

**An Examination of Destination Competitiveness from the Tourists'  
Perspective: The Relationship between Quality of Tourism Experience  
and Perceived Destination Competitiveness**

by

Fang Meng

Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Philosophy

in

Hospitality and Tourism Management

**Committee Chairman:** Dr. Muzaffer Uysal

**Committee Members:**

Dr. Ken McCleary  
Dr. Pamela Weaver  
Dr. Jim Littlefield  
Dr. Nancy McGehee

December 13, 2006  
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Destination Competitiveness, Tourism Experience, Involvement, Tourists'  
Perspective

Copyright 2006, Fang Meng

# **An Examination of Destination Competitiveness from the Tourists' Perspective: The Relationship between Quality of Tourism Experience and Perceived Destination Competitiveness**

Fang Meng

(ABSTRACT)

Destination competitiveness has become a critical issue in today's increasingly challenging tourism market. Many studies have indicated that tourists and their needs stand as the ultimate driving force which influences competition and competitiveness in the tourism destination. Today, destinations eventually compete on the quality of tourism experience offered to visitors. However, limited research has been undertaken to examine destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of quality of tourism experience on tourists' perception of destination competitiveness.

A destination competitiveness model based on the perceptions of tourists and a measurement instrument to assess the constructs of the model were developed for this study. The model proposes that tourists' perceived destination competitiveness is affected by the quality of tourism experience, which includes the experience in pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site, and after-trip (reflection) phases. Furthermore, tourist involvement, as an important salient dimension of consumer behavior, is introduced into the model as a moderating factor in the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

The sample population of this study consists of residents of Virginia who are 18 years old or above and took at least one leisure trip away from home in the past 18 months. Three hundred and fifty-three usable questionnaires were utilized in the data analysis of the study. Canonical Correlation Analysis (CCA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis were performed to test the study hypotheses.

The results indicated that the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perception of destination competitiveness do relate to each other as substantiated by the existence of shared common variances between these two major constructs. The study also revealed that tourists' perception of destination competitiveness is positively influenced by the quality of tourism experience in terms of different phases (pre-trip

planning, en-route experience, on-site instrumental experience, on-site expressive experience, and after-trip reflection). Furthermore, tourist involvement appears to have a moderating effect on the relationship between pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site expressive experience, and perceived destination competitiveness. The study also provided managerial implications to destination managers and marketers based on the research findings.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Fanjing Meng and Xiulian Wang, and my husband Lin Wang. Their inspiration and encouragement made the completion of my doctorate possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was certainly a collaborative endeavor. I dedicate this work to many people who provided direction, support, and assistance to the realization of this research project.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest and most sincere appreciation to Dr. Muzaffer Uysal, my committee chair and mentor, for his constant support, encouragement, and invaluable guidance throughout my doctoral pursuit. His exceptional knowledge, research skills, wisdom, and personality have certainly inspired and enriched me in many ways, both professionally and personally. I will never be able to fully express my gratitude and respect to him for what I gained in the past four years. It is a lifetime joy to have him as the consummate role model of an outstanding researcher, teacher, and person. I am extremely grateful for the many research opportunities he made possible to me, and his tremendous intellectual input to the every single step of my dissertation project.

I would like to thank my wonderful committee members, Dr. Ken McCleary, Dr. Pamela Weaver, Dr. Nancy McGehee, and Dr. James Littlefield, for their time, energy, and contributions to my work. Their inspiration, suggestions, and comments have improved the work and made the whole process a pleasant learning experience. Dr. McCleary has always provided valuable insights and keen questions, as well as enlightening advice for many aspects of my dissertation. His academic brilliance and scrutinization have set high standards and significantly improved the quality of the study. I am grateful to Dr. Weaver for being a constant, unwavering source of strength and encouragement. Her faith in my academic and professional competence has greatly influenced my self-esteem. Her thoughtful recommendations on the dissertation are greatly appreciated. Sincere gratitude is expressed to Dr. McGehee for her full support, extremely careful review of the dissertation, and generous assistance in improving many details of the study, from elucidating the research questions to respecifying the unclear points and inconsistency. I wish to thank Dr. Littlefield for his intellectual support and kind encouragement during the research process. His valuable suggestions and

commitment to my academic development and all the delightful discussions we shared will be always remembered.

I owe a special thanks to all the faculty and graduates students at the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Virginia Tech who helped me on the open-ended survey, focus group discussion, and the pretest of the survey instrument. Their valuable ideas, support, and assistance are gratefully acknowledged. I also wish to thank many friends in Virginia Tech who provided encouragement and help during my dissertation process.

I am grateful to my father, Fanjing Meng, and my mother, Xiulian Wang, for their unconditioned love and support to my academic endeavors. They showed me the passion for education and always encouraged me throughout my scholarly pursuit. I would like to thank my sister, Ying Meng, for her love and being proud of me all the time.

Lastly, I would like to express my special thanks and gratitude to my husband, Lin Wang, for his continued loving support, help and encouragement, and his firm faith in me. He has made many sacrifices and always sustained me through the most difficult times.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background and Overview .....	2
1.3 Research Questions.....	7
1.4 Research Hypotheses .....	10
1.5 Knowledge Foundation.....	11
1.6 Theoretical Framework of the Research.....	16
1.7 Functional Definitions of Key Terms .....	18
1.8 Organization of the Study .....	19

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Quality of Tourism Experience.....	20
2.2.1 Tourism Destination Product.....	20
2.2.2 Tourist and Tourism Consumption .....	24
2.2.3 Tourism Experience and its Quality .....	26
2.3 Destination Competitiveness .....	34
2.3.1 Competitiveness in the General Literature .....	34
2.3.2 Definition of Destination Competitiveness.....	36
2.3.3 Different Approaches to Destination Competitiveness.....	37
2.3.4 Determinants/Indicators of Destination Competitiveness .....	44
2.3.5. Destination Competitiveness and Quality of Tourism Experience.....	46
2.4 Tourist Involvement.....	49
2.4.1 Definitions.....	49
2.4.2 Tourist Involvement and its Measurement .....	50
2.4.3 The Moderating Effect of Tourist Involvement.....	54
2.5 Chapter Summary .....	56

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction.....	57
3.2 Research Framework .....	57
3.3 Research Hypotheses .....	60
3.4 Research Design .....	61
3.4.1 Study Population.....	61
3.4.2 Sampling Frame .....	61
3.4.3 Sample Size.....	62
3.4.4 Data Collection .....	64
3.5 Measurement Scales and Instruments.....	64
3.5.1 Survey Development and Pretest.....	64
3.5.2 Survey Instruments .....	65

3.5.3 Measurement Variables .....	67
3.5.3.1 Quality of Tourism Experience.....	67
3.5.3.2 Perceived Destination Competitiveness.....	69
3.5.3.3 Tourist Involvement.....	71
3.5.4 Reliability and Validity.....	74
3.6 Statistical Methods.....	75
3.6.1 Canonical Correlation Analysis.....	76
3.6.2 Structural Equation Modeling.....	78
3.6.2.1 Measurement Model .....	78
3.6.2.2 Structural Model .....	79
3.6.2.3 Evaluation of Structural Equation Modeling .....	80
3.6.3 Factor-Cluster Analysis .....	83
3.7 Chapter Summary .....	84

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introduction.....	85
4.2 Pretest.....	85
4.2.1 Pretest Survey Method.....	86
4.2.2 Pretest Sample.....	87
4.2.3 Pretest Results.....	87
4.2.3.1 Quality of Pre-Trip Planning Experience .....	88
4.2.3.2 Quality of En-Route Experience.....	88
4.2.3.3 Quality of On-Site Experience.....	89
4.2.3.4 Quality of After-Trip Reflection.....	89
4.2.3.5 Perceived Destination Competitiveness.....	90
4.2.4 Refinement of the Proposed Model .....	90
4.2.5 Summary of the Pretest Results .....	91
4.3 Data Collection and Sample .....	93
4.3.1 Survey Method.....	93
4.3.2 Sample.....	94
4.3.3 Profile of Respondents.....	95
4.3.3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents .....	95
4.3.3.2 Characteristics of the General Travel Behavior of the Respondents .....	98
4.3.4 Data Validation .....	100
4.3.4.1 Representativeness of the Data .....	100
4.3.4.2 Late and Non-response Bias Tests.....	100
4.3.5 Descriptive Statistics, Skewness, and Kurtosis.....	101
4.4 Data Analysis.....	102
4.4.1 Canonical Correlation Analysis.....	103
4.4.1.1 Factor Analysis .....	103
4.4.1.2 Canonical Correlation Analysis .....	105
4.4.2 Confirmative Factor Analysis.....	108
4.4.2.1 CFA for Pre-Trip Planning Experience .....	110
4.4.2.2 CFA for En-Route Experience.....	111
4.4.2.3 CFA for On-Site Instrumental Experience .....	114

4.4.2.4 CFA for On-Site Expressive Experience .....	116
4.4.2.5 CFA for After-Trip Reflection.....	118
4.4.2.6 CFA for Perceived Destination Competitiveness .....	120
4.4.3 Testing the Proposed Model .....	124
4.4.3.1 Overall Measurement Model .....	125
4.4.3.2 Fit Indices.....	133
4.4.3.2.1 Absolute Fit Indices .....	134
4.4.3.2.2 Incremental Fit Indices .....	134
4.4.3.2.3 Parsimonious Fit Indices.....	135
4.4.3.3 Convergent Validity.....	136
4.4.3.4 Discriminant Validity.....	137
4.4.3.5 Testing the Proposed Model and Hypotheses.....	139
4.4.3.6 Analysis of Hypotheses.....	142
4.4.3.7 Testing of the Moderating Effect.....	147
4.4.3.7.1 Factor Analysis of Tourist Involvement .....	147
4.4.3.7.2 Identification of Cluster Groups based on Tourist Involvement .....	150
4.4.3.7.3 Analysis of the Moderating Effect by Using SEM .....	151
4.5 Chapter Summary .....	154

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction.....	156
5.2 Summary of the Findings.....	156
5.3 Discussion of the Findings.....	158
5.3.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	160
5.3.2 Summary of the Discussion .....	164
5.4 Implications .....	164
5.4.1 Managerial Implications .....	164
5.4.2 Theoretical Implications .....	167
5.5 Limitations .....	168
5.6 Suggestions for Future Study.....	170
5.7 Conclusions.....	172

REFERENCES .....	173
------------------	-----

APPENDIX A. Open-ended Survey .....	197
-------------------------------------	-----

APPENDIX B. Cover Letter and Questionnaire .....	199
--	-----

APPENDIX C. Reminder Postcard .....	204
-------------------------------------	-----

APPENDIX D. Number of Survey Recipients assigned to each County and City of Virginia .....	205
--	-----

APPENDIX E. Pretest Results.....	208
----------------------------------	-----

APPENDIX F. Comparison of Demographic Characteristics: Sample vs. Census of Virginia .....	214
APPENDIX G. Comparison of Selected Survey Questions: Respondents vs. Non-Respondents .....	215
APPENDIX H. Comparison of Demographic Characteristics: Early vs. Late Respondents .....	216
APPENDIX I. Individual Items of the Constructs with Mean Scores and Standard Deviation.....	217
APPENDIX J. Factor Analysis of the Final Data .....	219
APPENDIX K. Comparison of Demographic Characteristics: Low vs. High Involvement Group .....	223

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Overview of Literature related to Quality Tourism Experience .....	28
Table 2.2	Influences on Tourists' Destination Experience and Satisfaction .....	33
Table 3.1	Dimensions of Tourist Involvement .....	73
Table 3.2	Fit Indices of the Measurement Model .....	83
Table 4.1	Constructs and Indicators based on the Pretest Results .....	91
Table 4.2	Survey Response Rate .....	95
Table 4.3	Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents .....	97
Table 4.4	Characteristics of the General Travel Behavior .....	99
Table 4.5	Overall Results of Canonical Correlation Analysis .....	106
Table 4.6	Canonical Loadings of Quality of Tourism Experience and Destination Competitiveness Sub-scales .....	108
Table 4.7	CFA Results for Pre-Trip Planning Experience .....	111
Table 4.8	CFA Results for En-Route Experience .....	113
Table 4.9	CFA Results for On-Site Instrumental Experience .....	115
Table 4.10	CFA Results for On-Site Expressive Experience .....	117
Table 4.11	CFA Results for After-Trip Reflection .....	119
Table 4.12	CFA Results for Perceived Destination Competitiveness .....	122
Table 4.13	Constructs and Indicators for the Overall Measurement Model .....	127
Table 4.14	Parameter Estimates for Overall Measurement Model .....	129
Table 4.15	CFA Results for the Overall Measurement Model .....	132
Table 4.16	Fit Indices for the Overall Measurement Model .....	136
Table 4.17	Results of Discriminant Validity Tests .....	139

Table 4.18 Fit Indices for the Proposed Theoretical Model .....	142
Table 4.19 Summary of Hypotheses Testing.....	147
Table 4.20 Factor Analysis Results of Tourist Involvement .....	149
Table 4.21 Cluster Analysis Results based on Tourist Involvement Factors .....	150
Table 4.22 Moderating Effect of Tourist Involvement (Low vs. High Involvement) ....	152
Table 4.23 Comparison of the Model based on Tourist Involvement (Low vs. High)...	154
Table 4.24 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results.....	155
Table 5.1 Hypotheses and Test Results .....	160

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Proposed Destination Competitiveness Model based on Tourists' Perception .....	17
Figure 1.2 The Proposed Model with Sub-Constructs.....	17
Figure 3.1 Proposed Tourist Perceived Destination Competitiveness Model with Proposed Hypotheses .....	59
Figure 4.1 Modified Proposed Model.....	92
Figure 4.2 Theoretical Structural Model.....	140
Figure 4.3 Final Structural Equation Model .....	144

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The tourist destination is the central component of the functional tourism system. In the current competitive tourism market, competitiveness has increasingly been seen as a critical influence on the performance of tourism destinations. A growing body of literature is being established regarding tourism destination marketing, management, and competitiveness issues. A successful tourism destination must embrace an integrated approach towards the many components of the tourism system (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005). The major players in the tourism system – the government, tourism enterprises, tourists, and local communities – may have very different approaches to destination competitiveness. To date, most studies have evaluated destination competitiveness from the industry practitioners' perspective, generally considered a supply-side approach. The existing literature rarely examined the competitiveness of tourism destination from the demand side, i.e., the tourists' perspective. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine destination competitiveness from the viewpoint of tourists. The guiding principle of this study is that from the tourist's perspective, the overall competitiveness of a destination is dependent upon the perceived quality of their tourism experience with a particular destination.

Specifically, the research attempts to identify the factors that are likely to influence tourists' perception of destination competitiveness, and proposes a theoretical model to investigate the relationship between quality of tourism experience and tourists' perception of destination competitiveness. Additionally, tourist involvement is examined to see if it influences the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

In this chapter, the research problem and objectives of the study are specifically explained. The theoretical framework is discussed and the proposed theoretical model that serves as the basis for the study is presented.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW**

Travel and tourism is one of the world's highest priority industries and employers. Tourism has been firmly established as the largest industry in many countries and regions and the fastest-growing economic sector in terms of revenue and employment (WTO, 2005). With people's higher standard of living in many countries, leisure tourism has been growing to be an international business. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has reported that international tourist arrivals reached an all-time record of 763 million in 2004, an 11% growth rate over the year of 2003. Growth was observed in all regions around the world, and was particularly strong in Asia and the Pacific (+28%) and in the Middle East (+18%) (WTO, 2005). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) report, world travel and tourism is expected to generate US\$6,201.5 billion of economic activity (total demand) in 2005, growing (nominal terms) to US\$10,678.5 billion by 2015. Travel and tourism demand is expected to grow by 5.4% in 2005 and by 4.6% per annum, in real terms, between 2006 and 2015 (WTTC, 2005).

Despite the overall world-wide development in tourism arrivals and receipts, the growth rate of world tourism has displayed a general decline as the industry matures. The Asian and Pacific regions are the major beneficiary of the growth, whereas the European and North American regions have demonstrated slower or even negative growth and shrinking market share in the past 3-4 years (WTO, 2005). Changing market growth rates and shifting market share are key determinants of the competitive environment (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b). Despite the fact that the growth in global tourism is still promising, maturing growth rates have caused many destinations to rethink their competitiveness in the market. As Ritchie and Crouch (2000b) indicated, more evidence of escalating competition has appeared in the steadily rising budgets of many National Tourism Administrations (NTAs) and the growing number of destination management

organizations (DMOs) and convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs) at various levels. Furthermore, competition among tourism destinations has also become severe due to the growing travel and tourism sectors such as business travel, gaming, resort areas, nature-based tourism, festivals and cultural tourism, major-events tourism, etc. (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b).

The growth and competition in tourism has stimulated significant interest in highly effective marketing and management strategies for tourism destinations, and made competitiveness a critical emphasis in today's changing market. Therefore, destination competitiveness is now becoming a crucial issue in the tourism industry and an established topic for researchers. Furthermore, evaluation of the competitiveness of a tourism destination is increasingly being recognized as an important tool in the strategic positioning and marketing analysis of destinations (Pearce, 1997a, 1997b; Faulkner, Oppermann, & Fredline, 1999; Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004). It was stated that "at a time when tourism worldwide is becoming increasingly competitive... all insights into the development, strength, and weaknesses of competing destinations will become even more crucial." (Pearce, 1997b, p. 25). Ritchie and Crouch (2000b, p. 6) also indicated that destination competitiveness has "tremendous ramifications for the tourism industry and is therefore of considerable interest to practitioners and policy makers." This view was also supported by Dwyer, Forsyth, and Rao (2000a, p. 10) in that it is "useful for the industry and government to understand where a country's competitive position is weakest and strongest" and therefore, know how and why competitiveness is changing.

In today's fast growing economic environment, competitiveness has been examined in general terms in the academic fields of economics, marketing, and management. The literature presents two perspectives in regard to the definition of "competitiveness". From a macro perspective, competitiveness is considered a national concern with its ultimate goal to improve real income. Competitiveness, in this case, is a very broad construct engaging all social, cultural, and economic aspects which may influence the performance of a nation in international markets (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Porter, 1990; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Conversely, from a micro perspective, competitiveness is seen and evaluated from the firm-level behaviors and performance. Porter (1980) emphasized industry attractiveness and its characteristics in examining

competitive advantages and long-term profitability, whereas the “resource-based” approach focuses on combining firm resources and distinctive capabilities and competencies, i.e., core competencies, to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). At the micro perspective, competitiveness refers to the organization’s ability to stay in the business and maintain sustained growth and development in financial terms.

As Hudson, Ritchie, and Timur (2004) claimed, the *World Competitiveness Yearbook*’s definition of world competitiveness is “the ability of a country or company to ... proportionally generate more wealth than its competitors in world markets”, whereas firm competitiveness is “the ability of entrepreneurs to design, produce and market goods and services, the prices and non-price qualities of which form a more attractive package of benefits than those of competitors” (IMD, 1994, p. 18). Competitiveness is viewed as the effective combining of both assets – either inherited (e.g. natural resources) or created (e.g. infrastructure) – and processes to transform these assets into economic results (IMD, 1994, p. 18).

Researchers indicated that despite the extensive literature on competitiveness, there is no clear and commonly agreed definition or model developed on this issue due to its complexity. Even the definition of the *World Competitiveness Yearbook* has varied to some extent over the years (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004). Spence and Hazard (1988) suggested that competitiveness is both a relative and multi-dimensional concept, and two questions should be raised: 1) Compared to what? 2) What are the salient attributes or qualities of competitiveness? It is also apparent that competitiveness from macro or micro perspectives has different meanings, challenges, and priorities, and includes various factors in evaluation and measurement at different levels.

Related to the general competitiveness issues in today’s world economy, tourism destination competitiveness has its own characteristics and needs to be examined from different approaches. Destination competitiveness is a dynamic issue and is not destination-specific. As Ritchie and Crouch (2003, p. 1) indicated:

*Those who are responsible for destination management are operating according to a constantly evolving set of rules that continually redefine the exact nature of*

*competition. Even though the factors that determine the attractiveness of a destination may remain constant, the changing nature of the competition requires ongoing assessment of the ability of a destination to compete.*

(Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 1)

Tourism is a comprehensive system with the origin and destination as two essential components, and the success of tourism development of a destination is based on how well the supply matches the demand (Uysal, 1998; Gunn, 1994). It is commonly accepted that origin represents tourism demand, i.e., the potential and actual tourists, whereas destination refers to tourism supply, which receives the tourists and consists of various elements such as natural resources, historical and cultural attractions, infrastructures, facilities, and services. Destination competitiveness, from the supply side and/or tourism industry practitioners' and policymakers' perspectives, is more concerned with the economic benefits of the destination in terms of revenues, taxation, employment, and the sustainable growth of the destination and the related firms. From the demand side, i.e., the tourists' perspective, destination competitiveness is closely related to the overall quality of the whole tourism experience.

Within and beyond the scope of the tourism destination system, tourism products have unique characteristics which differentiate them from conventional manufactured products: intangibility; perishability; inseparability of production and consumption; heterogeneity; and interdependence (Shostack, 1977; Gronroos, 1978; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985; Bowen, 1990; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1991; Hartman & Lindgren, 1993; O'Connor, 1999). The products provided by the hospitality and tourism sector included accommodation, food, drink, shopping, leisure activities (e.g., sightseeing, entertainment, and many other recreational activities). Therefore, tourism is a fragmented industry comprised of various elements such as attractions, activities, services, and infrastructures, which build up the total appeal of the natural and manmade characteristics of the place. The tourism destination, being a functional system itself, provides visitors diversified products/services, and each component critically influences the tourist's activities and experiences. It is important for tourism destinations to provide a variety of products to satisfy the demand of the tourism market and achieve the ultimate

goal of the overall development of the destination (Gunn, 1994). Overall destination competitiveness is integrated with tourists' experiences and activities as they evaluate the products in the market.

Due to the different nature of destinations or the purpose/types of tourism activities, it is difficult to measure, evaluate, and compare the destinations, as in many cases they are unique in their features and cannot be considered as identical to each other (Formica, 2000). However, it is important to develop a universal or widely accepted measurement for the various tourism elements when evaluating the competitiveness of a given destination. Existing tourism literature has attempted to answer this question through different approaches, either supply- or demand-oriented in nature. Most recent studies examined destination competitiveness with suppliers as the target group, such as managers of tourism firms and other industry practitioners, and examined the topic related to tourism enterprise development, marketing, and sustainable tourism (Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004; Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005; Dwyer et al., 2004; Go & Govers, 2000; Melian-Ganzales & Garcia-Falcon, 2003; Mihalic, 2000; Yoon, 2002).

As Ritchie and Crouch (2000b, p. 1) claimed, "The fundamental product in tourism is the destination experience". Compared to a business traveler's trip, the choice of destination is central to a pleasure traveler because his/her travel experience is tied to the destination itself. The tourism product incorporates the entire destination experience, which includes many individual segments, such as accommodation, transportation, attractions, entertainment, recreation, and food service. Destinations compete to attract these pleasure travelers by emphasizing the experience they have to offer (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b, 2003). To achieve competitive advantages for a certain tourism destination, the destination must ensure that its overall attractiveness and the tourist experience offered are superior to the visitor's alternative destinations (Dwyer et al., 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Therefore, the quality of tourism experiences is the key to the competitive advantages of the destinations. From the tourists' perspective, a quality tourism experience could be considered as the major contributing factor to their perception of the competitiveness of a specific destination and would influence their decision-making, image, and future behavioral intention toward the destination. Consequently, there is an integrated link between the destination competitiveness and the

quality of tourism experience and there is a need to examine this issue from the tourists' perspective.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

It is noted that tourism destination competitiveness is becoming an area of growing interest among tourism researchers. The current literature focusing on destination competitiveness has laid the groundwork. The concepts and relevant models have been developed, with a focus on how to improve destination competitiveness in response to market competition (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993, 2003; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Chon & Mayer, 1995; d'Hautesserre, 2000; Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004; Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005; Dwyer et al., 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2000a, 2000b; Evans, Fox & Johnson, 1995; Go & Govers, 2000; Hassan, 2000; Melian-Ganzales & Garcia-Falcon, 2003; Mihalic, 2000).

As Ritchie and Crouch (2003) stated, among the numerous forces and motives that could possibly influence the competitive environment, customers and their needs stand as the ultimate driving force behind competition and competitiveness. Competitive actions derive from customer demand and the competitiveness of a destination is directly affected by tourists' expectation, activities, experiences, and satisfaction. The destination itself is a combination of various components of tourism products and services, offering an integrated experience to consumers (Buhalis, 2000). Most destination competitiveness research, if not all, suggests that the competitive advantage of a destination closely relates to the quality of the product offered, which means the quality of tourist experience provided by the destination. In a highly competitive tourism destination market, tourists' experiences and their opinions and attitudes should be understood in order to enhance the performance of destination products and services and promote destination development strategies.

However, the existing literature has not provided a conceptual and empirically testable destination competitiveness model which is related to the quality of tourism experience. There seems to be no commonly agreed upon definition and measurement on

destination competitiveness. The same problem exists in defining and measuring the quality of tourism experience. The concept *tourism experience* has been used implicitly or tacitly in meaning and examined from a variety of approaches within the academic literature (Jennings, 2006). Researchers have different perspectives in examining the nature of tourism/tourist experience. Many studies have attempted to chronologically and temporally examine the term following Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) model of the recreation experience. The model involves five distinct and yet interacting phases: (1) an anticipation phase, (2) travel to the site, (3) on-site activity, (4) return travel, and (5) a recollection phase. Killion (1992) followed this recreation experience model and defined the tourism experience in terms of "planning" phase, the "travel to" phase, the "on-site activities" phase, the "return travel" phase, and the "recollection" phase, which could all be presented in a circular model. The model is especially applicable to multi-destination travel since it takes into account the replication of various phases in the framework (Jennings, 1997). Craig-Smith and French (1994) provided a more simplified model, in which tourism experiences are seen as three linear phases with previous experiences informing future experiences: anticipatory phase, experiential phase, and reflective phase. It is suggested that tourist experiences are dynamic and fluctuate over the course of engagement, and experience can be studied through looking at a series of stages or events (Arnould & Price, 1993; Hull & Michael, 1995; Hull, Stewart & Yi, 1992). In addition to the chronological measurement, the term "tourist/leisure experience" has also been examined from its psychological meaning derived from various tourism activities (Jackson, White & Schmierer, 1994, 1996; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2001; Deng, King & Bauer, 2002; Li, 2000; Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998; Manfredo, Driver & Tarrant, 1996; Stewart & Cole, 2001; Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2002). In this study, the "travel to the site" and "return travel" phase are combined into "en-route" phase, since these two phases are very similar. As Clawson and Knetsch (1966) pointed out, these two phases have subtle differences but little has been known about the variations between the going and the returning trips except the influence of travel satisfactions on visitors' minds. Therefore, with the awareness of the subtle difference of the "travel to the site" and "return travel" experience, this research combines the two phases and measures them by using identical indicators (Neal, 2000).

In the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness, “tourist involvement” serves as an important factor to moderate the interaction between the two concepts. Involvement can be defined as a psychological state of motivation, arousal, or interest between an individual and an activity or product (Zaichkowsky, 1987). Researchers have suggested that involvement is regarded as a widely used concept and one of the most important determinants in consumer behavior, and influences many aspects of the consumption process such as information search, perception, brand attitude, decision-making, and evaluation, etc. (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983; Swinyard, 1993; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Kim & Crompton, 2002; Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Sung, 2004).

There are other factors which might have a moderating effect on the relationship discussed in this study (for example, tourist motivation, satisfaction, and tourist behavioral characteristics, etc.). Tourist involvement is considered an appropriate moderating factor for this study due to the nature of the research questions and objectives. The study examines the different phases of tourism/vacation experience, which closely relate to the tourists’ engagement and perceptual issues of their tourist activities before, during, and after the trip. Tourist involvement specifically deals with the level of consumer’s engagement in the consumption process, thus represents a better indicator which may influence the tourists’ perception of quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. It is assumed that a traveler with high involvement level with travel and tourist activities would have different perception of the quality of tourism experience and the destination compared with a traveler whose involvement is low. Involvement is believed to perform a moderating role in the travel and tourism context and thus it is applied in the research model. However, it should be noted that other factors may also have moderating effects on the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. This study aims to only examine the moderating effect of tourist involvement, and further research could be conducted to test other factors mentioned above.

To better understand the two concepts of destination competitiveness and quality of tourism experience and their inter-correlation, this study intends to investigate the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination

competitiveness, and develop a theoretical model of destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective. In particular, the following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. How do the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness relate to each other?
2. What is the influence of the quality of tourism experience on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness?
3. What is the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness?

#### **1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

Based on the research questions, hypotheses are proposed and a structural model is used to determine how destination competitiveness could be influenced by the quality of tourism experience, including the pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection. The research also intends to identify the factors that are likely to influence the quality of tourism experience and the tourists' perceived destination competitiveness, and examine the extent to which the two concepts are related and common variance they share. The following research hypotheses are presented:

- H1: The quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness share a common variance.

H2: The quality of tourism experience (including pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection) has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

H3: The relationship between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

The above hypotheses 2 and 3 are overall statements and are tested in individual sub-hypotheses dealing with separate phases of tourism experience. The specific sub-hypotheses are discussed in Chapter II.

## **1.5 KNOWLEDGE FOUNDATION**

The theoretical basis and empirical studies on tourism destination competitiveness are derived from multiple disciplines and bodies of knowledge. Competition among tourism destinations is one of the specific aspects of the broader phenomenon of today's competitive market environment. When examining destination competitiveness, tourism researchers often relate the concept with the notion of "competitiveness" in international economics and discuss the competitiveness among different countries. Dwyer and Kim (2003) reinforced this viewpoint and indicate that the framework development of destination competitiveness should be consistent with the international competitiveness literature. Researchers commonly believe that competitiveness involves a complex interactive process that includes social, political, and institutional change. However, there is a lack of general theory to support this phenomenon. Dwyer and Kim (2003) summarized the various perspectives and disciplines in defining, understanding, and measuring competitiveness, and demonstrate three major groups of thought in the literature:

- Comparative advantage and/or price competitiveness (Bellak & Weiss, 1993; Cartwright, 1993; Durand & Giorno, 1987; Fagerberg, 1988; Fakiolas, 1985; Hilke & Nelson, 1988; Hodgetts, 1993; Porter, 1990; Rugman, 1991; Rugman &

D’Cruz, 1993). The researchers place emphasis on price and the country-specific economic characteristics of competitiveness.

- A strategy and management perspective (Day & Wensley, 1988; D’Cruz & Rugman, 1993; Ghoshal & Kim, 1986; Grant, 1991; Kogut, 1985; Mahmoud et al., 1992; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Mathur, 1992; Parsons, 1983; Peters, 1988; Porter, 1985, 1990, 1999; Porter & Millar, 1985; Powell, 1992a, 1992b; Yip, 1989). The researchers focus on the firm-specific characteristics of competitiveness.
- A historical and socio-cultural perspective (Aaker, 1989; Franke et al., 1991; Hofstede, 1980, 1983; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Kennedy, 1987; Porter et al., 2001). The researchers target various social, political, and cultural characteristics underlying the notion of competitiveness.

Compared to the diversified approaches to competitiveness in economics, marketing, and management disciplines, the perspectives in examining competitiveness in the tourism field share both similarities and differences. Lew (1987, 1994) evaluated tourism resources/attractions from three major approaches: ideographic, organizational, and cognitive perspectives. The ideographic perspective is linked to the supply component (e.g. a specific characteristic of a site) and assesses tourism resources or attractions by asking public or private tourism professionals about the most important tourism elements or attributes. The organizational perspective focuses on the spatial and temporal nature and relationships between resources / attractions. The cognitive approach is related to the demand components of tourism and generally deals with the experiential characteristics of tourists associated with specific types of resources or attractions. It was suggested that the entire tourism attraction system needs to be considered from multiple approaches (Leiper, 1990). These attributes could be considered as the key components in both the tourism origin-destination system and the tourism functional system. Based on the nature and purpose of this research, the study applies the cognitive approach which is related to the demand side of the tourism system.

Following Porter’s work in 1996, Ritchie and Crouch (2003) proposed that tourism destination competitiveness should be examined from multiple perspectives – the

economic, political, socio-cultural, technological, and environmental approaches. In other words, tourism destination competitiveness is “its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experience, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations” (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 2).

The second major category of knowledge in this research is the quality of tourism experience literature. Quality of tourism experience or “quality tourism experience” is a widely used phrase in tourism. It is associated with a diversity of meanings and usage, which “are described implicitly, explicitly, and tacitly by industry/business, government agencies, tourists, communities, and academics” (Jennings, 2006, p.5). Jennings (2006) utilized web-based content analysis to identify this term in government and quasi-government sites. It is noted that “quality tourism experiences” is not explicitly defined in any way, but only implicitly used in the context of its usage (Jennings, 2006). Jennings (2006) summarized through the content analysis of public sources that quality tourism experiences were associated with one or more of the following:

- Interaction between host and guest based on tourist and community perspectives
- The classification of type of tourism product, particularly perspectives from the tourism industry and government sector
- Market differentiation and development; tourist perspectives
- The notion of an integrated system as well as benefits from an economic perspective

Quality tourism experiences are also applied to positive social impacts, economic benefits, environmental protection, government policy formulation, and discrimination between tourism products and sustainability issues.

Jennings (2006) also conducted a content analysis research that focused on academic source documents and utilized three powerful academic database search engines (Proquest, Ingenta, and WebSPIRS) to examine the open term *quality tourism experiences*. The concept of quality tourism experiences tends to be associated with the key focuses on quality and product, quality and satisfaction, and quality and

environmental issues. It was summarized that academic articles mainly discuss quality tourism experiences in the following themes (Jennings, 2006):

- The importance of quality tourism products for quality tourism experiences
- The quality of tourism experiences and satisfaction
- Quality tourism experiences and the management of tourism experiences and associated environmental issues
- Degradation of environments in different locations (marine, cities, terrestrial, and heritage sites)
- Consequences for quality tourism products

In addition to the above major issues, research articles also included these themes:

- Quality tourism experiences and reputation,
- Sustainability and quality tourism experiences
- Quality tourism experiences and host-guest interactions
- Quality of life
- Quality and profitability
- Modes of experience
- Place and identity
- Quality of tourism experiences and motivation

As noted earlier, the mixed meaning and usage of the term “tourist/tourism experience”, as well as the diversified approaches in measuring tourism experience, has been demonstrated in the tourism and leisure literature. A major stream of the measurement focuses on the chronological and temporal examination of the different phases of tourist experience before, during, and after the trip, following Clawson and Knetsche’s (1966) model (Killion, 1992, Craig-Smith & French, 1994; Laws, 1995; Neal, Sirgy & Uysal, 1999, 2004).

Researchers also have examined this issue from the perspective of the psychological meaning of tourist experience based on Kelly’s (1955) Personal Construct Theory (PCT). PCT basically considers each individual as a “personal scientist” and “posits that the sine qua non of human existence is our tendency to attribute unique meanings to the data of our experience”. These meanings, termed *personal constructs*, serve not only as interpretation of past events but as hypotheses about events yet to be

encountered” (Epting & Neimeyer, 1984, p. 2). This is partly in response to Cohen’s (1979b) claim of tourism research which is “processual, contextual, comparative and emic” (p. 31-32). Kelly’s cycle of experience is comprised of five steps: anticipation, investment, encounter, confirmation and disconfirmation, and constructive revision, which is conceptually responsive to Clawson and Knetsch’s (1966) model in a psychological direction.

As noted earlier, quality of tourism experience is a complex concept and has been diversely used in various contexts. Based on the above major stream of experience research, this study adopts the chronological and temporal aspects of the tourism experience and examines the concept from a series of stages along with the entire tourist vacation.

This study also applies the involvement theory in consumer behavior, which derived from the early work of Sherif and Cantril (1947) and the social judgment theory developed by Brunswik (1956) and Sherif and Hovland (1961). The involvement construct, originally introduced in social psychology, is a widely used concept in the consumer behavior literature and has received much attention from leisure, recreation, and tourism researchers in recent years. It is considered one of the most important determinants of consumer behavior and a central point in explaining the decision-making process (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990, 1997, 1999; Dimanche, Havitz, & Howard, 1991, 1993; Reid & Crompton, 1993; Schuett, 1993; Jamrozy et al., 1996; Broderic & Mueller, 1999; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003).

Involvement can be defined as the degree to which consumers engage in different aspects of the consumption process: product, advertising, information search, information processing, decision-making, and the act of purchasing (Broderic & Mueller, 1999). The involvement concept has been used as a key variable in the measurement of an individual’s engagement to tourism destination product/service consumption and would influence the interaction between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

The present study proposes a tourism destination competitiveness model that builds on the existing literature on competitiveness and quality tourism experience, and implements theoretical and analytical tools to empirically examine the relationship

between the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH**

Figure 1.1 represents the proposed theoretical model which demonstrates the relationship between perceived destination competitiveness and the quality of tourism experience. The proposed model illustrates the logical relationship of the two major constructs by indicating the directions of the causes and effects of the interplay of destination competitiveness relating to the quality of tourism experience. It is proposed that from the tourists' perspective, perceived destination competitiveness is largely influenced or determined by the quality of tourism experience provided by the destination. Tourist involvement serves as a moderating factor in the relationship between these two major constructs. Figure 1.2 proposes the model with sub-constructs for the two main concepts: quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. Tourism experience is measured based on the different phases of entire vacation process, i.e., pre-trip planning phase, en-route phase, on-site phase, and after-trip reflection phase. In this study, tourism experience (or tourist experience) is communicated to the research survey respondents as their experience before, during, and after their leisure vacation, since it is easier for the general public to understand and it is commonly believed that a vacation involves tourism activities related to a destination. Therefore, the concepts "tourism/tourist experience" and "vacation experience" can be used interchangeably in this study.

Figure 1.1 Proposed Destination Competitiveness Model based on Tourists' Perception

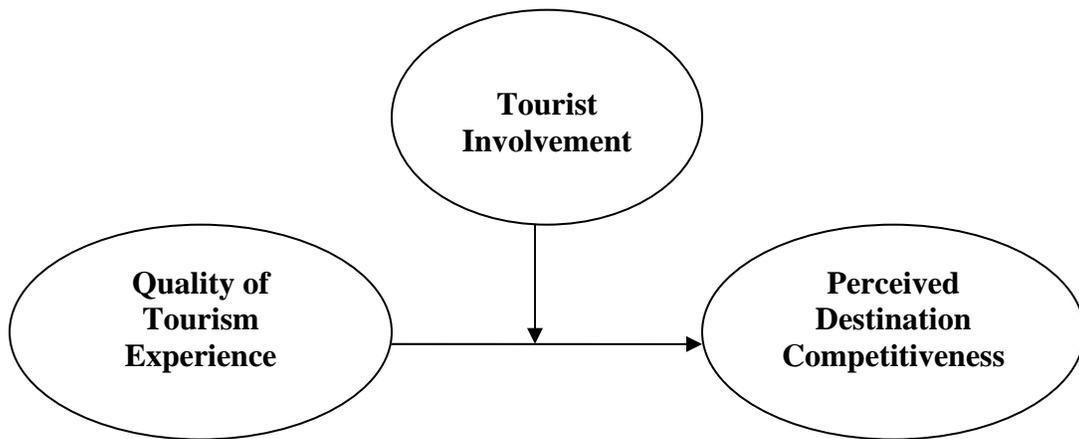
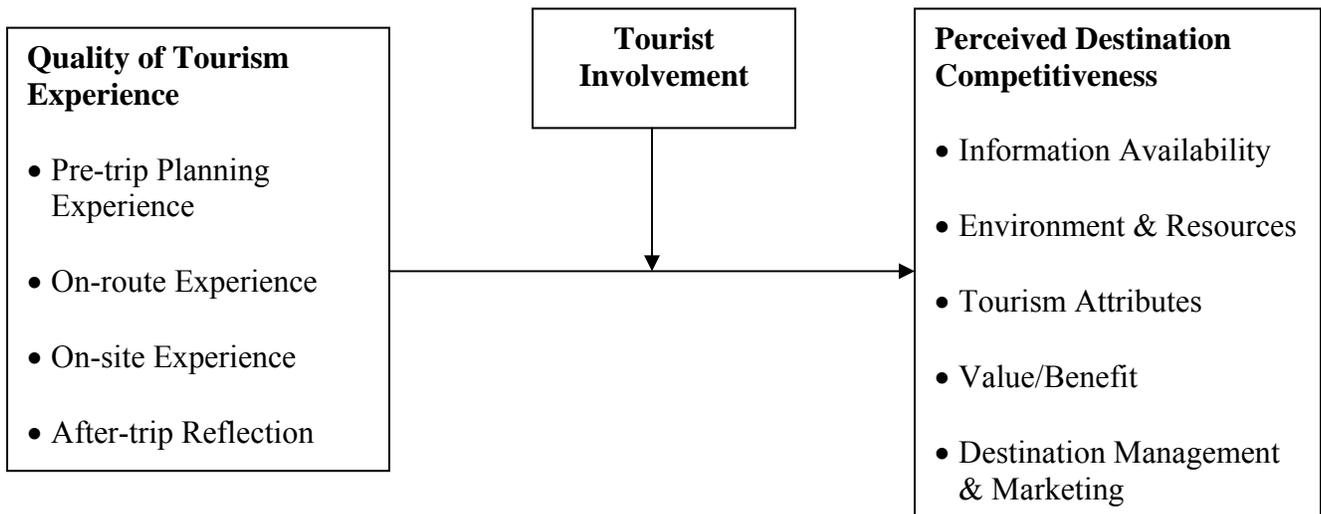


Figure 1.2 The Proposed Model with Sub-Constructs



## 1.7 FUNCTIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

**Tourism Experience:** It could also be termed as “tourist experience” or “vacation experience”. It is an obscure and diverse phenomenon, which has been approached from various perspectives. In this study, it is considered a classificatory term used by tourists to describe their (re)construction of a vacation experience and is examined in terms of chronological and temporal aspects. The tourism experience is defined as a multi-phase phenomenon related to the pre-trip planning experience, en-route (travel to the destination and return travel) experience, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection (Jennings & Weiler, 2006; Vitterso et al., 2000; Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Killion, 1992; Laws, 1995).

**Quality of Tourism Experience:** The tourists’ perception of the degree of quality of their tourism experience related to the product and services received during different phases of the entire vacation process (Jennings & Nickerson, 2006).

**Destination Competitiveness:** The destination’s ability to create and provide value-added products and quality experience which are important to tourists while sustaining its resources and maintaining market position relative to competitors (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Hassan, 2000). In this study, destination competitiveness is examined from the tourists’ perspective. It refers to the tourists’ perception of the destination’s ability and superiority in its performance with regard to offering quality tourism experience competitively.

**Tourist Involvement:** The degree to which consumers engage in different aspects of the consumption process (Broderic & Mueller, 1999). Tourist involvement as a scale is characterized by the perception of the following elements: importance, pleasure value, sign value, risk probability, and risk consequences (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990). On the basis of the elements of the involvement scale, this study created low and high involvement groups of respondents.

## **1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter One presented the overview of the study, which includes the background of the study, statement of problem, the research questions, theoretical framework, and the theoretical model proposed for this research. The key terms or concepts were also defined in this chapter. Chapter Two consists of a review of the available literature pertaining to destination competitiveness and the relevant constructs. The theoretical background and previous conceptual and empirical research findings are discussed. Chapter Three focuses on the research framework, research hypotheses to be tested, a detailed discussion of the research design, the development of the survey instrument, sampling, and procedures of data analysis.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a review of the literature pertaining to the constructs of the theoretical model proposed in this study in the areas of quality of tourism experience, destination competitiveness, and tourist involvement. The discussion of these concepts serves as the research background for the research questions and the study's objective. This chapter also presents the full theoretical model with the hypotheses established by the theoretical framework of the study to be empirically tested.

#### **2.2 QUALITY OF TOURISM EXPERIENCE**

##### **2.2.1 Tourism Destination Product**

As Kotler (1984, p. 463) defined, a product is “anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. It includes physical objects, services, persons, places, organization, and ideas”. This definition is applicable in the tourism context. Tourism as an industry does possess its unique generic product and production process: it provides the product as services, persons, places, organizations, and ideas, with the function of the facilitation of travel and activity of individuals away from their usual home environment (Smith, 1994). Smith (1994) provided a comprehensive review of the tourism product research.

Medlik and Middleton (1973) conceptualized tourism products as a bundle of activities, services, and benefits that constitute the entire tourism experience. Five components of the bundle were proposed: destination attractions, destination facilities,

accessibility, images, and price. This “components model” has been adopted by other researchers (Wahab, Crampon, & Rothfield, 1976; Schmoll, 1977; Gunn, 1994).

Researchers also applied different approaches and further refined the concept regarding the components model of tourism product. Middleton (1989) proposed two levels of tourist product: the “specific” level and the “total” level. “Specific” level of tourist product refers to a discrete product offered by a single business such as a hotel room or an airline seat, whereas the “total” level of product means the complete experience of the tourist from the time one leaves home to the time he/she returns (i.e. the “components model”).

A different approach was further undertaken in that service product consists of three components: facilitating goods, explicit intangibles, and implicit intangibles (Sasser, Olson, & Wyckoff, 1978). In tourism context, the facilitating good could be a hotel room, while the explicit intangible is the good rest provided by the room and the implicit intangibles are benefits such as service, socializing, ambiance, and/or relaxation. Related to this approach, Normann (1985) proposed a similar model of tourism product which consists of core service and secondary/peripheral services. For example, in the airline industry, the core service would be the flight from an origin to a destination, and the peripheral service could include reservations, check-in, in-flight meals, baggage handling, cleaning, comfort, and the general attitudes of the staff (Smith, 1994).

Tourism product was also conceptualized as consisting of components – goods, environment, and services (Lewis & Chambers, 1989). The authors suggested that a tourism product has three different levels: the “formal product” which the tourist believes one is buying; the “core product” which the tourist is actually buying; and the “augmented product” which is the combination of core product and any other value-added features and benefits related to the product. This concept of product levels is similar to Levitt’s (1981) proposed typology of “core product” (the essential service or benefit), “tangible product” (the service actually offered for sale and consumed), and the “augmented product” (the tangible product plus all added-value features). This typology of product has been cited and employed in the context of general marketing (Kotler, 1984) and tourism marketing (Middleton, 1988).

Jefferson and Lickorish (1988, p.59) provided two views regarding the definition of tourism product: the tourism product is a “collection of physical and service features together with symbolic associations which are expected to fulfill the wants and needs of the buyer” and more specifically “a satisfying activity at a desired destination”. Smith (1994) commented on this concept that it has an intuitive appeal but fails to adequately describe the structure of the tourism product and how that product is produced. Smith (1994) further concluded that the structure of services is relatively complex and involves different levels of service, and the consumer often has some connection to the provision of services.

Based on the previous literature on tourism product, Smith (1994) attempted to develop a model which consists of the elements of the tourism product and the process by which those elements are assembled. He described the tourism product as consisting of five elements – the physical plant, service, hospitality, freedom of choice, and involvement. Smith (1994) acknowledged the role of such travel services in creating a product experience, and describes how various “inputs” from the destination could produce an experiential “output for tourists”. Apparently, tourism products include visible components such as hotel rooms, food and beverage, admission tickets, souvenirs, and tour-bus rides, etc., but more importantly, the final outputs of the generic tourism production process is the tourist experience. The model explicitly acknowledges the role of human experience in the tourism product, and is claimed that it can be applied to either discrete commodities or to a package of commodities representing a “tourist experience”. It is suggested that the success of a product in meeting the tourist needs is determined by how well each element is designed and integrated with the others. The tourism product is more than the combination of the five elements, and it includes the synergistic interaction among all the elements.

Similarly, Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) discussed tourism as an extension of the commodification of modern social life under capitalism. It involves commodity production and exchange, the mass manipulation of commodity sign, standardization of products, tastes, and experiences. Therefore, tourism as a complex socio-cultural dimension of modernity is subject to the same principles of capitalist consumer culture, but the obvious rationale is that tourism should be considered as a special product – the

product of experience and its delivery as commodities. A tourism destination, therefore, is perceived as a complex experiential product in the whole system.

In examining the tourism destination product, some approaches have incorporated a supply and a demand side that describe how multiple components of the destination interact with travelers during their trip. Gunn's (1994) model of the Tourist System indicates that the tourism product is a complex consumptive experience that results from a process where tourists use multiple travel services during the course of their visit (information, transportation, accommodation, and attraction services). Other researchers also generated the similar assertion that tourism is an experience in its own right (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Ross, 1994).

In contrast to a specific manufactured product, a tourism destination may be regarded as “an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited” (Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000, p.44). Similarly, the tourism destination is also conceptualized as “a package of tourism facilities and services, which like any other consumer product, is composed of a number of multi-dimensional attributes” (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). Cohen (1979a) pointed out that a tourist's destination experience, however, is not solely derived from the consumption of various travel services. Studies on the international travel experience have revealed that tourists desire particular (novelty-familiarity) experiences from the physical setting itself, as well as from the service infrastructure that supports their visit. Mo, Howard and Havitz (1993) presented that in international tourists’ experiential desires of destination product, the destination's environment was the primary factor (e.g., social and culture features) and the destination's service infrastructure is the secondary factor (e.g., transportation, food and lodging services).

It could be concluded from the literature that tourism destination products are fundamentally experiences. The success of the tourism product depends on how well the whole experiential content was designed, packed, and delivered to the tourists (Smith, 1994). The tourism industry is closely bound to ensure a high standard of customer service and a quality “visitor” experience. Therefore, it is crucial that the tourist product – the overall experience – should appeal to the tourists’ fond desires and imaginative

associations (e.g., histories, cultures, services, activities) as well as the “hardware” infrastructure and facilities etc.

### **2.2.2 Tourist and Tourism Consumption**

Tourism can be characterized as a special consumption activity, and is “unique in that people displace themselves from familiar environments and voluntarily invest their time and money in making a journey to somewhere less familiar, where they undertake a range of activities before returning home” (Laws, 1995, p. 52). The tourism product and its consumption by tourists has been a fundamental subject in the tourism literature. The conceptualization of tourist as consumer stems from socio-cultural and geographical based studies and from the service marketing-related literature (Jensen & Lindberg, 2000). Researchers have continuously examined the concept of “tourist” since the early 1960s and attempted to answer the question “who actually is a tourist and what does s/he look for?” (Boorstin, 1962, 1964; Cohen, 1972, 1974, 1995; Smith, 1989; Leiper, 1979; Pearce, 1982; Dann, 1996; MacCannell, 1976, 1992). Many of these research deal with the authenticity issue in tourism consumption.

Boorstin (1962, 1964) described the replacement of the “once-upon-a-time genuine art of travel” with the prepackaged spectacles and “pseudo-events”. He argued that the tourist seldom likes the authentic product of foreign culture but prefers “his own provincial expectations” (which he considered unintelligible). He concluded that tourists want experiences or scenes that are tailored to their preconceptions and demand an unauthentic stage of pseudo-events.

Responding to Boorstin’s notion, MacCannell (1976, 1992) addressed this observation and argues that everyday life is in itself inauthentic and alienating, therefore, tourists actually demand authenticity on voyages. The tourism establishment caters to this quest by providing the “staged authenticity”, which tourists receive the seemingly authentic experience they seek. Numerous tourist activities, such as museums, local and cultural festivals, historical monuments, and even natural scenes could be routinely staged and offered to tourists.

Cohen (1979a, 1988) contributed to this literature by introducing the phenomenological inquiry and proposed that tourists are alienated from their cultural origins to different degrees, so their quest for authenticity varies in different exotic settings or distant places and is subject to varied interpretations by different tourists. Cohen's further work (1995) examined this issue from the perspective of tourism impact. As modern western tourists seek natural and authentic experience in their travel process and may cause undesirable impact on local community, sustainability and "staged authenticity" are raised to protect the destination. Having no serious quest for authenticity, post-modern tourists follow the travel mode of playful search for enjoyment, which result in the proliferation of many imaginary "contrived" attractions. The "virtual reality" developed by advanced simulation technology poses a potential threat to contemporary tourism, even blur the boundary of tourism and leisure due to the change of "placeness". The author argued that the changing nature of tourist attractions and places will give tourism new, although not clearly foreseeable, meanings, form and direction.

In sum, two main perspectives have been identified in discussing the tourist and tourism consumption – a modern and a post-modern perspective, in which the modern tourist seeks authenticity by the experience of authentically presented phenomena, whereas the post-modern tourist more focuses on enjoyment and entertainment and does not care much for the presentation's origin (MacCannell, 1976, 1992; Urry, 1990; Lash & Urry, 1994; Cohen, 1995). These two perspectives reflect two main assumptions of what a tourist should/could be: the tourist is cognitively oriented person (the modern tourist), and/or an experience-oriented person (the post-modern tourist). The former assumption indicated that tourists consume products based on knowledge and experience based on the expectancy-disconfirmation logic/process, whereas the latter implied that tourists are affective-driven in consumption and attempt to seek "good" "high quality" experiences and entertainment (MacCannell, 1976; Cohen, 1995; Urry, 1990).

Jensen and Lindberg (2000) proposed a third approach – "existential encounter perspective" – which focuses on the living, existing individual. A person is not viewed as a perceiver of a world outside him- or herself, but "as a being that constitutes meaning as a member of the world" (p. 215). Therefore, the tourist is considered as an adventurer who does not separate consumption from any other experience in life, and perceives

tourism activities as consumption experiences. Wang (1999) also summarized three approaches to authenticity of tourist experience – objectivism, constructivism, and post-modernism. It is suggested that existential authenticity is an alternative source in tourism, regardless of whether the toured objects are authentic.

Overall, the researchers have demonstrated that tourists could be explained as people who want to stay away from their unchanged, mundane routine lives and pursue a temporary exposure to the other side of an adventurous, exotic, and spectacular world. Tourism enterprises and establishments should cater to the needs and design and sell such experiences to tourists.

### **2.2.3 Tourism Experience and Its Quality**

Tourism experience has been a key research topic since its earliest days of conceptualization in the 1960s and has been addressed in numerous academic works in tourism field. Generally, four major trends of the conceptual development in the tourism experience research have been observed (Uriely, 2005). Uriely (2005) summarized that the conceptual development of tourist experience should be viewed as: a reconsideration of the distinctiveness of tourism from of everyday life experiences; a shift from homogenizing portrayals of the tourist as a general type to pluralizing depictions that capture the multiplicity of the experience); a shifted focus from the displayed objects provided by the industry to the subjective negotiation of meanings as a determinant of the experience; and a movement from contradictory and decisive academic discourse, which conceptualizes the experience in terms of absolute truths, toward relative and complementary interpretations.

Tourism experience is considered as an obscure and diverse phenomenon, which is mostly constituted by the individual consumer. The study of tourism experience has been approached from various perspectives due to the complexity of the construct itself and the lack of agreement on its meaning and usage. Similarly, quality is also associated with different meanings and has been used in a variety of contexts within tourism literature. Quality has been associated with service quality, quality assurance/auditing and

control, perceptions of quality at an individual/business/community level (i.e., stakeholder level), and in regard to product and market differentiation (Jennings, 2006). But most frequently and generally, quality is defined in terms of the demands and wishes of the consumer and the benefits received. Table 2.1 presents a summary of the topics within the literature related to quality tourism experience and part of the representative articles (Jennings, 2006).

Debate exists in regard to the definition of tourism experience due to its complexity in nature (Li, 2000). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Boorstin (1962, 1964) considered it as a popular act of consumption, and a contrived, prefabricated experience of mass tourism, whereas MacCannell (1973) viewed it to be an active response to the difficulties of modern life, arguing that tourists are in search of “authentic” experiences in order to overcome the difficulties. This debate subscribes to a common experience for all tourists as if their needs were consistent, regardless of the different social and cultural backgrounds constituting those needs. Cohen’s (1979a) work presented the argument that different people need different experiences, which cast different meanings for tourists and their societies. It is suggested that tourism experience is the relationship between a person and a variety of “centers” in that the meaning of the experience is derived from a person’s worldview, depending on whether the person adheres to a “center”. Many other researchers followed Cohen’s mode of tourism experience in their studies (Hamilton-Smith, 1987; Nash & Smith, 1991; Nash, 1996; Page, 1997; Pearce, 1982; Ryan, 1993, 1997; Smith, 1989; Urry, 1990; Kivel, 2000). Therefore, it is commonly believed that tourism experience is a multifunctional leisure activity, involving either entertainment or learning, or both, for an individual (Ryan, 1997).

Table 2.1 Overview of Literature related to Quality Tourism Experience

Trend Topic	Examples of Representative Articles
Importance of quality products for quality tourism experiences	Onome, 2003; Weber & Roehl, 1999; Laws, 1998; Murphy, 1997; Vaughan & Russell, 1982
Quality tourism experiences and satisfaction	Yuksel & Yuksel, 2001; Laws, 1998; Murphy, 1997; Chadee & Mattson, 1996; Uysal, McDonald, & Martin, 1994
Quality tourism experiences and management of tourist experiences and associated environmental issues, degradation of environments in different locations (marine, cities, terrestrial, and heritage sites) and consequences for quality tourism products	Bhat, 2003; Lawson et al., 2003; Boyd, 2002; Font, 2002; Schneider, 2002; Bauer & Chan, 2001; Harborne, Afzal, & Andrews, 2001; Ross & Wall, 1999; Mak & Moncur, 1998; Murphy, 1997; Ayala, 1996; Moscardo, 1996; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Laws, 1991; Vaughan & Russell, 1982; Smith & Webster, 1976
Service delivery and quality	Warden, Liu, Huang, & Lee, 2003; Lennon & Harris, 2002; O'Neill, Palmer, & Charters, 2002; Ryan, 2002; King, 2001; Lennon & Graham, 2001; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2001; Gyimothy, 2000; O'Neill, Williams, MacCarthy, & Groves, 2000; Ekdahl, Gustafsson, & Edvardsson, 1999; Weber & Roehl, 1999; Laws, 1998; Kandampully & Duddy, 1997; Chadee & Mattson, 1996; Turco & Riley, 1996; Larsen & Rapp, 1993; Braithewaite, 1992; Bitner, 1990; Sheldon & Fox, 1988
Quality tourism experiences and reputation	Keane, 1996
Sustainability and quality tourism experiences	Boyd, 2002; Font, 2002; Ross & Wall, 1999; Cooper & Morpheth, 1998; Moscardo, 1996
Quality tourism experiences and host-guest relations	Perdue, Long, & Yang, 1999; Cooper & Morpheth, 1998; Timothy & Wall, 1997; Howell, 1994
Quality of life	Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999; Perdue, Long, & Yang, 1999; Howell, 1994; Kim, 2002
Quality and profitability	Ayala, 1996; Braithewaite, 1992
Modes of experience	Ryan, 1997, 2002; Urry, 1990, 2002; Lengkeek, 2001; Cohen, 1972, 1979a, 1988
Place and identity	Campbell, 2003; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002; Schneider, 2002
Quality tourism experience and motivation	Onome, 2002; MacCannell, 2002; Ryan, 1997; Uysal, McDonald, & Martin, 1994

*Source:* Reprinted from *Quality Tourism Experience*, Jennings, G., Perspectives on quality tourism experience: an introduction, p. 7, Copyright (2006), with permission from Elsevier.

In this study, tourism quality is considered a classificatory term used by tourists to describe their (re)construction of a tourist experience. As Jennings and Weiler (2006, p. 59) claimed, “this term may mean excellence, a matching of expectations to lived experience, a perception of getting value for one’s money, or however the individual tourist choose to define it”. This social constructionist perspective is supported by postmodern writings in regard to the use of the term *authentic* and *authenticity*. The term *authenticity* is parallel to the term *quality* in many aspects, especially on the condition of who is doing the deconstruction and subsequent (re)construction or interpretation (Jennings & Weiler, 2006). Similarly, Urry (1990, p. 100) stated that “Tourism is a game, or rather a whole series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic [quality] tourists’ experience”. In this sense, quality is a self-defined term and might be derived from the social constructionist point of view and postmodern theoretical underpinning.

The term “experience”, with the same contestable nature as “quality”, may also refer to various aspects from a process to an outcome/endstate or product. It could be described as an individual’s inner state, brought about by something that is personally encountered, undergone, or lived through (Cohen, 2000, p. 251). It could be a package tour as a product which can be purchased. Another perspective that is generally supported in the literature is that the tourism experience is a process involving progression through a series of stages (beginning with anticipation and leading to planning, travel to, on-site [and multiple iterations of travel to and on-site activities], return travel, and recollection) (Jennings, 1997; Jennings & Weiler, 2006; Killion, 1992; Clawson, 1963). As Jennings and Weiler (2006) claimed, the nature of tourist experience is essentially manifold and involving numerous and complex interactions and contexts.

Regarding the empirical research on tourist/leisure experience, a special issue of the *Journal of Leisure Research* (Vol. 30, No. 4) has examined this issue from different perspectives, mostly in psychological terms: perception of risk and competence (McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998); information use (Vogt & Stewart, 1998); meanings associated with the challenges of leisure environments (Patterson et al., 1998); satisfaction (Hultsman, 1998). Others have investigated the concept through personal growth and self-renewal, sense of community, and harmony with nature (Arnould & Price, 1993); and emotions and/or moods (Hull, Stewart, & Yi, 1992). As Uriely (2005)

summarized, the analyses of tourist experience mainly focus on tourism motivations and the meanings that participants assign to their experiences in light of everyday life in “advanced” industrialized societies. More recent research on “tourist/leisure experience” also examined its psychological meaning and emotions derived from various tourism activities and perspectives (Jackson, White, & Schmierer, 1994, 1996; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2001; Deng, King, & Bauer, 2002; Li, 2000; Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998; Manfredi, Driver, & Tarrant, 1996; Stewart & Cole, 2001; Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2002; Sternberg, 1997; Lee & Shafer, 2002).

The study of Jackson, White, and Schmierer (1994) could somehow illustrate the complication of tourism experience research. The researchers collected and analyzed 456 positive and 434 negative tourism experiences. They generated 69 basic concepts under three major themes. These concepts accounted for 89.4% of the positive concepts and 96.9% of the negative concepts. It was revealed that the positive stories reflected *person factors* (e.g., understanding culture and heritage, appreciating food, being with people, being in control, having freedom and relaxation); *interpersonal factors* (e.g., positive host and other tourism relationships, and friendly interpersonal relationships); and *external factors* (e.g., natural scenery and beaches, heritage buildings, well-organized theme parks, packaged tours, and sporting activities). On the contrary, the negative stories were also reflected in the same three major aspects: *person factors* (e.g., failure to understand culture, food, frightening policies and poverty, feeling lost and isolated, feeling fear and boredom, having no sense of freedom, and suffering some physical health problem); *interpersonal factors* (e.g., negative people relationships with family, friends and hosts, and negative interpersonal relations such as crime, drunkenness, and overcrowding); and *external factors* (e.g., bad weather, poor accommodation and facilities, transport hassles such as lost luggage and delays, and mechanical breakdowns and accidents) (Jackson, White, & Schmierer, 1994, 1996).

The conceptual and methodological difficulties related to the measurement of tourist experience with tourism products have promoted alternative approaches to this issue. Pearce (1988) and Ryan (1995) reviewed factors to be considered in satisfaction research, and possible theoretical and methodological approaches. The different options

can be related to different stages of the experience – pre-travel processes, on-site experiences, and post-travel processes (Vitterso et al., 2000).

Like any other activity, tourism activity occurs within a time frame. There is a lead-in period devoted to planning and organizing the related travel arrangements. This period might be longer than the actual vacation itself and can influence the overall tourism experience at a later time. It is during this period that destination marketing and promotion are likely to have a significant impact. The actual vacation phase is the time of the trip and the on-site destination stay, which may last from several days to a few months. During the final phase of the tourism experience, the tourists would recollect or reflect the whole vacation either positively or negatively based on their actual experience, which have serious consequences for a destination's image and perception (Jennings, 2006; Laws, 1995; Clawson and Knetsch, 1966).

In terms of the chronological and temporal aspects of tourism experience, Clawson and Knetsch (1966) proposed the model in the recreation experience context and describe the experience as multiphasic. Five different and interacting phases are identified as (1) an anticipation phase, (2) travel to the site, (3) on-site activity, (4) return travel, and (5) a recollection phase. They suggested that outdoor recreationists gain satisfaction or dissatisfaction from each phase of the experience, and that except for the failure in the outdoor recreation delivery system, there might be a common pattern of increasing joy, satisfaction, or benefit from *anticipation* through *travel to* and including the *on-site* experience. There may be a drop in satisfaction during the *travel-back* phase, but then considerable recovery in benefits during the *recollection* phase.

Clawson and Knetsch (1966) further indicated that the whole recreation experience should be considered a package in which all parts are necessary to build the quality experience. The whole experience could be used as the unit of study and analysis. It is also suggested that research, planning, and operation of recreation programs and areas should be concerned with all the major phases, not merely with the on-site phase. Based on Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) findings, it can be concluded that quality tourism experience comprises of pleasurable components of each phase. For example, adequate information in the planning phase, enjoyable travel to and from the destination

site, and pleasant stay in the destination will all help people develop more accurate and satisfactory recollections of their tourism experiences.

Following Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) research, Killion (1992) defined the tourism experience as a circular model which consists of the "planning" phase, the "travel to" phase, the "on-site activities" phase, the "return travel" phase, and the "recollection" phase. The model represents a continuous and ongoing framework for various phases, and is considered especially applicable to multi-destination travel.

Craig-Smith and French (1994) provided a more simplified model, in which tourism experiences are seen as three linear phases with previous experiences informing future experiences: anticipatory phase, experiential phase, and reflective phase. It is suggested that tourism experiences are dynamic and fluctuate over the course of engagement, and experience can be studied through looking at a series of stages or events (Arnould & Price, 1993; Hull & Michael, 1995; Hull, Stewart, & Yi, 1992).

Similarly, Laws (1995) also examined the tourism experience with the destination in a set of phases of "pre-travel", "journey and arrival", "destination stay", and "after return home". In other words, the process consists of phases beginning with the development of an intention to visit it, continuing with the experiences of a variety of services during their stay at the destination, and culminating in their memories of the destination. Table 2.2 summarizes the phases in the form of a flow chart about the activities and influencers related to the tourism experience (Laws, 1995).

Vitterso et al. (2000) employed another alternative approach, the flow-simplex method, to measure tourists' on-site experience. The measurement model of subjective experience utilized in the study derived from the work of Eckblad (1980, 1981a, 1981b) on scheme theory. The research focused on a range of affective experiences as caused by the process of cognitive information processing and assumed that flow-simplex is sensitive to a variety of affective responses elicited by different attractions. Data from on-site experiences were gathered by questionnaires at six Norwegian attractions. The research findings demonstrated little differences among the six attractions in terms of overall satisfaction.

Table 2.2 Influences on Tourists' Destination Experience and Satisfaction

Phase	Activity	Influencers
Pre-travel	1. Purchase decisions	Advertising Brochures NTO information
	2. Planning	Travel agent Travel writers Friends
	3. Anticipation	
Journey (en-route)	4. Travel	Airline staff Airport staff Immigration/customs Baggage handlers
	5. Transfer to hotel	Courier
Destination stay	6. Accommodation	Hotel staff Restaurant staff
	7. Catering	Courier Coach driver
	8. Entertainment	TIC Guide books
	9. Excursions	Casual contact with Residents Other visitors
After-trip	10. Recollection	Photographs Video Souvenirs Discussion with friends Travel writing Advertising Brochures

Source: From *Tourist Destination Management: Issues, Analysis and Policies*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition by LAWS E. 1995. Reprinted with permission of Thomson Learning EMEA, a division of Thomson Learning: [www.thomsonrights.com](http://www.thomsonrights.com). Fax 800 730-2215.

It is important for destination managers and tour operators to understand what the tourists regard as the components of a high quality tourism experience. As Laws (1995) indicated, in a sense, tourists “measure” the quality of services they receive against their expectations formed in the earlier stage when they selected, purchased and then anticipated their tourist experience. Quality of experience is not just inherent in the properties of the service itself, but also a function of the consumer’s experiences and the personal values which govern their expectations (Garvin, 1988; Engel et al., 1986).

On the basis of the existing literature of tourist experience, in this study, quality of tourism experience is defined as the tourists’ perception of the degree of the pleasantness of their experience related to the product and services received during different phases of the entire vacation process. The tourism experience is approached from the chronological and temporal perspective. It is defined as a multiphasic phenomenon related to the pre-trip planning experience, en-route (travel to the destination and return travel) experience, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection (Jennings & Weiler, 2006; Vitterso et al., 2000; Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Killion, 1992; Laws, 1995).

## **2.3 DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS**

### **2.3.1 Competitiveness in the General Literature**

Most of the competitiveness literature in general included three major groups of thought including comparative advantage and/or price competitiveness perspective, strategy and management perspective, and historical and socio-cultural perspective (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Competitiveness has also been examined in macro (national level) and micro (firm level) perspectives. The wider literature of competitiveness provided useful insights in examining the various determinants of “national” or “firm” level of competitiveness issues (Porter, 1980; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

The discussion of competitiveness in the general literature also covers competitive advantage and comparative advantage (Porter, 1990), but it is claimed that the literature has not made a clear distinction between comparative and competitive advantage (Ritchie

& Crouch, 2003). In addition, it is claimed that these discussions did not address the special considerations related to determining the competitiveness in service sector (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Porter, 1990; Sapir, 1982).

The concepts of comparative and competitive advantage have been proposed in relevant to tourism destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). For a tourism destination, comparative advantage would relate to inherited or endowed resources such as climate, scenery, flora, fauna, etc., while competitive advantage would relate to created items such as the tourism infrastructure (hotels, attractions, transport network, etc.), festivals and events, the quality of management, skills of employees, government policy and so on. It is perceived that comparative advantage involve the resource available to a destination, whereas competitive advantage relate to a destination's ability to effectively utilize the resource.

Competitive advantage is expressed in terms of competitors and customers. Sources of competitive advantages are essential assets and skills (Aaker, 1991). An asset is considered a resource that is superior to those possessed by the competition, whereas a skill is an activity undertaken more effectively than competition. Therefore, for tourism destinations, the availability of tourism resources and the resource audit are both important for the competitiveness (Pearce, 1997a; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000a).

There seems to be a fundamental difference between the nature of the "tourism product" and the more traditional goods and services. As tourists gain experience of various destinations which are directly or indirectly in competition, their perceptions of quality and overall performance will play a significant role in determine repeat business or positive word-of-mouth recommendation (Laws, 1995; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Tourists, implicitly or explicitly, make comparisons between facilities, attractions, and service standards of various destinations (Laws, 1995). Consequently, tourism destination competitiveness must be examined accordingly to its own characteristics related to the service sector and experiential product in nature.

### **2.3.2 Definition of Destination Competitiveness**

Numerous definitions of competitiveness in the general literature were proposed but there seems to be no generally accepted statement of the term (Porter, 1990; Spence & Hazard, 1988). Consequently, a large number of variables also appear associated with the notion of destination competitiveness. The factors could include objective measures such as visitor numbers, market share, tourist expenditure, employment, value added by the tourism industry, as well as subjective measures such as richness of culture and heritage, quality of the tourism experience, etc.

Researchers have proposed different definitions on destination competitiveness from various approaches. Buhalis (2000) and Crouch and Ritchie (1999) examined the definition in terms of the economic prosperity of destination residents, which is consistent with the view raised by World Economic Forum (Porter et al., 2001). This approach is specifically applicable to the international-level destinations. It is considered reasonable to examine destination competitiveness with the focus on economic prosperity, since the nations (destinations) compete in the international tourism market to foster the economic well-being of residents, as well as the opportunity to promote the country as a place to live, trade with, invest in, do business with, play sport against, etc. (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

According to d'Hartserre (2000, p.23), competitiveness is “the ability of a destination to maintain its market position and share and/or to improve upon them through time”. Hassan defined competitiveness as “the destination’s ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors” (Hassan, 2000, p.239). Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000a) stated that “tourism competitiveness is a general concept that encompasses price differentials coupled with exchange rate movements, productivity levels of various components of the tourist industry and qualitative factors affecting the attractiveness or otherwise of a destination” (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2000a, p. 9). Dwyer and Kim (2003) proposed that destination competitiveness is “the ability of a destination to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered being important by tourists” (Dwyer & Kim, 2003, p. 375).

Consequently, based on the major objective and perspective of this study, in this study, destination competitiveness is defined as “the destination’s ability to create and provide value-added products and quality experience which are important to tourists while sustaining its resources and maintaining market position relative to competitors” (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Hassan, 2000).

### **2.3.3 Different Approaches to Destination Competitiveness**

Nowadays in the increasingly competitive world tourism market, maintaining competitiveness is a major challenge for many destinations. Destination competitiveness has been claimed to be “tourism’s holy grail” (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000a), however, the research on this field is limited and has only emerged since the 1990s.

The academic journal *Tourism Management* has published a special issue on “The Competitive Destination” (Vol. 21, Issue 1, 2000). The variety of topics covered in this issue represents the complexity associated with the study of destination competitiveness:

- Sustainable competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b)
- Price competitiveness (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2000a)
- Managed destinations (d’Hautesserre, 2000)
- Responding to competition (Kim et al., 2000)
- The destination product and its impact on traveler perceptions (Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000)
- The role of public transport in destination development (Prideaux, 2000)
- Environmental management (Mihalic, 2000)
- Integrated quality management (Go & Govers, 2000)
- Regional positioning (Uysal et al., 2000)
- Marketing the competitiveness destination of the future (Buhalis, 2000)

In addition, an issue on tourism and travel competitiveness in *Tourism* (Vol. 47, Issue 4, 1999) featured several articles at the destination level: price competitiveness (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 1999), the role of public administration in the competitiveness

of Spain's tourism industry (Bueno, 1999), and the competitiveness of Alpine destinations (Pechlaner, 1999).

Despite the various definitions of destination competitiveness, it is observed that few frameworks have been developed to assess the competitiveness of a destination (Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004). Bordas (1994) argued that competition does exist between clusters of tourism business and a strategic plan is required to gain competitive advantages: low cost, differentiation and specialization. Similarly, Poon (1993) suggested four major principles for destinations to follow if they are to be competitive: put the environment first; make tourism a leading sector; strengthen the distribution channels in the market place; and build a dynamic private sector. These approaches seem practical but has been criticized to be too broad and general to be meaningful to tourism stakeholders and policy makers (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

In developing the model of destination competitiveness, Chon and Mayer (1995) adapted Porter's generic competitiveness model to the tourism industry and proposed that tourism competitiveness includes five dimensions: appeal, management, organization, information and efficiency. The study incorporated tourism-specific issues (for example, the intangibility of the tourism product) into the model. Faulkner et al. (1999) adopted this model in measuring the competitiveness of South Australia.

Pearce (1997b) introduced the "competitive destination analysis" (CDA) to measure the competitiveness of tourism destinations. CDA is defined as "a means of systematically comparing diverse attributes of competing destinations within a planning context" (Pearce, 1997b, p. 16). It is suggested that this systematic appraisal and comparison of key tourism elements (attributes) among competitors could provide a more objective basis for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the destination and generate a better appreciation of its competitive advantages. CDA is considered as a better approach in identifying specific competitive features of the destinations due to its element-by-element basis (Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004).

Tourism destination, as a unique experiential product, is also judged by tourists on its price competitiveness. Dwyer, Forsyth, and Rao, (2000a, 2000b; 2002) provided a series of most detailed studies related to tourism price competitiveness. It is suggested that the measurement of destination price competitiveness plays an important part in any

framework of overall price and non-price competitiveness. Dwyer, Forsyth, and Rao (2000a) examined the price competitiveness of 19 tourism destinations by using Australia as a base country. The research compared the prices of a bundle of tourist goods and services in a range of competing destinations, through the development of indices of international price competitiveness. Two major categories of prices were also identified and distinguished: travel cost (prices related to travel to and from a destination) and ground cost (prices within the tourism destination). The price competitiveness of a destination varied from the perspective of tourists from different origin markets. The authors further constructed tourism price competitiveness indices to better understand the various determinants of tourism price competitiveness (e.g., exchange rate, price changes) and highlighted their influence on the indices. The method also allows for comparison of a destination's tourism price competitiveness relative to domestic tourism in origin markets and for its overall price competitiveness relative to major competitors. Again, 19 tourism destinations were examined during the period from 1985 to 1998 using Australia as a base case (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2002).

In addition to the price attribute, tourism destination also serves as a product which is highly environmental-sensitive. Hassan (2000) introduced a model of competitiveness that focuses on environmental sustainability factors associated with tourism destinations. Four determinants of market competitiveness are revealed: comparative advantage (includes those factors associated with both the macro and micro environments that are critical to market competitiveness); demand orientation (the destination's ability to respond to the changing nature of the market demand); industry structure (existence or absence of an organized tourism-related industry); and environmental commitment (the destination's commitment to the environment). The major principle of the research implied that it is critical for the tourism industry to understand key determinants of market competitiveness based on a global perspective in order to sustain its growth and vitality. It is commented that this model does not identify the key variables associated with measuring market and environmental sustainability (i.e., two major components of his model) (Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004)

In regard to the business-related competitiveness in tourism destination, Evans et al. (1995) used the three organizational strategies proposed by Porter (1980) – cost

leadership strategy, differentiation strategy and focus strategy – to examine the destination competitiveness. The study focuses upon destination management organizations (DMOs) and suggests that DMOs have to discover their core competencies (strengths) and build their strategy around these competencies. Similarly, Jones and Haven-Tang (2005) examined the destination competitiveness from the tourism enterprises perspective and emphasized the role of SMEs in the framework of destination competitiveness. The authors proposed that a destination can be considered as a hierarchy of entities – destination, tourism businesses including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and employee – together with the public-sector interventions that support and coordinate the strategic development of the destination to project a coherent image to potential customers.

Some researchers also investigated the destination competitiveness on specific types of tourism site. Go and Govers (1999) examined a destination's competitive position in the context of conference site selection. Seven attributes are revealed to be the indicators of destination competitiveness: facilities, accessibility, quality of service, overall affordability, location image, climate and environment, and attractiveness. These selected attributes specifically apply to the conventions sector of tourism and may not be able to generalize for other destination types.

Destination compositeness has been examined in the context of two or more competing locations in the international level. Kozak and Rimmington (1999) employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection to present a method of establishing competitiveness sets for international tourism destinations. The study revealed the direct competitors of Turkey for the summer tourism and examined the destination attributes of Turkey and competitor destinations to assess their comparative competitive positions. Further research conducted by Kozak (2004) investigated the competitive positions of the international tourism destinations such as Turkey and Mallorca, as well as other major self-selected destinations reported by the respondents (in this research, British tourists). The research used open-ended questionnaire to reveal the actual tourists' perceptions of various self-reported destination attributes regarding the strengths and weaknesses of these destinations. .

Enright and Newton (2004) argued that the approach to tourism destination competitiveness should go beyond conventional destination attributes to include generic business factors of competitiveness. The study tended to develop an instrument which contains both the competitiveness items related to destination's attractions and its tourism industry by surveying the tourism practitioners in Hong Kong. In a more recent study, the two researchers reinforced the statement by generating sets of both attributes, developing a methodology for assessing their relative importance and examining the degree to which their relative importance varies across locations. The results supported for the inclusion of both industry-level and destination attributes in studies of tourism competitiveness (Enright & Newton, 2005). In other words, a destination is competitive if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists, and this competitiveness is determined both by tourism-specific factors and a much wider range of factors that influence the tourism service providers.

Researchers (Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005; Huddon, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004) commonly agreed that the most detailed work on overall tourism competitiveness is that of Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Ritchie and Crouch (2000b, 2003). The conceptualization of tourism destination competitiveness is built on Porter's (1990) well-known framework of the "diamond of national competitiveness", which indicates that success in international competition in a given industry depends on the relative strength of an economy in a set of business-related features or "drivers" of competitiveness, namely "factor conditions"; "demand conditions"; "related and supporting industries", and "firm strategy, structure, and rivalry". Their approach extended the previous, pioneering studies, such as Pearce's (1997b) technique of "competitive destination analysis," which was proposed as a technique for systematically comparing diverse attributes of competing destinations, drawing attention to the need for comparisons across competitors. It is considered that these approaches also extended mainstream research focused primarily on destination image or attractiveness (Chon, Weaver, & Kim 1991; Hu & Ritchie 1993), which has been a long tradition in the destination research.

Generally, Ritchie and Crouch (1993, 2000a, 2000b, 2003) examined the applicability to tourism destinations of competitiveness research and models in other contexts ranging from companies and products, national industries, and national

economies, as well as competitiveness related to service industries. They claimed that the most competitive destination is one which brings about the greatest success, i.e., the most well-being for its residents on a sustainable basis. It is suggested that to be competitive, a tourism destination's development must be sustainable, not only economically and ecologically, but also socially, culturally and politically. The researchers mainly focused on long-term economic prosperity of the destination and the sustainable well-being of its residents regarding the destination competitiveness.

Specifically, Ritchie and Crouch (2003, p. 2) identified six dimensions of destination competitiveness (economic, political, social, cultural, technological, and environmental) and suggest that:

*what makes a tourism destination truly competitive is its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the nature capital of the destination for future generations.*

Ritchie and Crouch proposed a very comprehensive framework of destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b, 2003). The model incorporated the main elements of macro (national) and micro (firm) competitiveness, as well as comparative and competitive advantages of tourism destinations. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) indicated that tourism destination competitiveness is determined by five major components: “core resources and attractors”, “supporting factors and resources”, “destination management”, “destination policy, planning and development”, and “qualifying determinants”.

The “core resources and attractors” include the primary elements of destination appeal. It is the “fundamental reasons that prospective visitors choose one destination over another”. The factors included within this component of the model fall into seven categories: physiography and climate, culture and history, market ties, mix of activities, special events, and entertainment and the tourism superstructure. With the exception of market ties, these factors are consistent with mainstream destination attractiveness studies (Kim, 1998).

The other components of the model extend the determinants of tourism destination competitiveness by adding a wider range of factors that help link the destination “attractors” with the factors more usually found in studies of generic business competitiveness (Enright & Newton, 2005). The “supporting factors and resources” are factors that provide the foundation upon which a successful tourism industry can be established. They particularly include the extent and condition of a destination’s general infrastructure, enterprises, a range of facilitating resources, together with factors influencing the destination’s accessibility. The “destination policy, planning and development” contains the philosophy/values, vision, positioning/branding, development, competitive/collaborative analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and audit. It should be formulated as an integrative system of mechanism designed to work in concert, such that overall competitiveness and sustainability goals can be achieved (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

The next component “destination management” focuses on activities which implement the policy and planning framework to enhance the appeal of the core resources and attractors, strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the supporting factors, and adapt to constraints imposed by “qualifying and amplifying determinants”. Although the most researched aspect of management is destination marketing, the authors argue that a much wider set of management activities should be considered, including services, organization and the maintenance of the key tourism resources and attractors. The final component, the “qualifying and amplifying determinants”, includes factors that can modify, possibly in a negative sense, the influence of the other three components. Hence, these can possibly limit a destination’s capability to attract and satisfy potential tourists and hence affect its competitiveness. This component includes critically important variables, such as location, overall costs, and safety, which are beyond the control of the tourism sector but which play a major role in destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

As Enright and Newton (2004, 2005) have commented, by adding these more generic business related factors captured within the supporting factors, destination management and qualifying determinants, and the tourism-specific factors captured in the core resources and attractors, Crouch and Ritchie’s approach differs from, and advances,

other studies that focus primarily on models of the tourist product or destination image (Schroeder, 1996; Formica, 2002). The use of both tourism-specific and generic determinants also differs from work on tourism competitiveness that used Porter's basic framework, but paid only limited attention to more tourism-specific elements (Go, Pine, & Yu, 1994). Consequently, the study has the potential to offer a more comprehensive assessment of the factors that influence a destination's capability to attract and to satisfy its tourism customers (Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005).

Researchers have agreed that Ritchie and Crouch's model of tourism destination competitiveness is now "arguably the most comprehensive and most rigorous of all models of this type currently available" (Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004, p. 82). The multifaceted model is important to help comprehend the complex, fragmented and interrelated nature of tourism industry and internal relationships among the factors. However, to date, few studies have been conducted to empirically test this model, partly due to its complexity and dynamic nature.

### **2.3.4 Determinants/Indicators of Destination Competitiveness**

In addition to Ritchie and Crouch's model and proposed components of tourism destination competitiveness, several studies have specifically examined the determinants of destination competitiveness. Based on Ritchie and Crouch's work (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b, 2003) and other related literature, Dwyer and Kim (2003) proposed their model of destination competitiveness and provide a list of items in determining the destination competitiveness:

- Endowed resources – natural, cultural, historical resources
- Created resources – infrastructure, activities, shopping, entertainment, festival, events
- Supporting factors – general infrastructure, quality of service, accessibility, hospitality, market ties
- Destination management – management organizations, marketing, policy, HR, environmental management

- Situational conditions – micro environment, location, global environment, price, safety/security
- Market performance – visitor arrivals, expenditure, contribution to economy, investment, price, government support

Dwyer et al. (2004) also further used the factor analysis to empirically reveal the underlying dimensions of destination competitiveness through surveying tourism industry stakeholders in both Australia and Korea – industry operators, government officials, and tourism research academics. A total of 83 competitiveness indicators were presented in the survey and 12 factors were revealed. They are: destination management, nature-based and other resources, heritage resources, quality service, efficient public service, tourism shopping, government commitment, location and access, E-business, night life, visa requirements, amusement parks.

Pike (2004) demonstrated the determinants of destination competitiveness from the sources of comparative and competitive advantage related to Destination Management Organizations (DMO). The research indicates that sources of comparative advantages include the following:

- *Natural resources*: Location, landscape features and climate
- *Cultural resources*: History, language, cuisine, music, arts & crafts, traditions and customs
- *Human resources*: Skills and availability of the region's labor force; industrial relations; industry service standards; and attitudes of locals
- *Goodwill resources*: traveler's ancestral links to the destination; friends and/or relatives; novelty or fashionability of the destination; level of previous visitation and satisfaction; and perceived value

In addition, the sources of competitive advantage include

- *Developed resources*: accessibility, infrastructure, and the scale, range and capacity of man-made attractions and other superstructure
- *Financial resources*: size and certainty of the DMO budget; private sector marketing resources; influence on government fiscal policy such as taxation, investment incentives and capital expenditure on infrastructure developments; size of the local economy; access to capital for product

- *Legal resources*: brand trademarks, licenses and visa policies
- *Organization resources*: governance structure and policies; staffing levels, training, experience, skills and retention; organizational culture; innovation; technology; and flexibility
- *Information resources*: marketing information system
- *Relationship resources*: internal/external industry integration and alliances; distribution; stakeholder co-operation; and political influence
- *Implementation resources*: sustainable tourism development planning; brand development, positioning and promotion; ease of making reservations; consistency of stakeholders' delivery

It can be concluded that the research findings from different studies regarding the determinants/indicators of tourism destination competitiveness share some common features. This study adopts the findings of the above research to develop the measurement scale of destination competitiveness.

### **2.3.5 Destination Competitiveness and Quality of Tourism Experience**

In a simple form, tourism is a system combining an origin and a destination. This feature has been reflected by the nature of the production and consumption of tourism goods and services (Gunn, 1994; Leiper, 1979; Mill & Morrison, 1985). It is considered that the origin refers to the demand side of tourism, whereas the destination represents the supply side of the tourism. Furthermore, there are links between the origin (tourists) and destination - such as the transportation, information availability and marketing components – to make buying decisions easier. These links also enable the industry to affect directly the decisions of prospective customers through promotion, product development, and pricing strategies. The interaction between the two is reciprocal and influences the direction and intensity of the interaction (Fesenmaier & Uysal, 1990; Uysal, 1998; Formica & Uysal, 2006).

Researchers have indicated that a tourism destination is a collection of different products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area

visited. It is the visitor's "total experience" that is relevant to destination competitiveness and that presents a difficult challenge for the tourism researcher to fully articulate (Dwyer et al., 2004). In the overall tourism system, destination itself serves as a unique product which contains various segments: tourism resources (natural attractions, cultural, historical sites, etc.), infrastructures, accommodation, food service, facilities, activities, and so on. Tourism experience related to the sightseeing, activities, entertainments, hotel stay, food consumption, and interaction with the staff and local people generate the combined perception of the destination and impact the destination competitiveness.

Jafari (1982) suggested three elements of the supply side of tourism: tourism-oriented products, resident-oriented products, and background tourism elements. Tourism-oriented products are major tourism attributes that visitors directly use for achieving tourism activities and practices. They include accommodations, food service, transportation, travel agencies and tour operators, recreation and entertainment, and other travel-trade services. In the circumstances when tourists extend their stay at destination sites, they may increase their use of resident-oriented products, which are major attributes more likely used by local residents (e.g., hospitals, book stores, and barber shops, etc.). During the process in that tourists patronize local businesses, these outside visitors also are exposed to or experience the background tourism elements, such as the natural, socio-cultural, and man-made attractions that frequently constitute tourist' main reasons for travel. These elements collectively produce the ultimate tourism experience and can be examined simultaneously in the same context (Pyo, Uysal, & McLellan, 1991)

Tourism experience is a very dynamic and comprehensive concept. It is comprised of various elements and is difficult to define and measure. Tourism experience is subjective to different individuals and related to motivation, perception, value, meaning of places, satisfaction, quality of life, and so on (Jennings, 2006). Among the different approaches in examining the tourism experience, the chronological and temporal method focuses on the whole process of the tourist activity and perception from the very beginning of the tourism vacation (i.e., the planning stage) to the very end of the experience (after-trip reflection). It is considered as a manageable and well-defined approach to look at the tourist's overall tourism experience. Tourists' activities and experiences are investigated along with their actual happening in a time order. The

research regards this temporal approach an appropriate method to examine the tourism experience and its relationship with the destination competitiveness.

A behavioral perspective of the nature of the interaction between demand and supply suggests that people travel or participate in tourism activities because they are pushed and pulled by travelers' motivations and destination attributes (Dann 1977; Crompton, 1979; Pyo, Mihalik, & Uysal, 1989; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). In the pre-trip planning phase of the leisure vacation, tourists intend to search a destination which could provide high quality of the tourism experience. At the same time, the experience in making travel and accommodation arrangement, as well as the interactions with the travel agencies, tour operators, and destination management companies will affect their overall tourist experience. Similarly, tourists demand for high quality of tourism goods and services during their en-route, destination stay phases, which influence their after-trip reflection of the overall tourist experience and their perception of the destination as a whole. Therefore, tourists' demand in the tourism system could be summarized as the pursuit of "quality of tourism experience". On the other hand, a tourism destination, in order to obtain competitive position comparing to other alternative destinations, needs to focus on its competitive advantages of the tourism resources, if the comparative advantages may not be easily improve or change (for example, the natural resources such as mountains, natural wonders or historical/cultural sites). The supply of the destination attributes directly influences the competitiveness of the destination and its relative positions among competitors.

A competitive tourism destination is one which provides superior tourism experience to that of alternative destinations or competitors (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). In this sense, destination competitiveness is closely interrelated to the tourism experience or is considered a function of the perceived quality of tourism experience related to the destination. Therefore, for this study, the relationship between destination competitiveness and the quality of tourism experience are proposed as the following hypotheses:

H1: The quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness share a common variance.

H2: The quality of tourism experience (including pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site, and after-trip experience) has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

This hypothesis itself is an overall statement. It is divided into four separate hypotheses and tested individually.

H2a: The quality of pre-trip planning experience has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

H2b: The quality of en-route experience has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

H2c: The quality of on-site experience has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

H2d: The quality of after-trip reflection has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

## **2.4 TOURIST INVOLVEMENT**

### **2.4.1 Definitions**

Involvement is a widely used concept in consumer behavior literature and it has obtained increasing attention from leisure and recreation researchers within the last decade, as indicated to be central to leisure experience (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990, 1997, 1999; Dimanche, Havitz, & Howard, 1991, 1993; Reid & Crompton, 1993; Schuett, 1993; Jamrozy et al., 1996; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). The involvement construct is considered as one of the most important determinants of consumer behavior and a central point in explaining decision-making process (Broderic & Mueller, 1999; Dimanche, Havitz, & Howard, 1993; Havitz & Dimanche, 1999).

Involvement can be defined as the degree to which consumers engage in different aspects of the consumption process: product, advertising, information search, information processing, decision-making, and the act of purchasing (Broderic & Mueller, 1999). In the leisure and tourism domain, Manfredo (1989) defined involvement as the degree of interest in an activity and the affective response associated with that interest. Selin and Howard (1988) defined involvement as “the state of identification existing between an individual and a recreational activity, at one point in time, characterized by some level of enjoyment and self-expression being achieved through the activity” (p. 237). McIntyre (1989) addressed involvement as the personal meaning or affective attachment an individual has for an activity. This concept, namely enduring involvement, emphasizes long-term attachments or enduring properties rather than a situational feeling or state.

Havitz and Dimanche (1990) drew from Laurent and Kapferer’s (1985) work and extended Selin and Howard’s (1988) definition of involvement in tourism. It is stated that involvement is “a psychological state of motivation, arousal, or interest between an individual and recreational activities, tourist destinations, or related equipment, at one point in time, characterized by the perception of the following elements: importance, pleasure value, sign value, risk probability, and risk consequences” (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990, p. 180).

#### **2.4.2 Tourist Involvement and Its Measurement**

The initial research in involvement in consumer behavior includes the early work of Sherif and Cantril (1947) and the social judgment theory developed by Brunswik (1956) and Sherif and Hovland (1961). Sherif and Cantril (1947) proposed that involvement exists when a social object is related by the individual to the domain of the ego. It is generally seen as a motivating or a causal variable. Involvement has potential effect on people’s attitudes toward an activity or product, their receptivity toward promotional stimuli, and their behavior with respect to the activity or product (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990). In social judgment theory, a central concept is ego-involvement, which influences the probability of attitude change resulting from some sort of persuasive

information, and is directly related to consumers' styles of usage and consumption of a product (Laaksonen, 1994).

Therefore, involvement has been generally identified with interest, excitement, and enthusiasm for product class, activities, or information, as well as personal values, ego-involvement, and importance and risk perceptions (Jamrozy et al., 1996). It is summarized to be a "motivational state of mind of a person with regard to an object or activity. ...It reveals itself as the level of interest in that object or activity" (Mittal, 1983; Mittal & Lee, 1989). It is also observed that consumers assign both emotional and rational values to products, measuring the "hedonic" and "utilitarian" aspects of consumption (Zaichkowsky, 1987).

Zaichkowsky (1985) proposed that the "personal relevance" should embed in the concept of involvement, which is widely accepted as a general view. It is suggested that consumers' level of involvement with an object, situation, or actions is determined by the degree to which they perceive that concept to be personally relevant. It is represented by the perceived linkage between their needs, goals, and values, and their product knowledge (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003; Celsi & Olson, 1988, Jamrozy et al., 1996).

Although a number of theoretical models for the conceptualization of involvement have been proposed and discussed, there is a lack of agreement on the definition of the term as well as the measurement scale in the literature (Havitz & Dimanche, 1999). Among all the attempts of measurement scale development, two research have captured most researchers' interest and been used and tested most widely, which are Zaichkowsky's (1985) "Personal Involvement Inventory" (PII) and Laurent and Kapferer's (1985) "Consumer Involvement Profile" (CIP) (Jamrozy, Backman, & Backman, 1996; Havitz & Dimanche, 1990, 1997, 1999).

The PII model suggests that involvement is mainly related to the personal relevance to the consumer of a particular product, advertisement, or a situation (Rodgers & Schneider, 1993). It is proposed and supported to work as a uni-dimensional structure (Zaichkowsky, 1985) and modified in some later studies to be a two-factor structure (McQuarrie & Munson, 1987; Zaichkowsky, 1987; Broderic & Mueller, 1999; Mittal, 1989). Researchers have employed this scale in tourism and leisure studies, specifically

in examining tourist behavior and people's participation in leisure activities (Backman & Crompton, 1989, 1991; Havitz & Crompton, 1990).

Compared to PII scale, the CIP framework demonstrates a multi-dimensional structure and has been used and tested more extensively (Broderic & Mueller, 1999; Jamrozy, Backman & Backman, 1996; Havitz, Dimanche, & Howard, 1993; Dimanche et al., 1991; Kapferer & Laurent, 1993; Rogers & Schneider, 1993). Laurent and Kapferer (1985) proposed that involvement is a multi-dimensional function with five dimensions: (1) the interest in, or perceived importance of the product; (2) the hedonic or pleasure value of the product, its emotional appeal, its ability to provide pleasure and affect; (3) the symbolic or sign value attributed by the consumer to the product, its purchase, or its consumption; (4) the perceived importance of negative consequences in case of a poor choice; and (5) the perceived importance of making such a choice. Researchers have utilized CIP involvement scale in the context of recreation, leisure, and tourism settings and supported its multi-dimensional structure. However, no exact dimensions have been revealed in terms of the number and content.

Most leisure and tourism products are purchased, consumed, and evaluated in the form of services such as vacation trips. Therefore, the production, consumption, and evaluation differ from those of tangible goods, and the purchase process of services and consumers' involvement is likely to differ from that of durable goods (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). Tourism product/service purchasing and consumption usually take place at locations other than where the consumers live. Their decision-making process for purchasing tourism services takes much longer time than other tangible products (Gursoy, 2001). Furthermore, most of the time, tourists do not get any tangible return for their investment, i.e., tourism product is an experiential process. In this sense, tourism consumers have to undertake a high-level of perceived risk due to the high personal investment of time, effort, and money. Therefore, it is considered that they are likely to be more involved in the decision-making, selection, and purchase processes of tourism product (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003).

Havitz and Dimanche (1990) suggested 15 propositions that evolve from a review of involvement-related literature to test this concept in the realm of recreation and tourism context. They concluded that the measurement scale for involvement is

multifaceted, that tourist experience is likely to be highly involving, that ongoing search behavior and frequency of participation in the activity are positively related to an individual's involvement profile, and that persuasive promotions would be the most effective if directed towards individuals with high involvement profiles.

Notifying the lack of standardized instrumentation available for generic use in the tourism literature, Dimanche, Havitz and Howard (1991) translated the CIP scale from French into English and tested the scale in the context of recreational and tourism activities. The research findings indicated that the involvement includes four dimensions: the interest in, or perceived importance of the product/service; as well as the perceived pleasure value attributed to the product (importance/pleasure); the perceived sign value attributed by the consumer to the product (sign); the perceived importance of negative consequences in a case of poor choice (risk consequences); and the perceived probability of making such a mistake (risk probability).

In regards to the unique characteristics of leisure and tourism products consumption, Reid and Crompton (1993) developed propositions regarding the relationship of involvement and decision-making paradigms and suggested that individuals who purchase leisure services tend to have a high level of involvement, and that they will spend a greater amount of time and effort in the search, evaluation, and participation in the activities.

To test the involvement issue in tourism context, Jamrozy, Backman and Backman (1996) examined the relationship between involvement, opinion leadership, and trip behavior for nature-based tourism. The study investigated the nature-based tourism participants and the dimensions of involvement and their ability to predict opinion leadership. The researchers utilized both PII and CIP measurement scales to determine each involvement scale's multi-dimensionality and applicability for travelers interested in nature-based tourism. The research findings indicated that highly involved nature-oriented travelers tend to be more receptive to information concerning the travel product or destination and spread that information willingly. It is also suggested that opinion leaders take more trips and use slightly more information sources.

As a review of the previous leisure and tourism literature on involvement, Havitz and Dimanche's work (1997) examined and critiqued two propositions originally

proposed in their earlier work (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990) with respect to leisure involvement on the basis of evidence from 50 leisure involvement data sets: (1) multifaceted scales are more appropriate than single faceted scales for measuring leisure and tourism involvement; and (2) leisure and touristic experiences should be highly involving on all facets. The study summarized empirical leisure involvement research conducted from 1987-1997 and indicates leisure involvement is a more complex construct than originally suggested. It is revealed that most of the research in tourism and leisure has utilized involvement as a multi-dimensional scale: excluding comparison research, only nine of thirty-three studies published between 1991 and 1997 used uni-dimensional scales.

More recent research has examined the involvement concept in various aspects in leisure and tourism area. Jang et al. (2000) applied the concept of involvement to casino gamblers visiting Black Hawk, Colorado. Following Laurent and Kapferer's (1985) CIP, their study identified three domains of involvement in the context of casino gamblers: self-identity/self-expression, pleasure/importance, and centrality. The findings of this study reported that the amount of participation in gambling was positively correlated to all three involvement domains. Kim and Petrick (2004) segmented horse racing gamblers in South Korea using the concept of involvement. The research identified the distinctiveness of involvement clusters (segments) on motivation to a racecourse, behaviors and attitudes toward horse racing gambling. Gursoy and Gavcar (2003) examined the applicability of the CIP scale on international leisure tourists to reveal the underlying dimensions of involvement. The study suggested three involvement dimensions: pleasure/interest, risk probability, and risk importance.

### **2.4.3 The Moderating Effect of Tourist Involvement**

Tourist involvement, as one of the most widely used concepts in the consumer behavior research, serves as an important factor to moderate the interaction between the quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. Researchers have indicated that involvement is one of the most important determinants in consumer

behavior, and influences many aspects of consumption process such as information search, decision-making, perception, attitude, product/experience evaluation, etc. (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983; Swinyard, 1993; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Kim & Crompton, 2002; Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Sung, 2004). Tourists with different level of involvement in their tourism consumption process are proposed to have different perceptions of the quality of tourism experience and their perception on destination competitiveness. It is admitted that the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness could be influenced by many other issues such as demographic, psychographic characteristics, motivation, and tourists' general travel preference and habit. However, tourist involvement is regarded as the most important moderating factor since it is the determinant of the consumer behavior and widely influences the whole process of the tourism consumption. Therefore, the third hypothesis deals with the moderating effect of the tourist involvement with the relationship between the perception of quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness.

H3: The relationship between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

This hypothesis is divided into four individual hypotheses and tested separately with regard to each phase of the tourism/vacation experience.

H3a: The relationship between the quality of pre-trip planning experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

H3b: The relationship between the quality of en-route tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

H3c: The relationship between the quality of on-site tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

H3d: The relationship between the quality of after-trip reflection and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented a literature review that builds the theoretical framework for constructs in this study. The first section explained the unique characteristics of tourism product and tourism consumption. The literature related to the quality of tourism experience was discussed. The second section reviewed the concept of destination competitiveness and the various approaches in examining the competitiveness model of tourism destinations. The third section addressed the tourist involvement concept and the measurement scales utilized in previous studies. The next chapter provides a summary of research hypotheses and discusses research design and methodology in detail. The items that are used to measure each construct are also discussed in a brief manner.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to discuss the methodology and research design applied in this study. In the first section of the chapter, research questions and the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter One are presented, followed by the specific hypotheses empirically tested in the research. The second section provides a discussion of the research design and survey instrument. Specifically, the study population, sampling frame, data collection method, and the procedure of developing the survey are introduced. The section also includes the related procedures regarding the pretest sample and data collection. The variables and scaling used to measure the constructs are provided in this section. The third section describes the statistical methods (Canonical Correlation Analysis, Structural Equation Modeling) that are employed in the study and the related validity and reliability issues of the measurement scale.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

The research intends to examine the inter-relationship between two major concepts, i.e., quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness, from the tourists' perspective. Three research questions are addressed in this study. The first question is to examine to what extent the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness relate to each other. The second question is to investigate the influence of the quality of tourism experiences related to a destination on tourists' perception of destination competitiveness. The third question is to examine the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

To achieve the objectives of the study, an extensive review of the existing literature has been conducted, and a theoretical structural model is developed accordingly to examine the relationship between the major concepts of quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. The theoretical structural relationships among the constructs are developed (Figure 3.1).

In the structural model, tourists' perceived destination competitiveness is considered as the ultimate dependent or endogenous construct. It is proposed that destination competitiveness is affected by the quality of tourism experience related to the destination, which includes their experience in pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site, and after-trip (reflection) phases. These four constructs of quality of tourism experience, are considered as the exogenous constructs in the relationship. Furthermore, tourist involvement, as the moderating construct, influences the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. Figure 3.1 presents the theoretical model and the proposed hypotheses in this study. Specific hypotheses are presented in the next section in this chapter.

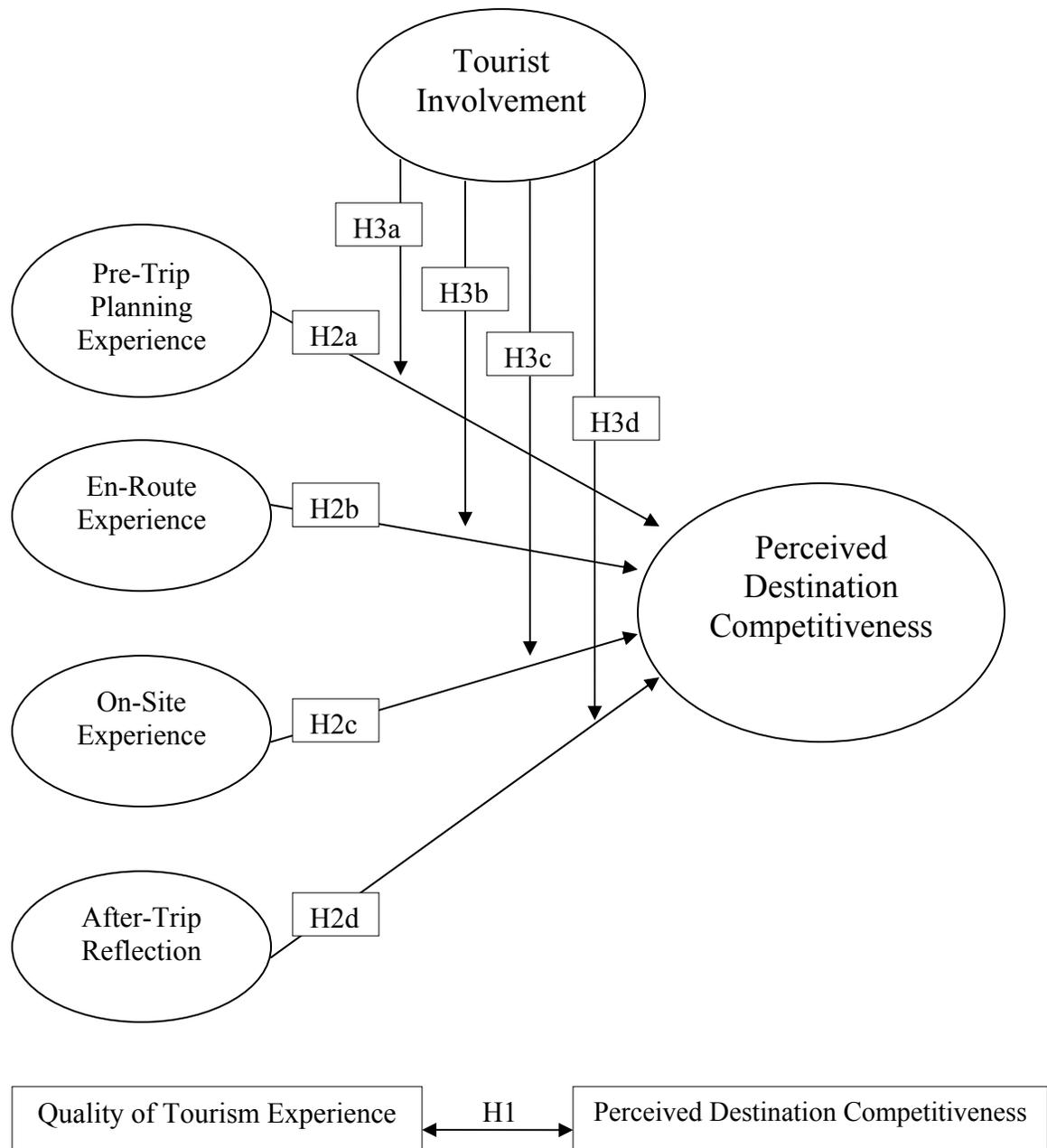


Figure 3.1 Proposed Tourist Perceived Destination Competitiveness Model with Proposed Hypotheses

### 3.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The nine research hypotheses and a structural model are proposed to determine how quality of tourism experience influences the tourists' perception of destination competitiveness, and whether the level of tourist involvement affects the relationship between quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. In this study, tourism experience is interpreted to the survey respondents as the overall combination of the different phases of their vacation experience. The research hypotheses are listed below:

- H1: The quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness share a common variance.
- H2a: The quality of pre-trip planning experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.
- H2b: The quality of en-route experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.
- H2c: The quality of on-site experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.
- H2d: The quality of after-trip reflection as part of the tourism experience has a positive relationship with tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.
- H3a: The relationship between the quality of pre-trip planning experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.
- H3b: The relationship between the quality of en-route experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.
- H3c: The relationship between the quality of on-site experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.
- H3d: The relationship between the quality of after-trip reflection and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

## **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.4.1 Study Population**

In research methodology, population can be defined as any complete group of entities such as people, organizations, institutions, or the like that share some common set of characteristics in agreement with the purpose of the study under investigation and about which researchers want to be able to draw conclusions and plan to generalize (Zikmund, 2002). This research aims to investigate the relationships between the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness. Therefore, the population of the study is leisure tourists. Specifically in this study, a leisure tourist is defined as a traveler who is at least 18 years old or above and took at least one leisure trip for at least two nights away from home.

### **3.4.2 Sampling Frame**

Sampling is the process of selecting observations using a small number of units of a larger population to draw conclusions about the whole population. A sampling frame, also called the working population, is the actual list of elements (sampling units) from which a sample may be drawn (Zikmund, 2002).

The sampling frame for this study includes residents of Virginia who are 18 years of age or older. The sampling frame was obtained through two steps. First, the number of respondents from each county and city was determined by a stratified sampling method due to the ratio of the population of the respective county/city to the Estimation Census of Virginia 2004, which is generated based on the actual Census of Virginia 2001 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51000.html>). Second, a random sample was employed to select the assigned number of respondents from each county and city of Virginia (Appendix D). It was used as the sample frame to send the survey questionnaire. The mailing list of the sample was obtained from the ReferenceUSA database ([www.referenceusa.com](http://www.referenceusa.com)), which provides residential information collected from

telephone directories and is available at large public libraries. Each listing appears in the database exactly as it appears in the phone book and unlisted phone numbers are not included.

### **3.4.3 Sample Size**

The number of observations is a critical issue for any statistical analysis and its assumption tests, and also is a crucial factor in determining the extent to which the procedures of the currently existing model evaluation is reliable. The study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the proposed structural model and hypotheses. A critical question in SEM involves how large a sample is needed. Even though individual observations are not needed, as with all other multivariate methods, the sample size plays an important role in the estimation and interpretation of SEM results (Hair et al., 1998).

The issues of the impact of sample size (both small and large) need to be considered using SEM. Small samples require more careful consideration of the conditions for valid statistical power and inference. It may be easy but not valid to make a conclusion about model fit when samples are too small and tested models are likely to fit. However, too large sample sizes could also cause problems since they are likely to result in poor goodness-of-fit indices and make it difficult to draw conclusions about the model fit.

Researchers have addressed the sample size issue for the SEM technique. Despite the lack of absolute criteria on the “correct” sample size, there are a number of factors that impact the sample size requirements, including model misspecification, model size, departures from normality, and estimation procedure (Hair et al., 1998). It is suggested that a sample size of 100 to 150 is acceptable to ensure appropriate use of maximum likelihood estimation (MLE), and it is more appropriate if a ratio of 10 respondents per parameter is obtained to meet the requirement of model size. Furthermore, the ratio of respondents to parameters should increase with a ratio of 15 respondents for each parameter if the data have some violation of multivariate normality. Therefore, it is

recommended that a sample size of 200 is appropriate for using SEM (Hair et al., 1998). In addition, based on the general rule concluded from previous research results, the model and number of fit indices such as GFI, AGFI, NNFI, CFI (or BFI), and CN are relatively and consistently stable across the MLE method at a sample size of 250 or greater when the latent constructs are independent. Therefore, this study intends to obtain the targeted usable sample size of a 300 or greater to ensure the solution for the final structural model.

The study also employs canonical correlation analysis (CCA) as a statistical method in data analysis to examine the maximum relationship between the quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. Similar to the sample size requirements of SEM, CCA is sensitive to too large or too small sample. Sample sizes that are very small will not present the correlations well, thus obscuring any meaningful relationships. Very large samples will have a tendency to indicate statistical significance in all instances, even where practical significance is not indicated. There is the necessity for a sufficient number of observations per variable. It is suggested that researchers maintain at least 10 observations per variable to avoid “over-fitting” the data (Hair et al., 1998).

It is commonly found that the response rate for mail surveys tends to be low, which may lead to the potential problem of generalizing the results. It is revealed that 30% response rate is common for the general population but it could be as low as 10%, depending upon the questionnaire content and study design (Smith, 1995). Particularly, according to the recent studies on Virginia residents, the response rate could be around 13.5% (Kim, 2002) or 15% (Yoon, 1998; Han, 2005) to 24% (Gursoy, 2001). For this study, the researcher takes a conservative view and assumes a maximum response rate of 15%, as well as takes into account of the number of possible unusable returned questionnaires. Therefore, in order to meet the sample size of 300-400, which is considered an appropriate number in this research, a total of 3,000 survey questionnaires were mailed to the target population.

### **3.4.4 Data Collection**

A self-administered mail survey was utilized to collect the data, since a mail questionnaire can reach a geographically dispersed sample simultaneously at a relatively low cost (Zikmund, 2002). Following the general rule that the length of a mail questionnaire should not exceed six pages (Bean & Roszkowski, 1995), the questionnaire was arranged in four pages: 17" x 11" paper was single folded to make four pages of 8½" x 11". A cover letter included the name and address of the respondent and signed individually was attached to the questionnaire to explain the purpose of the research. A self-addressed, business reply envelope was also enclosed in the questionnaire package to provide convenience for respondents to return the completed questionnaire. Three weeks after the survey was mailed, a reminder postcard was sent to those who have not returned their survey.

## **3.5 MEASUREMENT SCALES AND INSTRUMENTS**

### **3.5.1 Survey Development and Pretest**

The measurement scales and survey questionnaire were developed in several stages following the procedures recommended by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991). First of all, in addition to the research on the related literature review, an open-ended survey regarding the perceptions of the quality of vacation experience and destination competitiveness was distributed to all the faculty and graduate students in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Furthermore, an in-depth focus group study was conducted with several graduate students in the department to summarize and refine the responses from them and help the further development of the survey questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed based on the literature review, the objectives of the study, and the responses from the open-ended survey and focus group discussion results. The content validity of the items was assessed by the professors and graduate

students in and outside the department. They were asked to provide comments on the layout, content, wording, and understandability, and to edit and improve the items to enhance the clarity, readability and content validity. They were also asked to identify any of the scale items that were redundant with other scale items and to offer suggestions for improving the proposed scale. Based on their suggestions, the items of the measurement scale were revised and reorganized.

The questionnaire was then distributed through an online survey link to all the graduate students in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management and 840 undergraduate students in three large classes at Virginia Tech. The survey link was put at the Virginia Tech online survey website and the link was sent to the students through email by asking them to access the particular web address and complete the survey. The responses were analyzed to test reliability and validity of the measurement items. The feedback received was also used to refine the initial instrument scales and develop the final version of the survey instrument.

### **3.5.2 Survey Instruments**

The survey consisted of five major parts. As mentioned earlier, tourism experience (or tourist experience) is communicated to the research survey respondents as their experience of leisure vacation, due to its easiness for understanding and the commonly accepted notion that a vacation involves tourism activities related to a destination. The first part of the survey included questions regarding tourists' perceptions on quality of vacation experience. The respondents were asked about their experience related to pre-trip planning activities, en-route to the destination and the return trip, on-site destination experience, and trip reflections. The second part asked questions about respondents' perception on destination competitiveness based on their general vacation experience. The third part was about the tourists' involvement related to their vacation experience. The fourth part asked questions related to the general tourist behavior, such as the number of vacations taken per year, general length of stay, destination type, travel party, and so on. The last part asked questions in regard to the respondents' demographic

characteristics, including the age, gender, marital status, education level, household income, occupation, and travel personality type (respondents are asked to self-report if they are “allocentric” or “psychocentric”).

The quality of the tourism/vacation experience was examined based on four factors: (1) the quality of tourism experience in pre-trip planning phase, (2) the quality of tourism experience in en-route phase, (3) the quality of tourism experience on destination site, and (4) the quality of tourism experience about after-trip reflection. These specific dimensions are based on the phase model of travel proposed by Clawson and Knetsch (1966) and other related models regarding travel phases (Killion, 1992; Craig-Smith & French, 1994; Neal, 2000; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 2004).

The perceived quality of a leisure tourism experience can be explained by examining the various interactions that occur with destination travel/tourism service providers during the pre-trip planning, en-route, destination site, and reflection phases of the vacation. During the pre-trip planning phase, the destination travel/tourism service providers may assist travelers with travel arrangements, hotel accommodation, and so on. While en route, travelers’ experience could be influenced by the ease of access to the destination and the service provided by the airlines or the local airport, railway, and/or other transportation staff. At the destination site, the tourist’s experience relies on the natural/man-made tourism resources, the interaction with the local hospitality and tourism service providers in terms of accommodation, foods, entertainment, etc., and the communication with local people and probably, other tourists. After-trip reflection involves those enduring thoughts regarding the trip that remain with the traveler after the trip has been completed, and is considered essential in contributing to the overall quality of experience to the traveler (Neal, 2000; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 2004).

### 3.5.3 Measurement Variables

#### Exogenous Construct

##### 3.5.3.1 Quality of Tourism Experience

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the tourism experience, with a variety of approaches and perspectives in terms of perception, image, satisfaction, values/benefit, symbol/meaning, and motivation issues. In this study, the framed chronological and temporal aspects of tourism experience is employed, in which the tourist experience is divided into four different phases or stages: (1) pre-trip planning phase, (2) en-route phase (travel to the destination and the return trip back home), (3) destination on-site phase (destination stay), and (4) after-trip phase (reflection and/or recollection stage) (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Killion, 1992; Arnould & Price, 1993; Craig-Smith & French, 1994; Laws, 1995; Hull & Michael, 1995; Hull, Stewart, & Yi, 1992; Neal, 2000; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 2004).

The measurement scale is developed based on previous studies and modified based on the outcome of the pretest which included an open-ended questionnaire and focus group discussion with the faculty and graduate students in the Hospitality and Tourism Management department at Virginia Tech. Survey respondents are asked to indicate their perceptions of four sets of items related to quality of vacation experience. A five-point Likert scale was used in which 1=Not At All Important, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Important, 5=Very Important. Specifically, respondents are asked whether different factors in pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site, after-trip (reflection) phases would contribute to the quality of tourism experience.

#### Pre-Trip Planning Phase

The measurement items are about respondents' opinions on the quality of their tourism experience with planning and making travel arrangements. Respondents are asked to rate the importance of various indicators in contributing to high-quality vacation experience based on their general opinions and experience. The items are listed as:

1. Having plenty of time to plan the trip.
2. Having easy access to the information related to the destination.
3. Being able to get abundant information related to the destination.
4. Receiving high quality services from professionals (travel agents, hotel reservation staff, visitor center staff, etc.) when planning the vacation.
5. Making problem-free vacation arrangements (transportation, hotel, etc.).
6. Having reasonable prices for the vacation (transportation, accommodation, activities, etc.).

### *En-Route Phase*

The measurement items for en-route phase experience focus on respondents' experiences with the travel to the destination site and the return trip back home.

1. Having easy access to the destination from home.
2. Safe transportation to and from the destination.
3. Comfortable transportation to and from the destination.
4. Receiving clear direction and guidance (either at the airport or driving along the way).
5. Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination.
6. Having problem-free travel to and from the destination.

### *On-Site Phase*

The measurement items in this section focus on respondents' experience at the destination site.

1. Favorable weather/climate at the destination.
2. Unique tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site, etc.).
3. High quality of accommodation at the destination.

4. High quality of food at the destination.
5. Good facilities at the destination.
6. Having a variety of activities/entertainment to choose from at the destination.
7. Overall reasonable prices at the destination.
8. Receiving high quality service at the destination.
9. Clean environment at the destination.
10. Pleasant interaction/communication with the local people at the destination.
11. User-friendly guidance/information at destination.
12. Ensured safety and security at the destination.
13. Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination.

#### *After-Trip Reflection Phase*

The measurement items in this section focus on respondents' post-trip reflection about their vacation experience.

1. Having memorable items to bring back home (photographs, souvenirs, etc.).
2. Getting good value for the money for the whole trip.
3. Having a sense of freedom during the vacation.
4. Feeling relaxed and refreshed after the vacation.
5. The feeling of having spent quality time with family and friends.
6. Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation.
7. Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation.

### **Endogenous Construct**

#### **3.5.3.2 Perceived Destination Competitiveness**

In recent years, competitiveness of the tourism destination has gained increasing scholarly attention in the travel and tourism field. Several studies have examined the

determinants of destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b, 2003; Ritchie, Crouch, & Hudson, 2001; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Dwyer et al., 2004; Pearce, 1997; Mihalic, 2000; Buhalis, 2000; Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004; Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005). The measurement scale for this study is derived from the previous literature. Some minor adjustment was made based on the specific tourists' perspective and the outcome of the initial open-ended questionnaire and focus group discussion with the faculty and graduate students in the Hospitality and Tourism Management department at Virginia Tech.

Survey respondents are asked to indicate the importance of different measurement items related to destination competitiveness based on their general vacation experience. The items are measured on a five point Likert scale in which 1=Not Important At All, 2=Unimportant, 3= Neutral, 4=Important, 5=Very Important.

1. Easy access to the destination (frequency/capacity of transportation).
2. Smooth travel to and from the destination.
3. Easy access to meaningful information about the destination before travel.
4. Problem-free vacation arrangements with the destination.
5. Favorable weather/climate at the destination.
6. Unique tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site, local culture, customs, etc.).
7. High quality tourism infrastructure (accommodations, restaurants, local transportation, telecommunication system, health/medical facilities, etc.).
8. The destination's commitment to preserving the destination environment.
9. A good variety of activities offered for tourists at the destination (special events/festivals, entertainment, nightlife, etc.).
10. Friendliness and hospitality of the local people.
11. High quality of services/amenities at the destination.
12. Competitive price for the overall vacation relative to competitor destinations.
13. The destination's commitment to providing a safe and secure environment.
14. The overall destination experience offered "fits" the needs of visitors.
15. The destination's commitment to promoting a positive image.

16. The nature of the destination's setting helps visitors to function comfortably in daily activities (availability of currency exchange facilities, foreign language help, ease of making reservation, etc.).
17. Policies/regulations favorable to tourists (low or no taxes on tourist services, access to public resources such as museums and public buildings, etc.).
18. The destination's commitment to providing a satisfactory vacation experience.
19. A good value for the money spent for the vacation experience.
20. The destination's continuous commitment to the ongoing improvement and development of a high-quality destination.
21. The destination's overall favorable image in the world community.
22. The destination's alliance/connection with intermediates in the tourism sector (tour operators, airlines, hotel chains, etc.).

### **Moderating Construct**

#### **3.5.3.3 Tourist Involvement**

There are two major measurement scales to examine the involvement concept – Zaichkowsky's (1985) *Personal Involvement Inventory* (PII) and Laurent and Kapferer's (1985) *Consumer Involvement Profile* (CIP). Both scales have been used and tested extensively. Zaichkowsky's PII has been supported in its uni-dimensional structure or two-factor structure (McQuarrie & Munson, 1987; Mittal, 1989; Reinecke & Goldsmith, 1993; Zaichkowsky, 1987), whereas Laurent and Kapferer's CIP has been supported as a multidimensional structure and has received more attention (Dimanche et al., 1991; Havitz, Dimanche, & Howard, 1993; Kapferer & Laurent, 1993; McQuarrie & Munson, 1987; Rogers & Schneider, 1993). It is more likely for the researchers to agree that an involvement scale is a multidimensional construct and thus CIP has been employed more frequently. It is reported by Havitz and Dimanche (1997) that only nine of thirty-three studies published between 1991 and 1997 used uni-dimensional scales. Researchers developed and adjusted the CIP measurement scale from different approaches according

to the specific research objectives and contexts (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Selin & Howard, 1988; Dimanche et al., 1991; Madrigal et al., 1992; Jamrozy et al., 1996; Mittal, 1989, 1995; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003).

For this research, the measurement scale of tourist involvement was developed based on CIP and the relevant previous literature mentioned above. Survey respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements related to tourist involvement based on their general leisure vacation experience. The items are measured on a five point Likert scale in which 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

The existing literature has suggested that the measurement scale for involvement generally reaches a high reliability. Table 3.1 indicates a detailed description of the related research on the involvement scale and its reliability information.

Based on the literature, the measurement of tourist involvement is as follows:

1. I attach great importance to a vacation.
2. The vacation I buy tells something about me.
3. It gives me pleasure to purchase a vacation.
4. It is really annoying to purchase a vacation that is not suitable.
5. Buying a vacation is rather complicated.
6. Whenever one buys a vacation, he/she never really knows for sure whether it is the one that should have been bought.
7. You can tell a lot about a person by the vacation he/she chooses.
8. When I purchase a vacation, it is not a big deal if I make a mistake.
9. A vacation is somewhat of a pleasure to me.
10. When I face a variety of vacation choices, I always feel a bit at a loss to make my choice.
11. A vacation interests me a great deal.
12. When one purchases a vacation, he/she is never certain of his/her choice.
13. If, after I buy a vacation, my choice proves to be poor, I would be really upset.
14. The vacation I buy gives a glimpse of the type of person I am.

Table 3.1 Dimensions of Tourist Involvement

Research Article	Scale	# of Dimensions	Description of Dimensions
Laurent & Kapferer (1985)	CIP	5	Interest/importance ( $\alpha=.80$ ) Hedonic (pleasure) ( $\alpha=.88$ ) Sign ( $\alpha=.90$ ) Risk probability ( $\alpha=.82$ ) Risk importance ( $\alpha=.72$ )
Dimanche et al. (1991)	CIP	4	Importance ( $\alpha=.80$ ) pleasure ( $\alpha=.89$ ) Sign ( $\alpha=.96$ ) Risk consequences ( $\alpha=.89$ ) Risk probability ( $\alpha=.90$ )
Jamrozy et al. (1996)	CIP	4	Pleasure/Interest ( $\alpha=.83$ ) Sign ( $\alpha=.77$ ) Risk probability ( $\alpha=.67$ ) Risk importance ( $\alpha=.59$ )
Gursoy & Gavcar (2003)	CIP	3	Interest/pleasure ( $\alpha=.79$ ) Risk probability ( $\alpha=.76$ ) Risk importance ( $\alpha=.61$ )
Jang et al. (2000)	CIP	3	Self-identity/self-expression Pleasure/importance Centrality ( $\alpha: N/A$ )
Kim & Petrick (2004)	CIP	3	Importance-pleasure ( $\alpha=.85$ ) Sign ( $\alpha=.70$ ) Risk ( $\alpha=.70$ )

### 3.5.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are central issues in the measurement of constructs. Reliability is the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable. It is the extent to which the measurement is random error-free and produces the same results on repeated trials (DeVellis, 1991; Gable & Wolf, 1993). Reliability has two dimensions: repeatability and internal consistency, which could be measured by using test-retest and internal consistency methods (Zikmund, 2002). The test-retest method measures the stability of a scale over time. The split-half method is a type of internal consistency reliability that estimates an index of reliability for measures of a concept that are divided into two equal parts. The dimension of internal consistency refers to the ability of a scale item to correlate with other items of the scale that are intended to measure the same construct. The reliability of the measurement instrument is assessed by Cronbach's alpha. A Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability estimate of .70 or higher indicate that the measurement scale that is used to measure a construct is moderately reliable (Hair et al., 1998). If the composite reliability is not high enough to be accepted, the scales are revised by deleting items as a result of the reliability analysis. The composite reliability, as calculated with LISREL estimates, is analogous to coefficient alpha and is calculated by the formula by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Validity refers to how well the measurement and indicator(s) capture what it is designed to measure. There are several different types of validity: face/content validity (item sampling adequacy or the agreement among professionals that the item is measuring what it is supposed to measure), criterion validity (the degree of correspondence between a measure and a criterion variable, usually measured by their correlation), and construct validity (the ability of a measure to confirm a network of related hypotheses generated from a theory based on constructs) (DeVellis, 1991; Zikmund, 2002).

In this study, face validity of the instrument was assessed by asking professionals to examine it and provide feedback for revision. The survey was given to professors and graduate students in hospitality and tourism management to solicit feedback as well as to check for readability of the questions and estimated time to complete the survey

questionnaire. Additionally, a pretest was conducted on a convenience sample of three classes of undergraduate students at Virginia Tech.

Criterion validity has two types: predictive validity (if the criterion variable occurs in the future) and concurrent validity (when the criterion exists at the same time as the measurement scale). Concurrent validity is assessed by examining the Pearson relationship and multiple regression between the measurement scale and criterion variable.

Construct validity includes convergent validity (the degree to which two measures of the same concept are correlated) and discriminant validity (the degree to which two conceptually similar concepts are distinct) (Hair et al., 1998). Convergent validity is assessed in the measurement model by confirmatory factor analysis by estimating t-tests of factor loadings, as well as the corresponding significance. As a result, if all factor loadings for the indicators in the same construct are statistically significant, this can be evidence of the supporting convergent validity of the constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Discriminant validity is assessed for every possible pair of constructs by constraining the estimated correlation parameter between them to 1.0 and then performing a Chi-square difference test on the values obtained for the constrained and unconstrained model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). A significantly lower Chi-square value for the model in which the trait correlations are not constrained to unity indicates that the traits are not perfectly correlated and that discriminant validity is achieved.

### **3.6 STATISTICAL METHODS**

For the statistical methods conducted in the research, two major multivariate data analysis techniques are employed in the research. Canonical correlation analysis (CCA) is used to test the first hypothesis. Specifically, CCA technique is employed to examine the extent to which quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness are related, identifying significant and meaningful variates and capturing the common variance between the two through the redundancy index. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is applied to test the hypothesis 2 and 3. It is used to examine the causal model or

the systematic relationships among multiple indicators in the quality of leisure tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is designed to evaluate how well a proposed conceptual model that contains observed indicators and hypothetical constructs explains or fits the collected data. Through the SEM procedure, the simultaneous examination and explanation of the pattern of a series of inter-related dependence relationships among a set of latent (unobserved) constructs is possible (Hair et al., 1998; Reisinger & Turner, 1999). The indicators of the constructs in the proposed model and the hypotheses are tested using the SPSS package, as well as LISREL package (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1993) with the maximum likelihood (ML) method of estimation (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), in combination with the two-stage process recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and Sethi and King (1994).

### **3.6.1 Canonical Correlation Analysis**

Canonical correlation analysis (CCA) is employed to test the first hypothesis: The quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness share a common variance. CCA is a multivariate statistical model that investigates a maximum relationship between two sets of multiple dependent variables and multiple independent variables. In this case, the indicators of perceived destination competitiveness are considered the “multiple dependent variables”, whereas the indicators of different phases of tourism experience are considered the “multiple independent variables”. CCA is the most suitable technique to use when dealing with multiple dependent variables and independent variables, either metric or non-metric variables.

The first step of CCA is to derive one or more canonical functions. Each function consists of a pair of variates, one as independent variables and the other as dependent variables. The first function extracted accounts for the maximum amount of variance in the two sets of variables, i.e. the first pair of canonical variates exhibits the highest inter-correlation possible between the two sets of variables. The second pair of canonical variates derived accounts for the maximum amount of “leftover” variance.

There are three criteria for selecting the canonical function to interpret: (1) level of statistical significance of the function (Wilk's lambda), (2) magnitude of the canonical correlation (the practical significance of canonical functions), and (3) redundancy measure for the percentage of variance accounted for from the two data sets ("redundancy index" needs to be calculated to provide the summary measure of the ability of a set of independent variables to explain variation in each of dependent variables respectively).

If the canonical relationship is statistically significant and the magnitudes of the canonical root and the redundancy index are acceptable, the researcher needs to make further interpretations of the results. Three methods are proposed to examine the canonical functions and determine the relative importance of each variable in the canonical relationships. For the interpretation of the canonical function, canonical weights (standardized coefficients), canonical loadings (structure correlations), and canonical cross-loadings need to be addressed. Canonical weight (standard coefficients) is similar to Beta weights in multiple regression. Variables with relatively larger weights contribute more to the variate. Canonical loadings (structure correlations) measure the simple linear correlation between an original observed variable in the dependent or independent set and the set's canonical variate. It reflects the variance that the observed variable shares with its canonical variate. The larger the coefficient, the more important it is in deriving the canonical variate. The canonical cross-loading is suggested as an alternative to canonical loading. It involves correlating each of the original observed dependent variables directly with the independent canonical variate, and vice versa. The cross-loadings provide a more direct measure of the dependent-independent variable relationships by eliminating an intermediate step involved in conventional loadings.

In this research, significant canonical functions are derived from the sets dependent variables (perceived destination competitiveness) and independent variables (quality of tourism experience). The magnitude of the canonical correlations and redundancy index are interpreted to indicate the relative importance of each variable in independent variate (quality of tourism experience) in explaining each dependent variable (perceived destination competitiveness) respectively.

### **3.6.2 Structural Equation Modeling**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is applied in the research to test the second and third hypothesis. The second hypothesis is proposed as: The quality of tourism experience (including pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site, and after-trip experience) has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness. SEM is used to test the causal relationship between the quality of different phases of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness respectively. The third hypothesis ("The relationship between the quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement") is also tested by using SEM technique.

#### **3.6.2.1 Measurement Model**

There are two distinct components in structural equation modeling: 1) the measurement model and 2) the structural equation model. First, the measurement model is the component of the general model in which latent constructs are prescribed. By using confirmatory factor analysis for the measurement model, a priori hypotheses regarding relationships among and between observed indicators and their underlying latent constructs are evaluated. Thus, the confirmatory measurement model specifies the posited relationships of the observed indicators to the latent constructs (Sethi & King, 1994; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988), confirmatory measurement models should be evaluated and re-specified before measurement, and structural equation models are examined simultaneously. Therefore, before testing the measurement models overall, each construct in the model should be analyzed separately. In this research, different phases of vacation experience are considered individual constructs under the overall construct "quality of tourism experience". Perceived destination competitiveness is also measured by sub-constructs which are measured by variables. Each construct is tested by confirmatory factor analysis to examine the measurement model. Constructs with unacceptable fits (lower than 0.7 of factor loading) are re-specified by deleting the

indicators that do not work out as planned to have a uni-dimensional measurement (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

After assessing the uni-dimensionality of each construct individually (Sethi & King, 1994), a measurement model for each pair of constructs is estimated, combining them two by two (Jöreskog, 1993). First, each construct's fit is measured. After making sure that the fit of each construct is acceptable, the fit of two constructs (a pair) is measured. All constructs are paired with each other. Then the overall measurement model fit is tested (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Jöreskog, 1993; Sethi & King, 1994).

### **3.6.2.2 Structural Model**

The structural model is the hypothetical model that prescribes relationships among latent constructs and observed variables that are not indicators of latent constructs (Hoyle, 1995). The model is considered as the component of a general model that relates the constructs to other constructs by providing path coefficients (parameter values) for each of the research hypotheses. Specifically, each estimated path coefficient can be tested for its respective statistical significance for the hypotheses' relationships, while including standard errors and calculated t-values (Bollen, 1989; Byrne, 1998; Hair et al., 1998).

In the structural model, a specific structure between latent endogenous and exogenous constructs must be hypothesized, and the measurement model for latent endogenous and exogenous constructs must be determined (Hair et al., 1998). Generally, Maximum likelihood (ML) or generalized least squares (GLS) are utilized for the model estimation because these methods allow for the analysis of models involving latent constructs and non-zero error covariances across structural equations. In this study, the proposed model was presented in chapter 1 and chapter 3, indicating the relationship between different phases of tourism experience (exogenous constructs) and perceived destination competitiveness (endogenous constructs). SEM is used to test the path coefficient of each hypothesized relationship between different phases of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

Another evaluation for the structural model, the standardized solution, needs to be examined. It indicates the estimated coefficients all have equal variances and a maximum value of 1.0 (Hair et al., 1998). For the measure of the entire structural equation, an overall coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) should be calculated for the overall explanation of the variance. As a result, the structural model provides a meaningful and parsimonious explanation for observed relationships within a set of measured variables. The model also enables explanations of direct, indirect, and total structural effects of the exogenous latent constructs on the endogenous constructs.

### **3.6.2.3 Evaluation of Structural Equation Modeling**

When measurement and structural models are evaluated, three types of overall model fit measures need to be utilized: Absolute Fit Measures (AFM), Incremental Fit Measures (IFM), and Parsimonious Fit Measures (PFM) (Byrne, 1998; Hair et al., 1998). An absolute fit index is used to directly evaluate how well a priori theoretical model fits the sample data, and an incremental fit index assesses the proportionate fit by comparing a target model with a more restricted, nested baseline model. A parsimonious fit measure is used to diagnose whether model fit has been achieved by over-fitting the data with too many coefficients.

For absolute fit measures, there are four commonly used indices to evaluate the model: Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ), the noncentrality parameter (NCP), the root mean square residual (RMSR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Regarding the Chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ), since a large value of  $\chi^2$  relative to the degrees of freedom indicates that there is a difference between the observed and estimated covariance matrices with a statistically significant value ( $p < .05$ ), a low Chi-square value ( $\chi^2$ ) is desired. Thus, little difference between the actual and predicted input matrices is obtained. However, it should be noted that this Chi-square statistic is very sensitive to sample size (Hair et al., 1998).

As another absolute fit index, the noncentrality parameter (NCP) shows the results of another measure of the likelihood-ratio Chi-square statistic that is less affected by or

independent of the sample size. This fit measure shows the average squared Euclidean distances between the estimated model and the unrestricted model. Since this fit index cannot be statistically tested, it is recommended to use this measure in making comparisons between the alternative models. The Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) represents the overall degree of fit, indicating a nonstatistical measure ranging in value from zero (poor fit) to 1.0 (perfect fit). Thus, a higher score indicates a better fit. The score above .90 indicates a good model fit to the data (Byrne, 1998; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Kelloway, 1998).

The standardized root mean square residual, standardized RMR (SRMR) represents the average difference between the predicted and observed variances and covariances in the model. The smaller the standardized RMR, the better the model fit. Thus, when model fit is perfect, SRMR is 0.

The root mean square residual (RMSR) explains an average of the residuals between observed and estimated input matrices and is calculated by the square root of the mean of the squared residuals. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) represents a close approximation of fit relative to the degrees of freedom that could be expected if the model is estimated in the population, not just from the sample drawn for the estimation (Steiger, 1990). If 1) the RMSEA point estimate is less than .05; 2) the lower and upper boundaries of confidence interval is less than the recommended values of .05 and .08 respectively; and 3) the probability value associated with this test of close fit is greater than .50 it can be concluded that the degree of approximation in the population is very small and the model fits the data well (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Steiger (1990) suggests that values below .10 indicate a good fit to the data, and values below .05 a very good fit to the data.

As the second class of measures provided by LISREL, the incremental fit measures can be evaluated in order to compare the proposed model to some baseline model. The common examples of group of the fit indexes are the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the normed fit index (NFI), the relative fit index (RFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI). The AGFI as an extension of the GFI is adjusted by the ratio of degrees of freedom for the proposed model to the degrees of freedom for the null model. It is recommended that a value greater than or equal to .95 is

an acceptable level for a good fit. The TLI, also named Non-normed fit index (NNFI), is used for evaluating factor analysis and can also be used for comparisons between alternative models by substituting the alternative model for the null model. It is also recommended that a value greater than or equal to .90 is an acceptable level for a good fitting model. The NFI, RFI, and CFI are also used for a relative comparison of the proposed model to the null model or independent model, which ranges from zero (poor fit or no fit at all) to 1.0 (perfect fit). It is suggested that a good fitting model will obtain a value greater to or equal to .90. Thus, larger values indicate higher levels of goodness-of-fit (Byrne, 1998; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Kelloway, 1998).

As the third class of measure, the parsimonious fit measures include the parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI) and parsimonious goodness-of-fit index (PGFI). These measures are used to evaluate whether model fit has been obtained by “over fitting” the data with too many coefficients. The PNFI explains the number of degrees of freedom used to achieve a level of fit. Higher value of the PNFI shows better result. The PGFI takes into account the complexity of the hypothesized model in the assessment of the overall fit. Indeed, neither the PNFI nor the PGFI will likely reach the .90 cutoff used for other fit indices. Specifically, a PGFI value larger than .50 is an accepted value of a good model fit (Byrne, 1998; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Kelloway, 1998).

Lastly, as another general model evaluation fit index, the Hoelter’s Critical N (CN) can be used for evaluating the adequacy of model fit. Specifically, CN is used to estimate a sample size that would be sufficient to yield an adequate model fit for Chi-square test (Hu & Bentler, 1995). It is suggested that a CN value of more than 200 indicates that the model adequately represents the sample data. Table 3.2 illustrates types of indices used in SEM.

Table 3.2 Fit Indices of the Measurement Model

Fit Index	Cutoff Value
Goodness-of-fit Index (GFI)	$\geq .90$
Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI)	$\geq .90$
Parsimony Goodness-of-fit Index (PGFI)	$\geq .50$
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	$\geq .90$
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	$\geq .90$
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	$\geq .50$
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	$\geq .90$
Increment Fit Index (IFI)	$\geq .90$
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	$\geq .90$
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	$\leq .05$
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	$\leq .08$ or $.10$

### 3.6.3 Factor-Cluster Analysis

The primary purpose of factor analysis is “to define the underlying structure in a data matrix” (Hair et al., 1998, p. 90). Factor analysis determines linear combinations of variables that aid in investigating their interrelationships; this is a statistical method to discover the basic structure of a domain and to add substantive interpretations to the underlying dimensions (Zikmund, 2002, p. 544). The study utilizes factor analysis to discover the underlying dimensions of tourism/vacation experience, destination competitiveness, and tourist involvement for two purposes: 1) to prepare for the first hypothesis test using canonical correlation analysis; and 2) to prepare for the third hypothesis test of the moderating effect of tourist involvement using structural equation modeling. Therefore, factor analysis is used in the study as a “side” technique.

In this study, cluster analysis is used to categorize the respondents into different groups based on their level of tourist involvement. The identified clusters or groups are compared based on their demographic characteristics to see whether there are any

statistical significant differences between/among the groups. Like the factor analysis, this technique also serves as a “side” analysis. The outcome of factor-cluster analysis, i.e., the categorization of the respondents based on their level of tourist involvement (factors), are used to test the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of different phases of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

### **3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this study. First, the research framework and research hypotheses were presented. Second, the research design and survey instrument were described, including the study population, sampling frame, data collection method, and the development of the final survey. The issues of the reliability and validity of the measurement scales were also included in this section. Third, the statistical method employed in the study was described.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The results of the data analysis and hypothesis testing are presented in this chapter. The first section provides the pretest results of the scale items developed and used in this study. The second section presents a description of the survey methods employed in this study, as well as the demographic and travel behavior profiles of the survey respondents. The third section discusses the statistical analysis results for the three major hypotheses. Canonical correlation analysis is used for the first hypothesis testing. Then the confirmatory factor analysis is performed to confirm the factor structure of the constructs in the model, followed by the examination of the reliability and validity of the measurement of the constructs. The last part of this section presents the results of the second and third hypothesis tests applied in Structure Equation Modeling (SEM).

#### **4.2 PRETEST**

As stated in Chapter III, before the final survey instrument could be prepared, it was necessary to conduct a pretest of scale items. The purpose of the pretest was to validate the scale items to be used in the study that were either developed specifically for this study or modified from previous studies.

The development of the measurement scales for this study followed the procedures recommended by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991) for developing a standardized survey instrument. The initial task in developing a scale is to devise an item pool. First of all, in addition to the research on the related literature review, an open-ended survey regarding the perceptions of the quality of vacation experience and destination competitiveness was distributed to all the faculty members and graduate

students in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Furthermore, an in-depth focus group study was conducted with several graduate students in the department to summarize and refine the responses from them and help the further development of the survey questionnaire. A total of 50 items were used to measure tourist experience (ten items to measure pre-trip experience; nine items to measure en-route experience; twenty-two items for on-site experience; and nine items to assess after-trip experience), and 58 items for perceived destination competitiveness; and 16 items were used to measure tourist involvement.

The content validity of the items was assessed by several professors and graduate students in the department. They were asked to provide comments on the content and understandability, and to edit and improve the items to enhance the clarity, readability and content validity. They were also asked to identify any of the scale items that were redundant with other scale items and to offer suggestions for improving the proposed scale. The professors and some students commented that several scale items were redundant and overlapped. Based on their suggestions, the items of the measurement scale were revised and reorganized. Therefore, the number of items was decreased for each construct: 32 items for the quality of tourism/vacation experience, 20 items for perceived destination competitiveness, and 16 items for tourist involvement. The newly developed and modified scale items were tested empirically. The step in the pretest is discussed in detail in this section of the chapter.

#### **4.2.1 Pretest Survey Method**

The initial pretest survey questionnaire was distributed through online survey method. The survey link was put at the Virginia Tech online survey website and the link was sent to potential respondents through email by asking them to access the particular web address (<https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1144787619581>).

#### **4.2.2 Pretest Sample**

A convenient sample was used to conduct the pretest. The questionnaire was distributed to all the graduate students in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) and 840 undergraduate students in three large classes at Virginia Tech. In order to ensure the readability and clarity of the content and wording of the questions, the questionnaire was further delivered to several graduate students and staff members in other departments at Virginia Tech. A total of 330 completed questionnaires were generated, in which the section of “quality of tourism experience” had 150 responses, and the section of “destination competitiveness” and “tourist involvement” contained 180 responses. The responses were analyzed to test the reliability of the measurement items. The feedback received was also used to refine the initial instrument scales and develop the final version of the survey instrument.

#### **4.2.3 Pretest Results**

The results of the pretest provided the necessary validation in order to finalize the scale items to be used in the final survey. This section will provide a discussion of which items were chosen and how they were determined to be valid.

One of the objectives of a pretest is to establish a uni-dimensional scale for the measurement of a construct. Uni-dimensionality refers to the existence of a single construct explaining a set of attributes. To detect scale dimensionality, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with a principal component method was conducted for each construct and sub-construct. A separate principal component analysis was conducted for each sub-construct because the items of each sub-construct were pre-determined. First of all, to determine the appropriateness of factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were examined. A value of .60 or above from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy test indicates that the data are adequate for EFA and that a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity is required (Hair et al., 1998). In order to make sure that each factor identified by EFA has only one

dimension and each attribute loads only on one factor, attributes that had factor loadings of lower than .40 and attributes loading on more than one factor with a loading score of equal to or greater .40 on each factor were eliminated from the analysis (Hair et al., 1998).

#### **4.2.3.1 Quality of Pre-Trip Planning Experience**

The pretest of the trip planning construct included six items. A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed in order to determine the scale items. To determine the appropriateness of factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were first examined. The result of the KMO test indicated an acceptable level (.714). The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found to be significant at a level of .000. The principle component factor analysis indicated that one factor was derived and it represented 54.87% of the explained variance of the scale (Appendix E). Two items (“I feel that having reasonable and worthwhile price for the travel contributes to the quality of my vacation experience” and “I feel that being aware of the destination (either by previous experience, media, or word-of-mouth) contributes to my quality vacation experience”) was removed in order to achieve better results on the explained variance. Therefore, the factor comprised of four items, with all factor loadings greater than .40. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) was .72 using Cronbach’s Alpha reliability test, which exceeded the recommended reliability score of .70 (Hair et al., 1998).

#### **4.2.3.2 Quality of En-Route Experience**

The six items of the en-route experience construct were included in the factor analysis utilizing a principal components analysis with varimax rotation. To determine the appropriateness of factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were examined. The result of the KMO test

indicated an acceptable level (.796). The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found to be significant at a level of .000. The principle component factor analysis indicated that one factor was derived and represented 50.87% of the explained variance of the scale (Appendix E). All the factor loadings of the items were above .60. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was .76 using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, which exceeded the recommended reliability score of .70.

#### **4.2.3.3 Quality of On-Site Experience**

The pretest of the vacation on-site experience had 13 items. To determine the appropriateness of factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were examined. The result of the KMO test indicated an acceptable level (.848). The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found to be significant at a level of .000. The principle component factor analysis indicated that three factors were derived and represented 55.36% of the explained variance of the scale (Appendix E). The first two factors are closely related to each other in that both constructs deal with the instrumental experience (the more physical and cognitive attributes), whereas the third factor was expressive experience (the emotional aspects of the attributes). All the factor loadings of the items were above .45. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were all above .66, which moderately matched the recommended reliability score of .70.

#### **4.2.3.4 Quality of After-trip Reflection**

The pretest of the vacation after-trip reflection had 7 items. To determine the appropriateness of factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were examined. The result of the KMO test indicated an acceptable level (.718). The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found to be significant at a level of .000. Two items "I feel that getting the value for money of the

whole trip contributes to the quality of my vacation experience” and “I feel that having memorable moments to bring back home (e.g., photographs and souvenirs) contributes to the quality of my vacation experience” were not loaded on the factor and thus were removed. The principle component factor analysis indicated that one factor was derived and represented 51.00% of the explained variance of the scale (Appendix E). All the factor loadings of the items were above .45. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) were all above .75, which exceeded the recommended reliability score of .70.

#### **4.2.3.5 Perceived Destination Competitiveness**

The pretest measurement scale of perceived destination competitiveness consists of 19 indicators. The items were factor analyzed utilizing a principal components analysis with varimax rotation to identify any underlying dimensions. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.876, and the Barlett Test of Sphericity was statistically significant at .000 level. Therefore, the data were suitable for the proposed statistical procedure of factor analysis. Two items “destination’s commitment to preserving the environment” and “friendless and hospitality of the local people” were removed due to the low factor loadings. Four factors of perceived destination competitiveness were derived and explained 53.5% of the total variance. The factors were: Destination Management & Marketing, Accessibility and Information Availability, Tourism Attributes, Resources and Value. All the factor loadings were above .45. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) ranged from .64 to .77, indicating moderate reliability result (Appendix E).

#### **4.2.4 Refinement of the Proposed Model**

The major purpose of the pretest was to check the validity of the measurement scales and further clean up the items and refine the proposed model. The reliability coefficient of each construct presented a satisfactory score of .70 and higher. All

constructs indicated uni-dimensionality except the on-site experience construct, which resulted in two dimensions: instrumental experience (the more physical and cognitive attributes) and expressive experience (the emotional or affective aspects of the attributes). Therefore, the proposed model was further refined to represent the two-factor structure of the on-site experience construct. Figure 4.1 presents the modified proposed model which is then empirically tested.

#### 4.2.5 Summary of the Pretest Results

The pretest used a convenient sample of student population in Virginia Tech to examine the measurement items for the constructs proposed in this study. Most of the reliability coefficients of the constructs presented a satisfactory score of .70 and higher. The indicators which are used as the measurement items for each construct represented a substantial amount of the variance in the constructs. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the constructs proposed in the model and the information about indicators related to each construct.

Table 4.1 Constructs and Indicators based on the Pretest Results

Construct	Variences Explained	Reliability Coefficient
<b>Tourism Experience</b>		
Pre-trip Planning Experience	54.87%	.72
En-route Experience	50.87%	.76
On-Site Experience	55.36%	
On-site Instrumental Experience 1	21.13%	.73
On-site Instrumental Experience 2	18.73%	.71
On-site Expressive Experience	15.50%	.67
After-trip Reflection	51.00%	.75
<b>Perceived Destination Competitiveness</b>		
Destination Management and Marketing	15.44%	.77
Accessibility and information Availability	13.16%	.70
Tourism Attributes	12.71%	.64
Resources and Value	12.20%	.65

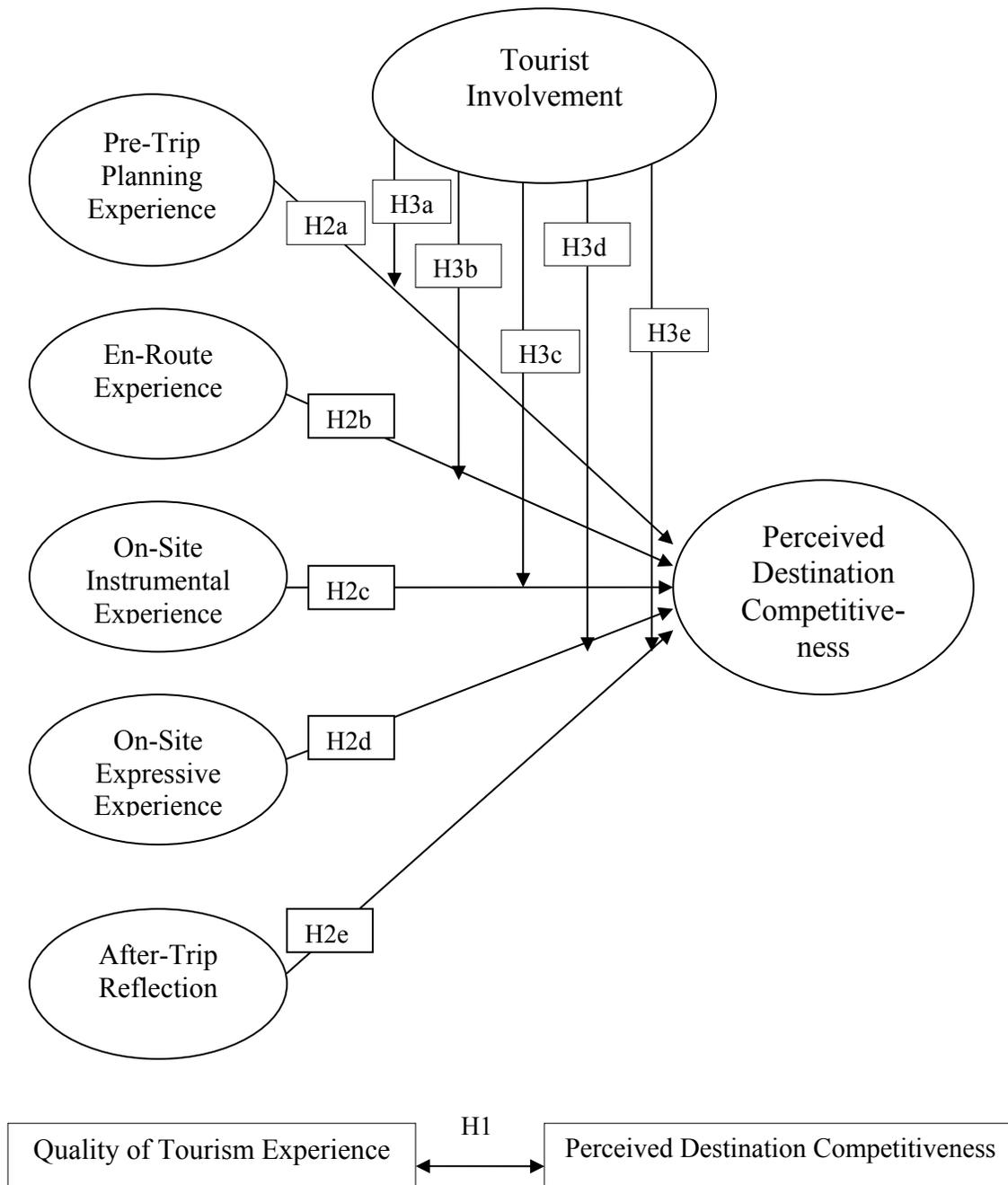


Figure 4.1 Modified Proposed Model

Based on the feedback from the pretest sample, the survey instrument was further revised for the finalization of the questionnaire. Although the items of “having reasonable prices”, “being able to make problem-free vacation arrangements”, “having memorable items to bring back home”, and “getting good value for the money for the whole trip” had a relatively low loading value (less than .40), they were kept in the final questionnaire because of their relevance to the construct in question. This was also recommended by tourism scholars who have examined the survey instrument. In addition, for the measurement scale of perceived destination competitiveness, the original items were remained, and items of “destination’s overall favorable image”, “destination’s alliance/connection with intermediates in the tourism sector”, and “helpfulness of the destination’s setting for tourists” were also added to the final questionnaire.

### **4.3 DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE**

This section of the chapter discusses the survey method, the sample, and the response rate. A preliminary review of the data is presented, including the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the general travel behavior reported by the respondents about their vacation.

#### **4.3.1 Survey Method**

Based on the literature review, the focus group study conducted with the professors and graduate students of Hospitality and Tourism Management, as well as the pretest results and the feedbacks from the professors and students, a self-administered survey questionnaire was finalized to be used for the formal data collection. The survey questionnaire was approved by the Virginia Tech IRB office.

The questionnaire was delivered via the U.S. Postal Service to a stratified random sample of Virginia residents during June and July 2006. The mailed package included a cover letter which explains the purpose of the research and the expected date for

returning the survey, a self-addressed and pre-paid return envelope, and the questionnaire (Appendix B). The respondents were asked to return the completed questionnaire within 5 weeks. Three weeks after the survey was mailed, a reminder postcard was sent to the respondents (Appendix C).

#### **4.3.2 Sample**

The sample population consisted of individuals who reside in Virginia. A survey questionnaire with a cover letter and a return envelope were mailed to 3,000 residents of Virginia. In order to make sure that the sample represented the population distribution in Virginia, a stratified sampling approach was utilized. First, the total population of Virginia and the population of all individual counties and cities in Virginia were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau (2004). Second, the number of respondents needed from each county and city was calculated in order to obtain a total sample of 3,000 residents. Once the number of respondents was identified, a random sampling method was utilized to select the appropriate number of respondents from each county and city. The sample (mailing list) for this study was obtained from the ReferenceUSA database (<http://www.referenceusa.com>), a website which provides residential information collected from the telephone directories and is available at large public libraries. Appendix D presents the population of counties and cities in Virginia and the number of respondents drawn from each county and city.

A total of 365 questionnaires were returned and the overall response rate was 12.35%. Twelve of the returned questionnaires were eliminated when the data were coded since they were returned blank or only partially completed. After eliminating the unusable responses, a total of 353 responses were coded and used for data analysis. Table 4.2 represents the related survey response information.

Table 4.2 Survey Response Rate

	Number	Percentage (%)
Total target population	3,000	100
Undelivered surveys	45	1.5
Total survey population	2955	100
Total responses	365	12.35
Unusable responses	12	0.41
Total coded samples	353	11.95
Total respondents for analysis	353	100
Early respondents	235	66.57
Late respondents	118	33.43

### 4.3.3 Profile of Respondents

A general overview of the respondents is discussed in this part. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented, followed by the characteristics of the general travel behavior of the respondents.

#### 4.3.3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of gender, age, marital status, education, ethnic group, and total household income are included in this section in order to provide a descriptive profile of the survey respondents (Table 4.3).

Of the 348 respondents who provided gender information, 170 (48.9%) were male, whereas 178 (51.1%) were female respondents. The majority of the respondents were middle aged or older. The largest age group of the respondents was 35-44 years old (32.5%), followed by the group of 55 or older (26.9%) and 45-54 (21.2%). Most of the respondents were married (69.5%), whereas 22.8% of the respondents were single. In terms of the level of education, 39.4% of the respondents had college degrees, and 37.6%

of the respondents had graduate education. With regard to respondents' annual household income, 22.0% of the respondents reported an annual household income of \$120,000 or more, whereas 10.4% reported income less than \$20,000. About 42.6% of the respondents had the annual household income in the range of \$40,000 to \$100,000. In terms of the ethnic groups, the vast majority of the survey participants were Caucasian (80.6%), followed by Asian (11.6%), African-American (3.5%), and Hispanic (2.3%).

Table 4.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender (N=348)		
Male	170	48.9
Female	178	51.1
Age (N=345)		
18-24	16	4.6
25-34	51	14.8
35-44	112	32.5
45-54	73	21.2
55-64	45	13.0
65 or older	48	13.9
Marital Status (N=347)		
Single	79	22.8
Married	241	69.5
Widowed	4	1.2
Divorced	22	6.3
Separated	1	0.3
Education (N=348)		
High school	80	23.0
Four year college	137	39.4
Graduate school	131	37.6
Total household Income (N=328)		
Less than \$20,000	34	10.4
\$20,000-\$40,000	53	16.2
\$40,001-\$60,000	48	14.6
\$60,001-\$80,000	55	16.8
\$80,001-100,000	40	12.2
\$100,001-\$120,000	26	7.9
Over \$120,001	72	22.0
Ethnic Groups (N=346)		
Caucasian	279	80.6
African-American	12	3.5
Hispanic	8	2.3
Asian	40	11.6
Native American	3	0.9
Others	4	1.2

#### **4.3.3.2 Characteristics of the General Travel Behavior of the Respondents**

The characteristics of the general travel behavior consisted of travel frequencies, trip planning, trip types, length of trips, travel parties, and trip destinations (Table 4.4).

Among the respondents who reported their general travel behavior, 40.6% of the respondents took 2-3 trips, 25.6% of the respondents took 4-5 trips, and 13.3% took more than 5 trips away from home for over two nights in the past 18 months. A total of 21 respondents (6.1%) reported that they did not take a leisure trip more than two nights away from home but still chose to complete and return the survey. Their responses were included in the data analysis. The inclusion of these responses did not change the distribution of the variables in question.

The respondents reported that they usually book the trip 1-3 months (40.4%) or less than one month (37.1%) in advance before their actual vacation took place. Most respondents stayed at the destination for 3-5 nights (37.6%) or 5-7 nights (27.1%), and 10.9% of the respondents spent more than 7 nights at the destination. A majority of respondents (67.1%) took 1-2 times of vacation each year, and 24.6% of the people took 3-4 times of vacation. In terms of the travel party, the majority of the respondents traveled with their spouse/partner (45.4%) or family members/relatives (37.6%) or friends (12.1%). With regard to the type of vacation, the respondents generally took the natural scenery trip (47.0%), outdoor activities (13.3%), historic/cultural heritage trip (12.7%) and entertainment / recreation / gaming trip (12.7%) as their preferred vacations. Regarding the trip destination, most of the respondents (62.6%) took the vacation within the United States, whereas 33.0% took a vacation with mixed domestic and international destinations, and 4.3% reported that they took only international destinations for their vacation.

Table 4.4 Characteristics of the General Travel Behavior

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
# of vacations in past 18 months (N=347)		
None (include leisure trip one night away from home)	21	6.1
1 time	50	14.4
2 times	77	22.2
3 times	64	18.4
4 times	50	14.4
5 times	39	11.2
more than 5 times	46	13.3
How far in advance to book the trip? (N=334)		
Less than 1 month	124	37.1
More than 1 month but less than 3 months	135	40.4
More than 3 months but less than 5 months	20	6.0
more than 5 months	55	16.5
Nights spent at the destination (N=340)		
3 nights or less	83	24.4
3-5 nights	128	37.6
5-7 nights	82	27.1
more than 7 nights	37	10.9
Vacations generally taken per year (N=346)		
1-2 times	232	67.1
3-4 times	85	24.6
5 times or more	29	8.4
Travel party (N=348)		
Alone	13	3.7
Spouse/partner	158	45.4
Family members/relatives	131	37.6
Friends	42	12.1
Organized group	4	1.1
Type of vacation (N=347)		
Natural scenery trip	163	47.0
Historic/cultural heritage trip	44	12.7
Outdoor activities	46	13.3
Entertainment/recreation/gaming	44	12.7
Attending festivals and events	8	2.3
Visiting friends and relatives	31	8.9
Other	11	3.2
Trip destination (N=348)		
Within the U.S./domestic	218	62.6
Abroad/international	15	4.3
A mix of both domestic and international	115	33.0

#### **4.3.4 Data Validation**

##### **4.3.4.1 Representativeness of the Data**

The data were checked for consistency with the census information for Virginia to ensure the representativeness. The census information used in this study was derived from the census data of the year of 2000 (<http://www.census.gov/census2000/states/va.html>). Some information of the 2000 census data was updated in 2004 and provided by the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51000.html>). Therefore, the census data used in this study are comprised of both 2000 and 2004 data. Some differences were anticipated since this study was designed to examine the residents of Virginia who are at least 18 years old and take vacations away from home, but not all Virginia residents travel in this manner and the census includes the information of people who are under 18. Therefore, only the census information related to this study was presented.

Specifically, the demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, education, and ethnic groups were compared between the sample and the census data. The Chi-square tests indicated that there were no significant differences on these demographic characteristics (Appendix F). The household income for this study was not applicable to compare with the census since the available information regarding the measurement scale was different.

##### **4.3.4.2 Late and Non-response Bias Tests**

In the data analysis in this study, it is assumed that there are no different distributions between the respondents and non-respondents in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics or opinions. Non-response bias was checked by asking selected survey questions to those who had received a survey but had not responded (See Appendix G for a list of the questions asked). A total of 225 individuals were randomly selected and telephoned. One hundred and seventy-one (171) of these individuals were

not available to participate in the survey (e.g., they were not at home, they had moved, and so forth). Ten individuals declined to participate and four reported having sent back the completed questionnaire. As a result, forty of these individuals agreed to answer eleven of the survey questions via telephone. These data were coded separately to be used to check for non-response bias. Several demographic questions and selected questions from the survey were asked to inspect if the profiles and responses of the non-respondents differed significantly from those who responded. The results of the tests are shown in Appendix G. The t-tests and Chi-square tests performed on these two groups indicated no significant differences for most of the questions.

In order to assess potential late-response bias, this study examined the differences between the early and late respondents in terms of the demographic characteristics. Specifically, Chi-square tests were utilized to compare the answers of the late respondents (those who returned completed surveys after the reminder postcard was mailed out) with those of the early respondents (those who returned completed surveys before the reminder postcard was mailed out). The results of Chi-square tests are reported in Appendix H. Chi-square tests performed on these two groups indicated that no significant differences exist between the early and late responses in terms of the demographic characteristics of respondents such as gender, age, marital status, education level, and ethnic groups.

Based on the results of the response bias tests, it could be concluded that the survey is basically representative and generally free from non-response and late-response bias.

#### **4.3.5 Descriptive Statistics, Skewness, and Kurtosis**

Since Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is utilized for testing the hypotheses in this study, violation of the univariate or multivariate normality could invalidate statistical hypothesis testing (Byrne, 1998; Hair et al., 1998; Kline, 1998). Furthermore, as the data were keyed into SPSS by hand, before any tests were conducted using the data, frequency distribution for each variable in the study was examined to ensure that the

data were “clean.” After reviewing the frequency distribution results, a few keying errors were corrected. Then frequencies were run a second time to ensure that there was no further errors in the data. Next, measures of central tendency were run for each of the variables in the study. The mean scores and standard deviations, as well as the skewness and kurtosis of each of the variables in the study are shown in Appendix I.

To assess the normality of the distribution of the data, the skewness and kurtosis of each variable were examined. The critical value for both of these measures of normality is drawn from a z distribution. The SPSS software package was used to generate the skewness and kurtosis values for each of the variables in the model. For the calculated skewness and kurtosis values, zero assumes perfect normality in the data distribution (which is seldom achieved). Z value of  $\pm 2.58$  indicating the rejection of the normality assumption at the 0.01 probability level, and  $\pm 1.96$  signifies a 0.05 error level (Hair et al. 1998). By applying the above criteria to the skewness values for each of the variables listed in Appendix I, it is clear that no variable fell outside the  $\pm 1.96$  range for skewness. Therefore, it can be assumed that all of the variables for the study are reasonably free from skewness, suggesting that the data used in the study do not violate normal distribution properties.

Another data characteristic that was considered is the kurtosis, that is, how observations “cluster around a central point” for a given standard distribution (Norusis, 1990, p.82). Distributions that are more peaked than normal are called “leptokurtic,” whereas those that are flatter than normal are referred to as “platykurtic.” Positive values for kurtosis show that a distribution has a higher than normal peak. Looking again at Appendix I, none of the variables fell outside  $\pm 2.56$  range for kurtosis. Therefore, the study can conclude that none of variables was leptokurtic or platykurtic.

#### **4.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

This section presents the results of the statistical analysis of the data collected. First, canonical correlation analysis (CCA) was employed to test the extent to which quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness are related, and

to capture the common variance between the two. The second part of the section deals with the structural equation modeling (SEM). The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the constructs are presented first, including the constructs which have sub-dimensions. After confirming the uni-dimensionality of each construct, as well as identifying the summated scale of constructs with sub-dimensions, the results of the measurement model for all constructs are presented. Then, the results of the structural equation modeling used to test the proposed hypotheses are presented.

#### **4.4.1 Canonical Correlation Analysis**

##### **4.4.1.1 Factor Analysis**

Before the canonical correlation analysis test is carried out, factor analysis was employed first with the final data to identify the underlying dimensions of the two major concepts: tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. There are 32 items for the measurement scale of quality of tourism experience and 22 items for perceived destination competitiveness. The determination of how and to what extent the observed indicators are linked to the constructs of quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness is essential. The main purpose of the factor analysis with the final data is to reduce the number of items and delineate the factor structures so that more concise and robust canonical correlation analysis could be conducted between the constructs of quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

Basically, factor analysis investigates relationships between a set of observed variables and the construct, and examines the covariation among a set of observed indicators in order to achieve underlying structures and collect information on the construct (Byrne, 1998; Hair et al., 1998). This procedure would help the following procedure of canonical correlation analysis (CCA) which examined to what extent the two major concepts relate to each other.

Since quality of tourism experience is measured by different phases of vacation process, factor analysis was employed for each dimension of the overall tourism experience construct, i.e., pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection. The items for each dimension were tested using factor analysis utilizing a principal components analysis with varimax rotation. To determine the appropriateness of factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were examined. All the KMO value indicated an acceptable level of above .70. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant at a level of .000. The explained variance for each dimension (sub-construct) was substantial: pre-trip planning experience (55.75%), en-route experience (58.76%), on-site instrumental experience (59.61%), on-site expressive experience (52.97%), and after-trip reflection (61.45%). The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for these five dimensions (sub-constructs) were .69, .83, .84, .76, and .76 respectively, which all matched or exceeded the recommended reliability score of .70 (Hair et al., 1998) (Appendix J).

The measurement items of perceived destination competitiveness were also factor analyzed utilizing a principal components analysis with varimax rotation to identify the underlying dimensions. The data were first assessed for the appropriateness of running factor analysis. The sample size (N=353) was big enough to run factor analysis since the sample vs. variable ratio exceeded the recommended 10:1 level (Hair et al., 1998). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.905, and the Barlett Test of Sphericity was statistically significant at .000 level. Therefore, the data were suitable for the proposed statistical procedure of factor analysis.

Five factors of perceived destination competitiveness were derived to represent the data and were retained for further analysis: Accessibility and Information Availability, Environment, Tourism Attributes, Price and Value, Destination Management & Marketing, which jointly explained 60.47% of the total variance. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .60 to .86, indicating satisfactory reliability result (Appendix J). The factor which explained the highest percentage of the total variance (37.11%) was Destination Management & Marketing, followed by

Accessibility and Information Availability (7.63%), Tourism Attributes (5.88%), Price and Value (5.26%), and Environment (4.60%).

#### **4.4.1.2 Canonical Correlation Analysis**

Canonical correlation analysis was used to reveal the extent of the relationship and identify the existing variates between the two sets of constructs: quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. Canonical correlation analysis is a statistical technique applicable for finding the correlations between one set of variables (multiple independent variables) and a second set of variables (multiple dependent variables). It is useful to analyze the number, magnitude, and composition of independent dimensions of the relationship between two sets of variables. This technique attempts to derive a linear combination of variables from each of the two sets of variables and extract the maximum number of canonical variates (functions) which equals the number of variables in the smallest set of variables (Hair et al., 1998).

Due to the fact that both sets of variables of quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness have a large number of items, the composite mean score of the items loading on the factors was calculated to be used as the construct score based on the above factor analysis results. Canonical correlation analysis was carried out to test the correlation of the two sets of variables (in this study, summated scores were used as variables). The perceived destination competitiveness variables were considered the dependent variates, whereas the variables of quality of tourism experience were considered the independent variates.

The results showed that three out of five canonical functions were statistically significant at the .001 probability level (Table 4.5). The canonical correlations ranged from .348 to .806. The overlapping variances between the pairs of canonical variates, which are equal to the squared canonical correlation for each function, ranged between 12.1% and 65.0%. This finding means that the first canonical variate explained 65.0% of the total variance shared by the two sets of variables (i.e., quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness). The second function explained 22.7% of the leftover

variance, and the third function explained 12.1% of the residual variance after being extracted by the first two functions. The redundancy index showed that 40.2% of the quality of tourism experience variance could be covered by perceived destination competitiveness variables, whereas 38.9% of the perceived destination competitiveness variance could be explained by quality of tourism experience items (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Overall Results of Canonical Correlation Analysis (N=353)

Variate number	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Canonical correlation</b>	.806	.476	.348	.158	.101
<b>Eigenvalue (Canonical R<sup>2</sup>)</b>	.650	.227	.121	.025	.010
<b>Wilk's lambda significance</b>	.000	.000	.000	.015	.060
<b>% of variance traced</b>					
Tourism experience	.549	.096	.154	.105	.095
Cumulative %	.549	.645	.799	.904	.999
Destination competitiveness	.537	.077	.154	.139	.093
Cumulative %	.537	.614	.768	.907	1.00
<b>Redundancy %</b>					
Tourism experience items	.357	.022	.019	.003	.001
Cumulative %	.357	.379	.398	.401	.402
Destination competitiveness items	.349	.017	.019	.003	.001
Cumulative %	.349	.366	.385	.388	.389

In order to determine which variables were most important in a given pair of canonical variates, standardized canonical coefficients (canonical weights) and canonical loadings (i.e., correlations between each variable and canonical variate) were checked. Canonical loadings are used to measure the linear correlation between a variable in the dependent or independent set and the set's canonical variate (Hair et al., 1998). In this study, only variables with a canonical loading greater than .40 were considered for the interpretation of the variates (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 presents a summary of the three significant variates with their associated quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness variables that are used to define the relationship between the two sets of variables. The first function could be presented as the following equation:

-0.302 (destination management and marketing) + -0.452 (accessibility and information availability) + -0.283 (tourism attributes) + -0.125 (price and value) + -0.133 (environment) = -0.207 (pre-trip planning) + -0.258 (en-route) + -0.366 (on-site instrumental) + -0.318 (on-site expressive) + -0.163 (after-trip reflection)

This first function, which explained 65% of the shared variance between the two sets of items, is considered the most important equation to explain the relationship of the tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. The canonical coefficient (weights) in the function indicated that “accessibility and information availability” and “destination management and marketing” were the two most important dependent variables which contribute to the first variate, whereas tourist on-site experience, both instrumental and expressive experience, contributed to the first variate as independent variables. In the second function, “tourism attributes” and “destination accessibility and information availability” contribute most to the dependent variate, whereas on-site instrumental experience and en-route experience contribute most to the tourism experience variate. The third function also explained the most important variables in both sets and the remaining variance after the first two functions extracted the common variance shared by the two sets of variables (Table 4.6).

The overall results of the CCA and the specific three significant canonical variates revealed that the five variables (i.e., the sub-scales in this study) of quality of tourism experience are, in general, directly related to the sub-scales of perceived destination competitiveness. This outcome further established the duality of the existing relationship between the two major constructs.

Table 4.6 Canonical Loadings of Quality of Tourism Experience and Destination Competitiveness Sub-scales

	Variates		
	1	2	3
<b>Quality of Tourism Experience</b>			
Pre-trip planning experience	-.207	-.341	.275
En-route experience	-.258	-.676	.626
Onsite instrumental experience	-.366	1.232	.230
Onsite expressive experience	-.318	-.198	-.612
After-trip reflection	-.163	-.213	-.719
<b>Destination Competitiveness</b>			
Destination Management & Marketing	-.302	-.487	.347
Accessibility and Information Availability	-.452	-.586	.819
Tourism Attributes	-.283	1.401	.137
Price and Value	-.125	-.288	-.339
Environment	-.113	-.196	-.737

#### 4.4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used to test the measurement model specifying the posited relations of the observed variables to the underlying constructs. This CFA approach examines whether or not the collected data are consistent with a highly constrained hypothesized model, or a priori specified model (Byrne, 1998; Maruyama, 1997). Therefore, CFA allows identification and clustering of the observed variables in a pre-specified, theory-driven hypothesized model to evaluate to what extent a particular collected data set confirms what is theoretically believed to be its underlying constructs (Mueller, 1996).

In this study, the analysis of the factor structures of the two data sets (pretest and final) revealed some minor discrepancies. The exploratory factor analysis of the final data revealed two factors for the on-site experience construct (Appendix J.3-J.4). Initially the pretest result of the same construct had three dimensions (Appendix E.3). However, in both cases, the items of the construct were the same. This may be attributed to the nature of the population in the two sets of the data. Since the items were retained, the two sub-

constructs of the on-site experience construct were selected for use in the confirmatory factor analysis of the final data.

In this section, a series of confirmatory factor analyses are performed to confirm the measurement scale properties of the six constructs proposed in the model: Tourist Pre-Trip Planning Experience, En-Route Experience, On-Site Experience (two constructs), After-Trip Reflection, and Perceived Destination Competitiveness. A summated scale is used to measure the perceived destination competitiveness construct. The indicators of each sub-dimension of perceived destination competitiveness are summated, and the resulting summated scales are used to measure the construct of perceived destination competitiveness. By employing CFA, each measurement model is confirmed in terms of stipulating the relationship between the latent factors and their indicator variables. Since CFA is performed on the basis of the premise that the observed variables are not perfect indicators for the underlying constructs, each construct in the measurement model is tested separately and then the overall measurement model is evaluated. As discussed in Chapter III, the model estimation process for each model is provided along with statistical results. Modification indices, Absolute Fit Measures (AFM), Incremental Fit Measures (IFM), and Parsimonious Fit Measures (PFM) are utilized to evaluate the proposed model.

The analyses were conducted using LISREL 8.51 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 2001). These analyses employed the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method of parameter estimation because the collected usable sample was quite large (N=353), the scales of observed indicators were continuous variables, the normal distribution of the observed variables were met according to the results of skewness and kurtosis, and variables in the hypothesized model were believed to be valid. Further, the ML estimation method has been widely used in studies of structural equation modeling because this estimation method has been found to be quite robust even if the normal distribution of the observed variables are violated (Chou & Bentler, 1995). Particularly, when the observed data are normally distributed and the collected data are large enough, the ML method is suggested to estimate the parameters because it creates computational simplicity, accuracy, and correctness of statistical results.

#### 4.4.2.1 CFA for Pre-Trip Planning Experience

Five indicators were utilized to measure the tourist pre-trip planning experience. For the input file, after specifying 5 observed indicators, the diagonal elements of the covariance matrix were fixed at one. The variance/covariance matrix of the pre-trip planning experience construct was assigned to a symmetric matrix with all parameters free to be estimated.

The results of the initial estimation of CFA of the pre-trip planning experience construct were acceptable in terms of the range of goodness-of-fit indices. However, there appears to be room for further refinement of the generated measurement model. The Chi-square value was 7.61 with 5 degrees of freedom ( $p = .179$ ) and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of .039. RMSEA explains the error of approximation in the population; values should be less than .08 for a good fit or less than .10 for a moderate good fit (Byrne, 1998). The only unsatisfactory result was the overall error variance, which was .35 in this analysis. The error variance is a form of reliability measure which represents the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the latent construct. The value should reach a threshold guideline level of .50 for the construct (Hair et al., 1998). Therefore, based on the results of the t-value, standard error, squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ), and completely standardized solution, two indicators (items 1 “Having plenty of time to plan the trip” and item 6 “Having reasonable prices for the vacation”) were deleted because of low t-values, high standard error, and low explained variances.

After deleting the two indicators and re-testing the data for CFA, the final results of the CFA for the pre-trip planning experience were presented (Table 4.7). The re-specified model resulted in a Chi-square value of .00 with 0 degrees of freedom ( $p=1.00$ ). All indices were perfect and the model was saturated.

The completely standardized factor loadings revealed comparatively high loadings, ranging from .50 to .83. In terms of estimating the squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ), which are used to examine the extent to which the measurement model adequately represents the observed indicators (Byrne, 1998; Kline, 1998),  $R^2$  values ranged between .25 and .69. These coefficient scores also serve as indicator reliabilities (Bollen, 1989).

Further, the composite reliability of this measurement construct resulted in .73, which exceeded the recommended threshold level of .70 (Hair et al., 1998). As another measure of reliability, the error variance, i.e., the extracted variance for the construct of pre-trip planning experience revealed a value of .50, which matched the recommended level of .50. Overall, the pre-trip planning experience construct retained three observed indicators with satisfactory results of fit indices.

Table 4.7 CFA Results for Pre-Trip Planning Experience

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
<b>Pre-Trip Planning Experience</b>		<b>.73</b>	.50
Having easy access to destination information	.83	.69	.31
Being able to get abundant destination information	.72	.52	.48
Making problem-free vacation arrangements	.50	.25	.75
<b>Fit Indices</b>			
Absolute Fit Measures			
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	0.00 (df=0, p=1.00)		
The Model is Saturated, the Fit is Perfect!			

#### 4.4.2.2 CFA for En-Route Experience

A total of six indicators were utilized to measure the tourist en-route experience. CFA was used to evaluate whether the gathered data fit the model of en-route experience. The results of the initial estimation of the CFA for the construct were acceptable but did not show a perfect-fitting model, suggesting further refinement for better goodness-of-fit. The Chi-square value was 33.60 with 9 degrees of freedom ( $p < .000$ ). The RMSEA value was .09, which is slightly higher than the threshold of .08 but met the requirement of moderate good fit of .10 (Byrne, 1998). Other fit indices indicated that the specified model was acceptable showing NFI = .95, GFI = .97, AGFI = .93, NNFI = .94, and PNFI

= .57. After reviewing the t-value, standard error, squared multiple correlations and completely standardized loadings, one item “Receiving clear direction and guidance (either in airport or driving on the way)” was deleted due to its low contributions in fitting the data to model.

After deleting one indicator and re-testing the data, the final results of the CFA for the en-route experience were presented (Table 4.8). The re-specified model resulted in a Chi-square value of 12.48 with 5 degrees of freedom ( $p=.029$ ). All other indices showed that the data successfully fit the model with GFI = .99, RMSEA = .065, AGFI = .96, NNFI = .97, NFI = .98, PNFI = .49, CFI = .99, IFI = .99.

The completely standardized factor loadings revealed comparatively high loadings, ranging from .66 to .80. The squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ) ranged between .43 and .63. These coefficient scores also serve as indicator reliabilities (Bollen, 1989). The composite reliability of this measurement construct resulted in .83, which exceeded the recommended threshold level of .70 (Hair et al., 1998). The extracted variance for the construct of en-route experience revealed a value of .50, which matched the recommended level of .50. Overall, the en-route experience construct retained five observed indicators with satisfactory results of fit indices.

Table 4.8 CFA Results for En-Route Experience

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
<b>En-Route Experience</b>		<b>.83</b>	<b>.50</b>
Having easy access to and from the destination	.67	.45	.55
Safe transportation to and from the destination	.66	.43	.57
Comfortable transportation to and from the destination	.80	.63	.37
Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination	.69	.47	.53
Having problem-free travel to and from the destination	.69	.47	.53
<b>Fit Indices</b>			
<b>Absolute Fit Measures</b>			
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	13.07 (df=5, p=.02)		
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	.99		
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.016		
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.065		
<b>Incremental Fit Measures</b>			
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.96		
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	.97		
Normed fit index (NFI)	.98		
<b>Parsimonious Fit Measures</b>			
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	.33		
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.49		
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.99		
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.99		
Critical N	407.31		

#### 4.4.2.3 CFA for On-Site Instrumental Experience

Seven indicators were utilized to evaluate whether the gathered data fit the model of tourist on-site instrumental experience. The results of the initial estimation of the CFA for the construct were acceptable but refinement was needed for better goodness-of-fit indices for the measurement model. The Chi-square value was 67.73 with 20 degrees of freedom ( $p < .000$ ). The RMSEA value was .08, which just matched the threshold of .08. Other fit indices indicated that the specified model was acceptable showing NFI = .93, GFI = .95, AGFI = .92, NNFI = .93, and PNFI = .66. After reviewing the t-value, standard error, squared multiple correlations and completely standardized loadings, one item “Favorable weather/climate at the destination” was deleted due to its low t-value, high standard error, and low explained variances.

After deleting the indicator and re-testing the data, the final results of the CFA for the on-site instrumental experience were presented (Table 4.9). The re-specified model resulted in a Chi-square value of 42.54 with 9 degrees of freedom ( $p = .000$ ). All other indices showed that the data successfully fit the model with GFI = .96, RMSEA = .08, AGFI = .91, NNFI = .93, NFI = .95, PNFI = .57, CFI = .96, IFI = .96.

The completely standardized factor loadings revealed comparatively high loadings, ranging from .50 to .81. The squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ) ranged between .25 and .65. The composite reliability of this measurement construct resulted in .85, which exceeded the recommended threshold level of .70 (Hair et al., 1998). The extracted variance for the construct of on-site instrumental experience revealed a value of .50, which matched the recommended level of .50. Overall, the on-site instrumental experience construct retained six observed indicators with satisfactory results of fit indices.

Table 4.9 CFA Results for On-Site Instrumental Experience

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
<b>On-Site Instrumental Experience</b>		<b>.85</b>	<b>.50</b>
High quality of accommodation at the destination	.78	.60	.40
High quality of food at the destination	.71	.50	.50
Good facilities at the destination	.81	.65	.35
Having a variety of activities/entertainment to choose from	.50	.25	.75
Receiving high quality service at the destination	.76	.58	.42
Clean environment at the destination	.63	.40	.60
<b>Fit Indices</b>			
<b>Absolute Fit Measures</b>			
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	42.54 (df=9, p=.00)		
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	.96		
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.024		
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.08		
<b>Incremental Fit Measures</b>			
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.91		
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	.93		
Normed fit index (NFI)	.95		
<b>Parsimonious Fit Measures</b>			
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	.42		
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.57		
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.96		
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.96		
Critical N	180.28		

#### 4.4.2.4 CFA for On-Site Expressive Experience

A total of five indicators were utilized to evaluate whether the gathered data fit the model of tourist on-site expressive experience. The results of the initial estimation of the CFA for the construct were acceptable but refinement was needed for better goodness-of-fit indices for the measurement model. The Chi-square value was 24.04 with 5 degrees of freedom ( $p < .000$ ). The RMSEA value was .10, which was slightly higher than the threshold of .08 but met the requirement of moderate fit of .10. Other fit indices indicated that the specified model was acceptable showing NFI = .95, GFI = .97, AGFI = .92, NNFI = .91, and PNFI = .47. After reviewing the t-value, standard error, squared multiple correlations and completely standardized loadings, one indicator “Overall reasonable prices at the destination” was deleted due to its low t-value, high standard error, and low explained variances.

After deleting the one indicator and re-testing the data, the final results of the CFA for the on-site expressive experience were presented (Table 4.10). The re-specified model resulted in a Chi-square value of 20.91 with 2 degrees of freedom ( $p = .000$ ). All other indices showed that the data successfully fit the model with GFI = .97, RMSEA = .10, AGFI = .86, NNFI = .85, NFI = .95, PNFI = .47, CFI = .95, IFI = .95.

The completely standardized factor loadings revealed comparatively high loadings, ranging from .56 to .81. The squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ) ranged between .32 and .64. The composite reliability of this measurement construct resulted in .78, which exceeded the recommended threshold level of .70 (Hair et al., 1998). The extracted variance for the construct of on-site instrumental experience revealed a value of .48, which moderately matched the recommended level of .50. Overall, the on-site expressive experience construct retained six observed indicators with satisfactory results of fit indices.

Table 4.10 CFA Results for On-Site Expressive Experience

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
<b>On-Site Expressive Experience</b>		<b>.78</b>	<b>.48</b>
Pleasant interaction/communication with the local people	.56	.32	.68
User-friendly guidance/information at destination	.74	.55	.45
Ensured safety and security at the destination	.62	.38	.62
Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination	.81	.64	.36
<b>Fit Indices</b>			
<b>Absolute Fit Measures</b>			
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	20.91 (df=2, p=.00)		
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	.97		
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.027		
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.10		
<b>Incremental Fit Measures</b>			
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.86		
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	.85		
Normed fit index (NFI)	.95		
<b>Parsimonious Fit Measures</b>			
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	.32		
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.47		
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.95		
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.95		
Critical N	156.50		

#### 4.4.2.5 CFA for After-Trip Reflection

Five indicators were utilized to evaluate whether the gathered data fit the model of tourist after-trip reflection. The results of the initial estimation of the CFA for the construct were not satisfactory and refinement was needed for better goodness-of-fit indices for the measurement model. The Chi-square value was 95.11 with 5 degrees of freedom ( $p < .000$ ). The RMSEA value was .23, which was higher than the threshold of .08 and the requirement of moderate fit of .10. Other fit indices indicated that the specified model was not acceptable and needed to be re-specified, showing NFI = .83, GFI = .90, AGFI = .71, NNFI = .66, and PNFI = .41. After reviewing the t-value, standard error, squared multiple correlations and completely standardized loadings, one indicator “Feeling relaxed and refreshed after the vacation” was deleted due to its low t-value, high standard error, and low explained variances.

After deleting the one indicator and re-testing the data, the final results of the CFA for the after-trip reflection were presented (Table 4.11). The re-specified model resulted in a Chi-square value of 14.33 with 2 degrees of freedom ( $p = .000$ ). All other indices showed that the data successfully fit the model with GFI = .98, RMSEA = .10, AGFI = .91, NNFI = .91, NFI = .97, CFI = .97, IFI = .97.

The completely standardized factor loadings revealed comparatively good loadings, ranging from .37 to .92. The squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ) ranged between .14 and .85. The composite reliability of this measurement construct resulted in .74, which exceeded the recommended threshold level of .70 (Hair et al., 1998). The extracted variance for the construct of after-trip reflection revealed a value of .40. Overall, the after-trip reflection construct retained four observed indicators with satisfactory results of fit indices.

Table 4.11 CFA Results for After-Trip Reflection

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
<b>After-Trip Reflection</b>		<b>.74</b>	<b>.40</b>
Having a sense of freedom during the vacation	.38	.14	.86
Feeling having spent quality time with family and friends	.37	.14	.86
Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation	.92	.85	.15
Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation	.84	.70	.30
<b>Fit Indices</b>			
<b>Absolute Fit Measures</b>			
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	14.33 (df=2, p=.00)		
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	.98		
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.023		
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.10		
<b>Incremental Fit Measures</b>			
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.91		
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	.91		
Normed fit index (NFI)	.97		
<b>Parsimonious Fit Measures</b>			
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	.23		
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.32		
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.97		
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.97		
Critical N	227.30		

#### 4.4.2.6 CFA for Perceived Destination Competitiveness

Before testing the overall confirmatory measurement model, the measurement of uni-dimensionality of each sub-dimension of the perceived destination competitiveness was assessed individually. The confirmatory factor analysis was performed by specifying the posited relationships of the observed variables to the underlying five dimensions of the perceived destination competitiveness, with the dimensions allowed to inter-correlate freely. The covariance matrix was assigned for the confirmatory factor analysis procedure.

The confirmatory measurement model to be tested postulates a priori that the perceived destination competitiveness is a five-factor structure composed of (1) accessibility and information availability (4 indicators), (2) environment (2 indicators), (3) tourism attributes (3 indicators), (4) price and value (2 indicators), and (5) destination management and marketing (8 indicators). Before testing the overall confirmatory measurement for the economic impact of tourism model, the measurement of each sub-construct was assessed individually.

A separate confirmatory factor analysis was performed for each sub-construct with the specific observed variables. The results indicated that all five sub-dimensions had measurement uni-dimensionality. After assessing the uni-dimensionality of each sub-dimension individually, a measurement model for each pair of constructs was estimated, combining them two by two. Then the overall measurement fit of the perceived destination competitiveness construct was tested by a confirmatory factor analysis. The items and the result of the confirmatory factor analysis of sub-dimension of the perceived destination competitiveness are presented in Table 4.12. The indices of completely standardized coefficients (i.e., both the latent and observed variables are standardized), the indicator reliabilities, and the error variances for each indicator were also calculated and listed. The results of the CFA were acceptable and indicated a good fit model. The Chi-square value was 8.37 with 5 degrees of freedom ( $p=.14$ ). The RMSEA value was .046, which matches the threshold of less than .08. Other fit indices indicated that the specified model was acceptable showing NFI = .98, GFI = .99, AGFI = .97, NNFI = .99,

PNFI = .49, Critical N = 635.81. All of the composite reliabilities were above .70 and all variance extracted estimates were close to or above .50.

After the uni-dimensionality of each sub-dimension was verified, the indicators of the sub-dimension were summated and used as individual variables to test the construct of perceived destination competitiveness. In this sense, the perceived destination competitiveness construct was considered to be measured by five indicators: accessibility and information availability, environment, tourism attributes, price and value, and destination management and marketing.

The five summated variables were used as indicators to test the construct of perceived destination competitiveness. The summated variable “environment” was removed due to its low loading and explained variance. Therefore, the construct of perceived destination competitiveness was measured by four observed variables. After re-specifying the data input, the final results of the CFA for the perceived destination competitiveness were presented (Table 4.12). The re-specified model resulted in a Chi-square value of 2.70 with 2 degrees of freedom ( $p=.26$ ). All other indices showed that the data successfully fit the model with GFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .033, AGFI = .98, NNFI = 1.00, NFI = .99, PNFI = .33, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00.

The completely standardized factor loadings which determine the relative importance of the observed variables as indicators of perceived destination competitiveness construct revealed comparatively high loadings, ranging from .58 to .82. The squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ) ranged between .33 and .68. These coefficient scores also serve as indicator reliabilities (Bollen, 1989). The composite reliability of this measurement construct resulted in .82, which exceeded the recommended threshold level of .70 (Hair et al., 1998). The extracted variance for the construct of perceived destination competitiveness revealed a value of .54, which exceeded the recommended level of .50. Overall, the perceived destination competitiveness construct retained four observed indicators with satisfactory results of fit indices.

Table 4.12 CFA Results for Perceived Destination Competitiveness

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
<b>Accessibility and information availability</b>		<b>.80</b>	<b>.50</b>
Easy access to the destination	.74	.54	.46
Smooth travel to the destination and back home	.82	.67	.33
Easy access to meaningful information about the destination before travel	.57	.32	.68
Problem-free vacation arrangements with the destination	.68	.46	.54
<b>Environment</b>		<b>.67</b>	<b>.54</b>
Unique tourism resources	.45	.21	.79
The destination's commitment to preserving the destination environment	.93	.86	.14
<b>Tourism attributes</b>		<b>.74</b>	<b>.50</b>
High quality tourism infrastructure	.73	.53	.47
A good variety of activities offered for tourists	.58	.34	.66
High quality of services/amenities at the destination	.77	.60	.40
<b>Price and value</b>		<b>.80</b>	<b>.67</b>
Competitive price for the overall vacation relative to competitor destinations	.78	.60	.40
A good value for the money spent for the vacation experience	.85	.73	.27
<b>Destination management &amp; marketing</b>		<b>.86</b>	<b>.45</b>
The destination's commitment to providing a safe and secure environment	.67	.45	.55
The overall destination experience offered "fits" the needs of visitors	.58	.33	.67
The destination's commitment to promoting a positive image	.72	.51	.49
Policies/regulations favorable to tourists	.56	.31	.69
The destination's commitment to providing a satisfactory vacation experience	.71	.50	.50
The destination's continuous commitment to the ongoing improvement and development of a high-quality destination	.76	.59	.41
The destination's overall favorable image in the world community	.63	.40	.60
The destination's alliance/connection with intermediates in the tourism sector	.67	.45	.55

Table 4.12 (Cont'd)

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
		<b>.80</b>	<b>.47</b>
Accessibility and information availability	.70	.49	.51
Environment	.37	.14	.86
Tourism attributes	.79	.63	.37
Price and value	.57	.33	.67
Destination management and marketing	.83	.69	.31

Re-specified Sub-scale of Perceived Destination Competitiveness

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
		<b>.82</b>	<b>.54</b>
Accessibility and information availability	.71	.50	.50
Tourism attributes	.79	.63	.37
Price and value	.58	.33	.67
Destination management and marketing	.82	.68	.32

### **Fit Indices**

#### **Absolute Fit Measures**

Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	2.70 (df=2, p=.26)
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	1.00
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.006
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.033

#### **Incremental Fit Measures**

Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.98
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	1.00
Normed fit index (NFI)	.99

#### **Parsimonious Fit Measures**

Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	.20
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.33
Comparative fit index (CFI)	1.00
Incremental fit index (IFI)	1.00

Critical N	1201.41
------------	---------

### 4.4.3 Testing the Proposed Model

SEM is used to evaluate a substantive theory with empirical data through a hypothesized model. The structural equation model presents a series of hypotheses about how the variables are related. This study began with the development of a conceptual and theoretical model with linkages between the latent constructs and their measurable variables. Once the hypothetical constructs are defined by observable indicators, the hypothesized structural model of how the constructs are interrelated with each other is defined by the proposed hypotheses. Subsequently, the proposed hypotheses are tested by SEM.

In structural equation modeling (SEM), the development of the hypothetical model depicting the linkages between the latent constructs and their empirical observed indicators is considered as a measurement model, while the theoretical relationships between or among the constructs is referred to as a structural model (Bollen, 1989; Byrne, 1998; Jöreskog, 1993). The measurement model can specify the patterns of how the observed indicators load on the constructs, and also provides the measurement properties of how much the observed indicators are reliable (reliability) and valid (validity). A structural model can specify which of the construct(s) directly or indirectly influence or change the values of other constructs in the model (Byrne, 1998; Maruyama, 1998).

In this proposed structural model, six theoretical constructs were discussed in terms of not only their posited relationships with the observed indicators, but also structural relationships among the constructs. These constructs include tourist pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site instrumental experience, on-site expressive experience, after-trip reflection, and perceived destination competitiveness. The parameters of the model are the regression coefficient variance and covariance of variables. The commonly-used approaches to estimate the parameters of structural equation models are maximum likelihood (ML) and normal theory generalized least squares (GLS). Both estimation techniques assume that the measured variables are continuous and have a multivariate normal distribution. Maximum likelihood estimation has been the most commonly-used approach in structural equation modeling because ML

estimations have been found to overcome the problems created by the violations of normality, which means that estimates are good estimates, even when the data are not normally distributed. However, all indicators that already checked the normality showed that they have fair normal distribution (Appendix I).

Therefore, the properties of the items of six constructs (five exogenous and one endogenous) in the proposed model and the hypotheses were tested using the LISREL 8.51 structural equation analysis package (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 2001) with maximum likelihood (ML) method of estimation, in combination with the two stage process recommended by Sethi and King (1994) and Anderson and Gerbing (1988).

#### **4.4.3.1 Overall Measurement Model**

Prior to estimating the overall measurement model, measurement unidimensionality of each construct was assessed individually (Sethi & King, 1994). Based on the results of the goodness-of-fit indices, modification indices, and estimated coefficient scores such as t-values and multiple correlations, the measurement models for each construct were modified and re-specified. Consequently, the final measurement model for each construct with the observed indicators was determined on the basis of the statistical and theoretical soundness of the constructs. Thus, each final model represented the best-fitting model to the data in terms of parsimony and substantive meaningfulness.

Maximum likelihood confirmatory factor analysis requires complete data for every subject in order to preserve the integrity of the data set. The missing data of the individual cases were replaced with the mean value of that variable. A confirmatory factor analysis conducted with a small sample size may result in inflated and spurious results. It is suggest that for relatively simple models (i.e., one, two, or three factors), a minimum of 100 subjects is required (Bearden, Sharma, & Teel, 1982). For more complex models, substantially larger sample sizes are needed. The total of 353 useable responses was employed in the study and this sample size was considered large enough to satisfy the sample size requirements of confirmatory factor analysis. Another criterion requires that the correlation (or covariance) matrix include multiple measures of each

underlying constructs. In a single-factor model, at least three (ideally more) observed measures (indicators) of the factor are required. In more complex (multiple-factor) models, two measures per factor may be sufficient (Bryne, 1998; Hoyle, 1995). All of the factors included in this study have at least two or three observed measures (indicators).

In this study, after the uni-dimensionality of five exogenous variables and one endogenous latent variable was tested, the overall measurement model fit with the total of six constructs and 25 indicators was tested by CFA. An initial estimation of the overall measurement model did not generate good model fit. The Chi-square value was 877.99 with 284 degrees of freedom ( $p=.00$ ) and RMSEA value was .077. Other fit indices indicated that the specified model was not a good fit and needs to be re-specified: GFI = .84, RMR = .047, AGFI = .80, NNFI = .84, NFI = .81, PNFI = .71, CFI = .86, IFI = .86. The t-value, standard error, squared multiple correlations and completely standardized loadings were reviewed to eliminate the variables with low contributions in the model fit. Although the final measurement model was not different from the originally proposed measurement model, the number of indicators of the constructs proposed in the model decreased by one for each exogenous construct in the final measurement model. Therefore, the re-specified overall measurement model with six constructs and 20 observed indicators was estimated by CFA (Table 4.13).

Table 4.13 Constructs and Indicators for the Overall Measurement Model

---

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>
<b>Pre-Trip Planning Experience (TP)</b>
TP1: Having easy access to destination information
TP2: Being able to get abundant destination information
<b>En-Route Experience (ER)</b>
ER1: Having easy access to and from the destination
ER2: Comfortable transportation to and from the destination
ER3: Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination
ER4: Having problem-free travel to and from the destination
<b>On-Site Instrumental Experience (OSI)</b>
OSI1: High quality of accommodation at the destination
OSI2: High quality of food at the destination
OSI3: Good facilities at the destination
OSI4: Receiving high quality service at the destination
OSI5: Clean environment at the destination
<b>On-Site Expressive Experience (OSE)</b>
OSE1: User-friendly guidance/information at destination
OSE2: Ensured safety and security at the destination
OSE3: Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination
<b>After-Trip Reflection (AT)</b>
AT1: Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation
AT2: Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation
<b>Perceived Destination Competitiveness (DC)</b>
DC1: Accessibility and information availability
DC2: Tourism attributes
DC3: Price and value
DC4: Destination management and marketing

---

The fit of the measurement model was tested using the LISREL 8.51 structural equation package with the maximum likelihood (ML) method of estimation. The primary interest in this section was to test whether the measurement model has acceptable fit or not. Before evaluating the model as a whole, it is necessary to evaluate the individual parameter estimates. First, the viability of the individual parameters' estimated values need to be determined. Parameter estimates should exhibit the correct sign and size and be consistent with the underlying theory. A second criterion relates to the statistical significance of parameter estimates. The test statistic used is the t-statistic, which represents the parameter estimate divided by its standard error. The t-statistic tests whether the estimate is statistically significant from zero. A t-test statistic that is larger than  $\pm 1.96$  indicates that the parameter estimate is significant at .05 probability level.

Table 4.14 presents the unstandardized parameter estimates for the proposed six-factor measurement model produced by LISREL. There are three lines of information for each observed indicator. The first line represents the estimate, the parentheses value of the second line denotes the standard error, and the third line represents the t-value. An examination of the unstandardized parameter estimation in Table 4.14 reveals all estimates to be both reasonable and statistically significant.

Table 4.14 Parameter Estimates for Overall Measurement Model (N=353)

LAMDA-X		TP	ER	OSI	OSE	AT	DC
TP1	E	.53					
	SE	(.04)					
	T	13.00					
TP2	E	.65					
	SE	(.05)					
	T	13.32					
ER1	E		.70				
	SE		(.05)				
	T		13.19				
ER2	E		.58				
	SE		(.04)				
	T		15.25				
ER3	E		.68				
	SE		(.04)				
	T		15.36				
ER4	E		.52				
	SE		(.04)				
	T		13.60				
OSI1	E			.67			
	SE			(.04)			
	T			16.39			
OSI2	E			.61			
	SE			(.04)			
	T			13.93			
OSI3	E			.63			
	SD			(.03)			
	T			18.05			
OSI4	E			.61			
	SE			(.04)			
	T			16.22			
OSI5	E			.45			
	SE			(.03)			
	T			13.02			
OSE1	E				.58		
	SE				(.04)		
	T				14.96		
OSE2	E				.48		
	SE				(.04)		
	T				13.28		
OSE3	E				.58		
	SE				(.04)		
	T				15.43		

Table 4.14 (Cont'd)

LAMDA-X		TP	ER	OSI	OSE	AT	DC
AT1	E					.78	
	SE					(.07)	
	T					11.62	
AT2	E					.96	
	SE					(.08)	
	T					12.76	
DC1	E						.49
	SE						(.03)
	T						16.09
DC2	E						.55
	SE						(.03)
	T						16.53
DC3	E						.36
	SE						(.03)
	T						10.72
DC4	E						.50
	SE						(.03)
	T						17.55

Note: E: Estimate, T: t-value, SE: Standard error, TP1: Having easy access to destination information, TP2: Being able to get abundant destination information, ER1: Having easy access to and from the destination, ER2: Comfortable transportation to and from the destination, ER3: Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination, ER4: Having problem-free travel to and from the destination, OSI1: High quality of accommodation at the destination, OSI2: High quality of food at the destination, OSI3: Good facilities at the destination, OSI4: Receiving high quality service at the destination, OSI5: Clean environment at the destination, OSE1: User-friendly guidance/information at destination, OSE2: Ensured safety and security at the destination, OSE3: Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination, AT1: Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation, AT2: Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation, DC1: Accessibility and information availability, DC2: Tourism attributes, DC3: Price and value, DC4: Destination management and marketing, TP: Pre-trip planning experience, ER: En-route experience, OSI: On-site instrumental experience, OSE: On-site expressive experience, AT: After-trip reflection, DC: Perceived destination competitiveness.

The next step in assessing model fit is to examine the extent to which the measurement model is adequately represented by the observed variables. The squared multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ) values generated by the LISREL 8.51 were used to determine whether the measurement model is adequately represented by the observed variables. The squared multiple correlation also represents the indicator reliability. The values of the squared multiple correlations can range from 0.00 to 1.00, and serve as reliability indicators (Bollen, 1989). Examination of the  $R^2$  values reported in Table 4.15 reveals that the measures are strong.

After measuring the adequacy of the individual items, the composite reliability score and variance extracted estimate for each latent factor was assessed. The composite reliability score and variance extracted estimate for each latent variable (construct) were generated from completely standardized LISREL estimates and calculated by the formula provided by Fornell and Larcker (1981). As shown in Table 4.15, all of the composite reliabilities were above .70, ranging between .75 and .88. All the variance extracted estimates were also above .50, which indicated satisfactory results of fit indices. Moreover, the completely standardized factor loadings which determine the relative importance of the observed variables as indicators revealed comparatively high loadings, ranging from .55 to .96.

Table 4.15 CFA Results for the Overall Measurement Model (N=353)

<b>Constructs &amp; Indicators</b>	<b>Standardized Loading (Li)</b>	<b>Reliability (Li<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Error Variance</b>
Pre-Trip Planning Experience		.75*	.60**
TP1	.76	.58	.42
TP2	.79	.62	.38
En-Route Experience		.81*	.51**
ER1	.67	.45	.55
ER2	.75	.56	.44
ER3	.75	.56	.44
ER4	.68	.47	.53
On-Site Instrumental Experience		.86*	.55**
OSI1	.77	.59	.41
OSI2	.68	.47	.53
OSI3	.82	.67	.33
OSI4	.76	.58	.42
OSI5	.65	.42	.58
On-Site Expressive Experience		.77*	.53**
OSE1	.74	.55	.45
OSE2	.68	.46	.54
OSE3	.76	.58	.42
After-Trip Reflection		.88*	.79**
AT1	.81	.65	.35
AT2	.96	.92	.08
Destination Competitiveness		.82*	.54**
DC1	.76	.58	.42
DC2	.77	.60	.40
DC3	.55	.31	.69
DC4	.81	.65	.35

Note: \* Composite reliability, \*\* Variance extracted estimate, TP1: Having easy access to destination information, TP2: Being able to get abundant destination information, ER1: Having easy access to and from the destination, ER2: Comfortable transportation to and from the destination, ER3: Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination, ER4: Having problem-free travel to and from the destination, OSI1: High quality of accommodation at the destination, OSI2: High quality of food at the destination, OSI3: Good facilities at the destination, OSI4: Receiving high quality service at the destination, OSI5: Clean environment at the destination, OSE1: User-friendly guidance/information at destination, OSE2: Ensured safety and security at the destination, OSE3: Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination, AT1: Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation, AT2: Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation, DC1: Accessibility and information availability, DC2: Tourism attributes, DC3: Price and value, DC4: Destination management and marketing, TP: Pre-trip planning experience, ER: En-route experience, OSI: On-site instrumental experience, OSE: On-site expressive experience, AT: After-trip reflection, DC: Perceived destination competitiveness.

Next, the overall measurement fit was assessed. A model is said to fit the observed data to the extent that the covariance matrix it implies is equivalent to the observed covariance matrix (Hoyle, 1995). The most common index of fit is the  $\chi^2$  goodness-of-fit test, which is derived directly from the value of the fitting function. Therefore, the  $\chi^2$  goodness-of-fit test (and associated p values) was first examined. However, according to the nature of  $\chi^2$ , Chi-square tends to be large in large samples (Jöreskog, 1993, p. 309). In a  $\chi^2$  test, only the central  $\chi^2$  distribution is used to test the hypothesis that the discrepancy between the sample covariance matrix and the implied covariance matrix is statistically equal to zero.

However, even if the discrepancy between the estimated model and data is very small, if the sample size is large enough, almost any model will be rejected because the discrepancy is not statistically equal to zero due to the excess power of the large sample size. In other words, the researcher is not likely to know everything about the data. In addition, the  $\chi^2$  test offers only a dichotomous decision strategy implied by a statistical decision rule and can not be used to quantify the degree of fit along a continuum with some pre-specified boundary. In this case, the sample size was 353 and the  $\chi^2$  value for the saturated model was 421.45 (df=155, p=.00) (Table 4.16).

#### **4.4.3.2 Fit Indices**

According to the problems associated with the  $\chi^2$  (and associated p values), various different types of fit indices were selected to measure the fit of the tested model based on the recommendations of several researchers from a number of different disciplines. These selected fit indices are absolute fit indices, incremental fit indexes, and parsimonious fit indices.

#### **4.4.3.2.1 Absolute fit indices**

An absolute fit index directly assesses how well an a priori model reproduces the sample data. Four absolute fit indices are reported in this study: The absolute fit indices include Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of the estimate model, the Goodness of fit (GFI), the Root mean square residual (RMR), and the Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

The GFI is a measure of the relative amount of variance and covariance in sample data that is jointly explained by sample data (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1993). The GFI value for the overall measurement model was .90, which indicated that the proposed model fits the sample data fairly well (Byrne, 1998). The RMR is a measure of the average of the fitted residual and can only be interpreted in relation to the sizes of the observed variances and covariance in the sample data (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1993). RMR value in this model was .032, which met the requirement of a well-fitting model that RMR should be close to .05 and less (Byrne, 1998). The RMSEA is used to correct for the tendency of the Chi-square statistic to reject any specified model with a sufficiently large sample. A RMSEA value ranging from .05 to .08 is deemed acceptable (Mueller, 1996). The RMSEA value in this study was .071, showing that the proposed model was acceptable (Table 4.16).

#### **4.4.3.2.2 Incremental fit indices**

An incremental fit index compares the target model with a baseline model in order to measure the proportionate improvement fit. The incremental fit indices include Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), Non-normed fit index (NNFI), and Normed fit index (NFI). The AGFI addresses the issue of parsimony by incorporating a penalty for the inclusion of an additional parameter. The value of AGFI for the overall measurement model was .85, indicated a moderately good model fit of the proposed model with the sample data (Byrne, 1998). The NNFI takes the complexity of the model into account in the comparison of the proposed model with the independence model. The NFI is an index of the fit between a saturated model and a null model (Bentler & Bonett, 1995). The

values of NNFI and NFI were .90 and .88 respectively, suggesting that the proposed model represented an adequate fit to the data (Bentler, 1990).

#### **4.4.3.2.3 Parsimonious fit indices**

Parsimonious fit indices provide information for comparison between models of differing complexity and objectives by evaluating the fit of the model versus the number of estimated coefficients needed to achieve that level of fit. The parsimonious fit indices include Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI), Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI), Comparative fit index (CFI), and Incremental fit index (IFI).

The PGFI addresses the issues of parsimony in SEM by taking the complexity of the model into account of the proposed model in its assessment of overall model fit. The PNFI adjusts for the number of free parameters in the model; it also controls for the fact that better fit can be indicated by the other indices simply by freeing more parameters in the model (Mulaik & James, 1995). The PGFI and PNFI usually have lower values than the threshold level generally perceived as acceptable for other normed indices of fit. It is suggested that goodness-of-fit indices in the range of .90 accompanied by parsimonious-fit-index in the range of .50, are not unexpected (Byrne, 1998). Therefore, the PGFI and PNFI value of the hypothesized measurement model (.66 and .72 respectively) presented in Table 4.16 indicated an acceptable model fit.

The CFI is the revised version of the NFI. It takes the sample into account in the comparison of the hypothesized model with the independence model (Bentler, 1990). Given the differences in parsimony of a priori (theoretical) models and re-specified models, the CFI can ensure that conclusions were not biased in favor of more saturated model. The IFI addresses the issues of parsimony and sample size that are known to be associated with NFI. As shown in Table 4.16, the CFI and IFI (.92 and .92 respectively) indicated that the proposed model represented an adequate fit to the data.

The last goodness-of-fit statistic reported in the study is the Hoelter's (1983) Critical N (CN). The CN addresses the issue of sample size rather than the model fit. The CN statistic estimates the sample size that would make the obtained Chi-square statistically significant (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1993). A cut-off of 200 or greater is

suggested as an indication of adequate model fit for the critical N statistic (Bollen, 1989). The CN value for the proposed model was 167.10, which indicated a moderate appropriate goodness-of-fit. Although this Critical N index did not match the 200 threshold, other fit indices have collectively indicated an acceptable proposed model.

Table 4.16 Fit Indices for the Overall Measurement Model (N=353)

<b>Fit Indices</b>	
<b>Absolute Fit Measures</b>	
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	421.45 (df=155, p=.00)
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	.90
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.032
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.071
<b>Incremental Fit Measures</b>	
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.85
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	.90
Normed fit index (NFI)	.88
<b>Parsimonious Fit Measures</b>	
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	.66
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.72
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.92
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.92
Critical N	167.10

#### 4.4.3.3 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to the confirmation of the measurement of a construct by the use of multiple methods (Zikmund, 2002). A measure has convergent validity when it is highly correlated with different measures of similar constructs. It is the overlaps between alternative measures that are intended to measure the same construct but have different sources of undesired variation (Judd, Smith, & Kidder, 1991). In other

words, if several observed indicators are used to measure a theoretical construct (i.e., latent variable), those observed indicators should share a good deal of variance (converge together). Particularly, if the indicators specified to measure a common underlying factor have relatively high loadings on that factor, convergent validity is achieved (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Byrne, 1998; Kline, 1998). The high loadings imply that strong correlations on the posited underlying construct are achieved and the measurement scales are measuring what they are intended to measure (Kline, 1998).

To evaluate convergent validity for structural equation modeling, the standardized parameters' estimated coefficient (i.e., the factor loading) with an associated t-value as results of CFA test can be used (Marsh & Grayson, 1995). Convergent validity can be assessed from the measurement model by determining whether each indicator's estimated pattern coefficient on its posited underlying construct factor is significant (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Statistically significant large factor loadings indicate convergent validity. That is, if the values in the off diagonal are large, convergent validity is achieved. As shown in Table 4.14, all of the estimated pattern coefficients on their posited underlying construct factors were significant at 0.05 significant levels (i.e., each indicator had a t-value  $>\pm 1.96$ ). Therefore, convergent validity was achieved for all the variables in the study.

#### **4.4.3.4 Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity addresses the concept that “dissimilar constructs should differ” (Burns & Bush 1995, p. 275). It refers to the ability of some measures to have a low correlation with measures of dissimilar concepts. Simply, it is related to the distinctiveness of constructs. The correlations between two scales for two distinct constructs should not be high for discriminant validity. In applying this concept, the observed indicators used to measure the different constructs in the proposed model should yield different results.

To ensure that the constructs are not measuring the same concept or ideas, the discriminant validity was assessed for each construct by examining the constructs in sets of two. For instance, the pre-trip planning experience was tested against the en-route

experience (in order to establish that these two constructs were not measuring the same thing). Separately, the en-route experience was tested against on-site experience, and so forth until every possible pair of constructs was tested.

Discriminant validity was examined by constraining the estimated correlation parameter between each pair of constructs to 0.0 (the fixed model). This implies that the correlation parameter is given as 0.0 to indicate that the two constructs are uncorrelated. The unconstrained model (the free model) indicates that the correlation between factors was estimated. A Chi-square difference test between the constrained model and unconstrained model was performed. A significant Chi-square difference between the models provided evidence of discriminant validity between the pair of the constructs being tested (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Additionally, a significantly lower Chi-square value for the unconstrained model indicates that discriminant validity is achieved (Bagozzi & Phillips, 1982) and the goodness-of-fit statistics are improved in the unconstrained model when discriminant validity is achieved (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998).

Table 4.17 lists the correlations of each pair of constructs and Chi-square difference tests between the constrained model and the unconstrained model on each pair of constructs. The results showed that all of the constructs possess discriminant validity. A closer examination of the table reveals that many of the model's constructs are correlated. The correlation of each pair of constructs ranged from .07 to .66. Since the critical value of the Chi-square test is 9.21 at the alpha value of .01, all of the estimated Chi-square difference values were clearly significant. The significantly lower  $\chi^2$  values for the unconstrained (free) model demonstrated that discriminant validity has been achieved (Anderson & Gerbing 1988; Bogazzi & Phillips 1982).

Table 4.17 Results of Discriminant Validity Tests

Constructs	Corr. Value	$\chi^2$ w/corr. Fixed	df	$\chi^2$ w/corr. Free	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta$ df	p-value
TP-ER	.42	342.18	10	74.39	9	267.79	1	.00
TP-OSI	.36	497.29	16	248.18	15	249.11	1	.00
TP-OSE	.34	331.71	6	46.86	5	284.85	1	.00
TP-AT	.07	487.3	3	6.64	2	480.66	1	.00
TP-DC	.44	396.76	10	99.31	9	297.45	1	.00
ER-OSI	.60	495.45	28	253.74	27	241.71	1	.00
ER-OSE	.53	370.97	15	154.00	14	216.97	1	.00
ER-AT	.14	502.42	10	31.73	9	470.69	1	.00
ER-DC	.61	457.22	21	246.22	20	211	1	.00
OSI-OSE	.57	482.86	21	221.14	20	261.72	1	.00
OSI-AT	.12	268.02	15	43.33	14	224.69	1	.00
OSI-DC	.64	225.88	27	94.75	26	131.13	1	.00
OSE-AT	.23	227.71	5	9.50	4	216.21	1	.00
OSE-DC	.66	244.57	14	25.23	13	219.34	1	.00
AT-DC	.24	210.20	9	23.11	8	187.09	1	.00

#### 4.4.3.5 Testing the Proposed Model and Hypotheses

The primary purpose of this study is to develop an integrated theoretical model of destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective by examining the relationship between the tourism experience (in terms of different vacation phases) and their perceived destination competitiveness. The study also intends to address the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

In testing the proposed hypotheses for this study, a theoretical structural model was examined with five exogenous constructs, one endogenous construct, and one moderating construct, as presented in Figure 4.2. The properties of the six research constructs are as follows: five exogenous – tourist pre-trip planning experience (TP), en-route experience (ER), on-site instrumental experience (OSI), on-site expressive experience (OSE), after-trip reflection (AT), one endogenous – perceived destination competitiveness (DC). A total of 20 observed indicators (16 for exogenous constructs and 4 for endogenous constructs) were used to measure these six research constructs (Figure 4.2).

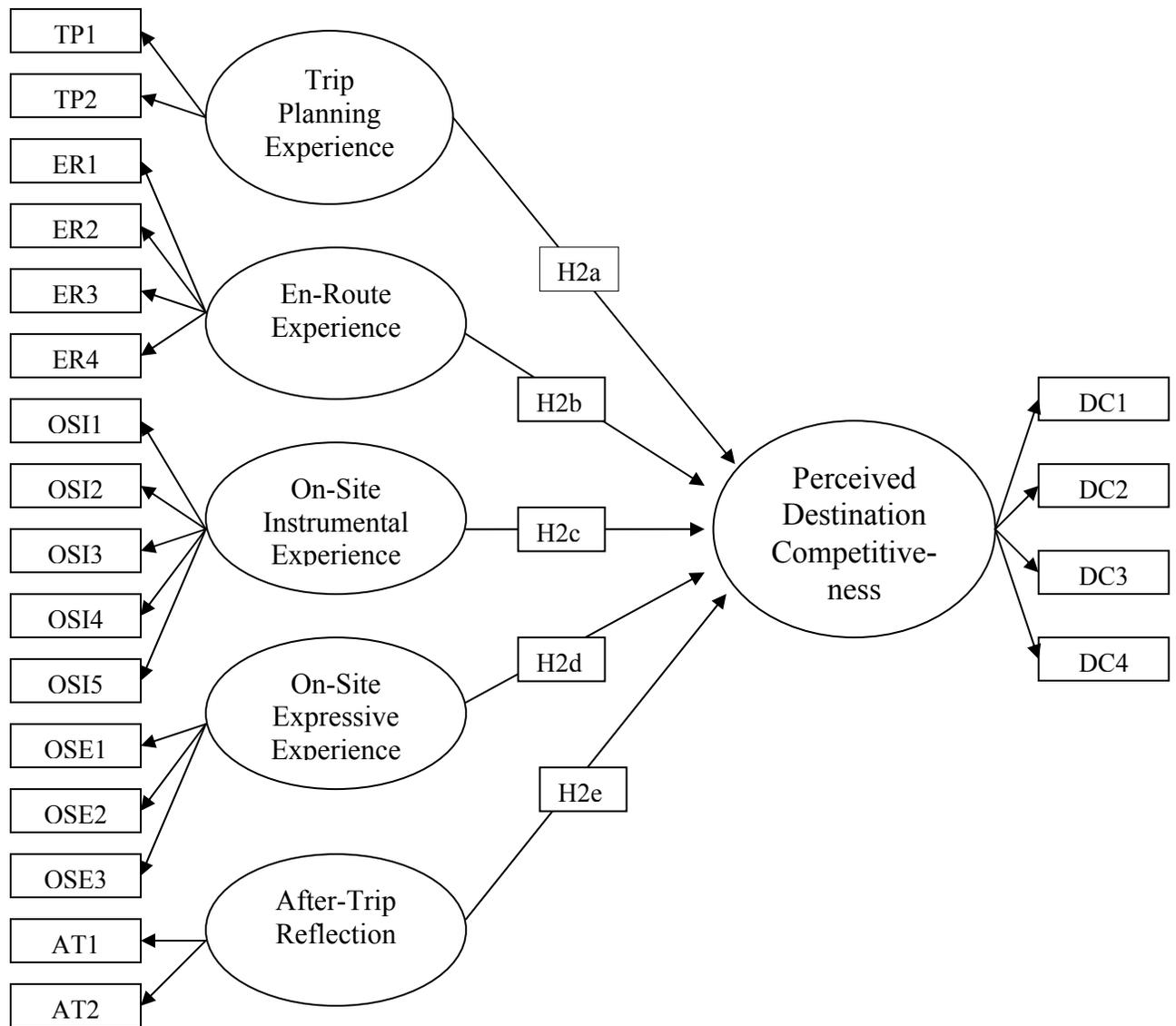


Figure 4.2 Theoretical Structural Model

Note: TP1: Having easy access to destination information, TP2: Being able to get abundant destination information, ER1: Having easy access to and from the destination, ER2: Comfortable transportation to and from the destination, ER3: Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination, ER4: Having problem-free travel to and from the destination, OSI1: High quality of accommodation at the destination, OSI2: High quality of food at the destination, OSI3: Good facilities at the destination, OSI4: Receiving high quality service at the destination, OSI5: Clean environment at the destination, OSE1: User-friendly guidance/information at destination, OSE2: Ensured safety and security at the destination, OSE3: Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination, AT1: Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation, AT2: Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation, DC1: Accessibility and information availability, DC2: Tourism attributes, DC3: Price and value, DC4: Destination management and marketing.

Since the primary interest in SEM for testing hypotheses is to examine the relationships between/among the exogenous and endogenous constructs, the relationship can be specified by two types of matrices: a Gamma matrix ( $\gamma$ ), and a Beta matrix ( $\beta$ ) (Bollen, 1989; Byrne, 1998; Mueller, 1996). The Gamma matrix represents the regression coefficients that link the exogenous constructs and the endogenous constructs, while the Beta matrix specifies the regression coefficients that link the endogenous constructs. A close examination of the structural paths of the hypothesized model reveals that there are five Gamma parameters to be estimated but no Beta parameters are applied in this study. Each of the parameters to be estimated represents one of the proposed research hypotheses in this study. For example,  $\gamma_{11}$  defines hypothesis H2a (Tourist pre-trip planning experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness, TP→DC), and  $\gamma_{12}$  represents hypothesis H2b (Tourist en-route experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness, ER→DC). Consequently, the proposed structural equation model with five Gamma paths were tested using the LISREL program for structural equation modeling (SEM). The five hypotheses which indicated the relationship among the six construct were provided.

- H2a: The quality of pre-trip planning experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourist's perceived destination competitiveness (TP→DC).
- H2b: The quality of en-route experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourist's perceived destination competitiveness (ER→DC).
- H2c: The quality of on-site instrumental experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourist's perceived destination competitiveness (OSI→DC).
- H2d: The quality of on-site expressive experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourist's perceived destination competitiveness (OSE→DC).
- H2e: The quality of after-trip reflection as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourist's perceived destination competitiveness (AT→DC).

The review of the theoretical structural model demonstrated that the Chi-square value was 432.84 with 155 degrees of freedom ( $p = .00$ ), which indicated that the model was not good enough. However, given the known sensitivity of the Chi-square test to the sample size (Bollen & Long, 1993; Byrne, 1998), other goodness-of-fit indices have been suggested to help model evaluation (Bentler, 1990; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). The review of goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that the theoretical model was a well-fitting model to the data and suggested that this model could be the structural model to be tested for the proposed hypotheses in this study. The indices were listed in Table 4.18, and the results all fit the acceptance level: GFI = .89, RMR = .032, RMSEA = .071, NFI = .88, NNFI = .90, PGFI = .63, CFI = .92, IFI = .92 (Hair et al., 1998).

Table 4.18 Fit Indices for the Proposed Theoretical Model (N=353)

<b>Fit Indices</b>	
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimate model	432.84 (df=155, $p=.00$ )
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	.89
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.032
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.071
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.85
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	.90
Normed fit index (NFI)	.88
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	.66
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.72
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.92
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.92
Critical N	167.10

#### 4.4.3.6 Analysis of Hypotheses

The results of structural equation analysis by LISREL were utilized to test the proposed hypotheses in this study. The relationships between the constructs were examined based on t-values associated with path coefficients between the constructs. If an estimated t-value is greater than a certain critical value ( $p < .05$ , t-value = 1.96)

(Mueller, 1996), the null hypothesis that the associated estimated parameter is equal to 0 was rejected. Therefore, the hypothesized relationship was supported.

In this section, a total of five hypotheses were tested by using structural equation modeling. The relationship between the pre-trip planning experience and perceived destination competitiveness (Gamma  $\gamma_{11}$ ) represented hypothesis H2a. The relationship between the en-route experience and perceived destination competitiveness (Gamma  $\gamma_{12}$ ) explained hypothesis H2b. The relationship between the on-site instrumental experience and perceived destination competitiveness (Gamma  $\gamma_{13}$ ) specified hypothesis H2c. The relationship between the on-site expressive experience and perceived destination competitiveness (Gamma  $\gamma_{14}$ ) specified hypothesis H2d. Lastly, the relationship between the after-trip reflection and perceived destination competitiveness (Gamma  $\gamma_{15}$ ) defined hypothesis H2e. Figure 4.3 represents the specific loadings of indicators to the constructs and the regression coefficients of each link in the Gamma matrix. The summary of the hypotheses testing results is presented in Table 4.19.

**H2a:** The quality of pre-trip planning experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness (TP→DC).

The result of SEM analysis indicated that the path from the construct of tourist pre-trip planning experience and the construct of tourist perceived destination competitiveness was significant and positive (t-value = 2.59,  $p < .01$ ). This result supported that if tourists had a high-quality pre-trip planning experience for their vacation, they would perceive the destination to be more competitive.

Specifically, if tourists are able to have easy access to the information related to the destination and receive abundant information when they do the search, they would consider having a high-quality pre-trip planning experience, which in turn contributes to their positive perception of the destination competitiveness. It is understandable that during the pre-trip planning phase, the easiness and availability in finding the needed information about the destination constitute the high-quality pre-trip planning experience, and at the same time, provide positive influence on tourists' perception on how well the destination is promoted and marketed to the potential visitors.

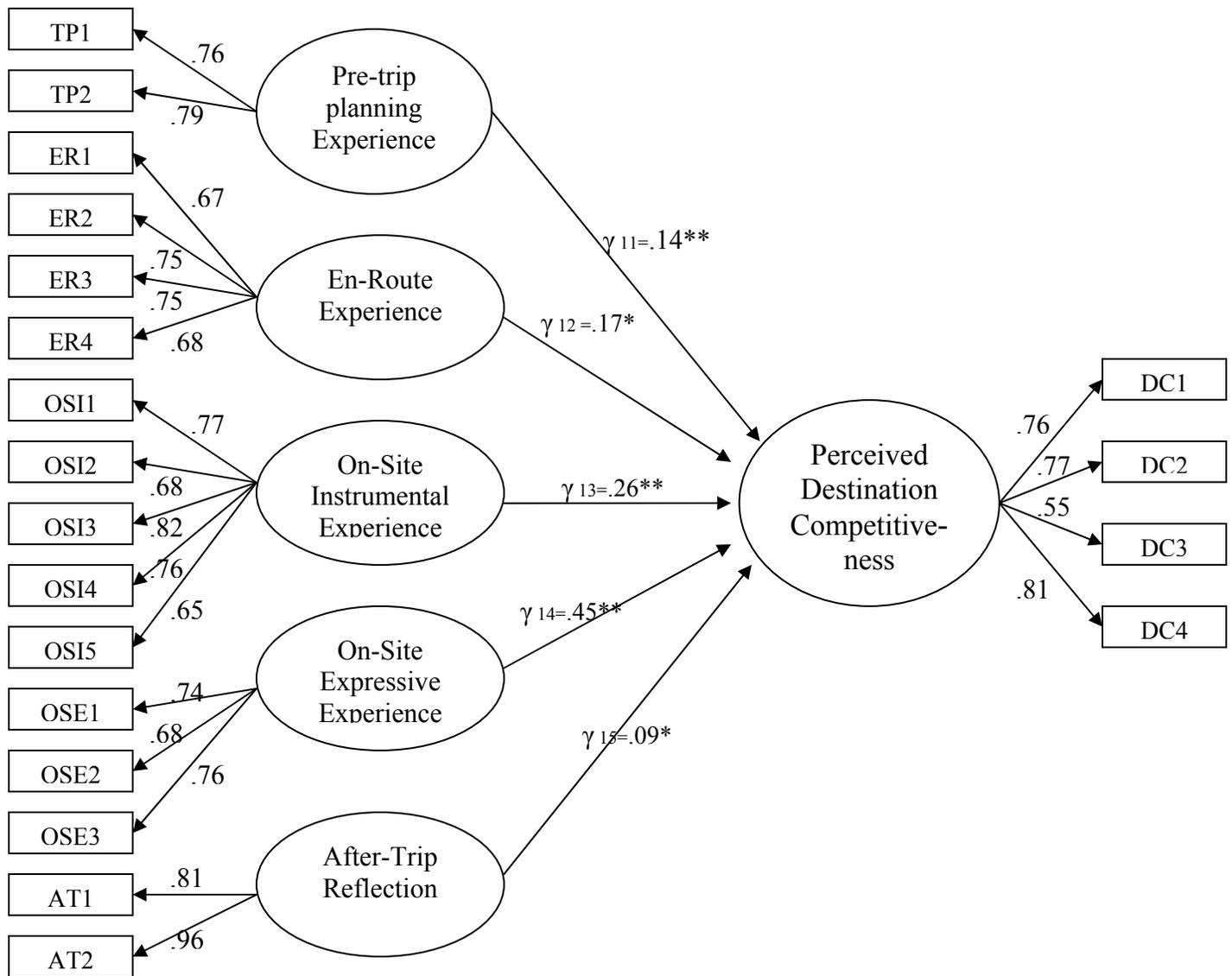


Figure 4.3 Final Structural Equation Model

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , TP1: Having easy access to destination information, TP2: Being able to get abundant destination information, ER1: Having easy access to and from the destination, ER2: Comfortable transportation to and from the destination, ER3: Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination, ER4: Having problem-free travel to and from the destination, OSI1: High quality of accommodation at the destination, OSI2: High quality of food at the destination, OSI3: Good facilities at the destination, OSI4: Receiving high quality service at the destination, OSI5: Clean environment at the destination, OSE1: User-friendly guidance/information at destination, OSE2: Ensured safety and security at the destination, OSE3: Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination, AT1: Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation, AT2: Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation, DC1: Accessibility and information availability, DC2: Tourism attributes, DC3: Price and value, DC4: Destination management and marketing.

**H2b:** The quality of en-route experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness (ER→DC).

Hypothesis H2b investigated the relationship between tourist en-route experience and perceived destination competitiveness. The postulated statement was supported by SEM analysis (t-value = 2.03,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, tourist en-route experience significantly influenced their perception on the destination competitiveness. This finding suggests that if tourists have a high-quality en-route experience to and from the vacation destination, they would perceive the destination to be more competitive.

More specifically, tourists consider high-quality en-route experience comprised of easy access to the vacation destination, comfortable transportation, high quality en-route services, and problem-free travel to and from the destination. The positive experience on the way to the destination and coming home influenced tourists' perception about the destination they visit. Although the en-route experience may not directly related to the destination itself, the enjoyable time on the way was also a driving force which influenced tourists' perception about the destination.

**H2c:** The quality of on-site instrumental experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness (OSI→DC).

In hypothesis H2c, it was postulated that the on-site instrumental experience influences tourists' perception on destination competitiveness. The hypothesis was supported by LISREL analysis. The tourist on-site instrumental experience significantly influenced the perception of the competitiveness of destination (t-value = 3.25,  $p < 0.01$ ). Result indicates that the good experience tourists have on the destination site in terms of high-quality accommodation, food, facilities, service, and environment would influence their positive perception on the destination competitiveness.

**H2d:** The quality of on-site expressive experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness (OSE→DC).

Hypothesis H2d investigated the relationship between tourist on-site expressive experience and their perceived destination competitiveness. The structural coefficient and t-values associated with these two constructs were positively significant (t-value = 5.29,  $p < .001$ ), indicating the support to this hypothesis. This finding suggests that the more positive experience tourists have in terms of interaction/communication with service staff, safety and security, and user-friendly guidance and information at the destination, the more they would perceive the destination to be competitive. It implies that tourists put importance on their expressive experience, i.e., the emotional feeling toward the people and environment during their stay at the destination, and the experience would influence their perception on the competitiveness of the destination.

**H2e:** The quality of after-trip reflection as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness (AT→DC).

Hypothesis H2e investigated the relationship between tourist after-trip reflection about their tourism/vacation experience and their perceived destination competitiveness. The structural coefficient and t-values associated with these two constructs were positively significant (t-value=2.19,  $p < .05$ ), indicating the support to this hypothesis. This finding suggests that the more positively tourists reflect or recollect their vacation experience, the more likely they perceive the related destination to be competitive. It indicates that tourists give values to the sense of life-enrichment and personal reward after the trip, and the positive reflection of vacation experience would influence their perception on the competitiveness of the destination. Table 4.19 presents the summary of the hypotheses testing results.

Table 4.19 Summary of the Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Results
H2a	TP→DC ( $\gamma_{11}$ )	.14	2.59**	Supported
H2b	ER→DC ( $\gamma_{12}$ )	.17	2.03*	Supported
H2c	OSI→DC ( $\gamma_{13}$ )	.26	3.25**	Supported
H2d	OSE→DC ( $\gamma_{14}$ )	.45	5.29**	Supported
H2e	AT→DC ( $\gamma_{15}$ )	.09	2.19*	Supported

Note: \*  $p < .05$  (1.96) \*\*  $p < .01$  (2.58)

TP: Pre-trip planning experience, ER: En-route experience, OSI: On-site instrumental experience, OSE: On-site expressive experience, AT: After-trip reflection, DC: Perceived destination competitiveness

#### 4.4.3.7 Testing of the Moderating Effect

This stage of data analysis deals with the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of tourism experience (in terms of different phases of the vacation) and tourist perceived destination competitiveness. The study used the SEM to examine the moderating effect of tourist involvement.

The following procedures are employed to complete the analysis. First, the tourist involvement items are factor analyzed utilizing a principal components analysis with varimax rotation procedure in order to identify the tourist involvement dimensions. Second, cluster analysis is employed to identify groups of respondents based on the dimensions generated from the factor analysis. Third, the hypotheses of the moderating effect are tested using SEM.

##### 4.4.3.7.1 Factor Analysis of Tourist Involvement

The 14 tourist involvement items were factor analyzed utilizing a principal components analysis with varimax rotation to identify any underlying dimensions. The data were first assessed for the appropriateness of running factor analysis. The correlation

matrix revealed a substantial number of variables correlated at the .30 level or above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.746, and the Barlett Test of Sphericity was statistically significant at .000 level. Therefore, the data were suitable for the proposed statistical procedure of factor analysis. Four factors of tourist involvement were derived to represent the data and were retained for further analysis: Interest/Pleasure; Sign; Risk Probability; and Risk Importance. One item “It is really annoying to purchase a vacation that is not suitable” did not load on any factor and was removed. All the factor loadings were above .65 and the four involvement factors explained 63.07% of the total variance. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) ranged from .690 to .838, indicating satisfactory reliability result (Table 4.20). The factor which explained the highest percentage of the total variance (25.70%) was Interest/Pleasure, followed by Sign (17.11%), Risk Probability (11.90%), and Risk Importance (8.39%). The results were consistent with the findings of previous studies related to tourist involvement (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Dimanche et al., 1991; Madrigal et al., 1992; Jamrozy et al., 1996; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003; Kim & Petrick, 2004).

Table 4.20 Factor Analysis Results of Tourist Involvement

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b>Interest/Pleasure</b>		3.596	25.70%	.795
A vacation interests me a great deal	.820			
A vacation is somewhat a pleasure to me	.759			
I attach great importance to a vacation	.756			
It gives me pleasure to purchase a vacation	.725			
<b>Sign</b>		2.395	17.11%	.838
The vacation I buy gives a glimpse of the type of person I am	.906			
You can tell a lot about a person by the vacation he/she chooses	.868			
The vacation I buy tells something about me	.739			
<b>Risk probability</b>		1.665	11.90%	.690
When one purchases a vacation, he/she is never certain of his/her choice	.778			
Buying a vacation is rather complicated	.692			
When I face a variety of vacation choices, I always feel a bit at a loss to make my choice	.676			
Whenever one buys a vacation, he/she never really knows for sure whether it is the one that should have been bought	.656			
<b>Risk importance</b>		1.174	8.39%	.631
When I purchase a vacation, it is not a big deal if I make a mistake	-.841			
If, after I buy a vacation proves to be poor, I would be really upset	.750			
<b>Total Variance Explained</b>			63.07%	

Note: Tourist Involvement: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree  
 KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.746  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

#### 4.4.3.7.2 Identification of Cluster Groups based on Tourist Involvement

Cluster analysis was employed to identify groups of respondents based on the tourist involvement dimensions generated from the factor analysis. Both hierarchical and quick clustering methods were performed and two cluster groups were identified. All the 353 respondents were clustered into the two groups, which comprise of 163 and 190 cases respectively. The cluster means for each of the four factors are shown in Table 4.21. ANOVA tests revealed that differences exist between clusters for each tourist involvement factor except Risk Importance. Cluster I respondents placed all the involvement factors lower than Cluster II respondents. Therefore, Cluster I was named “Low Involvement Group” whereas Cluster II was identified as “High Involvement Group”.

Table 4.21 Cluster Analysis Results based on Tourist Involvement Factors (N=353)

Factors	Cluster I (N=163)	Cluster II (N=190)	F-Value	Sig. Level
	Low Involvement	High Involvement		
Interest/Pleasure	3.68	4.34	108.789	.000
Sign	2.73	4.05	483.683	.000
Risk Probability	2.81	3.04	8.150	.005
Risk Importance	3.03	3.15	3.556	.060

Note: Mean values are computed on the basis of 5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

A demographic profile of each cluster was created using cross-tabulation analysis. Clusters were significantly different from the expected values based on Chi-square analysis for only one demographic variable: gender. Females tend to be high involvement tourists during the process of taking vacation: Cluster I was comprised of 38.8% female, whereas Cluster II had 61.2% female (Appendix K).

#### **4.4.3.7.3 Analysis of the Moderating Effect by Using SEM**

After identifying the two involvement groups, the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and tourist perceived destination competitiveness was tested by using the SEM. The hypotheses were listed as the following:

- H3a: The relationship between the quality of pre-trip planning experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.
- H3b: The relationship between the quality of en-route experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.
- H3c: The relationship between the quality of on-site instrumental experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.
- H3d: The relationship between the quality of on-site expressive experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.
- H3e: The relationship between the quality of after-trip reflection and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

The basic premise of the moderating effect indicated that responses to variations in the relationship between quality of tourism experience and tourist perceived destination competitiveness depends on the tourist involvement level. Two steps were employed to test the moderating (interaction) effect of the delineated two involvement levels, i.e., low involvement and high involvement in taking tourism/vacation activities. The first step involved a “multiple-group” solution in which LISREL derived parameter estimates for each involvement level separately without constraint across the involvement levels as well as a measure of pooled goodness-of-fit of the model for both involvement groups considered simultaneously. In the second step, the path coefficients were estimated for each involvement group with an across-group constraint imposed to reflect

the interaction effect (Jaccard & Wan, 1996). Based on the size of the difference in the value of Chi-square changes from the base model to the constrained solutions, a decision about the interaction effect could be made. Table 4.22 provided the statistical comparisons of the involvement level models for the interaction effect.

For the base model in which LISREL estimates parameters in different groups with no across-group constraints, the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value was 638.50 with 310 degrees of freedom. For the second step in which LISREL estimates parameters in different groups with an across-group constraint imposed to reflect the interaction effect, the differences in Chi-square ( $\Delta \chi^2$ ) values were 3.85, 5.25, .06, 6.89, and .06 respectively for different path relationships. The differences were distributed as a Chi-square statistic with degrees of freedom equal to the differences between the base model and the constraint models' degrees of freedom, that is, 311-310=1. The individual moderating effect tests of tourist involvement on each path were presented in Table 4.22. The results showed that the differences of Chi-square value of en-route experience ( $\Delta \chi^2 = 5.25$ ), on-site expressive experience ( $\Delta \chi^2 = 6.89$ ) with 1 degrees of freedom were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that the differences in model fit were statistically significant. Therefore, the moderating effect was present, since making the assumption of no interaction significantly adversely affected model fit. The differences in the Chi-squares of pre-trip planning experience ( $\Delta \chi^2 = 3.39$ ), on-site instrumental experience ( $\Delta \chi^2 = .06$ ), and after-trip reflection ( $\Delta \chi^2 = .06$ ) were not significant.

Table 4.22 Moderating Effect of Tourist Involvement (Low vs. High Involvement)

	Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	df	$\Delta \chi^2$	$\Delta df$	p-value
Base model	638.50	310	-	-	-
TP	642.35	311	3.85	1	<.05
ER	643.75	311	5.25	1	<.05
OSI	638.56	311	.06	1	>.05
OSE	645.39	311	6.89	1	<.05
AT	638.56	311	.06	1	>.05

Note: TP: Pre-trip planning experience, ER: En-route experience, OSI: On-site instrumental experience, OSE: On-site expressive experience, AT: After-trip reflection

To further examine the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness, the comparison model of low involvement and high involvement groups with the estimated path coefficients with associated t-values were presented in Table 4.23. The path coefficients provided the estimates of the regression coefficient for low involvement and high involvement groups. For example, the path coefficient from the latent variable of pre-trip planning experience to perceived destination competitiveness for low involvement was .05, whereas for high involvement, the corresponding path coefficient was .19. The difference between the path coefficients was statistically significant because of the nested fit test. The impact of pre-trip planning experience on perceived destination competitiveness was stronger for high involvement group than for low involvement group. Moreover, the influence of on-site instrumental and expressive experience on perceived destination competitiveness was also stronger for high involvement group ( $p < .01$ , higher standardized coefficients) than for low involvement group ( $p < .05$ , lower standardized coefficients). However, the influence of en-route experience on perceived destination competitiveness seems stronger for low involvement ( $p < .05$ ) than for high involvement ( $p > .05$ ). In terms of the influence of after-trip reflection on perceived destination competitiveness, both group showed non-significant relationship ( $p > .05$ ).

Table 4.23 Comparison of the Model based on Tourist Involvement (Low vs. High)

Tourist Involvement	Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	df	Standardized Coefficients	t-values
Low Involvement	342.08	155	-	-
TP→DC			.05	.54
ER→DC			.26	2.39*
OSI→DC			.34	2.19*
OSE→DC			.40	2.64**
AT→DC			.06	1.31
High Involvement	296.41	155		
TP→DC			.19	2.37*
ER→DC			.05	.39
OSI→DC			.35	3.06**
OSE→DC			.50	4.85**
AT→DC			.07	1.29

Note: \*  $p < .05$  (1.96) \*\*  $p < .01$  (2.58)

TP: Pre-trip planning experience, ER: En-route experience, OSI: On-site instrumental experience, OSE: On-site expressive experience, AT: After-trip reflection, DC: Perceived destination competitiveness

#### 4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter IV presented the data analysis of the study and tested the proposed hypotheses. The first section provided a description of the survey method employed in this study and the demographic profiles of the survey. The second section presented a preliminary data analysis to identify the measurement scale and dimension(s) for each construct proposed in the model. The third section discussed the canonical correlation analysis which was used to test the first hypothesis, followed by the confirmatory factor analysis results, measurement model testing, and the test of the proposed structural equation model and hypotheses. The final section tested the moderating effect for the last hypothesis using SEM. Table 4.24 presents a summary of the hypotheses testing results.

Table 4.24 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypotheses	Results
H1: The quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness share a common variance.	Supported
H2a: The quality of pre-trip planning experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.	Supported
H2b: The quality of en-route experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.	Supported
H2c: The quality of on-site instrumental experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.	Supported
H2d: The quality of on-site expressive experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.	Supported
H2e: The quality of after-trip reflection as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.	Supported
H3a: The relationship between the quality of pre-trip planning experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement	Supported
H3b: The relationship between the quality of en-route experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.	Supported
H3c: The relationship between the quality of on-site instrumental experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.	Not Supported
H3d: The relationship between the quality of on-site expressive experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.	Supported
H3e: The relationship between the quality of after-trip reflection and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.	Not Supported

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the summary, discussion and implications of the findings of the study. In the first section of the chapter, a summary and discussion of the hypotheses testing are presented. The managerial and theoretical implications of the findings, followed by the limitation of the study, are discussed next. Finally, the chapter concludes with the suggestions for future research.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

This study developed a destination competitiveness model based on tourists' perception and attempted to investigate how different phases of tourism/vacation experience affect tourists' perception of the competitiveness of the destination they visit. The proposed theoretical model addressed the tourism experience from the chronological and temporal aspects, i.e., tourist pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection, and their influences on tourists' perception on destination competitiveness. Additionally, tourist involvement was proposed to have a moderating effect on the relationship between tourism experience dimensions and destination competitive domains. The proposed model in Figure 3.1 was empirically tested. The model analyzed (1) the effect of the quality of tourist pre-trip planning experience on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness; (2) the effect of the quality of tourist en-route experience on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness; (3) the effect of the quality of tourist on-site experience on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness (including two hypotheses); (4) the effect of the tourist after-trip reflection on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness, and (5) the moderating

effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between tourist pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site experience, after-trip reflection, and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

Before conducting the actual study, a series of procedures were adopted to develop the measurement scales for the proposed constructs in order to ensure that those measurements are valid and reliable. Measurement scales of constructs were refined based on the feedback from professors and students in hospitality and tourism management and the related findings of the pretest. The model was modified to represent the two-factor structure of the tourist on-site experience construct, i.e., on-site instrumental and expressive experience, which reflects the cognitive and affective aspects of the tourist on-site experience. The modified theoretical model was presented in Figure 4.1.

The study specially focused on leisure tourists who take vacations away from home to domestic and international destinations. This focus was selected in order to address the effect of the quality of tourists' tourism experience on their perception of destination competitiveness. Respondents were asked to complete a self-administered survey based on their vacation experience and their perception of the destination competitiveness. A final usable sample of 353 respondents was used in the data analysis. The survey questionnaires were collected from a wide range of counties and cities in Virginia. The demographic characteristics of respondents were consistent with the census of Virginia residents and showed the representativeness of the region. The sample was also checked for non-response bias and possible late response bias, and no response bias was revealed.

This study developed and tested a measurement model for the five constructs of tourism experience, as well as the sub-dimensions of perceived destination competitiveness. The five constructs of tourism experience were pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site instrumental experience, on-site expressive experience, and after-trip reflection. The perceived destination competitiveness also contained five sub-dimensions, which included accessibility and information availability, environment, tourism attributes, price and value, and destination management and marketing. Each construct was measured by at least two indicators or sub-dimensions.

Each sub-dimension of the construct (in this case, the perceived destination competitiveness) consisted of at least two indicators. The score of items for each sub-dimension of the destination competitiveness perception was summated and used to measure the proposed constructs.

The results of the study found that the quality of different phases of tourism experience influenced tourists' perceived destination competitiveness. In addition, the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationships between three of the constructs of tourism experience and the perceived destination competitiveness were statistically significant. These findings are discussed in detail in the following section.

### **5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

This discussion section first addresses the development and testing of the constructs of tourism experience and the sub-dimensions of the perception of destination competitiveness. The constructs of tourism experience, and the dynamics of destination competitiveness construct, were discussed in detail in Chapter II in order to provide a better understanding of the influence of tourism experience on tourists' perception of destination competitiveness. The constructs of tourism experience are pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection. The sub-constructs of destination competitiveness perception are accessibility and information availability, tourism attributes, price and value, and destination management and marketing. A multiple indicator measurement scale was developed for each construct in Chapter III. The proposed model was refined since tourist on-site experience could be represented by two constructs: on-site instrumental experience and on-site expressive experience. The revised model was then provided and used for the foundation of hypotheses testing.

In Chapter IV, a detailed explanation of the data collection method was provided. The demographic characteristics and general travel behavior of the respondents were presented. The preliminary factor analyses of the data were conducted for the preparation of the proposed hypotheses testing. The preliminary data analysis presented satisfactory reliability results for all the constructs with the Cronbach's Alpha scores higher than .70.

The measurement items also explained acceptable variance of the constructs and represented uni-dimensionality of the constructs proposed in the model.

Canonical correlation analysis was then performed to test the first hypothesis to reveal the extent of the relationship and identify the existing variates between the two sets of variables: quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. The composite mean scores of items loading on the factors were used as the construct score based on the preliminary factor analysis results. The perceived destination competitiveness sub-dimensions were considered the dependent variates, whereas the constructs of quality of tourism experience were considered the independent variates.

Structural equation modeling was used for the second hypothesis testing. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first conducted to refine the posited relationships of the observed indicators to the constructs. CFA resulted in elimination of some indicators from the proposed model to preserve the uni-dimensionality of each scale and generate satisfactory goodness-of-fit indices. Through the CFA, the uni-dimensionality was confirmed and the composite reliabilities for each construct were calculated. It was indicated that all the constructs had a composite reliability score above .70, which include pre-trip planning experience (.73), en-route experience (.83), on-site instrumental experience (.85), on-site expressive experience (.78), after-trip reflection (.74), and perception of destination competitiveness (.80). The four sub-dimensions which were used as indicators to perceived destination competitiveness also had the reliability scores above .70 (accessibility and information availability .80, tourism attributes .74, price and value .80, and destination management and marketing .86).

After testing the uni-dimensionality and confirming the posited relationships of the constructs, the overall measurement model was tested to observe if the theoretical measurement model fit the data well. Therefore, the overall measurement model for six constructs was tested to check the uni-dimensionality of the scale to measure each construct. The results indicated that the final measurement model was not different from the originally proposed measurement model, but the number of indicators of the constructs proposed in the model decreased by one for each exogenous construct in the final measurement model, since those indicators had comparatively high measurement errors and low correlations to the construct. Therefore, the re-specific overall

measurement model had six constructs and 20 observed indicators. A detailed examination of the observed indicators of the constructs showed that pre-trip planning experience was measured by 2 indicators, en-route experience had 4 indicators, on-site instrumental experience had 5 indicators, on-site expressive experience had 3 indicators, after-trip reflection had 2 indicators, and perception of destination competitiveness had 4 indicators (sub-dimensions).

### 5.3.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Table 5.1 presents a summary of the hypotheses tested and the standardized coefficients or Chi-squares for each hypothesis. As presented in table 5.1, the findings of this study supported nine of the proposed eleven hypotheses. The rest of this section addresses the research questions and the hypotheses that were empirically tested.

Table 5.1 Hypotheses and Test Results

Hypotheses	Standardized Coefficients	Results
H1: VE→DC	-	Supported
H2a: TP→DC	.14**	Supported
H2b: ER→DC	.17*	Supported
H2c: OSI→DC	.26**	Supported
H2d: OSE→DC	.45**	Supported
H2e: AT→DC	.09*	Supported
Hypotheses (Moderating Effects)	Chi-square differences ( $\Delta \chi^2$ )	Results
H3a: TI on TP→DC	3.85*	Supported
H3b: TI on ER→DC	5.25*	Supported
H3c: TI on OSI→DC	.06	Not Supported
H3d: TI on OSE→DC	6.89*	Supported
H3e: TI on AT→DC	.06	Not Supported

Note: \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

VE: Overall vacation experience, TP: Pre-trip planning experience, ER: En-route experience, OSI: On-site instrumental experience, OSE: On-site expressive experience, AT: After-trip reflection, DC: Perceived destination competitiveness, TI: Tourist Involvement

## **Research Question 1**

*How do the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness relate to each other?*

Research question 1 was addressed by one hypothesis: H1: The quality of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness share a common variance. The findings of the canonical correlation analysis supported the proposed hypothesis that the quality of tourism experience and tourist' perception of destination competitiveness do relate to each other by sharing overlapping variances between the pairs of canonical variates representing the two major concepts respectively. Three out of five canonical functions were statistically significant at the .001 probability level, among which the first canonical variate explained 65.0% of the total variance, whereas the second canonical variate explained 22.7% of the leftover variance, and the third function explained 12.1% of the following residual variance. The findings validated the previous studies related to destination competitiveness and tourism experience (Dwyer et al., 2004; Hassan, 2000; Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2000a; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). These studies indicated that destination competitiveness, to a large extent, depends on the ability of a destination to deliver better goods and services which relate to the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists.

## **Research Question 2**

*What is the influence of the quality of tourism experience on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness?*

The second research question addressed the influence of different phases (pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site, after-trip) of tourism experience on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness. These relationships were examined through hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d, H2e. Hypothesis H2a: The quality of pre-trip planning experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination

competitiveness; H2b: The quality of en-route experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness; H2c: The quality of on-site instrumental experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness; H2d: The quality of on-site expressive experience as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness; H2e: The quality of after-trip reflection as part of the tourism experience has a positive influence on tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

The results showed that all the five hypotheses were supported, and the examination of these hypotheses revealed the strength and direction of the relationships between the different phases of tourism experience and tourists' perception of destination competitiveness. It could be concluded that the quality of tourism experience, including pre-trip planning, en-route experience, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection, influenced tourists' perception of the competitiveness of the destination where they took their tourism/vacation activities. The better the quality the tourists perceive their tourism experience during different phases, the more competitive they think the destination is. The findings extended previous research which demonstrated the possible link between tourism experience and the destination competitiveness in that a high quality experience offered to tourists gives an edge to destination competitiveness (Dwyer et al., 2004; Hassan, 2000; Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2000a; Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

### **Research Question 3**

*What is the moderating effect of tourist involvement on the relationship between tourism experience and tourists' perception of destination competitiveness?*

Research question 3 addressed the moderating influence of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of tourism experience in terms of different phases and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness. These relationships were examined through hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c, H3d, and H3e: H3a: The relationship between the

quality of tourist pre-trip planning experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement; H3b: The relationship between the quality of tourist en-route experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement; H3c: The relationship between the quality of tourist on-site instrumental experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement; H3d: The relationship between the quality of tourist on-site expressive experience and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement; H3e: The relationship between the quality of tourist after-trip reflection and perceived destination competitiveness is moderated by the level of tourist involvement.

The study first used factor-cluster analysis to divide the tourists into low-involvement and high-involvement groups based on their reported involvement level in taking tourism/vacation activities. The tourist involvement's moderating effect was examined on the path between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. The testing results showed that hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3d were supported. That is, tourist involvement moderated the relationships between the pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site expressive experience and perceived destination competitiveness. The results indicated that the path coefficients of these relationships significantly changed for the two involvement groups (i.e., "low involvement" vs. "high involvement"). Specifically, the impact of pre-trip planning experience on perceived destination competitiveness was stronger for high involvement group than for low involvement group. Moreover, the influence of on-site instrumental and expressive experience on perceived destination competitiveness was also stronger for high involvement group ( $p < .01$ ) than for low involvement group ( $p < .05$ ). However, the influence of en-route experience on perceived destination competitiveness seems stronger for low involvement ( $p < .05$ ) than for high involvement ( $p > .05$ ).

### **5.3.2 Summary of the Discussion**

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between the quality of tourism experience and tourists' perception of destination competitiveness, which means that if tourists think that they have a high quality tourism experience, they tend to perceive that this destination obtains competitiveness and is more superior to alternative destination choices. Findings also indicate the statistical significance of the moderating effect in the model, thus suggesting that there were some meaningful moderating effects of tourist involvement on the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

## **5.4 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.4.1 Managerial Implications**

In today's increasingly saturated tourism market, destination competitiveness has become a critical issue in successful destination management and planning. Since tourists and their needs stand as the ultimate driving force which influences the competition and competitiveness in tourism destinations (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b, 2003), it is necessary to examine the concept of destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective. Tourists' perceptions on what is a high quality tourism experience and how they perceive destination competitiveness could provide important insights to destination managers and marketers. The study provides an integrated approach to understand the relationship between the quality of tourism experience in different phases (pre-trip planning, en-route experience, on-site experience, after-trip reflection) and the perception of destination competitiveness. The results indicate that the quality of tourism experience during the different phases has significant influence on tourists' perception of destination competitiveness. In other words, if tourists have a high quality tourism experience, they would perceive the destination superior and more competitive than other alternative or similar destinations.

The relationship between different phases of tourism experience and tourists' perception of destination competitiveness provides managerial implications to destination managers and marketers. For example, specifically, during the pre-trip planning phase, tourists value easy access to the information related to the destination and receiving abundant information when they do the vacation search. These two issues make tourists feel that they have a high quality pre-trip planning experience, which in turn contributes to their positive perception of the destination competitiveness. Destination managers and marketers need to focus on establishing reliable and abundant destination information which is easy to access. This is very important to impress the tourists with how well the destination is promoted and marketed to potential visitors.

Another critical research finding was the strong relationship (the highest path coefficient score) between tourist on-site experience and destination competitiveness. Accordingly, the results suggest that destination managers/marketers need to guarantee high-quality accommodation, food, facilities, service, and clean environment to provide a high-quality on-site experience. In addition, the emotional/affective aspects of the on-site experience, such as pleasant communication with the staff and user-friendly guidance at the destination also need to be generated. The instrumental and expressive on-site experience directly and significantly influenced tourists' perception of the destination superiority and competitiveness. Expressive on-site experience was considered the most important indicator since it has the highest path coefficient score among all the five path relationships, which was followed by instrumental on-site experience.

These results are likely to help destination marketers to collect information and plan appropriate tourism experience packages based on tourists' wants and needs. It is interesting to note that the en-route experience also has a significant positive influence on perceived destination competitiveness. The positive experience on the way to the destination and returning home influenced tourists' perception about the destination they visit. Although the en-route experience may not directly relate to the destination itself, the enjoyable time on the way is also a driving force which influenced tourists' perception about the destination. This finding may encourage destination managers and marketers to develop a partnership or alliance with businesses which handle ground

transportation at the destination when considering the strategic development and management of a high-quality tourism experience package offered to visitors.

The moderating effect tests revealed that tourist involvement significantly influenced the relationships between pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, expressive on-site experience, and perceived destination competitiveness. For example, the impact of pre-trip planning experience on perceived destination competitiveness was stronger for the high involvement group (significant relationship) than for the low involvement group (non-significant relationship). The influence of on-site instrumental and expressive experience on perceived destination competitiveness was also stronger for the high involvement group (significant at .01 level) than for the low involvement group (significant at .05 level). However, the influence of en-route experience on perceived destination competitiveness seemed stronger for low involvement than for high involvement.

The findings imply that destination managers and marketers need to pay more attention to high-involvement tourists since their perceived destination competitiveness are more influenced by their reported quality of tourism experience. However, for the low involvement tourists, destination managers and marketer need to specifically focus on the en-route experience for this group in addition to their on-site experiences, since this en-route experience is the only factor that impacts the relationship between tourism experience and destination competitiveness for low involvement tourists more than high involvement counterparts. In real business practice, however, it is difficult to recognize the involvement level of the visitors on the destination site except the gender, which is the significant demographic difference between the two groups. Furthermore, both groups value the on-site experience as the most important component of the quality of their overall tourism experience. Therefore, tourism destination companies need to provide the best experience that could be offered to every tourist.

It can be concluded from the findings of this study that destination managers and marketers need to take a serious and integrated approach to provide a high-quality experience package to tourists, so that it will be guaranteed that tourists feel they receive a good experience from the very beginning stage of planning the vacation to the very end of the process of recall or reflecting the whole trip. In this way, tourists will feel the

competitive edge of the destination and perceive this specific place a superior and more competitive destination choice.

#### **5.4.2 Theoretical Implications**

Research on destination competitiveness has been receiving popularity in recent years. Many researchers have attempted to examine the competitiveness in a tourism destination context due to the fact that this issue has become a critical matter in today's dynamic but saturated tourism market. However, most of the previous studies have examined this issue from the perspectives of the industry practitioners or tourism professionals (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993, 2003; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004; Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005; Dwyer et al., 1999, 2000, 2004; Go & Govers, 2000; Melian-Ganzales & Garcia-Falcon, 2003; Mihalic, 2000). For example, Ritchie and Crouch (1993, 1999, 2003) discussed destination competitiveness mainly on the industry level, which could be considered as a macro-level perspective. Dwyer and colleagues' work (1999, 2000, 2004) mainly discussed the price issues related to the destination competitiveness. Dwyer and Kim (2003) also presented the review and categorization of the major indicators of destination competitiveness, but no empirical test was carried out to test the framework.

Many researchers stated that destination competitiveness depends on the superior tourist experience offered by the destination and it is the quality of experience that destinations compete on for obtaining a competitive edge (Dwyer et al., 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b, 2003). However, only limited research has examined this perspective either theoretically or empirically. This study contributes to the literature in that it developed a theoretical model to examine the destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective by testing the relationship between different phases of tourism experience and tourists' perceived destination competitiveness. The study empirically validates the notion that the quality of tourism experience, in fact, positively influences tourists' perceived destination competitiveness.

The influence of tourist involvement as a moderating variable was also tested on the relationship between tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness.

The model developed and tested in this research provides a theoretical basis for relating destination competitiveness to quality of tourism experience. New elements could be added to the model, which may further explain tourists' tourism experience and their perception of destination competitiveness. Furthermore, the behavioral intention related to tourists' perceived destination competitiveness could also be examined. The theoretical model may be helpful in directing future research in determining and refining the elements to measure tourism experience and the perception of destination competitiveness.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS**

As expected in all research, limitations to this study are presented. First, the limitations of this study evolve from the boundaries set for the analysis of the proposed theoretical model. This study investigated the structural relationships of tourism destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspectives. So this study focus is directed only to leisure tourists and their perceptions of quality of tourism/vacation experience and destination competitiveness. This means that only leisure tourists who traveled to a vacation destination were addressed. Destination competitiveness is a complex issue and should be approached from various perspectives, including not only the tourists' opinions (demand side), but also the perceptions and practices of destination management companies, tourism organizations, and other tourism industry professionals (supply side). This study only included the demand side perspective, specifically, the leisure tourist market. It is expected that other demand segments in tourism (for example, business travelers) and supply side perspective may result in different perceptions, attitudes, and practices on destination competitiveness. Furthermore, tourism/tourist experience is another complex topic which includes a variety of approaches and perspectives from previous studies. This study only addressed the tourism experience in terms of the chronological and temporal aspects, i.e., the different phases in the time order of tourist

pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site experience, and after-trip reflection. It is also expected that tourism experience examined from other approaches may result in different relationships and effects on tourists' perception of destination competitiveness. Beyond the above two points, the destination itself varies tremendously in terms of location, function, economic, socio-cultural development, and so on, and the competitiveness may represent different criteria for different destination types. The different purposes of vacation or leisure travel may also alter the experience requirements from the tourists, which could make the specific relationship between quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness a lot more complex.

The second limitation is that this study has been somewhat constrained in its selection of observed indicators, variables, and constructs. Even if those observed indicators, variables, and constructs were generated based on the literature review and researcher's observations, other critical variables and constructs may exist to achieve further insights of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. For example, more variables may contribute to the measurement scale of the quality of tourism experience in terms of the different phases in vacation. Refinement of the measurement scale may be needed for further research. Furthermore, this study only included tourist involvement as the moderating factor in the relationship between quality of tourism experience and destination competitiveness. There may be other moderating factors which could be added into the model, such as tourist motivation, satisfaction, personality, and so on.

The last limitations of the study could be considered as secondary limitations, since these issues did not affect the validity and soundness of the research. They mainly deal with the limited geographical coverage of the survey questionnaire distribution and low response rate. The survey data were only collected from residents of Virginia. The major purpose of the research is to propose the theoretical model and empirically test it. Therefore, the data collection in Virginia solely will not significantly affect the final results of the study. However, it is possible that if the study was conducted on the residents of other states and countries, the magnitude of the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and the perception of destination competitiveness may show some variations. In this sense, other geographic regions should be explored and

additional studies across different traveling populations should be conducted. The next secondary limitation relates to the response rate of this study. The population of Virginia was not under-represented, since the late response bias, non-response bias, and the representativeness of the sample related to the census data of Virginia were examined to ensure that the sample was valid and sound to carry out the analysis. However, it was expected that the study could generate more responses from the sample population.

Consequently, the limitations addressed above should be considered as essential and critical suggestions for future research. Future studies should take into account these limitations to produce more complete research results.

## **5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY**

There are several key implications that deserve the attention for future research as a result of the findings and limitations of this study. Those implications are discussed in this section.

This study intends to initiate the development of theoretical framework of destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective based on their perception of quality of tourism experience. As discussed in the limitation section, both destination competitiveness and tourism experience are very complex constructs which could and should be examined from various approaches and perspectives. Therefore, future studies should develop better unified definition of destination competitiveness and tourism experience. Future research is needed to build on the conceptual framework which combines the demand and supply side of the destination competitiveness in terms of concept, perceptions, and practices. Tourism experience needs to be examined from alternative approaches in addition to the chronological and temporal aspects of different phases in taking vacations. More specific studies should be carried out to investigate the destination competitiveness based on different destination locations and functions, and how different purposes and expectation of tourism experience influence tourists' thoughts on destination competitiveness.

The proposed model of the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness was limited to the empirical test on the sample of leisure traveling residents of Virginia. Future studies should replicate the study for targeting more traveling parties from other geographic regions, states, and various international cultures in order to improve the understanding of tourists' perception of destination competitiveness and generate a more solid relationship among constructs in this study. Such applications will help researchers to identify reliable indicators to measure the proposed constructs, and generate a more solid and stable model. Future research is also needed to test whether other variables or constructs should be added to the model and refine the conceptual framework for improvement. For example, the model proposed in this study only included tourist involvement as a moderating variable which influences the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. Other variables such as demographics, travel behavior characteristics, tourist motivations, and satisfaction may also function as moderating variables in this model. The current study did not add these variables in the model due to the major objectives and nature of the research. However, future research should examine the moderating effect of these variables on the proposed relationship between tourism experience and destination competitiveness.

In this study, the different phases of tourism experience were examined as separate and discreet constructs, and the data were collected at one point in time reflecting the respondents' general perceptions related to their vacation experience and perceived destination competitiveness. Further research could be conducted to examine travelers' actual behavior and perception related to each phase of tourism experience, in which data may be collected at different points in time to reflect the actual behavior for each individual phase of tourism experience.

Due to the major objectives of the research and the length concern of the survey questionnaire, this study did not include the tourist behavioral variables such as the satisfaction of the destination and intension of repeat visit and tourist loyalty, which would help to examine the tourists' perception of destination competitiveness and the related future tourist behavior with the destination. This future research would be able to better answer the "so what" question.

## 5.7 CONCLUSIONS

Destination competitiveness is a comparatively new point of discussion in the tourism destination research. Given the fact that there are a limited number of empirical studies on tourism destination competitiveness, especially from the demand side perspective, this study developed and empirically tested a structural equation model of destination competitiveness from the tourists' perspective, through exploring the relationship between the quality of tourism experience and the perceived destination competitiveness. The results of the study provided support that tourists' perception of destination competitiveness is positively influenced by the quality of tourism experience in terms of different phases (pre-trip planning, en-route experience, on-site instrumental experience, on-site expressive experience, and after-trip reflection). Findings also indicated that tourist involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between tourist pre-trip planning experience, en-route experience, on-site expressive experience, and perceived destination competitiveness.

The study aims to initiate the development of a theoretical foundation of the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness. It is expected that this study makes valuable contributions to the understanding and insights about destination competitive from the tourists' perspective. From the results of the comprehensive data analyses and procedures, this study reiterates that in order to increase the perceived destination competitiveness in tourists' mind, it is necessary for destination managers and marketers to provide high quality tourism experience to visitors in every single phase of the entire vacation. Finally, even though the results and findings of this study are exploratory in nature, it is hoped that the information produced and the implications of the study will be helpful to tourism planners and destination managers/marketers in building more competitive strategies to offer high quality of tourism experience and build competitive edge to generate more new and repeated tourists.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. (1989). Managing assets and skills: The key to a sustainable competitive advantage. *California Management Review* (Winter), 91-106.
- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity*. New York: Free Press.
- Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 411-423.
- Arnould, E., & Price, L. (1993). River magic: Extraordinary experiences and the extended service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20, 28-45.
- Arnould, E., Price, L., & Tierney, P. (1998). Communicative staging of the wilderness staging of the wilderness service scape. *The Service Industries Journal*, 18(3), 90-115.
- Ayala, H. (1996). Resort ecotourism: A paradigm for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 37(5), 54-61.
- Bagozzi, R. P. & Philips, L. W. (1982). Representing and testing organizational theories: a historical construal. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27, 459-489.
- Barney, J. B. (1991). Firms resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17, 99-120.
- Bauer, T. G. & Chan, A. (2001). Does the environment matter? Experiences, attitudes, and revisit intentions of international visitors to Hong Kong. *Pacific Tourism Review*, 5(1), 75-82.
- Bean, A. G., & Roszkowski, M. J. (1995). The Long and Short of It: When does questionnaire length affect response rate? *Marketing Research*, 7(1), 21-26.
- Bearden, W. D., Sharma, S. & Teel, J. E. (1982). Sample size effects on chi-square and other statistical used in evaluating causal models. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 19, 425-430.
- Bellak, C. J., & Weiss, A. (1993). A note on Austrian 'diamond'. *Management International Review*, 33, 109-118.
- Bentler, P. M. (1990). Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 238-246.

- Bentler, P. M. & Bonett, D. G. (1980). Significance test and goodness of fit in the analysis of covariance structures. *Psychological Bulletin*, 88, 591-606.
- Bhat, M.G. (2003). Application of non-market valuation to the Florida Keys marine reserve management.' *Journal of Environmental Management*, 67(4), 315.
- Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: the effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 69-82.
- Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural Equations with Latent Variables*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bollen, K. A., & Long, J. S. (1993). *Testing Structural Equation Models*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, International Education and Professional Publisher.
- Boorstin, D. J. (1962). *The Image, or What Happened to the American Dream*. New York: Atheneum.
- Boorstin, D. J. (1964). *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Atheneum.
- Bordas, E. (1994). Competitiveness of tourist destinations in long distance markets. *Revue de Tourisme*, 3(3), 3-9.
- Borrie, B., & Roggenbuck, J. (2001). The dynamic, emergent, and multi-phasic nature of on-site wilderness experiences. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 33(2), 202-228.
- Botterill, T. D., & Crompton, J. L. (1996). Two case studies exploring the nature of the tourist's experience. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28(1), 57-82.
- Boyd, S. (2002). Cultural and heritage tourism in Canada: Opportunities, principles and challenges. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 3(3) 211-234.
- Bowen, J. (1990). Development of a taxonomy of services to gain strategic marketing insights. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 18(1), 43-49.
- Braithewaite, R. (1992). Value-Chain assessment of the travel experience. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 33(5), 41-50.
- Bricker, K. S., & Kerstetter, D. L. (2002). An interpretation of special place meanings whitewater recreationists attach to the South Fork of the American River. *Tourism Geographies*, 4(4), 396-425.
- Broderic, A., & Mueller, R. (1999). A theoretical and empirical exegesis of the consumer involvement construct: The psychology of the food shopper. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 7(4), 97-108.

- Brunswik, E. (1956). *Perception and the Representative Design of Experiments*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Bueno, A. (1999). Competitiveness in the tourist industry and the role of the Spanish public administration. *Tourism*, 47(4), 316-331.
- Buhalis, D. (2000). Marketing the competitive destination of the future. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 97-116.
- Burns, A. C. & Bush R. F. (1995). *Marketing Research*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Byrne, B. M. (1998). *Structural equation modeling with LISREL, PRELIS, and SIMPLIS: Basic concepts, applications, and programming*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Campbell, C. (2003). Our dear north country: Regional identity and national meaning in Ontario's Georgian Bay. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 37(4), 68-92..
- Cartwright, W. R. (1993). Multiple linked 'diamonds' and the international competitiveness of export-dependent industries: The New Zealand experience. *Management International Review*, 33, 55-70.
- Celsi, R. L., & Olsen, J. C. (1988). The role of involvement in attention and comprehension processes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, 210-224.
- Chadee, D. D., & Mattson, J. (1996). An assessment of customer satisfaction in tourism. *The Service Industries Journal*, 16(3), 305-320.
- Chon, K. S., Weaver, P. A., & Kim, C. Y. (1991). Marketing your community: image analysis in Norfolk. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 31(4), 24-27.
- Chon, K. S., & Mayer, K. J. (1995). Destination competitiveness models in tourism and their application to Las Vegas. *Journal of Tourism Systems and Quality Management*, 1(2-4), 227-246.
- Chou, C. P., & Bentler, P. M. (1995). Estimates and tests in structural equation modeling. In R. H. Hoyle (ed.), *Structural Equation Modeling: Concepts, Issues, and Application*, pp. 37-55. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Churchill, G. A. (1979). A paradigm for developing better measure of marketing constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16(1), 64-73.

- Clawson, M. (1963). *Land and Water for Recreation: Opportunities, Problems and Policies*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Clawson, M., & Knetsch, J. L. (1966). *Economics of Outdoor Recreation: Resources for the Future*. Baltimore: John Hopkins.
- Cohen, E. (1972). Toward a sociology of international tourism. *Social Research*, 39, 164-182.
- Cohen, E. (1974). Who is a tourist? A conceptual clarification. *Sociological Review*, 22(4), 527-553.
- Cohen, E. (1979a). A phenomenology of tourist experiences. *Sociology*, 13, 179-201.
- Cohen, E. (1979b). Re-thinking the sociology of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6, 18-35.
- Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15(3), 371-386.
- Cohen, E. (1995). Contemporary tourism - trends and challenges. Sustainable authenticity or contrived post-modernity? In R. Butler & D. G. Pearce (Eds.), *Change in Tourism: People, Places, Processes*. (pp. 12-29). London: Routledge.
- Cohen, E. (2000). Experience. In J. Jafari (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Tourism* (pp. 215-216). London: Routledge.
- Cooper, C., & Morpheth, N. (1998). The impact of tourism on residential experience in Central-eastern Europe: The development of a new legitimation crisis in the Czech Republic. *Urban Studies*, 35(12), 2253-2275.
- Craig-Smith, S., & French, C. (1994). *Learning to live with tourism*. Melbourne: Pitman.
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). Motivations of pleasure vacations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6(4), 408-424.
- Crouch, G. I., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1999). Tourism, competitiveness, and social prosperity. *Journal of Business Research*, 44(3), 137-152.
- Dann, G. M. S. (1977). Anomie, ego-enhancement and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 4, 184-194.
- Dann, G. M. S. (1996). *The Language of Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Oxon, UK: CAB International.

- Day, G. S., & Wensley, R. (1988). Assessing advantage: A framework for diagnosing competitive superiority. *Journal of Marketing*, 52(April), 1-20.
- D'Cruz, J. R., & Rugman, A. M. (1993). Developing international competitiveness: The five partners model. *Business Quarterly*, 60-72.
- Deng, J., King, B., & Bauer, T. (2002). Evaluating natural attractions for tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(2), 422-438.
- DeVellis, R. F. (1991). *Scale Development: Theory and Applications*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- d' Hauteserre, A. M. (2000). Lessons in managed destination competitiveness: the case of Foxwoods casino resort. *Tourism Management*, 21, 23-32.
- Dillman, D. A. (1978). *Mail and Telephone Survey: The Total Design Method*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Dimanche, F., Havitz, M., & Howard, D. (1991). Testing the involvement profile scale in the context of selected recreational and touristic activities. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 23(1), 51-66.
- Dimanche, F., Havitz, M., & Howard, D. (1993). Segmenting recreationists and tourists using involvement profiles. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 1(4), 33-52.
- Durand, M., & Giorno, C. (1987). Indicators of international competitiveness: Conceptual aspects and evaluation. *OECD economic Studies*, 9, 147-182.
- Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P., & Rao, P. (1999). Tourism price competitiveness and journey purpose. *Tourism*, 47(4), 283-299.
- Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P., & Rao, P. (2000a). The price competitiveness of travel and tourism: a comparison of 19 destinations. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 9-22.
- Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P., & Rao, P. (2000b). Sectoral analysis of price competitiveness of tourism: an international comparison. *Tourism Analysis*, 5(1), 1-12.
- Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P., & Rao, P. (2002). Destination price competitiveness: Exchange rate changes vs. inflation rates. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(3), 340-348.
- Dwyer, L., & Kim, C. (2003). Destination competitiveness: determinants and indicators. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(5), 369-414.
- Dwyer, L., Mellor, R., Livaic, Z., Edwards, D., & Kim, C. (2004). Attributes of destination competitiveness: a factor analysis. *Tourism Analysis*, 9, 91-101.

- Eckblad, G. (1980). The curvex: simple order structure revealed in ratings of complexity, interestingness, and pleasantness. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 21, 1-16.
- Eckblad, G. (1981a). Assimilation resistance and affective response in problem solving. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 22, 1-16.
- Eckblad, G. (1981b). *Scheme Theory: A Conceptual Framework for Cognitive-Motivational Processes*. London: Academic Press.
- Ekdahl, F., Gustafsson, A., & Edvardsson, B. (1999). Customer-oriented service development at SAS. *Managing Service Quality*, 9(6), 403.
- Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W. (1986). *Consumer Behavior*. Chicago: Dryden Press.
- Enright, M. J., & Newton, J. (2004). Tourism destination competitiveness: a quantitative approach. *Tourism Management*, 25(6), 777-788.
- Enright, M. J., & Newton, J. (2005). Determinants of tourism destination competitiveness in Asia Pacific: comprehensiveness and universality. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(4), 339-350.
- Epting, F. R., & Neimeyer, R. A. (1984). *Personal Meanings of Death: Applications of Personal Construct Theory to Clinical Practice*. New York: Hemisphere Publishing.
- Evans, M. R., Fox, J. B., & Johnson, R. B. (1995). Identifying competitive strategies for successful tourism destination development. *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*, 3(1), 37-45.
- Fagerberg, J. (1988). International competitiveness. *Economic Journal*, 98, 355-374.
- Fakiolas, T. (1985). Basic causes of Soviet industry's low international competitiveness. *Journal of Economic Studies*, 12(5), 39-52.
- Faulkner, B., Oppermann, M., & Fredline, E. (1999). Destination competitiveness: An exploratory examination of South Australia's core attractions. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 5(2), 125-139.
- Fesenmaier, D., & Uysal, M. (1990). The tourism system: levels of economic and human behavior. In J. B. Zeiger & L. M. Caneday (Eds.), *Tourism and Leisure: Dynamics and Diversity* (pp. 27-35). Alexandria, VA: National Recreation and Park Association.
- Font, X. (2002). Environmental certification in tourism and hospitality: Progress, process and prospects. *Tourism Management*, 5(1), 75-82.

- Formica, S. (2000). *Destination Attractiveness as a Function of Supply and Demand Interaction*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.
- Formica, S. (2002). Measuring destination attractiveness: a proposed framework. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 1(2), 350-355.
- Formica, S., & Uysal, M. (2006). Destination attractiveness based on supply and demand evaluations: An analytical framework. *Journal of Travel Research*, 44(4), 418-430.
- Fornell, C. & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18 (1), 39-50.
- Franke, R. H., Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. (1991). Cultural roots of economic performance: A research note. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12, 165-173.
- Gable, R. K., & Wolf, M. (1993). *Instrument Development in the Affective Domain* (2nd ed.). Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Garvin, D. A. (1988). *Managing Quality*. New York: Free Press.
- Ghoshal, S., & SeokKi, K. (1986). Building effective intelligence system for competitive advantage. *Sloan Management Review* (Autumn), 49-58.
- Go, F. M., & Govers, R. (2000). Integrated quality management for tourist destinations: a European perspective on achieving competitiveness. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 79-88.
- Go, F., Pine, R., & Yu, R. (1994). Hong Kong: Sustaining competitive advantage in Asia's hotel industry. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 35(5), 50-60.
- Grant, R. (1991). The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: Implications for strategy formulation. *California Management Review Spring*, 114-135.
- Gronroos, C. (1978). A service oriented approach to marketing of services. *European Journal of Marketing*, 12(8), 588-601.
- Gunn, C. A. (1994). *Tourism Planning* (3rd ed.). New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Gursoy, D. (2001). *Development of Travelers' Information Search Behavior Model*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA.

- Gursoy, D., & Gavcar, E. (2003). International leisure tourist' involvement profile. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(4), 906-926.
- Gyimothy, S. (2000). Odysseys: Analysing service journeys from the customer's perspective. *Managing Service Quality*, 10(6), 389.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (1998). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (5th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Hamilton-Smith, E. (1987). Four kinds of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 14, 332-334.
- Harborne, A. R., Afzal, D. C., & Andrews, M. J. (2001). Honduras: Caribbean Coast. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 42(12), 1221-1235.
- Hartman, D., & Lindgren, J. (1993). Consumer evaluations of goods and services - Implications for services marketing. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 7(2), 4-15.
- Hassan, S. S. (2000). Determinants of market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(3), 239-245.
- Havitz, M. E., & Crompton, J. L. (1990). The influence of persuasive message on propensity to purchase selected recreational services from public or from commercial suppliers. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 22, 71-88.
- Havitz, M., & Dimanche, F. (1990). Propositions for guiding the empirical testing of the involvement construct in recreational and tourist context. *Leisure Sciences*, 12, 179-196.
- Havitz, M., & Dimanche, F. (1997). Leisure involvement revisited: Conceptual conundrums and measurement advances. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29, 245-278.
- Havitz, M., & Dimanche, F. (1999). Leisure involvement revisited: Drive properties and paradoxes. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 31, 122-149.
- Havitz, M., Dimanche, F., & Howard, D. (1993). A two-sample comparison of the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) and Involvement Profile (IP) scales using selected recreation activities. *Journal of Applied Recreation Research*, 17, 331-364.
- Hilke, J., & Nelson, P. (1988). *US International Competitiveness: Evolution or Revolution*. New York: Praeger.
- Hodgetts, R. M. (1993). Porter's diamond framework in a Mexican context. *Management International Review*, 33(special issue), 41-54.

- Hoelter, J. W. (1983). The analysis of covariance structures: Goodness-of-fit indices. *Sociological Methods and Research, 11*, 325-344.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (1983). Dimensions of national cultures in fifty countries and three regions. In J. B. Deregowski, S. Dziurawiec & R. C. Annis (Eds.), *Explications in Crosscultural Psychology* (pp. 335-355). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1988). The Confucius connection: From cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamism, 16*, 4-21.
- Hou, J. S., Lin, C. H., & Morais, D. (2005). Antecedents of attachment to a cultural tourism destination: The case of Hakka and Non-Hakka Taiwanese visitors to Pei-Pu, Taiwan. *Journal of Travel Research, 44*(2), 221-233.
- Howell, B.J. (1994). Weighing the risks and rewards of involvement in cultural conservation and heritage tourism. *Human Organization, 53*, 150-156.
- Hoyle H. R. (1995). The structural equation modeling approach: Basic concepts, and fundamental issues. In R. Hoyle (Ed.), *Structural Equation Modeling: Concepts, Issues and Applications* (pp.1-15). Thousand Oak, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1995). Evaluating model fit. In R.H. Hoyle (Ed.), *Structural Equation Modeling: Concepts, Issues, and Applications* (pp. 76-99). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hu, Y. Z., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1993). Measuring destination attractiveness: A contextual approach. *Journal of Travel Research, 35*(4), 42-49.
- Hudson, S., Ritchie, B., & Timur, S. (2004). Measuring destination competitiveness: an empirical study of Canadian ski resorts. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development, 1*(1), 79-94.
- Hull, R., & Michael, S. (1995). Nature-based recreation, mood change, and stress reduction. *Leisure Sciences, 17*, 1-14.
- Hull, R., Stewart, W., & Yi, Y. (1992). Experience patterns: Capturing the dynamic nature of a recreation experience. *Journal of Leisure Research, 24*(3), 240-252.
- Hultsman, W. (1998). The multi-day, competitive leisure event: examining satisfaction over time. *Journal of Leisure Research, 30*(4), 472-497.

- IMD. (1994). *The World Competitiveness Yearbook: Executive Summary*. Lausanne: International Institute for Management Development.
- Jaccard, J. & Wan, C. I. (1996). *LISREL Approaches to Interaction Effects in Multiple Regression*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Jackson, M. S., White, G. N., & Schmierer, C. L. (1994). The return from Xanadu: A qualitative and quantitative analysis of tourist experiences generated from a large Melbourne sample. In T. Veal & B. Weiler (Eds.), *Leisure and Tourism Research in Australia and New Zealand* (pp. 79-93). Sydney: ANXALS.
- Jackson, M. S., White, G. N., & Schmierer, C. L. (1996). Tourism experiences within an attributional framework. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(4), 798-810.
- Jafari, J. (1982). The tourism market basket of goods and services: The components and nature of tourism. In T. V. Singh, J. Kaur & D. P. Singh (Eds.), *Studies in Tourism Wildlife Parks Conservation* (pp. 1-12). New Delhi, India: Metropolitan Book Company.
- Jamrozy, U., Backman, S. J., & Backman, K. F. (1996). Involvement and opinion leadership in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(4), 908-924.
- Jang, H., Lee, B., Park, M., & Stokowski, P. A. (2000). Measuring underlying meanings of gambling from the perspective of enduring involvement. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(3), 230-238.
- Jennings, G. (1997). The travel experience of cruisers. In M. Oppermann (ed.) *Pacific Rim 2000: Issues, Interrelations, Inhibitors* (pp. 94-105). London: CAB International.
- Jennings, G. (2006). Perspectives on quality tourism experiences: an introduction. In G. Jennings & N. P. Nickerson (Eds.), *Quality Tourism Experiences* (pp. 1-21). Burlington: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Jennings, G., & Weiler, B. (2006). Mediating meaning: perspectives on brokering quality tourist experiences. In G. Jennings & N. P. Nickerson (Eds.), *Quality Tourism Experience* (pp. 57-78). Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Jennings, G. & Nickerson, N. P. (2006). *Quality Tourism Experience*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Jensen, O., & Lindberg, F. (2000). The consumption of a tourist attraction: a modern, post-modern and existential encounter perspective. In S. C. Beckmann & R. H. Elliott (Eds.), *Interpretive Consumer Research: Paradigms, Methodologies & Applications* (pp. 212-238). Hemdon, VA: Copenhagen Business School Press.

- Jones, E., & Haven-Tang, C. (2005). Tourism SMEs, service quality and destination competitiveness. In E. Jones & C. Haven-Tang (Eds.), *Tourism SMEs, Service Quality and Destination Competitiveness* (pp. 1-24). Cambridge, MA: CABI publishing.
- Jöreskog, K. G. (1993). Testing structural equation models. In K. A. Bollen & J. S. Long (Eds.), *Testing Structural Equation Models*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publishing.
- Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (1993). *LISREL 8: Structural Equation Modeling with SIMPLIS Command Language*. Mooresvill: Scientific Software.
- Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (1996). *LISREL 8: User's Reference Guide*. Mooresvill III: Scientific Software.
- Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (2001). *LISREL 8.50*. Scientific Software International, Inc.
- Judd, C. M., Smith, E. L. & Kidder, L. H. (1991). Research methods in social relations (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Kandampully, J., & Duddy, R. (1997). Shotover to quality: The world's most exciting jet boat ride. *Managing Service Quality*, 7(5), 221.
- Kapferer, J., & Laurent, G. (1993). Further evidence on the Consumer Involvement Profile: Five antecedents of involvement. *Psychology and Marketing*, 10, 347-355.
- Keane, M. J. (1996). Sustaining quality in tourism destinations: An economic model with an application. *Applied Economics*, 28(12), 1545-1552.
- Kelloway, E. K. (1998). *Using LISREL for Structural Equation Modeling: A Researcher's Guide*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Kelly, G. (1955). *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. New York: Norton.
- Kennedy, P. (1987). *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*. New York: Random House.
- Killion, G. L. (1992). *Understanding Tourism*. Rockhampton: Central Queensland University.
- Kim, H. B. (1998). Perceived Attractiveness of Korean Destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(2), 340-361.
- Kim, K. (2002). *The Effects of Tourism Impacts upon Quality of Life of Residents in the Community*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.

- Kim, S., & Crompton, J. L. (2002). The influence of selected behavioral and economic variables on perceptions of admission price levels. *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(2), 144-152.
- Kim, S.-S., Crompton, J. L., & Botha, C. (2000). Responding to competition: a strategy for Sun/Lost City, South Africa. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 33-41.
- Kim, S. S., & Petrick, J. F. (2004). Segmenting horse racing gamblers using the concept of involvement *Tourism Analysis*, 9, 103-116.
- Kim, S., Scott, D., & Crompton, J. L. (1997). An exploration of the relationships among social psychological involvement, behavioral involvement, commitment, and future intentions in the context of birdwatching. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29(3), 320-341.
- Kivel, B. D. (2000). Leisure experience and identity: What difference does difference make? *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(1), 79-81.
- Klein, J. G., Ettenson, R., & Morris, M. D. (1998). The animosity model of foreign product purchase: An empirical test in the people's republic of china. *Journal of Marketing*, 62(1), 89-99.
- Kline, R. B. (1998). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kogut, B. (1985). Designing global strategies: Comparative and competitive value-added chains. *Sloan Management Review* (Summer), 15-28.
- Kotler, P. (1983). *Principles of Marketing* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Kotler, P. (1984). *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, and Control* (5th ed.). New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Kozak, M. (2004). Measuring competitive performance of vacation destinations: using tourists self-reported judgments as an alternative approach *Tourism Analysis*, 8(2), 247-251.
- Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (1999). Measuring tourist destination competitiveness: conceptual considerations and empirical findings. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 18(3), 273-283.
- Laaksonen, P. (1985). *Consumer Involvement: Concepts and Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Lash, S., & Urry, J. (1994). *Economies of Signs and Space*. London: Sage.

- Larsen, S., & Rapp, L. (1993). Creating the service driven cruise line. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 5(1), IV-VII.
- Laurent, G., & Kapferer, J. N. (1985). Measuring consumer involvement profiles. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22, 41-53.
- Laws, E. (1991). *Tourism Marketing: Service and Quality Management Perspectives*. Cheltenham, UK: Stanley Thornes.
- Laws, E. (1995). *Tourist Destination Management: Issues, Analysis and Policies*. London: Routledge.
- Laws, E. (1998). Conceptualizing visitor satisfaction management in heritage settings: An exploratory blueprinting analysis of Leeds Castle, Kent. *Tourism Management*, 19(6), 545-554.
- Lawson, S. R., Manning, R. E., Valliere, W. A., & Wang, B. (2003). Proactive monitoring and adaptive management of social carrying capacity in Arches National Park: An application of computer simulation modeling. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 68(3), 305-312.
- Lee, B., & Shafer, C. S. (2002). The dynamic nature of leisure experience: An application of affect control theory. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(3), 290-310.
- Leiper, N. (1979). The framework of tourism: Towards definitions of tourism, tourists and the tourism industry. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6, 390-407.
- Leiper, N. (1990). Tourist attraction systems. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17(3), 367-384.
- Lengkeek, J. (2001). Leisure experience and imagination: Rethinking Cohen's modes of tourism experience. *International Sociology*, 16(2), 173-184.
- Lennon, J. J., & Graham, M. (2001). Commercial development and competitive environments: The museum sector in Scotland. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 3(4), 265-281.
- Lennon, R., & Harris, J. (2002). Customer service on the Web: A Cross-industry investigation. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 10(4), 325-338.
- Levitt, T. (1981). Marketing intangible products and product intangibles. *Harvard Business Review*, May/June, 37-44.
- Lew, A. (1989). Authenticity and sense of place in the tourism development experience of older retail districts. *Journal of Travel Research*, 27(4), 15-22.

- Lew, A. A. (1987). A model of tourist attraction research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 14, 553-575.
- Lew, A. A. (1994). A framework of tourist attraction research. In J. R. B. Ritchie & M. R. Goeldner (Eds.), *Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Research: A Handbook for Managers and Researchers* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Lewis, C. C., & Chambers, R. E. (1989). *Marketing Leadership in Hospitality*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Li, Y. (2000). Geographical consciousness and tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(4), 863-883.
- Lindberg, K., & Johnson, R. L. (1997). Modeling residents attitude toward tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(2), 402-424.
- MacCannell, D. (1976). *The Tourists: A Theory of the Leisure Class*. London: MacMillan Press.
- MacCannell, D. (1992). *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*. London: Routledge.
- MacCannell, D. (2002). The ego factor in tourism. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 146-151.
- Mahmoud, E., Rice, G., & Anderson, G. (1992). Quality improvement program: Tools for international competitive advantage. *International Executive*, 34(4), 305-320.
- Mahoney, J. T., & Pandian, J. R. (1992). The resource based view within the conversation of strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13, 363-380.
- Mak, J., & Moncur, E. T. (1998). Political economy of protecting unique recreational resources: Hanauma Bay, Hawaii. *Ambio*, 27(3), 217.
- Manfredo, M. J. (1989). An investigation of the basis for external information search in recreation and tourism. *Leisure Sciences*, 11, 29-45.
- Manfredo, M. J., Driver, B. L., & Tarrant, M. A. (1996). Measuring leisure motivation: A meta-analysis of the recreation experience preference scales. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28(3), 188-213.
- Mannell, R. C., & Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1987). Psychological Nature of Leisure and Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 14(2), 314-331.

- Mano, H., & Oliver, R. L. (1993). Assessing the dimensionality and structure of the consumption experience: Evaluation, feeling, and satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(3), 451-466.
- Marsh, H. W. & Grayson, D. (1995). Latent variable models of multi-trait multi-method data. In R. Hoyle (ed.), *Structural Equation Modeling: Concepts, Issues and Applications*, pp. 177-198. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage Publications.
- Maruyama, G. M. (1998). *Basics of Structural Equation Modeling*. California: Sage Publication.
- Mathur, S. S. (1992). Talking straight about competitive strategy. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 8, 199-217.
- Mayo, E. J., & Jarvis, L. P. (1981). *The psychology of leisure travel*. Boston: CBI.
- McIntyre, N. (1989). The personal meaning of participation: Enduring involvement. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 21(2), 167-179.
- McIntyre, N., & Roggenbuck, J. W. (1998). Nature/person transactions during an outdoor adventure experience: a multi-phasic analysis. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(4), 401-422.
- McQuarrie, E. F., & Munson, J. M. (1987). The Zaichkowsky personal inventory: Modification and extension. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 14, 36-40.
- Medlik, S., & Middleton, V. T. C. (1973). Product formulation in tourism. In *Tourism and Marketing* (Vol. 13). Berne: AIEST.
- Melian-Gonzales, A., & Garcia-Falcon, J. M. (2003). Competitive potential of tourism in destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(3), 720-740.
- Middleton, V. T. C. (1988). *Marketing in Travel and Tourism*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Middleton, V. T. C. (1989). Tourist product. In S. F. Witt & L. Moutinho (Eds.), *Tourism Marketing and Management Handbook* (pp. 573-576). Hempel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.
- Mill, R. C., & Morrison, A. M. (1985). *The Tourism System: An Introductory Text*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Mihalic, T. (2000). Environmental management of a tourist destination: A factor of tourism competitiveness. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 65-78.
- Mittal, B. (1983). *Understanding the bases and effects of involvement in the consumer choice process*. University of Pittsburgh, Ann Arbor MI.

- Mittal, B., & Lee, S. X. (1989). A causal model of consumer involvement. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 10, 363-389.
- Mittal, B. (1989). A theoretical analysis of two recent measures of involvement. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 16, 697-702.
- Mo, C., Howard, D. R., & Havitz, M. E. (1993). Testing an international tourist role typology. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 20(2), 319-335.
- Moscardo, G. (1996). Mindful visitors—Heritage and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(2), 376-397.
- Mueller, R. O. (1996). *Basic Principles of Structural Equation Modeling: An Introduction to LISREL and EQS*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Mulaik, S. A., & James, L. R. (1995). Objectivity and reasoning in science and structural equation modeling. In R. H. Hoyle (ed.), *Structural Equation Modeling: Concepts, Issues, and Application*, pp. 119-137. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Murphy, P. E. (1997). *Quality Management in Urban Tourism. International Western Geographical Series*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons.
- Murphy, P., Pritchard, M. P., & Smith, B. (2000). The destination product and its impact on traveler perceptions. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 43-52.
- Nash, D. (1996). *Anthropology of Tourism*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Nash, D., & Smith, V. L. (1991). Anthropology and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 18(1), 12-25.
- Neal, J. D., Sirgy, M. J., & Uysal, M. (1999). The role of satisfaction with leisure travel/tourism services and experience in satisfaction with leisure life and overall life. *Journal of Business Research*, 44(3), 153-163.
- Neal, J. D. (2000). *The Effects of Different Aspects of Tourism Services on Travelers' Quality of Life: Model Validation, Refinement, and Extension*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.
- Neal, J. D., Sirgy, M. J., & Uysal, M. (2004). Measuring the effect of tourism services on travelers' quality of life: Further validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 69, 243-277.
- Normann, R. (1985). *Service Management: Strategy and Leadership in Service Management*. New York: Wiley.

- Norusis, M. (1990). *SPSS Introductory Statistics Student Guide*. Chicago, Illinois: SPSS Inc.
- O'Connor, P. (1999). *Electronic Information Distribution in Tourism and Hospitality*. Wallingford, UK: CAB International.
- O'Neill, M., Palmer, A., & Charters, S. (2002). Wine production as a service experience - the effects of service quality on wine sales. *The Journal of Services Marketing*, 16(4), 342.
- O'Neill, M.A., Williams, P., MacCarthy, M., & Groves, R. (2000). Diving into service quality—the dive tour operator perspective. *Managing Service Quality*, 10(3), 131.
- Onkvisit, S., & Shaw, J. (1991). Is service marketing really different? *Journal of Professional Services Marketing*, 7(2), 3-17.
- Onome, D. A. (2003). Destination environment quality and tourists' spatial behavior in Nigeria: A case study of third world tropical Africa. *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, 5(4), 251-260.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithmal, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: multiple item for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing* 64(1), 12-40.
- Parson, G. L. (1983). Information technology: A new competitive weapon. *Sloan Management Review*, 4(Autumn), 342-351.
- Patterson, M. E., Watson, A. E., Williams, D. R., & Roggenbuck, J. R. (1998). An hermeneutic approach to studying the nature of wilderness experiences. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(4), 423-452.
- Pearce, D. G. (1997a). Competitive destination images: analysis of association meeting planners' perceptions. *Tourism Management*, 17(3), 175-182.
- Pearce, D. G. (1997b). Competitive destination analysis in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Travel Research*, 35(4), 16-25.
- Pearce, D. G. (1989). *Tourist Development*. New York: Wiley.
- Pearce, P. L. (1982). *The Social Psychology of Tourist Behavior*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Pearce, P. L. (1988). *The Ulysses Factor: Evaluating Visitors in Tourism Settings*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

- Pechlaner, H. (1999). The competitiveness of alpine destinations between market pressure and problems of adaptation *Tourism*, 47(4), 332-343.
- Pennington-Gray, L. A., & Kerstetter, D. L. (2001). What do university-educated women want from their pleasure travel experiences? *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(1), 49-56.
- Perdue, R. R., Long, P. T., & Allen, L. (1990). Resident support for tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17, 586-599.
- Perdue, R. R., Long, P.T., & Yang, Y. S. (1999). Boomtown tourism and resident quality of life—a Colorado case study. *Journal of Business Research*, 44(3), 165-177.
- Peters, T. (1988). Restoring American competitiveness: Looking for new models of organizations. *Academy of Management Executive*, 2(2), 103-109.
- Petty, R., Cacioppo, J. T., & Schumann, D. (1983). Central and peripheral routes to advertising effectiveness: The moderating role of involvement. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10, 135-146.
- Pike, S. (2004). *Destination Marketing Organizations*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Poon, A. (1993). *Tourism, Technology, and Competitive Strategy*. Wallingford: CAV International.
- Porter, M. E. (1980). *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. New York: Free Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*. New York: Free Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1990). *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York: Free Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1996). *On Competition*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1999). Microeconomic competitiveness: Findings from the 1999 executive survey. *Global Competitiveness Report 1999. World Economic Forum* (pp. 30-53).
- Porter, M. E., & Millar, V. E. (1985). How information gives you competitive advantage. *Harvard Business Review*, 63(4), 149-160.
- Porter, M., Sachs, J., & McArthur, J. (2001). Executive summary: Competitiveness and stages of economic development. In World Economic Forum *The Global Competitiveness Report 2001-2002*.

- Powell, T. C. (1992a). Organizational alignment as competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13, 119-134.
- Powell, T. C. (1992b). Strategic planning and competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13, 551-558.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Hamel, G. (1990). The core competence of the corporation. *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 79-91.
- Prentice, R. C., Witt, S. F., & Hamer, C. (1998). Tourism as experience: The case of heritage parks. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(1), 1-24.
- Pretes, M. (1995). Postmodern tourism: The Santa Claus Industry. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22, 1-15.
- Prideaux, B. (2000). The role of the transport system in destination development. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 53-63.
- Pyo, S., Mihalik, B., & Uysal, M. (1989). Attraction attributes and motivations: A canonical correlation analysis." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 16(2), 277-282.
- Pyo, S., Uysal, M., & McLellan, R. (1991). A linear expenditure model for tourism demand. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 18(3), 443-454.
- Reid, I. S., & Crompton, J. L. (1993). A taxonomy of leisure purchase decision paradigms based on level of involvement. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 25, 182-202.
- Reisinger, Y., & Turner, L. (1999). Structural equation modeling with Lisrel: Application in Tourism. *Tourism Management*, 20, 71-88.
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (1993). *Competitiveness in international tourism: A framework for understanding and analysis*. Paper presented at the 43rd Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism, San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina, pp. 23-71.
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2000a). *Are destination stars born or made: must a competitive destination have star genes?* Paper presented at the 31st Annual Conference of Travel and Tourism Research Association San Fernando Valley, CA.
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2000b). The competitive destination: a sustainability perspective. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 1-7.
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. Cambridge: CABI Publishing.

- Ritchie, J. R. B., Crouch, G. I., & Hudson, S. (2001). Developing operational measures for the components of a destination competitiveness/sustainability model: consumer versus managerial perspectives. In M. J. A., G. I. Crouch, J. R. B. Ritchie & A. Woodside (Eds.), *Consumer Psychology of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure* (Vol. 2, pp. 1-17). Wallingford, UK: CAB International.
- Rogers, W. C., & Schneider, K. (1993). An empirical evaluation of the Kapferer-Laurent Consumer Involvement Profile scale. *Psychology and Marketing*, 10, 333-345.
- Rogers, M. (1996). Beyond authenticity: Conservation, tourism, and the politics of representation in the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Identities*, 3, 73-125.
- Rojek, C., & Urry, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Touring Cultures: Transformation of Travel and Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Ross, G. F. (1994). *The Psychology of Tourism*. Melbourne: Hospitality Press.
- Ross, S., & Wall, G. (1999). Evaluating ecotourism: The case of North Sulawesi, Indonesia – The impact of regionalization. *Tourism Management*, 20(6), 673-682.
- Rugman, A. M. (1991). Diamond in the rough. *Business Quarterly*, 55(3 Winter), 61-64.
- Rugman, A. M., & D'Cruz, J. R. (1993). The 'double diamond' model of international competitiveness: The Canadian experience. *Management International Review*, 33(special issue), 17-39.
- Ryan, C. (1993). *Recreational Tourism: A Social Science Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Ryan, C. (1995). *Researching Tourist Satisfaction*. London: Routledge.
- Ryan, C. (Ed.). (1997). *The Tourist Experience: An Introduction*. London: Cassell.
- Ryan, C. (Ed.). (2002). *The Tourist Experience: An Introduction* (2nd Ed.). London: Thomson Learning.
- Sapir, A. (1982). Trade in services: policy issues for the eighties. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 17(Fall), 77-83.
- Schmoll, G. A. (1977). *Tourism Promotion*. London: Tourism International Press.
- Schneider, R. (2002). September-October 2002: P'town Agonistes". *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, 9(5), 4.

- Schroeder, T. (1996). The relationship of residents' image of their state as a tourist destination and their support for tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, 34(4), 71-74.
- Schuett, M. E. (1993). Refining measures of adventure recreation involvement. *Leisure Sciences*, 15, 205-216.
- Schumacker, R. E., & Lomax, R. G. (1996). *A Beginner's Guide to Structural Equation Modelling*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Schutz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. (G. Walsh and F. Lehnert, Trans.). Chicago: Northwestern University Press.
- Selin, S. W., & Howard, D. R. (1988). Ego involvement and leisure behavior: A conceptual specification. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 20(3), 237-244.
- Sethi, V., & King, W. (1994). Development of measures to assess the extent to which an information technology application provides competitive advantage. *Management Science*, 40(Dec.), 1601-1624.
- Sheldon, P., & Fox, M. (1988). The role of foodservice in vacation choice and experience: A cross-cultural analysis. *Journal of Travel Research*, 27(2), 9-16.
- Sherif, C. W., & Cantril, H. (1947). *The Psychology of Ego-involvement: Social Attitudes and Identifications*. New York: Wiley.
- Sherif, C. W., & Hovland, C. I. (1961). *Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Reaction to Communication and Attitude Change*. New Haven, CT: Greenwood.
- Shostack, G. (1977). Breaking free from product marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 41, 73-80.
- Sirgy, M. J., & Su, C. (2000). Destination image, self-congruity, and travel behavior: Toward an integrative model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(4), 340-352.
- Smith, S. L. J. (1994). The tourism product. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21(3), 582-595.
- Smith, S. L. J. (1995). *Tourism Analysis: A Handbook* (2nd Ed.). Essex, England: Longman.
- Smith, V. (1989). *Host and Guests: An Anthropology of Tourism*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Smith, V. K., & Webster, D. B. (1976). The management of wilderness areas - a simulation model. *Decision Sciences*, 7(3), 524-530.
- Spence, A. M., & Hazard, H. A. (Eds.). (1988). *International Competitiveness*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Steiger, J. H. (1990). Structural model evaluation and modification: An interval estimation approach. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 25, 173-180.
- Sternberg, E. (1997). The iconography of the tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 951-969.
- Stewart, W. (1998). Leisure as multiphase experiences: Challenging traditions. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(4), 391-400.
- Stewart, W. P., & Cole, D. N. (2001). Number of encounters and experience quality in Grand Canyon backcountry: Consistently negative and weak relationships. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 33(1), 106-120.
- Sung, H. H. (2004). Classification of adventure travelers: Behavior, decision making, and target markets. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42(4), 343-356.
- Swinyard, W. R. (1993). The effects of mood, involvement, and quality of store experience on shopping intentions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(2), 271-280.
- Tian-Cole, S., Crompton, J. L., & Willson, V. L. (2002). An empirical investigation of the relationships between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions among visitors to a wildlife refuge. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(1), 1-24.
- Timothy, D.J., & Wall, G. (1997). Selling to tourists: Indonesian street vendors. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(2), 322-340.
- Turco, D. M., & Riley, R. W. (1996). Choice factors and alternative activities for riverboat gamblers. *Journal of Travel Research*, 34(3), 24-30.
- Uriely, N. (2005). The tourist experience: conceptual developments. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(1), 199-216.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Society in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage.
- Urry, J. (2002). *The tourist gaze* (2nd Ed.). London: Sage.

- Uysal, M. (1998). The determinants of tourism demand: a theoretical perspective. In D. Ioannides & K. G. Debbage (Eds.), *The Economic Geography of the Tourist Industry* (pp. 79-98). London: Routledge.
- Uysal, M., Chen, J. S., & Williams, D. R. (2000). Increasing state market share through a regional positioning. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 89-96.
- Uysal, M., McDonald, C. D., & Martin, B. S. (1994). Australian visitors to US national parks and natural areas. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 6(3), 18-25.
- Vaughan, W.J., & Russell, C. S. (1982). Valuing a fishing day: An application of a systematic varying parameter model. *Land Economics*, 58(4), 450-464.
- Vitterso, J., Vorkinn, M., Vistad, O. I., & Vaagland, J. (2000). Tourist experiences and attractions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(2), 432-450.
- Vogt, C. A., & Stewart, S. I. (1998). Affective and cognitive effects of information use over the course of a vacation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 30(4), 498-520.
- Wahab, S., Crampon, L. J., & Rothfield, L. M. (1976). *Tourism Marketing*. London: Tourism International Press.
- Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 349-370.
- Wang, P., & Godbey G. (1994). A normative approach to tourism growth to the year 2000. *Journal of Travel Research*, 33(1), 33-41.
- Warden, C.A., Liu, T-C., Huang C-T., & Lee, C-H. (2003). Service failures away from home: Benefits in intercultural service encounters. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 14(3/4), 436.
- Watson, G. L., & Kopachevsky, J. P. (1994). Interpretations of tourism as commodity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21(3), 643-660.
- Weber, K., & Roehl, W. S. (1999). Profiling people searching for the purchasing travel products on the World Wide Web. *Journal of Travel Research*, 37(3), 291-298.
- Weiler, B., & Davis, D. (1993). An exploratory investigation into the roles of the nature-based tour leader. *Tourism Management*, 91-98.
- WTO (2005). *UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2005 Edition*. Retrieved on Feb. 16, 2006 from <http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/menu.html>

- WTTC. (2005). *Executive Summary: The 2005 Travel and Tourism Economic Research*. London: World Travel and Tourism Council.
- Yip, G. S. (1989). Global strategy: In a world of nations. *Sloan Management Review*, (Autumn), 29-40.
- Yoon, Y (2002). *Development of a Structural Model for Tourism Destination Competitiveness from Stakeholders' Perspectives*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.
- Yoon, Y., Chen, J. S., & Gursoy, D. (1999). An Investigation of the relationship between tourism impacts and host communities' characteristics. *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 10(1), 29-44.
- Yuan, S. & McDonald, C. D. (1990). Motivational determinants of international pleasure time. *Journal of Travel Research*, 29(1), 42-44.
- Yuksel, A., & Yuksel, F. (2001). Comparative performance analysis: Tourists' perceptions of Turkey relative to other tourist destinations. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 7(4), 333-355.
- Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985). Measuring the involvement construct. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12, 341-352.
- Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1986). Conceptualizing involvement. *Journal of Advertising*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1987). The emotional aspect of product involvement. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 14, 32-35.
- Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. (1985). Problems and strategies in services marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(1), 33-46.
- Zikmund, W. G. (2002). *Business Research Methods* (7th Ed.). Orlando: Thomson Learning.

## Appendix A

### Open-ended Survey (also used for Focus Group Discussion)

Hello professors and colleagues,

I am writing to ask you a big favor on my dissertation. My dissertation topic is to examine the relationship between the quality of vacation experience and perceived destination competitiveness. To make a better measurement on "quality of tourist experience" and "destination competitiveness", in addition to the existing literature, I would like to ask you for help and give me some ideas on this concept based on your vacation experience and knowledge.

I plan to have a focus group discussion this Friday morning (March, 17, 2006) after the Graduate Seminar. Basically, we will discuss the most important factors/attributes which contribute to your quality vacation experience and perceived destination competitiveness. This is based on your own vacation experience and knowledge as a tourist.

For those who could not attend the discussion, could you please send me back a brief list (3-4 items for each phase of leisure vacation) about your ideas? You could just fill up the list below (if you have more than 4 items, please do list them here). **Any further comments and notes are welcome!** It will be great if you send me back the answer by this coming Friday or Saturday.

I greatly appreciate your time and nice help on this! Please let me know if you have any questions. I will also be more than happy to talk about this in person with you. Thanks!

**Here is Question 1: What do you think are the most important factors determining your quality vacation experience in pre-trip planning, en-route, on-site, and after-trip phase?**

I. Pre-trip planning phase

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(for example, easy access to the information about the destination...)

II. En-route phase

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

III. On-site phase (this part is for your experience and activities in the destination)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

IV. After-trip (Reflection/recollection) phase

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

(for example, the value/benefit, life enrichment...)

**Question 2: For destination competitiveness, could you please list at least five most important attributes (to you as a tourist) which may contribute to the destination competitiveness?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Appendix B

### Cover Letter

June 12, 2006

Hello -

I am a Ph.D. student in Hospitality and Tourism Management at Virginia Tech. I am conducting a research project that examines people's ideas about their vacation experiences. This study will help the tourism industry better serve travelers like you. I really need your help in participating in this study!

The enclosed questionnaire should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers for any of the questions in this survey. I would greatly appreciate it if you could answer all the questions carefully, and return the questionnaire in the enclosed pre-paid, self-addressed envelope by **July 10, 2006**. Your address was obtained from the phone directory; I do not have any of your personal information. All the responses will be completely confidential and only used for academic research.

Thank you so much in advance for your time and help! Your response is of the utmost importance to me in completing this research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (Fang Meng) via phone at (917) 379-2450 and/or email [fameng@vt.edu](mailto:fameng@vt.edu).

Again, your participation in this important project is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Fang Meng  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Hospitality and Tourism Management  
Virginia Tech

Muzaffer Uysal, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Hospitality and Tourism Management  
Virginia Tech  
E-mail: [samil@vt.edu](mailto:samil@vt.edu)

# Questionnaire

## I. Quality of Vacation Experience

The following statements are designed to help us understand your feelings about the various factors that make up a good vacation. Based on your vacation experiences and opinions, please circle the appropriate number to rate **the importance of each item in contributing to the quality of vacation experience.**

### 1. Pre-trip Planning Phase

This section focuses on your vacation planning and travel arrangements. How important are the following items?

**1=Not At All Important, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Important, 5=Very Important**

1. Having plenty of time to plan the trip.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Having easy access to the information related to the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Being able to get abundant information related to the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Receiving high quality services from professionals (travel agents, hotel reservation staff, visitor center staff, etc.) when planning the vacation. (If you usually do not use these services, put an "X" here _____)	1	2	3	4	5
5. Making problem-free vacation arrangements (transportation, hotel, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
6. Having reasonable prices for the vacation (transportation, accommodation, activities, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5

### 2. En-route Phase

This section focuses on your travel to the vacation destination and the return trip back home. How important are the following items?

**1=Not At All Important, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Important, 5=Very Important**

7. Having easy access to the destination from home.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Safe transportation to and from the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Comfortable transportation to and from the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Receiving clear direction and guidance (either at the airport or driving along the way).	1	2	3	4	5
11. Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Having problem-free travel to and from the destination.	1	2	3	4	5

### 3. Destination On-site Phase

This section focuses on your experience at the destination. How important are the following items?

**1=Not At All Important, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Important, 5=Very Important**

13. Favorable weather/climate at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Unique tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
15. High quality of accommodation at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
16. High quality of food at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Good facilities at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Having a variety of activities/entertainment to choose from at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Overall reasonable prices at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Receiving high quality service at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Clean environment at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Pleasant interaction/communication with the local people at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
23. User-friendly guidance/information at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Ensured safety and security at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5

#### 4. After-trip Phase

This section focuses on your after-trip reflection about your vacation. How important are the following items?

**1=Not At All Important, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Important, 5=Very Important**

26. Having memorable items to bring back home (photographs, souvenirs, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
27. Getting good value for the money for the whole trip.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Having a sense of freedom during the vacation.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Feeling relaxed and refreshed after the vacation.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The feeling of having spent quality time with family and friends.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation.	1	2	3	4	5

## II. Perceived Destination Competitiveness

The following statements are about your perception of what makes one vacation destination better than another. Based on your general vacation experiences and opinions, please circle the appropriate number to indicate **how important each item is to make a destination superior to other similar destinations.**

**1=Not At All Important, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Important, 5=Very Important**

1. Easy access to the destination (frequency/capacity of transportation).	1	2	3	4	5
2. Smooth travel to and from the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Easy access to meaningful information about the destination before travel.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Problem-free vacation arrangements with the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Favorable weather/climate at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Unique tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site, local culture, customs, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
7. High quality tourism infrastructure (accommodations, restaurants, local transportation, telecommunication system, health/medical facilities, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
8. The destination's commitment to preserving the destination environment.	1	2	3	4	5
9. A good variety of activities offered for tourists at the destination (special events/festivals, entertainment, nightlife, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
10. Friendliness and hospitality of the local people.	1	2	3	4	5
11. High quality of services/amenities at the destination.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Competitive price for the overall vacation relative to competitor destinations.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The destination's commitment to providing a safe and secure environment.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The overall destination experience offered "fits" the needs of visitors.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The destination's commitment to promoting a positive image.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The nature of the destination's setting helps visitors to function comfortably in daily activities (availability of currency exchange facilities, foreign language help, ease of making reservation, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
17. Policies/regulations favorable to tourists (low or no taxes on tourist services, access to public resources such as museums and public buildings, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
18. The destination's commitment to providing a satisfactory vacation experience.	1	2	3	4	5
19. A good value for the money spent for the vacation experience.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The destination's continuous commitment to the ongoing improvement and development of a high-quality destination.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The destination's overall favorable image in the world community.	1	2	3	4	5
22. The destination's alliance/connection with intermediates in the tourism sector (tour operators, airlines, hotel chains, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5

### III. Tourist Involvement

The following statements are used to understand how strongly you feel about taking vacations. Please circle the appropriate number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

**1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree**

1. I attach great importance to a vacation.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The vacation I buy tells something about me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It gives me pleasure to purchase a vacation.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is really annoying to purchase a vacation that is not suitable.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Buying a vacation is rather complicated.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Whenever one buys a vacation, he/she never really knows for sure whether it is the one that should have been bought.	1	2	3	4	5
7. You can tell a lot about a person by the vacation he/she chooses.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When I purchase a vacation, it is not a big deal if I make a mistake.	1	2	3	4	5
9. A vacation is somewhat of a pleasure to me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I face a variety of vacation choices, I always feel a bit at a loss to make my choice.	1	2	3	4	5
11. A vacation interests me a great deal.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When one purchases a vacation, he/she is never certain of his/her choice.	1	2	3	4	5
13. If, after I buy a vacation, my choice proves to be poor, I would be really upset.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The vacation I buy gives a glimpse of the type of person I am.	1	2	3	4	5

### IV. Motivation

The following statements are about your motivation for taking vacations. Please circle the appropriate number to rate the importance of each item to you.

**1=Not At All Important, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Somewhat Important, 5=Very Important**

1. Having a sense of freedom and relaxation.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Having fun and doing exciting things.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Enjoying peace and calm.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Experiencing new places and new things.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Getting away from work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Being emotionally and physically refreshed.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Developing my personal interests.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Meeting new people and socializing.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Engaging in various activities.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Getting closer to nature.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Being with family and friends.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Feeling personally safe and secure.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Seeking intellectual enrichment/increasing knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5

### V. General Travel Behavior

- In the past 18 months, how many vacation(s) have you taken (for more than two nights away from home)? \_\_\_\_\_ times.
- How far in advance do you usually book the trip? \_\_\_\_\_ month(s) **or** \_\_\_\_\_ week(s) **or** \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- How many nights do you usually stay in the vacation destination? \_\_\_\_\_ nights.
- Generally speaking, how many vacation(s) do you take per year? \_\_\_\_\_ vacation(s).



## Appendix C

### Reminder Postcard

June 28, 2006

Hello -

Recently, a questionnaire was mailed to you from Virginia Tech asking about your vacation experience. If you have already returned your completed questionnaire, thank you very much for your participation! If not, please kindly fill out the survey and return it by **July 10, 2006**. Please feel free to ask for another copy if the original questionnaire has become lost or misplaced, or you can go to the following link <https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1149003290316> to finish it online.

Your participation is extremely important to make this study a success. Again, all your response will be treated anonymous and confidential. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Fang Meng via phone at (917) 379-2450 and/or email [fameng@vt.edu](mailto:fameng@vt.edu).

Again, we greatly appreciate your time and help on this research project!

Fang Meng, Ph.D. Candidate  
Muzzo Uysal, Ph.D., Professor

## Appendix D

Number of Survey Recipients assigned to each County and City of Virginia

<b>County and city population according to estimation of 2004</b>			
Total population of Virginia: 7,459,827			Sample: 3,000
<b>County and Independent City</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Target sample</b>
Accomack County	39,358	0.53%	16
Albemarle County	88,726	1.19%	36
Alleghany County	16,737	0.22%	7
Amelia County	11,929	0.16%	5
Amherst County	31,981	0.43%	13
Appomattox County	13,913	0.19%	6
Arlington County	186,117	2.49%	75
Augusta County	68,774	0.92%	28
Bath County	4,984	0.07%	2
Bedford County	63,788	0.86%	26
Bland County	7,034	0.09%	3
Botetourt County	31,777	0.43%	13
Brunswick County	18,194	0.24%	7
Buchanan County	25,200	0.34%	10
Buckingham County	15,919	0.21%	6
Campbell County	51,695	0.69%	21
Caroline County	24,019	0.32%	10
Carroll County	29,495	0.40%	12
Charles City County	7,120	0.10%	3
Charlotte County	12,412	0.17%	5
Chesterfield County	282,925	3.79%	114
Clarke County	13,852	0.19%	6
Craig County	5,139	0.07%	2
Culpeper County	40,192	0.54%	16
Cumberland County	9,178	0.12%	4
Dickenson County	16,177	0.22%	7
Dinwiddie County	25,173	0.34%	10
Essex County	10,339	0.14%	4
Fairfax County	1,003,157	13.45%	403
Fauquier County	63,255	0.85%	25
Floyd County	14,464	0.19%	6
Fluvanna County	23,644	0.32%	10
Franklin County	49,841	0.67%	20
Frederick County	66,611	0.89%	27
Giles County	16,989	0.23%	7
Gloucester County	37,262	0.50%	15
Goochland County	18,753	0.25%	8
Grayson County	16,490	0.22%	7
Greene County	17,024	0.23%	7
Greensville County	11,496	0.15%	5
Halifax County	36,362	0.49%	15

Hanover County	96,054	1.29%	39
Henrico County	276,479	3.71%	111
Henry County	56,940	0.76%	23
Highland County	2,482	0.03%	1
Isle of Wight County	32,774	0.44%	13
James City County	55,502	0.74%	22
King and Queen County	6,775	0.09%	3
King George County	19,355	0.26%	8
King William County	14,334	0.19%	6
Lancaster County	12,030	0.16%	5
Lee County	23,846	0.32%	10
Loudoun County	239,156	3.21%	96
Louisa County	28,802	0.39%	12
Lunenburg County	13,085	0.18%	5
Madison County	13,134	0.18%	5
Mathews County	9,226	0.12%	4
Mecklenburg County	32,493	0.44%	13
Middlesex County	10,489	0.14%	4
Montgomery County	83,959	1.13%	34
Nelson County	14,902	0.20%	6
New Kent County	15,552	0.21%	6
Northampton County	13,303	0.18%	5
Northumberland County	12,893	0.17%	5
Nottoway County	15,625	0.21%	6
Orange County	28,970	0.39%	12
Page County	23,730	0.32%	10
Patrick County	19,239	0.26%	8
Pittsylvania County	61,752	0.83%	25
Powhatan County	25,866	0.35%	10
Prince Edward County	20,326	0.27%	8
Prince George County	34,313	0.46%	14
Prince William County	336,586	4.51%	135
Pulaski County	35,152	0.47%	14
Rappahannock County	7,171	0.10%	3
Richmond County	8,990	0.12%	4
Roanoke County	87,679	1.18%	35
Rockbridge County	21,084	0.28%	8
Rockingham County	70,218	0.94%	28
Russell County	28,893	0.39%	12
Scott County	22,982	0.31%	9
Shenandoah County	38,032	0.51%	15
Smyth County	32,538	0.44%	13
Southampton County	17,585	0.24%	7
Spotsylvania County	111,850	1.50%	45
Stafford County	114,781	1.54%	46
Surry County	6,970	0.09%	3
Sussex County	11,914	0.16%	5
Tazewell County	44,753	0.60%	18
Warren County	34,377	0.46%	14
Washington County	52,030	0.70%	21

Westmoreland County	17,039	0.23%	7
Wise County	41,744	0.56%	17
Wythe County	28,013	0.38%	11
York County	60,885	0.82%	24
Alexandria city	128,206	1.72%	52
Bedford city	6,229	0.08%	3
Bristol city	17,308	0.23%	7
Buena Vista city	6,230	0.08%	3
Charlottesville city	36,605	0.49%	15
Chesapeake city	214,725	2.88%	86
Colonial Heights city	17,511	0.23%	7
Covington city	6,256	0.08%	3
Danville city	46,371	0.62%	19
Emporia city	5,674	0.08%	2
Fairfax city	22,062	0.30%	9
Falls Church city	10,781	0.14%	4
Franklin city	8,471	0.11%	3
Fredericksburg city	20,458	0.27%	8
Galax city	6,657	0.09%	3
Hampton city	145,951	1.96%	59
Harrisonburg city	41,066	0.55%	17
Hopewell city	22,369	0.30%	9
Lexington city	6,910	0.09%	3
Lynchburg city	64,932	0.87%	26
Manassas city	37,615	0.50%	15
Manassas Park city	11,519	0.15%	5
Martinsville city	15,039	0.20%	6
Newport News city	181,913	2.44%	73
Norfolk city	237,835	3.19%	96
Norton city	3,753	0.05%	2
Petersburg city	32,757	0.44%	13
Poquoson city	11,700	0.16%	5
Portsmouth city	99,291	1.33%	40
Radford city	14,770	0.20%	6
Richmond city	192,494	2.58%	77
Roanoke city	92,352	1.24%	37
Salem city	24,347	0.33%	10
Staunton city	23,840	0.32%	10
Suffolk city	76,586	1.03%	31
Virginia Beach city	440,098	5.90%	177
Waynesboro city	20,755	0.28%	8
Williamsburg city	11,465	0.15%	5
Winchester city	24,779	0.33%	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,459,827</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>3000</b>

## APPENDIX E. Pretest Results

Table E.1 Dimensions of Pre-Trip Planning Experience

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b><u>Pre-trip planning experience</u></b>		2.195	54.87%	.716
I feel that having plenty of time to plan the trip contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.852			
I feel that having easy access to abundant information related to the destination contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.802			
I feel that receiving high quality services from travel and tourism professionals (e.g., travel agents, hotel reservation staff, destination tourism firms) contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.654			
I feel that being able to make problem-free vacation arrangement contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.631			
<i>Total Variance Explained</i>			54.87%	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.714  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table E.2 Dimensions of En-Route Experience

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b><u>En-route experience</u></b>		2.544	50.87%	.756
I feel that having problem-free travel to the destination site and back home contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.791			
I feel that safe and comfortable transportation contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.731			
I feel that receiving clear direction and guidance (either at the airport or driving along the way) contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.725			
I feel that receiving high quality services in transit to the destination site and back home contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.693			
I feel that having easy access to the destination and back home contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.614			
<i><u>Total Variance Explained</u></i>			50.87%	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.796  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table E.3 Dimensions of On-Site Experience

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b><u>On-Site Instrumental Experience 1</u></b>		4.644	21.13%	.734
I feel that having the variety of activities/entertainment at the destination contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.748			
I feel that receiving high quality service at the destination contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.701			
I feel that overall reasonable prices at the destination contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.622			
I feel that good facilities at the destination contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.599			
I feel that user-friendly guidance/information at the destination contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.485			
<b><u>On-Site Instrumental Experience 2</u></b>		1.403	18.73%	.709
I feel that high quality of accommodation contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.731			
I feel that unique tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site) contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.651			
I feel that favorable weather/climate at the destination contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.636			
I feel that high quality of food at the destination contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.574			
I feel that clean destination environment contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.482			
<b><u>On-Site Expressive Experience</u></b>		1.149	15.50%	.665
I feel that pleasant interaction/communication with the local people contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.806			
I feel that pleasant interaction/communication with the staff contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.661			
I feel that ensured safety and security at the destination contributes to the quality of my vacation experience.	.580			
<b><u>Total Variance Explained</u></b>			55.36%	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.848  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table E.4 Dimensions of After-Trip Experience

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b><u>After-trip Experience</u></b>				
If I feel the trip is rewarding to me and feel much better about things and myself after the trip, this would contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.825			
If I feel the sense of life-enrichment after the vacation, this would contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.809			
If I feel that I spend good time with family/friends, it would contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.724			
If I feel relaxed and refreshed after the trip, this would contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.603			
If I feel the sense of freedom during the vacation, it would contribute to the quality of my vacation experience.	.575			
			51.00%	
<b><u>Total Variance Explained</u></b>				

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.718  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table E.5 Dimensions of Destination Competitiveness

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b><u>Destination Management &amp; Marketing</u></b>				
Destination's capability in promoting the awareness and strong/clear image of the destination.	.721	5.358	15.44%	.771
The package of destination experience meets or "fits" the needs for visitors.	.661			
Destination's continuous commitment and capability in better performance and development for a high-quality destination.	.620			
Favorable tourism policy/regulations catering for tourist needs and convenience.	.616			
Destination's commitment to providing satisfactory vacation experience.	.553			
Destination's commitment and capability to maintaining the sustainability of the destination environment.	.421			
<b><u>Accessibility &amp; Information Availability</u></b>				
The ease of access/low level of "hassle" to reach destination.	.785	1.478	13.16%	.702
Comfortable travel to the destination and back home.	.714			
Problem-free travel and vacation arrangement with the destination.	.583			
The ease to get abundant clear information about the destination before the travel.	.558			
<b><u>Tourism Attributes</u></b>				
High quality and variety of activities offered for tourists at the destination (special events/festivals, entertainment, nightlife, etc.).	.755	1.213	12.71%	.641
High quality tourism infrastructure (accommodation, restaurant, local transport, health/medical facilities, etc.).	.739			
High quality of service/amenities at the destination.	.538			
<b><u>Tourism Resources &amp; Value</u></b>				
Favorable weather/climate at the destination.	.632	1.046	12.20%	.651
Competitive price for the overall vacation relative to competitor destinations.	.618			
A good value for money for the vacation experience.	.613			
Abundance of tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site, local culture, etc.).	.576			
Destination's capability to provide a safe and secure environment.	.539			
<b><u>Total Variance Explained</u></b>			53.50%	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.879

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table E.6 Dimensions of Tourist Involvement

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b><u>Risk Uncertainty/Probability</u></b>		3.060	16.93%	.780
When I face a variety of vacation choices, I always feel a bit at loss to make my choice.	.848			
When one purchases a vacation, one is never certain of his/her choice.	.824			
Choosing a vacation destination is rather complicated.	.796			
Whenever one buys a vacation, one never really knows whether it is the one that should have been bought.	.594			
<b><u>Sign</u></b>		2.633	16.36%	.847
The vacation you buy tells something about you.	.854 .853			
The vacation I buy gives a glimpse of the type of person I am.	.837			
You can tell a lot about a person by the vacation destination he or she chooses.				
<b><u>Importance-Pleasure</u></b>		1.703	14.02%	.721
I can say vacation destination interests me a lot.	.866			
I attach great importance to a vacation.	.733			
It gives me pleasure by purchasing a vacation.	.667			
<b><u>Risk Importance</u></b>		1.416	10.89%	-.097
It is really annoying to purchase a vacation that is not suitable.	.743			
If, after I bought a vacation, my choice proves to be poor, I would be really upset.	.724			
When I chose a vacation destination, it is not a big deal if I make a mistake.	-.620			
<b><u>Pleasure</u></b>		1.134	8.09%	.104
A vacation is somewhat of a pleasure to me.	.789			
A vacation destination is a topic that leaves me totally indifferent.	.510			
<b><u>Total Variance Explained</u></b>			66.30%	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.672  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

## APPENDIX F

### Comparison of Demographic Characteristics: Sample vs. Census

Variables	Sample (%)	Census (%)	
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	48.9	49.2	$\chi^2 = 2.000$ p=.157
Female	51.1	50.8	
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	4.7	6.8	$\chi^2 = 30.000$ p=.224
25-34	14.8	14.6	
35-44	32.5	17.0	
45-54	21.2	14.1	
55-64	13.0	9.0	
65 or older	13.9	11.4	
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	22.8	26.2	$\chi^2 = 20.000$ p=.220
Married	69.5	55.7	
Widowed	1.2	6.2	
Divorced	6.3	9.0	
Separated	0.3	2.9	
<b>Education</b>			
High school	23.0	26.0	$\chi^2 = 6.000$ p=.199
Four year college	39.4	43.9	
Graduate school	37.6	11.6	
<b>Ethnic Groups</b>			
Caucasian	80.6	73.8	$\chi^2 = 30.000$ p=.224
African-American	3.5	19.6	
Hispanic	2.3	5.7	
Asian	11.6	4.4	
Native American	0.9	0.3	
Others	1.2	1.2	

**APPENDIX G.** Comparison of Selected Survey Questions: Respondents vs. Non-Respondents

Variables	Respondents Mean (N=353)	Non-Respondents Mean (N=40)	t-value	Significance
Q1 (Pre-trip Planning)	4.20	4.05	1.487	p=.142
Q2 (En-route)	4.40	3.93	4.235	p=.000*
Q3 (On-site)	3.89	4.00	-.953	p=.345
Q4 (On-site)	4.19	4.13	.645	p=.522
Q5 (Destination competitiveness)	4.07	3.90	1.176	p=.240
Q6 (Destination competitiveness)	3.88	3.78	.743	p=.458
Q7 (Involvement)	4.05	3.61	2.804	p=.005*
Variables	Respondents (%)	Non-Respondents (%)	Chi-square	Significance
Gender				
Male	48.9	60.0	$\chi^2 = 1.950$	p=.377
Female	51.1	40.0		
Age				
18-24	4.7	0.0	$\chi^2 = 13.966$	p=.016*
25-34	14.8	7.5		
35-44	32.5	32.5		
45-54	21.2	42.5		
55-64	13.0	15.0		
65 or older	13.9	2.5		
Marital Status				
Single	22.8	10.0	$\chi^2 = 6.934$	p=.139
Married	69.5	80.0		
Widowed	1.2	5.0		
Divorced	6.3	5.0		
Separated	0.3	0.0		
Education				
High school	23.0	0.0	$\chi^2 = 29.670$	p=.000*
Four year college	39.4	69.2		
Graduate school	37.6	30.8		

Note: "Respondents" as reported here include both early and late respondents.

\* indicates significance at the .05 level.

Q1: Being able to get abundant information related to the destination when you do the vacation planning.

Q2: Having problem-free travel to the destination and back home.

Q3: Having a variety of activities/entertainment to choose from at the destination.

Q4: Receiving high quality service at the destination.

Q5: Unique tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site, local culture, customs, etc.).

Q6: The destination's commitment to promoting a positive image.

Q7: I attach great importance to a vacation.

## Appendix H

### Comparison of Demographic Characteristics: Early vs. Late Respondents

Variables	Early responses	Late responses	Chi-square test
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	109	61	$\chi^2 = 1.550$ p<.461
Female	123	55	
Total	232	116	
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	11	5	$\chi^2 = 10.066$ p<.073
25-34	29	22	
35-44	67	45	
45-54	54	19	
55-64	35	10	
65 or older	34	14	
Total	230	115	
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	48	31	$\chi^2 = 3.114$ p<.539
Married	162	79	
Widowed	3	1	
Divorced	17	5	
Separated	1	0	
Total	231	116	
<b>Education</b>			
High school	59	21	$\chi^2 = 4.697$ p<.096
Four year college	88	49	
Graduate school	86	45	
Total	233	115	
<b>Total household Income</b>			
Less than \$20,000	23	11	$\chi^2 = 6.233$ p<.513
\$20,000-\$40,000	32	21	
\$40,001-\$60,000	27	21	
\$60,001-\$80,000	37	18	
\$80,001-100,000	31	9	
\$100,001-\$120,000	20	6	
Over \$120,001	49	23	
Total	219	109	
<b>Ethnic Groups</b>			
Caucasian	187	92	$\chi^2 = 3.234$ p<.664
African-American	6	6	
Hispanic	7	1	
Asian	27	13	
Native American	2	1	
Others	3	1	
Total	232	114	

**Appendix I.** Individual Items of the Constructs with Mean Scores and Standard Deviation

Variables	Mean	SD	Skew.	Kurt.
<b>Pre-trip Planning Experience</b>				
Having plenty of time to plan the trip	3.89	1.04	-.92	.35
Having easy access to the information of the destination	4.47	.69	-1.35	2.05
Being able to get abundant information of the destination	4.19	.84	-1.02	.94
Receiving high quality services from professionals when planning the trip	3.59	1.01	.04	-.713
Making problem-free vacation arrangements	4.39	.77	-1.17	.86
Having reasonable prices for the vacation	4.61	.62	-1.57	2.32
<b>En-route Experience</b>				
Having easy access to and from the destination	3.87	1.05	-.90	.47
Safe transportation to and from the destination	4.62	.66	-1.71	2.45
Comfortable transportation to and from the destination	4.26	.78	-.89	.37
Receiving clear direction and guidance	4.41	.78	-1.29	1.22
Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination	3.99	.91	-.70	.17
Having problem-free travel to and from the destination	4.40	.76	-1.20	1.01
<b>On-Site Experience</b>				
Favorable weather/climate at the destination	4.07	.85	-.98	1.07
Unique tourism resources	4.05	.87	-.80	.63
High quality of accommodation at the destination	3.91	.88	-.62	.08
High quality of food at the destination	3.93	.89	-.72	.37
Good facilities at the destination	4.14	.77	-.69	.44
Having a variety of activities/entertainment to choose	3.90	.94	-.82	.54
Overall reasonable prices at the destination	4.40	.71	-1.09	1.32
Receiving high quality service at the destination	4.19	.80	-.87	.62
Clean environment at the destination	4.53	.70	-1.45	1.79
Pleasant interaction/communication with the local people	4.04	.84	-.75	.47
User-friendly guidance/information at destination	4.11	.78	-.84	1.07
Ensured safety and security at the destination	4.54	.71	-1.58	2.08
Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination	4.19	.77	-.93	1.37
<b>After-trip Experience</b>				
Having memorable items to bring back home	3.54	1.04	-.39	-.53
Getting good value for the money for the whole trip	4.42	.70	-1.10	.962
Having a sense of freedom during the vacation	4.40	.74	-1.17	1.29
Feeling relaxed and refreshed after the vacation	4.42	.73	-1.09	.70
Feeling having spent quality time with family and friends	4.47	.74	-1.36	1.39
Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation	4.04	.97	-.99	.72
Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation	3.92	1.01	-.87	.43
<b>Destination Competitiveness</b>				
Easy access to the destination	3.96	.91	-.81	.32
Smooth travel to the destination and back home	4.23	.79	-1.04	1.19
Easy access to meaningful information about the destination before travel	4.17	.82	-.88	.57

Problem-free vacation arrangements with the destination	4.29	.79	-1.09	1.08
Favorable weather/climate at the destination	4.10	.84	-.78	.15
Unique tourism resources	4.07	.86	-.70	.03
High quality tourism infrastructure	3.93	.89	-.69	-.01
The destination's commitment to preserving the destination environment	4.12	.86	-.93	.77
A good variety of activities offered for tourists	3.85	.90	-.55	-.15
Friendliness and hospitality of the local people	4.12	.76	-.61	.05
High quality of services/amenities at the destination	4.09	.84	-.72	.10
Competitive price for the overall vacation relative to competitor destinations	4.37	.75	-1.15	1.26
The destination's commitment to providing a safe and secure environment	4.50	.69	-1.29	1.33
The overall destination experience offered "fits" the needs of visitors	4.13	.80	-.61	-.18
The destination's commitment to promoting a positive image	3.88	.87	-.54	.08
The nature of the destination's setting helps visitors to function comfortably in daily activities	3.99	.92	-.82	.59
Policies/regulations favorable to tourists	3.92	.91	-.79	.51
The destination's commitment to providing a satisfactory vacation experience	4.18	.79	-.83	.62
A good value for the money spent for the vacation experience	4.45	.66	-.98	.55
The destination's continuous commitment to the ongoing improvement and development of a high-quality destination	4.00	.84	-.75	.79
The destination's overall favorable image in the world community	3.57	1.06	-.58	-.11
The destination's alliance/connection with intermediates in the tourism sector	3.47	1.02	-.40	-.15
<b>Tourist Involvement</b>				
I attach great importance to a vacation	4.06	.97	-1.12	1.18
The vacation I buy tells something about me	3.57	1.02	-.47	-.11
It gives me pleasure to purchase a vacation	3.72	.90	-.41	-.12
It is really annoying to purchase a vacation that is not suitable	4.07	.95	-.75	-.03
Buying a vacation is rather complicated	3.13	1.06	-.17	-.56
Whenever one buys a vacation, he/she never really knows for sure whether it is the one that should have been bought	3.05	1.02	-.14	-.52
You can tell a lot about a person by the vacation he/she chooses	3.33	.98	-.32	-.31
When I purchase a vacation, it is not a big deal if I make a mistake	2.79	1.05	.02	-.82
A vacation is somewhat of a pleasure to me	4.28	.69	-.85	1.11
When I face a variety of vacation choices, I always feel a bit at a loss to make my choice	2.77	1.07	.10	-.77
A vacation interests me a great deal	4.09	.88	-.81	.27
When one purchases a vacation, he/she is never certain of his/her choice	2.77	1.01	.16	-.61
If, after I buy a vacation, my choice proves to be poor, I would be really upset.	3.41	1.06	-.13	-.86
The vacation I buy gives a glimpse of the type of person I am	3.42	.98	-.50	.05

## APPENDIX J. Factor Analysis of the Final Data

### Quality of Tourism Experience

Table J.1 Quality of Pre-Trip Planning Experience

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b>Quality of pre-trip planning experience</b>		2.315	55.75%	.69
Having easy access to the information related to the destination	.841			
Being able to get abundant information related to the destination	.773			
Making problem-free vacation arrangements (transportation, hotel, etc.)	.669			
Having plenty of time to plan the trip	.590			
Having reasonable prices for the vacation (transportation, accommodation, activities, etc.).	.464			

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.712  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table J.2 Quality of En-Route Experience

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b>Quality of en-route experience</b>		3.345	58.76%	.83
Comfortable transportation to and from the destination	.811			
Receiving high quality services in transit to and from the destination	.777			
Having problem-free travel to and from the destination	.759			
Having easy access to the destination from home	.729			
Safe transportation to and from the destination	.698			
Receiving clear direction and guidance (either in airport or driving on the way)	.691			

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.860  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table J.3 Quality of On-Site Instrumental Experience

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b>Quality of on-site instrumental experience</b>		3.750	59.61%	.84
Good facilities at the destination	.840			
Receiving high quality service at the destination	.804			
High quality of accommodation at the destination	.800			
High quality of food at the destination	.747			
Clean environment at the destination	.717			
Having a variety of activities to choose from at the destination	.517			
Favorable weather/climate at the destination	.495			

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.867  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table J.4 Quality of On-Site Expressive Experience

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b>Quality of on-site expressive experience</b>		2.598	52.97%	.76
Pleasant interaction/communication with the service personnel at the destination	.839			
User-friendly guidance/information at destination	.799			
Ensured safety and security at the destination	.704			
Pleasant interaction/communication with the local people at the destination	.675			
Overall reasonable prices at the destination	.552			

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.770  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table J.5 Quality of After-Trip Reflection

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b>Quality of after-trip reflection</b>		2.572	61.45%	.76
Feeling a sense of life-enrichment after the vacation	.813			
Feeling a sense of personal reward after the vacation	.792			
Feeling relaxed and refreshed after the vacation	.674			
Having a sense of freedom during the vacation	.671			
The feeling of having spent quality time with family and friends	.615			

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.665  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

Table J.6 Perceived Destination Competitiveness

Factor	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Explained Variance	Reliability Coefficient
<b><u>Destination Management and Marketing</u></b>				
The destination's alliance/connection with intermediates in the tourism sector	.712	8.164	37.11%	.86
The destination's commitment to promoting a positive image	.687			
The destination's overall favorable image in the world community	.660			
The destination's continuous commitment to the ongoing improvement and development of a high-quality destination	.649			
Policies/regulations favorable to tourists	.640			
The destination's commitment to providing a satisfactory vacation experience	.614			
The nature of the destination's setting helps visitors to function comfortably in daily activities	.598			
The overall destination experience offered "fits" the needs of visitors	.483			
<b><u>Accessibility and Information Availability</u></b>				
Problem-free vacation arrangements with the destination	.756	1.678	7.63%	.79
Smooth travel to the destination and back home	.737			
Easy access to the destination (frequency/capacity of transportation)	.679			
Easy access to meaningful information about the destination before travel	.647			
<b><u>Tourism Attributes</u></b>				
A good variety of activities offered for tourists at the destination	.652	1.294	5.88%	.76
Friendliness and hospitality of the local people	.579			
Favorable weather/climate at the destination	.529			
High quality of services/amenities at the destination	.526			
High quality tourism infrastructure	.478			
<b><u>Price and Value</u></b>				
Competitive price for the overall vacation relative to competitor destinations	.842	1.156	5.26%	.79
A good value for the money spent for the vacation experience	.800			
<b><u>Environment</u></b>				
Unique tourism resources	.820	1.011	4.60%	.60
The destination's commitment to preserving the destination environment	.712			
<b><u>Total Variance Explained</u></b>			60.47%	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) = 0.905  
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: p=.000

**Appendix K.** Comparison of Demographic Characteristics: Low vs. High Involvement Group

Variables	Low Involvement	High Involvement	$\chi^2$ & p value
Gender			
Male	92 (54.4%)	78 (45.6%)	$\chi^2 = 9.430$ p=.009*
Female	69 (38.8%)	109 (61.2%)	
Age			
18-24	5	11	$\chi^2 = 7.480$ p=.187
25-34	21	30	
35-44	45	67	
45-54	40	32	
55-64	23	22	
65 or older	25	22	
Marital Status			
Single	33	46	$\chi^2 = 2.466$ p=.651
Married	113	128	
Widowed	2	2	
Divorced	12	10	
Separated	1	0	
Education			
High school	39	40	$\chi^2 = 1.448$ p=.485
Four year college	48	48	
Graduate school	74	97	
Total household Income			
Less than \$20,000	14	20	$\chi^2 = 9.283$ p=.233
\$20,000-\$40,000	20	33	
\$40,001-\$60,000	26	22	
\$60,001-\$80,000	30	25	
\$80,001-100,000	21	19	
\$100,001-\$120,000	23	23	
Over \$120,001	21	31	
Ethnic Groups			
Caucasian	131	148	$\chi^2 = 8.646$ p=.124
African-American	5	7	
Hispanic	1	7	
Asian	18	22	
Native American	3	0	
Vacation Taken Per Year			
1-2 times	111	121	$\chi^2 = 1.073$ p=.585
3-4 times	36	49	
5 times or more	11	16	
Nights spent at the destination			
3 nights or less	41	42	$\chi^2 = 3.677$ p=.451
3-5 nights	61	67	
5-7 nights	38	54	
more than 7 nights	15	22	

