the same type of activities during my vacation… |
| 11 | To practice my hobby during my vacation… |
| 12 | To go camping during my vacation … |
| 13 | To go on a chartered tour during my vacation… |
| 14 | To take part in an eco tourism activity |
| 15 | To experience something new during every vacation… |
| 16 | To take the day as it comes during my vacation…. |
| | |
| 17 | To go by car to my vacation destination…. |
| 18 | To go by airplane to my vacation destination… |
| 19 | To use a non-motor driven vehicle (e.g. bike, walking) to get to my vacation destination… |
| 20 | To take the boat to my vacation destination… |
| 21 | To take the bus to my vacation destination… |
| 22 | To take the train to my vacation destination… |
| 23 | To use the same mean of transportation to get to my vacation destination…. |

| Correlation symbols |
|---|
| Positive correlation significant at the 0.05 level = +, significant at the 0.01 level = ++ |
| Negative correlation significant at the 0.05 level = -, significant at the 0.01 level = -- |

**Statements**

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | ++ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | + | ++ | | ++ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | ++ | | | | | ++ | | + | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | | + | | ++ | | | | | + | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | | + | | | + | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | | | | | | ++ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | ++ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | + | | | | | | | | + | | | ++ | ++ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | ++ | | ++ | -- | | | | ++ | | | + | | | ++ | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | | | - | + | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | ++ | + | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | + | | | | | | | | | | + | | ++ | ++ | ++ | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | | + | ++ | | ++ | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | | | | | | + | | + | | | | ++ | | ++ | | + | + | | ++ | | | | |
| 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | + | | | | | | | + | | | |
| 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ++ | | ++ | | |
| 23 | | + | | | | | | | + | ++ | + | | | | | | | + | | | | | |