

A Systematic Comparison of First-Time and Repeat Visitors via a Two-Phase Online Survey

Abstract: Tourism researchers report differences between first-time and repeat visitors in terms of their demographics, tripographics, destination perception, perceived value, and travel motivations. The majority of previous studies focus on comparing only one or a couple of these dimensions, with fragmented and sometimes conflicting findings. Consequently, the existing literature presents a rather mixed picture of the similarity and differences between the two groups. This article offers a systematic comparison of first-time and repeat visitors via demographic and tripographic characteristics, travel planning behavior, pre- and post-trip congruency in travel activity preferences, and post-trip evaluation. The findings indicate that first-timers' behaviors are more tourism/travel oriented, while repeaters' behaviors demonstrate a recreation/activity orientation. First-timers are more active travel planners, while repeaters indicate more positive post-trip evaluations. Plus, on-site experiences influence the two groups' activity preferences.

1. Introduction

A rhetoric of tourism tends to emphasize tourism as a quest for novel experience that is spectacular and different from what tourists have previously experienced. However, a plethora of literature in the field of tourism shows substantial evidence that “what many tourists seem to enjoy is the return to the familiar” (Franklin, 2003, p. 53). While novelty seeking is certainly a powerful motivation for many tourists (Lee & Crompton, 1992), a search for familiarity via repeat tourism is equally prominent particularly when “the rewards of security outweigh any possible rewards brought by the high costs of uncertainty” (Burch, 1969, p. 132). It is an interesting paradox in which people leave their familiar home environment only to return to a familiar destination. According to Giddens (1991), ontological security is an indispensable element in fostering the development of self. However, the accelerated velocity of everyday life in modern society tends to bring instability and insecurity to a great prominence in a varying degree to everyone with the increasing concentration of urban population worldwide (Beck, 1992; Rojek, 2000). Thus, repeat tourism may be a reaction to such

characteristics of modernity. A need for stability and continuity may spur a number of individuals to become repeat tourists who enjoy familiarity with the destination for either (or both) aesthetic reasons (sentimentality, memory, a sense of belonging) or utilitarian reasons (better knowledge of geographic area for selected tourism activities). On the other hand, tourists who visit the destination for the first time may be seen differently in a sense that they are driven more by novelty than by familiarity. Given that underlying motivating forces dictate actual on-site behaviors (Crompton, 1979), there is theoretical reason to believe that repeaters and first-time visitors are different in various aspects. The interesting juxtaposition between familiarity seeking tourists and novelty seeking tourists is implicitly reflected in a line of empirical studies in the tourism literature, namely a comparative study of repeat tourists and first-time tourists.

The differences between first-time and repeat visitors are receiving renewed interests among tourism researchers (Anwar & Sohail, 2004; Fallon & Schofield, 2004; Hughes & Morrison-Saunders, 2002; Kemperman, Joh, & Timmermans, 2003; Shanka & Taylor, 2004). Understanding their differences is of vital importance in developing effective tourism marketing and management strategies as well as in building travel motivation and decision-making theories (Lau & McKercher, 2004; Oppermann, 1997; Petrick, 2004). Specifically, information regarding tourists' status as first-time or repeat visitors can be useful in market segmentation (Formica & Uysal, 1998), signaling destination familiarity (Tideswell & Faulkner, 1999), and determining a destination's position in its life cycle (Oppermann, 1998a; Priestley & Mundet, 1998).

A number of researchers in the field of tourism have reported the differences between first-timers and repeaters. The most notable differences include demographics,

tripographics, destination perceptions, perceived value, and travel motivations (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Lau & McKercher, 2004; McKercher & Wong, 2004; Oppermann, 1998a; Petrick, 2004; Shanka & Taylor, 2004). Collectively, the previous literature suggests that first-time visitors are more likely to be younger and less likely to visit friends/family than repeat visitors (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Lau & McKercher, 2004). First-timers typically explore a destination widely and participate in a variety of activities, with particular interest in large-icon attractions and events (Lau & McKercher, 2004). First-timers also tend to have shorter stays at a destination (Lau & McKercher, 2004; Oppermann, 1998), and have more complex and differentiated images of destinations than repeat visitors (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

In comparison to first-timers, repeat visitors have drawn even more research attention, owing to the tradition of loyalty and repurchase behavior studies in this field. Repeat visitors are destination-aware tourists whose expectations are based on previous experiences, while first-timers have to rely solely on external information (McKercher & Wong, 2004; Reid & Reid, 1993). Previous research suggests that repeaters are less likely to be satisfied (McKercher & Wong, 2004), but have a stronger intention to revisit in the future than first-time visitors (Juaneda, 1996; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). This indicates less persuasion efforts and lower promotional expenditure for destination marketers to secure repeat business than attracting new clientele (Lau & McKercher, 2004). Reid and Reid (1993, p. 3) suggest that repeat visitors represent more than just a stable source of revenues, but also act as “information channels that informally link networks of friends, relatives and other potential travelers to a destination.”

Much existing literature on the issue of first-timers and repeaters has utilized on-site tourists as research subjects and employed conventional survey methods, such as interviews and self-administered questionnaire surveys. These methods might not have helped identify the underlying causes of the differences, which could be embedded in the pre-trip decision-making and post-trip evaluation processes. As Opperman (1997, p. 179-180) advocates, "Given the emerging considerable differences among first-time and repeat visitors one needs to probe deeper to pinpoint the real cause of these differences." Moreover, understanding the differences between first-time and repeat visitors' travel experiences, particularly differences in their pre-travel and post-trip characteristics, is likely relevant for destination managers. This study attempts to provide a more systematic comparison between first-time and repeat visitors via a two-phase survey. The pre- and post-trip survey design allows the researchers to identify differences between first-timers and repeaters in terms of their pre-trip planning behavior and post trip evaluation, in addition to traditional comparisons of demographics and tripographics. The study also attempts to respond to Ritchie's (1996) criticism that tourism marketing studies are inattentive to travelers' post-trip thoughts.

Evidently, tourism destinations are not the only study contexts for the comparisons between first-timers and repeaters. Other study settings include cruising (Petrick, 2004), whitewater rafting (Fluker & Turner, 2000), festival attendance (Anwar & Sohail, 2004), and so on. While the present study focuses primarily on visiting a destination, findings from other travel and leisure contexts also seem to be important for the more enriched interpretation of the present study results.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Generic Differences between First-Timers and Repeaters*

Recent studies (Lau & McKercher, 2004; McKercher & Wong, 2004; Oppermann, 1998a; Reid & Reid, 1993) have identified a number of differences (e.g., travel characteristics, motivations, destination images, perceived values, and post-trip evaluation) in relation to first-time and repeat visitors. The most frequently examined variable may be the underlying travel motivation between these two segments. Consistently, relaxation and familiarity were identified as the most distinctive motivations for repeat tourists, while novelty and new cultural experiences the most crucial motivations for first-timers (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Hughs & Morrison-Saunders, 2002). Fluker and Turner (2000) also found significant differences in needs and motivations, but fewer differences in expectations between first-time and repeat whitewater rafters. They reported that first-time rafters focused more on the action of whitewater rafting per se by seeking a new experience and exploring adventure alternatives, and were more willing to take risks to accomplish these goals. Repeaters, on the other hand, were more likely to seek relaxation, the ancillary benefits of whitewater rafting, and had more realistic expectations.

Tourist activities and behaviors appear to reflect these differed motivations (relaxation and social needs for repeat visitors and novelty for first-time visitors) between the two groups. In terms of intended activities, most findings seem to suggest that repeat visitors prefer to participate in more social activities such as shopping, dining, and visiting friends and relatives, while first-time visitors seem to enjoy visiting major-iconic attractions that may help satisfy novelty seeking motivations (Anwar & Sohail, 2004; Fallon & Schofield, 2004; Lau & McKercher, 2004). The trip characteristics

of the two groups implicitly reflect the inherent differences in their motivation to visit the selected destination. Opperman's (1997) study of tourists to New Zealand showed that first-time visitors tended to spend more money, but stay shorter than repeat visitors. In addition, first-time visitors tended to explore the destination extensively while repeat visitors visited a smaller number of attractions but spent time more intensively. Lau and McKercher (2004) found similar results in their study of tourists to Hong Kong. First-time tourists in Hong Kong were more likely to be active tourists who enjoyed a wide variety of activities and explored the territory extensively (e.g., joining commercial tours and visiting icon attractions), while repeat visitors tended to stick to a few specific activities and attractions. Wang (2004) also showed that repeat visitors from Mainland China to Hong Kong were more likely to stay longer, take fewer activities and be involved in local life-related activities than first-time visitors.

Reid and Reid (1993) maintain that destination knowledge accumulated via previous visitation tends to affect perceptions of a place. Fakeye and Crompton's (1991) study of prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas confirmed this postulation. They identified a significant difference in destination image between first-timers and repeaters. This is probably because repeat visitors typically develop their images out of previous actual experiences while first-time visitors establish their images of the destination through information obtained from external sources (e.g., tourism suppliers, travel intermediaries, and friends and relatives). Accordingly, first-time tourists identified natural and cultural amenities and accommodations as more important image components, whereas repeat tourists found some factors associated with social opportunities such as food, friendly people, bars

and evening entertainments more important than other image components (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Other studies also identified significant differences between the two groups in terms of their destination perceptions (Anwar & Sohail, 2004).

2.2. Travel Planning Behaviors and Post-Trip Evaluations

The tourism literature suggests that previous destination experience (and familiarity) significantly impacts tourists' decision making process (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Oppermann, 1998b; Prentice & Andersen, 2000; S. Stewart & Vogt, 1999). Tourists' prior experience serves as a major information source in travel planning (Andereck and Caldwell 1993; Assael 2004; Fodness and Murray 1997; Woodside and Dubelaar 2002). For instance, prior experience and familiarity with the destination affects travel planners' use of promotional literature (Etzel & Wahlers, 1985), amount of time spent in planning (Zalatan, 1996), and perceptions of risk (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). Following the case-based planning theory, S. Stewart and Vogt (1999) maintain that previous experience with a destination makes a difference in tourists' planning efficiency. Repeat tourists tend to make more congruent plans than first-time visitors, and are less likely to change their plans because of their experiences with the destination. It seems tourist' familiarity with a destination can reduce risks involved in their travel decision and related information search efforts. Havitz and Dimanche (1999) postulate that this is the result of decreased level of involvement corresponding to accumulated experience.

However, recent studies reveal some counter-intuitive results. According to Shanka and Taylor (2004), repeat visitors utilize a wider variety of information sources than first-time visitors. In a similar vein, Lehto et al. (2004) report that tourists'

information search efforts do not necessarily decrease as their experiences with a specific destination increase. These rather unexpected results suggest that some tourists do not reduce their information gathering efforts even when it is a destination they have previously visited. Contrary to the general risk reduction hypothesis, previous experience with the destination may lead to a more diversified and detailed demand for information and activities sought (Opperman 1997). Kemperman et al. (2003) also suggest that the information sources differentially utilized by the two groups may also contribute to the different behavioral patterns between them.

Stewart and Vogt's (1999) finding that tourists tend to over plan their trips, and previous visitation history influence tourists' planning efficiency, has also been challenged. March and Woodside (2005) argued that tourists' realized consumption behaviors could be greater in number than planned. Further, their comparison between first-time, moderately-experienced, and heavy-experienced tourists suggested that previous destination experience did not significantly influence the incongruence between planned and realized spending or length-of-stay.

The influence of tourists' actual on-site experience on their post-trip evaluation is another key dimension to understanding differences between first-time and repeat tourists. Tourists' post-trip evaluations are of importance for destination marketers because such evaluations may directly influence their repurchase behavior (Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001). Some researchers suggest that repeat visitors require less marketing persuasion to return to the destination in the future than first-time visitors (Reid & Reid, 1993). In regard to satisfaction, the results are rather inconsistent. While some studies show that first-timers are more easily satisfied with a destination than

repeaters (Anwar & Sohail, 2004), others report that repeaters indicate a higher level of satisfaction than first-time visitors (Mohr, Backman, Gahan, & Backman, 1993). Thus, the question regarding who is more receptive to satisfaction is inconclusive at this stage. As a result, recent studies have started focusing more on identifying factors that differentially affect the level of satisfaction between the two groups than simple comparison of satisfaction. For instance, Fallon and Schofield (2004) revealed that different hierarchies of factors might account for the overall satisfaction of first-time visitors and repeat visitors. That is, different destination attributes function disproportionately in satisfying first-time and repeat visitors. They reported secondary attractions, such as shopping and dining opportunities, were the single most influential factor contributing to the differences between first-time and repeat tourists.

The significantly positive relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention has been repeatedly confirmed in the marketing and tourism literature (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cronin Jr., Brady, & Hult, 2000; Cronin Jr. & Taylor, 1994). However, the findings within the context of first-time and repeat visitation studies are not as consistent as one might expect. A majority of studies in the field indicate that repeat visitors are more likely to revisit the destination than first-time visitors (Gyte & Phelps, 1989; Juaneda, 1996; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Petrick et al., 2001; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). However, repeaters might have a lower level of satisfaction because of higher expectations in some cases (Anwar & Sohail, 2004; McKercher & Wong, 2004). This means that satisfaction may not be directly correlated with revisit intention. When controlling the characteristics of destination (e.g., developed destinations and less developed destinations), the level of positive correlation between satisfaction and revisit

intention may change. Indeed, Kozak (2001) found that this satisfaction-revisit intention relationship was weaker in less developed destinations than mature destinations.

In summary, the literature does not necessarily provide a consistent account of the similarities or differences in travel planning and post-trip evaluations between first-timers and repeaters, although there is some degree of consistency in terms of their tripographic and demographic characteristics. On one hand, first-timers are said to be more active travel planners holding lower expectations, due to lack of familiarity with the destination. On the other hand, repeaters may actively seek information and be more easily satisfied because of their commitment to the destination. It is difficult for the authors of this paper to make any firm and meaningful hypotheses based on prior research. Consequently, the present study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the major differences between first-time and repeat visitors' travel planning characteristics?

RQ2: How congruent are first-time and repeat visitors' pre- and post-trip activity preferences?, and

RQ3: What are the major differences between first-time and repeat visitors' post-trip evaluations?

Study Methods

The present study is part of a larger project, which benchmarks the advertising effectiveness of a number of American state tourism websites, as well as the consumption patterns of the website visitors. The project started in the Fall of 2001, with one state, and has since grown to nearly twenty states. Development of all survey

questions followed Nominal Group Technique (NGT) procedures. Directors of research, or an expert representative, for each state's tourism department participated in this procedure. Only questions that most project partners felt important were included in the final online surveys.

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase examined visitors' overall evaluations of the state tourism websites, and profiled their preferences and demographics. In order to collect the data, each state placed links on their homepages to lead to the survey, such that they could continually receive feedback from their website. At the end of the phase one survey, respondents were asked if they would agree to take a follow-up survey (i.e., the phase two survey). If they agreed to participate, they were asked to give their email address.

The phase two survey was conducted six months after the phase one survey was completed. The goal of this phase was to examine whether those website users (who responded to the first survey) actually visited the state or not, and the reasons behind their decisions. Phase one respondents who had given us their email addresses were sent an initial email asking whether or not they have visited the state (whose website they had visited initially) within the past six months. Website users who had visited the respective state within the past six months (since their initial inquiry) were directed to one online survey (Visitor Survey), while non-visitors were sent to another (Non-Visitor Survey). Later, two rounds of reminding emails were sent, one and two weeks respectively after the initial email.

The present study used phase one data collected between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004, and the visitor section of the phase two data collected between July 1,

2004 and December 31, 2004, from 14 state tourism websites including Arkansas, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. During this period, phase one generated a total of 38,065 responses, and phase two visitor data consisted of 2,583 responses. By definition, responses to the phase one survey reflect tourists' travel planning characteristics, while the visitor survey for phase two reports actual travel behavior and post-trip evaluation.

For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to match respondents of the phase one survey with their follow-up survey. However, to protect respondents' anonymity, the online study does not allow the researchers to collect any identifying information. To solve this problem, the same general demographic questions were asked in both phase one and phase two surveys. An index was created to match the individuals' responses to phase one and phase two surveys via their demographics. The index contained information regarding one's zip code, age, gender, education level, and the state website visited. It was assumed that if a phase two response contained the same information regarding zip code, age, gender, education level, and the state tourism websites they visited, as a phase one response, the two responses were from the same individual. Admittedly, this approach does not completely rule out the possibility that two different individuals may coincidentally share these same characteristics, though the chance of this occurring is quite low.

In this study, a first-time visitor was operationally defined as those who had not traveled to the state before, indicated travel planning as their main reason to visit the website (in phase one), and later traveled to the state destination. A repeater, on the

other hand, refers to those who have traveled to the state in the past 3 years, visited the website for travel planning, and finally made their trip. Two screening questions were hence used to identify the status of respondents (“Have you ever traveled to STATE NAME before?” and “Why did you visit our Web Site?”). A total of 1016 valid responses were identified, with 780 (76.8%) categorized as repeaters and 236 (23.2%) as first-timers.

4. Data Analysis & Results

As mentioned previously, the literature related to differences between first-time visitors and repeaters has reported conflicting results. Therefore, basic statistical tests were utilized for exploratory purposes: Chi-square was used to test the association of nominal variables and the two groups, while Gamma was additionally used to test the level of association between ordinal variables. Gamma is known to be the best ordinal level measurement with straightforward limit (+1 to -1) and PRE (proportional reduction in error) interpretation (Blalock, 1979). Further, adjusted standardized residual was used to indicate the deviations of the observed values from the expected values. An absolute value that is larger than 2 indicates marked deviation (SPSS, 1999). For variables measured with Likert-type scales, independent t-tests were used to test the differences between the two groups.

The primary focus of the present study is to compare first-time and repeat visitors in terms of their travel planning, pre- and post-trip congruency in travel activity preferences, and post-trip evaluation. In addition, the first phase of data analysis involves general comparisons on demographic and travel characteristics, to be used as baseline information of first-timers and repeaters.

4.1. *General Demographic and Tripographic Profile:*

Consistent with previous studies (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Lau & McKercher, 2004), first-timers were found to be significantly younger ($p=.001$) than repeaters. They were also more likely to be single ($p=.016$). There were no statistically significant differences ($p>.05$) between the two groups in terms of gender, education, and income (see Table 1). This is consistent with McKercher and Wong's (2004) findings that few demographic differences among visitors could actually be attributed to the first-timer/peater differences.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Tripographics (travel characteristics) in this study included purpose of travel, mode of transportation, length of stay, distance of travel, and individual daily expenditures¹. Consistent with previous studies, repeaters seemed to be more likely to visit friends and families than first-timers (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Lau & McKercher, 2004). They were also more likely to take weekend getaways. There were no significant differences ($p>.05$) for length of stay between the two groups. First-timers were more likely to be long-haul tourists ($p<.001$). More first-timers ($p<.001$) planned to fly to their state destinations, while more repeaters preferred driving. Although the overall differences between first-timers' and repeaters' individual daily expenditures were negligible, first-timers spent significantly more money in transportation and accommodations than repeaters (see Table 2).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

¹ We calculated "Individual Daily Expenditure" (S) with the following formula: $S = \text{Total or category expenditure} / [(1 + \text{Number of Travel Parties}) * \text{Length of Stay}]$

4.2. Research Question Analysis

Research question one (RQ1) examined differences between first-time and repeat visitors' travel planning characteristics. Tourists' travel planning characteristics were measured in terms of the timing of their planning, useful information types, and influential factors related to their vacation. Specifically, in phase one, respondents were asked whether they were planning a visit to or within the state "within the next week," "within the next month," "within the next 2 to 3 months," "between 3 and 6 months," or "more than 6 months time." In Phase Two, after their trip, respondents were asked to recall "what information on the website was most valuable to you on your vacation," and "which of the following [factors] influenced your decision to visit STATE NAME."

The results (see Table 3) revealed that first-timers planned their visit significantly more in advance ($\Gamma = .19, p = .001$). Regarding useful information, first-timers mainly found information about maps and transportation to be more valuable for their travel decision, while repeaters rated information regarding local events as more important ($p = .004$). Additionally, more first-timers considered friends and family ($p < .001$), climate ($p = .001$), and travel agents ($p < .001$) to be critical factors influencing their travel decisions, while repeaters showed more concern for costs ($p < .001$).

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Research question two (RQ2) asked how congruent first-time and repeat visitors' travel activity preferences were before and after their trips. S. Stewart and Vogt (1999) raised a similar issue, and found that repeaters tended to have a higher level of plan-behavior congruency. That is, repeaters are more likely to stick to their original travel plan, while first-timers actuate fewer activities than they plan for. In this study,

respondents' stated interest in travel activities before (phase one responses) and after their trip (phase two responses) was the point of comparison. Profiling tourists' activity preference was deemed important in that it may help destination marketers understand and predict tourists' future travel-related activities.

A pre-developed list of activities was presented to the respondents in both phases, and they were asked to check all activities they were interested in. Congruency refers to a respondent's consistency in choosing or not choosing certain activities. Consequently, respondents were classified into four groups, two of which were "congruent" groups comprising those who consistently stated that they were interested or not interested in certain activities. Using "casino gaming" as an example, the "N-N" group refers to the group of tourists who consistently indicated no interest in gaming (i.e., choosing "No" in both pre- and post-trip survey); and the "Y-Y" group refers to the group of tourists who consistently showed interest in gambling (i.e., choosing "Yes" in both pre- and post-trip survey). There are also two "incongruent" groups, comprised of those who either indicated no interest in the activity before the trip, but showed interest after the trip, or vice versa. To continue the example on "casino gaming," the "N-Y" group refers to the group of tourists who indicated no interest in gaming before the trip, but showed interest after the trip (i.e., choosing "No" in pre- trip survey, and "Yes" in post-trip survey); while the "Y-N" group refers to the group of tourists who indicated interest in gambling before the trip, but showed no interest after the trip (i.e., choosing "Yes" in pre- trip survey, and "No" in post-trip survey). It was assumed that at least some of the incongruence would be the result of respondents' on-site experiences. In other words, if a respondent showed no interest in a certain activity in phase one, but

indicated interests in that activity in phase two, the change of mind could be the result of their travel experiences.

As Table 4 shows, there were significant differences between repeaters and first-timers in four activities—visiting friends and family, general sightseeing, general entertainment, and casino gaming. Overall, first-time visitors showed more preference incongruence in casino gaming and general entertainment, while repeat visitors were more incongruent in general sightseeing and VFR. Meanwhile, repeaters were more consistently interested in visiting family and friends, and casino gaming. Conversely, first-timers were more consistently interested in general sightseeing than repeaters. Further, a significantly larger portion of first-timers indicated a declining interest toward general entertainment after the trip. Plus, there was no difference between the two groups in terms of the number of congruent activity preferences as both groups averaged 11.3 congruent activities.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Research question three (RQ3) examined the differences between first-time and repeat visitors' post-trip evaluations. Tourists' post-trip evaluations were measured in terms of their intentions to return, word-of-mouth, and satisfaction. Respondents' intention to return/travel to the state was measured by their probability of visit within the next two years, on a seven-point scale ("1"="0% chance" to "7" = "100% chance"). Word-of-mouth was measured by asking how the respondents will talk to others about the state as a leisure travel destination, on a 7-point scale anchored by "extremely negatively" and "extremely positively." Consistent with previous literature (Oliver, 1993; Petrick & Backman, 2002b), tourists' satisfaction was measured at both the

global/overall and attribute/transactional level. These were all measured on a 5-point scale anchored by “very satisfied” and “very dissatisfied.” A “did not experience” option was also provided. Attribute satisfaction was measured in terms of how satisfied tourists were with attractions, transportation, accommodations, restaurants, and entertainment.

As shown in Tables 5 and 6, repeaters evaluated their trips more positively than first-timers. They indicated a significantly higher probability of returning in the next 2 years ($p < .001$), and were more likely to give positive word-of-mouth ($p = .001$). Moreover, except for transportation and entertainment (where no difference was identified), repeaters were significantly more satisfied with attractions ($p = .02$), accommodations ($p = .0024$), restaurants ($p < .001$), and their overall experience ($p < .001$).

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

5. Discussion & Implications

Building on extant literature, the present investigation compared first-time and repeat visitors in five aspects— demographic and tripographic characteristics, travel planning behavior, pre- and post-trip congruency in travel activity interested, and post-trip evaluation (see Table 7 for a summary of the findings of the present study, compared with previous findings). Consistent with previous studies (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Lau & McKercher, 2004), this study found that first-timers tended to be younger and single, and were more likely to be long-haul tourists ($p < .001$). Repeaters, on the other hand, were more likely ($p < .001$) to travel to visit friends and families, and take weekend getaways. Correspondingly, more first-timers ($p < .001$) planned to fly to their state destinations, while more repeaters preferred driving. This implies that

repeaters are more likely to be a drive market (nearer) while first-timers are more likely to be traveling from a further distance. It is evident that distance is a critical factor affecting some visitors' decision to return to a destination (i.e., becoming repeaters), and others' not to do so. Whether travel distance may account for other behavioral differences between the two groups deserves more attention in future research. For destination managers, this finding suggests they may want to target those first-timers who live close to the destination, as they are more likely to be repeaters in the future.

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Findings of the study further show that first-timers appear to be active travel planners who start collecting information much earlier. Their travel planning behavior as well as their travel consumption patterns, seem to be "tourism/travel" oriented, meaning that most of their decision activities and money are spent on travel arrangements (i.e., travel and accommodations). They also rely more on their friends and family, as well as professionals to make their travel decision.

In contrast, repeaters seem to rely more on their own experiences to make travel decisions than other information sources, hence spent much less time in planning. Many of them travel to visit friends and relatives, or simply for a short break. Their visits are hence more "recreation/activity" oriented. In other words, they travel less within the destination, have more specific plans for what to do on site, and are more cost sensitive. From a marketing perspective, these findings can help destination managers and marketers better customize their offerings to different customer groups. For instance, as repeat visitors like to explore the destination more thoroughly, destination marketers should put more efforts into disseminating information related to their less known

attractions and diverse recreation opportunities (such as local events) to repeaters, and attempt to facilitate such trips. Additionally, how to satisfy the information needs of different segments remains to be a challenge for destination website marketers.

Destination marketers may find it useful to provide separate websites or links for first-timers (who presumably know less about the destinations and are more interested in hallmark attractions) and repeaters (who typically seek more information regarding local life and recreational opportunities). For instance, New York City's website now provides a page for first-timers (<http://www.nycvisit.com/content/index.cfm?pagePkey=1150>). Further, special needs of niche markets, such as novelty seekers (those whose major travel motivation is to seek novelty, arousal, and intensity of experience (Galloway & Lopez, 1999; T. Lee & Crompton, 1992), and experience collectors (i.e., those who have visited many destinations, with little experience on any one) (Petrick et al., 2001; Schreyer, Lime, & Williams, 1984; Williams, Schreyer, & Knopf, 1990), should be given extra consideration.

As for the pre- and post-trip congruency of travel activity preferences, this study identified four groups of travelers in terms of their interests in travel activities. Intuitively, it seems that destination marketers can develop more effective strategies for those who show consistent interest in certain travel activities because their behavioral intentions are more predictable. Another group (i.e., the N-Y group), whose activity interests may be inspired by their on-site experiences, could be a potentially profitable market for destinations. There is also a group of travelers who may have a declining interest in certain travel activities after their trip. It is imperative for destination marketers to understand the reasons behind this decline in interest in order to better design their

offerings. Finally, there is a group of travelers who are consistently disinterested in certain activities. This group might not be a justifiable target market for those activities. Identifying these groups may assist DMOs in making their marketing efforts more effective, as destination managers can make a more informed decision in allocating the finite marketing resources to different target markets. More research is needed to better understand each of these groups.

Similar to the past results, the present study showed that repeaters had a stronger intention to return and were more likely to give positive word-of-mouth (Kozak, 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002). Consistent with Mohr et al. (1993), this study reported that repeaters had a higher level of satisfaction than first-timers. Intuition and theory had previously led researchers to expect that first-time visitors are easier to be satisfied, due to a typically lower expectation (Anwar & Sohail, 2004; McKercher & Wong, 2004). However, it merits attention that the present project was conducted under a different time frame than others. Many previous studies have measured real-time satisfaction (on-site), while the present study reported post hoc satisfaction based on tourists' recollection. As W. Stewart and Hull (1992) suggested, visitors' satisfaction suffers certain levels of decay over time. Thus, findings of this study do not necessarily conflict with previous studies. It is possible that first-timers' satisfaction starts higher, but decays faster as a result of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). In contrast, repeaters' satisfaction may be more stable than first-timers, due to a longer history and more interaction with the destination (see Figure 1 for a postulated relationship). This phenomenon warrants further study.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Another possible explanation is that repeaters, owing to their prior experiences with the destination, tend to hold more realistic expectations (Fluker & Turner, 2000), while first-timers may be misled by illusion created by destination promotions. First-timers' pre-trip expectations are built entirely through the external information (Assael, 2004). If tourism marketers overly exaggerate the experiences their destination can provide, first-timers may establish some unreasonable expectations, which may lead to a higher level of incongruence between their expectations and actual experiences. Such inconsistency may result in dissatisfaction, and negatively influence the probability of future visits and word of mouth (Oliver 1980). The fact that 96.1 percent of respondents indicated in the phase two survey that the state tourism websites failed to provide a clear picture to them, or "did not match reality" seems to support this conjecture. Therefore, destination marketers should present more realistic information in their promotions. Plus, follow-up marketing efforts should be made to maintain a positive impression of the destination.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations which require a cautious judgment in generalizing the results. First and foremost, this study suffers coverage error (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2004), as most online surveys do. Hwang and Fesenmaier (2004) suggest that this bias comes from several sources. First, the self-reported responses are provided on a voluntary basis, which inherently biases certain populations who either preferred the survey objects (i.e., travel), or the online survey method per se. Also, there is still a portion of the general population who do not have access to the Internet. As a result, better-educated, higher-income, and younger individuals have a better chance of

responding to online surveys. Further, there is no general and reliable sampling frame for online surveys. In the present case, there is a possibility that an individual may have visited one or several of the fourteen state tourism websites, left different email addresses, and then submitted duplicated responses without being detected.

This study is further limited by the way the sample was identified. Although the use of an index containing five types of demographic information largely removed pure chance of coincidence, this resulted in a small sample of paired-responses in comparison to the original sample size. To solve this problem, a new survey system is under development for this project, which will match same individual's responses without violating the anonymity issue.

This study is also limited by failing to control factors such as state and seasonal differences due to sample size (particularly the small number of first-time visitors) and confidentiality. McKercher and Wong (2004) argued that differences between tourist segments might be the effect of either tourists' diverse experience levels or the nature of destinations in their vacation route. In this study, each state differs substantially in their offerings (i.e., not all attractions/activities are equally available in the 14 states), and such differences may influence visitors' expectations and other behavioral characteristics. For instance, Tourist A keeps visiting Nevada because of his involvement with gambling, while Tourist B returns to Texas to visit new cities. Although they both are repeat visitors, they might demonstrate different travel planning behavior. Thus, ideally, a state-by-state breakout would provide more useful information on the topics in discussion.

Another limitation of this study is that the researchers do not know the travel history of respondents. The fact that they are first-time visitors to one state does not necessarily mean that they are inexperienced in traveling. The concept of travel career ladder may play a mediating role in understanding the differences between the first-timers and repeaters. Future research should examine the travel histories of repeaters vs. first-timers to better understand the influence of travel history.

One of the strengths and weaknesses of this study is that practitioners (i.e., state tourism directors involved in the NGT process) played an active role in designing the questionnaires. Involving practitioners in academic research design, or pursuing a theory-in-use approach (Zaltman, Lemasters, & Heffring, 1982), will generate fruitful and meaningful results. Admittedly, this also results in some differences in the way questions were framed as opposed to traditional academic approaches. This presents another limitation of the study.

As for future research, more detailed comparisons investigating first-timer/repeater differences across different types of destinations, different purposes of visit, and in different cultures, will assist in making the present findings more generalizable. Further, future studies should be hypothesis-driven with the knowledge on this issue accumulated. From a methodological perspective, unstructured interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative approaches may provide more interesting insights, allowing for a richer understanding of both first-timers' and repeaters' decision-making processes.

It is clear that comparing first-time and repeat visitors is not for the sake of comparison or segmentation per se. The theoretical importance of identifying first-

timer/repeater differences lies in its conceptual association with studies on motivation, destination loyalty, the impact of prior experiences on travel decision, and the prediction of future behavior. Recent studies on destination loyalty (G. Lee, 2001; Niininen & Riley, 2003; Oppermann, 1999, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005) imply a first-timer → repeater → destination loyal visitor sequence. However, mechanisms underlying this loyalty formation process are still largely unknown. Future studies on first-timer/repeater comparisons should emphasize the antecedents, moderators, and consequences of this process.

A somewhat overlooked topic in first-timer/repeater studies is the concept of involvement, which refers to an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest toward a product (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997). The finding that first-timers are more active planners implies that they are more involved in travel decision than repeaters. At first sight, it appears to contradict Lehto et al's (2004) empirical findings while supporting Havitz and Dimanche's (1999) conjecture that "contrary to intuition which suggests that involvement levels rise over time, first-time buyers of a service may be in a high involvement situation whereas repeat buyers' involvement levels may be lower. Loyal participants who have already experienced the search, purchase, and recollection phases might be less involved, especially with respect to importance and risk, than are novice buyers" (p. 136). However, the authors speculate that it is the involvement types (i.e., situational vs. enduring), not the involvement levels (i.e., high vs. low), that are under play here between first-timers and repeater. That is, first-timers' involvement with destination may be better understood via the concept of situational involvement that is evoked by an individual's rather immediate concern for his/her behavior in purchase or

decision making process. Repeaters, on the other hand, may be better understood by the concept of enduring involvement that refers to an individual's ongoing orientation towards a product (Houston & Rothschild, 1978). Future study on this issue may shed new light on the causes of first-timer/repeater differences.

7. Conclusion

In the past two decades, numerous studies have examined differences between first-time and repeat visitors. The majority of previous studies have focused only on one or a couple of dimensions of the comparison, with fragmented and sometimes conflicting findings. Thus, existing literature presents a rather mixed picture of the similarities and differences between the two groups. This study systematically compared first-time and repeat visitors via demographic and tripographic characteristics, travel planning behavior, pre- and post-trip congruency in travel activity preferences, and post-trip evaluations. Findings of this study suggested that first-timers' behavior is more tourism/travel oriented, while repeaters' behavior demonstrates more of a recreation/activity orientation. First-timers are more active travel planners than repeaters. Repeaters are more positive in post-trip evaluations than first-timers. The on-site experiences have some influence on the two groups' activity preferences. Conceptual implications aside, results of this study should provide important practical guidance for destination marketers.

A final contribution of this study is its research design. The two-phase survey enabled the researchers to draw a more complete picture regarding first-timers' and repeaters' pre- and post-trip behaviors. The fact that practitioners played an active role in designing the questionnaires assists in making the results more relevant to

destination marketing practices. Therefore, findings from this study may help destination marketers to optimize resource utilization for the long-term viability of their destination.

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Table 1. Demographic Comparison

	Repeater	First Timer	Overall	χ^2 (Gamma)	p		
Gender							
Male	48.5% (1.0)*	44.9% (-1.0)	47.6%	0.913	0.339		
Female	51.5% (-1.0)	55.1% (1.0)	52.4%				
Marital Status							
Married	76.5% (0.5)	74.8% (-0.5)	76.1%	8.249	0.016		
Single	13.2% (-2.3)	19.2% (2.3)	14.6%				
Separated, divorced/ widowed	10.3% (2.0)	6.0% (-2.0)	9.3%				
Age							
18-24	0.9% (-1.5)	2.1% (1.5)	1.2%	21.017	0.001		
25-34	8.8% (-2.7)	14.8% (2.7)	10.2%				
35-44	16.3% (-2.6)	23.7% (2.6)	18.0%	(-0.231)	<0.001		
45-54	35.3% (1.1)	31.4% (-1.1)	34.4%				
55-64	28.7% (2.2)	21.6% (-2.2)	27.1%				
65+	10.0% (1.7)	6.4% (-1.7)	9.2%				
Income							
Less than 35k	10.0% (-0.8)	12.1% (0.8)	10.5%			3.706	0.592
35-55k	22.5% (1.1)	18.8% (-1.1)	21.6%				
55-75	20.5% (-0.4)	21.7% (0.4)	20.8%				
75-95	20.7% (-0.6)	22.7% (0.6)	21.1%				
95-115k	12.9% (-0.6)	14.5% (0.6)	13.3%				
115k or more	13.5% (1.3)	10.1% (-1.3)	12.7%				
Education							
Some High School	0.5% (-0.6)	0.8% (0.6)	0.6%	5.851	0.321		
High School Graduate	11.8% (-0.4)	12.7% (0.4)	12.0%				
Some College	33.6%	26.3%	31.9%				

	(2.1)	(-2.1)	
College Graduate	28.6%	34.7%	30.0%
	(-1.8)	(1.8)	
Some Graduate School	7.7%	8.1%	7.8%
	(-0.2)	(0.2)	
Completed Graduate School	17.8%	17.4%	17.7%
	(0.2)	(-0.2)	

Bold items are significant at $p < .05$ level

*Adjusted Standardized Residual

Table 2. Tripographic Comparison

	Repeater	First Timer	Overall	χ^2 (Gamma)	p
Purpose of trip					
Business	5.0%	6.4%	5.3%	26.493	<0.001
	(-0.8)*	(0.8)			
Visit family/ friends	19.1%	10.2%	17.0%		
	(3.2)	(-3.2)			
Vacation	51.7%	64.3%	54.6%		
	(-3.4)	(3.4)			
Special event	7.6%	8.5%	7.8%		
	(-0.5)	(0.5)			
Getaway Weekend	10.4%	3.0%	8.7%		
	(3.6)	(-3.6)			
Other personal travel	6.2%	7.7%	6.5%		
	(-0.8)	(0.8)			
Transportation					
Drove	60.6%	39.3%	55.6%	36.908	<0.001
	(5.7)	(-5.7)			
Flew	39.1%	58.5%	43.6%		
	(-5.3)	(5.3)			
Train	0.4%	2.1%	0.8%		
	(-2.6)	(2.6)			
How far did you travel?					
Less than 100 miles	4.5%	1.3%	3.8%	70.517	<0.001
	(2.3)	(-2.3)			
100-250 miles	11.8%	2.6%	9.6%		
	(4.2)	(-4.2)			
251-500 miles	20.6%	6.8%	17.4%		
	(4.9)	(-4.9)			
501-1000 miles	23.3%	21.8%	23.0%		
	(0.5)	(-0.5)			
More than 1,000 miles	39.8%	67.5%	46.2%		
	(-7.5)	(7.5)			
Days/nights of visit					
Day trip	3.8%	2.5%	3.5%	5.200	0.158
	(0.9)	(-0.9)			
1 to 3 Night	32.3%	30.9%	32.0%		
	(0.4)	(-0.4)			
4 to 6 Nights	38.3%	45.8%	40.0%		
	(-2.1)	(2.1)			
Longer than one weeks	25.7%	20.8%	24.5%		
	(1.5)	(-1.5)			
Per-Person Daily Expenditure (\$)					
	Mean			t	p
Total	108.71	110.70		-0.27	0.79
Transportation	21.07	28.67		-3.27	0.00

Lodging	24.88	30.59	-3.04	0.00
Food & beverage	19.24	18.55	0.58	0.57
Shopping	18.87	16.15	1.10	0.27
Entertainment (non-gambling)	9.79	11.10	-1.15	0.25
Gambling	23.81	16.99	1.50	0.13
Other purchases	11.37	9.67	0.50	0.62

Bold items are significant at $p < .05$ level

*Adjusted Standardized Residual

Table 3. Comparing First Timers and Repeaters' Travel Planning Characteristics

	Repeater	First Timer	Overall	χ^2 (Gamma)	p
Planning Time					
One week	11.4%	7.9%	10.6%	14.678	0.005
	(1.5)	(-1.5)		(0.188)	0.001
One month	25.5%	20.1%	24.2%		
	(1.7)	(-1.7)			
2 to 3 months	33.2%	29.3%	32.2%		
	(1.1)	(-1.1)			
3 to 6 months	23.5%	35.4%	26.3%		
	(-3.6)	(3.6)			
More than 6 months	6.4%	7.4%	6.6%		
	(-0.6)	(0.6)			
The Most Valuable info on Web Site					
Attractions	30.3%	34.1%	31.2%	22.237	0.004
	(-1.1)*	(1.1)			
Maps & Transportation	20.9%	30.6%	23.1%		
	(-3.1)	(3.1)			
Local events	11.1%	4.3%	9.5%		
	(3.1)	(-3.1)			
Golf course	0.9%	0.0%	0.7%		
	(1.5)	(-1.5)			
Accommodations	12.7%	10.8%	12.2%		
	(0.8)	(-0.8)			
Restaurant	3.5%	2.2%	3.2%		
	(1.0)	(-1.0)			
Nightlife	1.6%	1.3%	1.5%		
	(0.3)	(-0.3)			
Historical attractions	16.6%	13.4%	15.8%		
	(1.2)	(-1.2)			
Travel packages	2.5%	3.4%	2.7%		
	(-0.8)	(0.8)			
Influential Decision-making Factors					
Advertising	12.4%	16.9%	13.5%	3.164	0.075
Articles in travel magazines or newspaper	0.6%	1.3%	0.8%	0.921	0.337
Friends & Family	16.5%	27.1%	19.0%	13.180	<0.001
Cost	59.0%	4.2%	46.3%	218.360	<0.001
Climate	33.1%	45.3%	35.9%	11.835	0.001
Travel agents	2.3%	11.4%	4.4%	35.702	<0.001
Previous visits	16.8%	12.7%	15.8%	2.265	0.132
Television	21.8%	19.5%	21.3%	0.574	0.449
Convenience	21.8%	19.1%	21.2%	0.808	0.369

Bold items are significant at p < .05 level

*Adjusted Standardized Residual

Table 4. Comparing First Timers and Repeaters' Pre- and Post-trip Activity Preferences

		Congruent		Incongruent		χ^2	p
		N-N	Y-Y	Y-N	N-Y		
Visit Attractions	RP	8.46%	66.79%	16.15%	8.59%	6.53	0.09
		(0.8)*	(0.3)	(2.2)	(-2.0)		
	FT	6.78%	73.73%	15.25%	4.24%		
		(-0.8)	(-0.3)	(-2.2)	(2.0)		
Nightlife	RP	68.46%	12.69%	13.46%	5.38%	2.13	0.55
		(0.3)	(0.6)	(0.4)	(-1.3)		
	FT	67.37%	16.10%	11.86%	4.66%		
		(-0.3)	(-0.6)	(-0.4)	(1.3)		
Watch Sports	RP	86.15%	4.62%	3.46%	5.77%	1.38	0.71
		(0.5)	(-0.3)	(-1.0)	(0.5)		
	FT	84.75%	3.81%	3.81%	7.63%		
		(-0.5)	(0.3)	(1.0)	(-0.5)		
Shopping	RP	37.44%	31.79%	17.31%	13.46%	0.28	0.96
		(-0.2)	(-0.3)	(0.0)	(0.5)		
	FT	38.14%	30.08%	18.22%	13.56%		
		(0.2)	(0.3)	(0.0)	(-0.5)		
Nature Activates	RP	34.74%	35.51%	16.03%	13.72%	1.57	0.67
		(0.4)	(0.1)	(0.9)	(-1.1)		
	FT	33.47%	39.41%	15.68%	11.44%		
		(-0.4)	(-0.1)	(-0.9)	(1.1)		
Visit Friends & Family	RP	59.49%	20.90%	9.10%	10.51%	27.23	<0.001
		(-5.2)	(2.0)	(1.7)	(3.7)		
	FT	77.97%	10.17%	5.08%	6.78%		
		(5.2)	(-2.0)	(-1.7)	(-3.7)		
Cultural Activities	RP	54.49%	17.69%	14.23%	13.59%	3.01	0.39
		(0.3)	(-1.7)	(0.5)	(0.7)		
	FT	53.39%	15.68%	18.64%	12.29%		
		(-0.3)	(1.7)	(-0.5)	(-0.7)		
Skiing	RP	95.51%	1.28%	0.77%	2.44%	4.21	0.24
		(1.9)	(-1.3)	(-0.8)	(-1.4)		
	FT	92.37%	2.54%	1.69%	3.39%		
		(-1.9)	(1.3)	(0.8)	(1.4)		
General Sightseeing	RP	9.10%	62.44%	18.33%	10.13%	9.00	0.03
		(1.3)	(0.3)	(2.4)	(-2.5)		
	FT	6.36%	71.19%	17.37%	5.08%		
		(-1.3)	(-0.3)	(-2.4)	(2.5)		
Play Golf	RP	90.38%	4.36%	2.56%	2.69%	2.83	0.42
		(-1.1)	(-0.3)	(0.5)	(1.6)		
	FT	92.80%	2.12%	2.97%	2.12%		
		(1.1)	(0.3)	(-0.5)	(-1.6)		
General Entertainment	RP	53.85%	20.38%	14.62%	11.15%	13.71	<0.001
		(2.5)	(-3.6)	(0.1)	(0.2)		
	FT	44.49%	19.92%	24.58%	11.02%		
		(-2.5)	(3.6)	(-0.1)	(-0.2)		

		Congruent		Incongruent		χ^2	p
		N-N	Y-Y	Y-N	N-Y		
Play Sports other than Golf	RP	96.41%	0.38%	1.92%	1.28%	0.35	0.95
		(-0.5)	(0.2)	(0.5)	(-0.1)		
	FT	97.03%	0.42%	1.69%	0.85%		
		(0.5)	(-0.2)	(-0.5)	(0.1)		
Outdoor Recreation	RP	48.08%	26.15%	14.23%	11.54%	1.52	0.68
		(0.1)	(-0.2)	(-1.0)	(0.9)		
	FT	47.88%	23.31%	14.83%	13.98%		
		(-0.1)	(0.2)	(1.0)	(-0.9)		
Casino Gaming	RP	57.18%	27.44%	9.36%	6.03%	16.62	<0.001
		(-0.6)	(-3.4)	(0.8)	(2.7)		
	FT	59.32%	18.64%	17.37%	4.66%		
		(0.6)	(3.4)	(-0.8)	(-2.7)		

Bold items are significant at $p < .05$ level

*Adjusted Standardized Residual

“N-N” refers to the group consistently indicated no interest in the activity (i.e., Chose “No” in both pre- and post-trip survey); “Y-Y” refers to the group consistently indicated interest in the activity (i.e., Chose “Yes” in both pre- and post-trip survey); “N-Y” refers to the group indicated no interest in the activity before the trip, but showed interest after the trip (i.e., Chose “No” in pre- trip survey, and “Yes” in post-trip survey); “Y-N” refers to the group indicated interest in the activity before the trip, but showed no interest after the trip (i.e., Chose “Yes” in pre- trip survey, and “No” in post-trip survey).

Table 5. Comparing First timers and Repeaters' Future Revisit Intention

	Repeater	First Timer	Overall	χ^2 (Gamma)	p
Probability of Re-visit in 2 years					
0% chance	0.9%	3.8%	1.6%	134.399	<0.001
	(-3.1)*	(3.1)		(-0.541)	<0.001
Very low probability	3.7%	13.6%	6.0%		
	(-5.6)	(5.6)			
Low probability	4.4%	13.6%	6.5%		
	(-5.0)	(5.0)			
50% chance	14.1%	30.1%	17.9%		
	(-5.6)	(5.6)			
High probability	18.5%	13.6%	17.4%		
	(1.8)	(-1.8)			
Very high probability	14.8%	11.0%	13.9%		
	(1.5)	(-1.5)			
100% chance	43.6%	14.4%	36.8%		
	(8.1)	(-8.1)			

Bold items are significant at p < .05 level

*Adjusted Standardized Residual

Table 6. Comparing First timers and Repeaters' Satisfaction Level and WOM

	Mean		t	p
	Repeater	First timer		
Satisfaction ¹				
Attractions	4.21 (n=685 ,SD=0.87)	4.05 (n=210 ,SD=0.98)	2.33	0.020
Transportation	3.79 (n=579 ,SD=1.05)	3.70 (n=193 ,SD=1.08)	1.06	0.289
Accommodation	4.16 (n=699 ,SD=0.91)	3.93 (n=219 ,SD=1.02)	3.15	0.002
Restaurants	4.13 (n=741 ,SD=0.89)	3.79 (n=229 ,SD=0.96)	4.86	<0.001
Entertainment	4.04 (n=551 ,SD=0.95)	3.94 (n=171 ,SD=0.97)	1.20	0.229
Overall Experience	4.36 (n=763 ,SD=0.77)	4.15 (n=233 ,SD=0.88)	3.51	<0.001
Word of Mouth²	6.34 (n=776 ,SD=0.82)	6.13 (n=235 ,SD=0.93)	3.42	0.001

Bold items are significant at p < .05 level

¹ Satisfaction was measured on a 5-point scale with 5= "very satisfied" and 1="very dissatisfied."²

Word-of-mouth was measured on a 7-point scale with 7="extremely positively." and 1="extremely negatively" and

Table 7. Comparative Analysis of Findings between Selected Previous Studies and Current Study

Variables	Previous Findings	Current Study
Activities Pursued (Interested)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First-time visitors participated in more diverse destinations and activities than repeat visitors (Opperman, 1997) ● First-time visitors were more likely to take local tours and explore destination widely, whereas repeat visitors were more likely to engage in shopping and gourmet tours (McKercher & Wang, 2004; Lau & McKercher, 2004) ● Repeat visitors were more involved in local life related activities while first-time visitors were more likely to visit popular tourism attractions (Wang, 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeaters were more consistently interested in visiting family and friends, and casino gaming, while first-timers tended to be more consistently interested in general sightseeing
Purpose of Trip (Motivation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The desire for exploration and novelty was more relevant to first-time visitors while the desire to meet different people was more closely associated with repeat visitors (McKercher & Wang, 2004) ● First-time visitors are more interested in learning about the cultural heritage of destination, while repeat visitors are more interested in spending time with friends and family (Lau & McKercher, 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeaters were more likely to visit friends and families than first-timers
Transportation Mode	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First-timers planned to fly to their state destinations, while more repeaters preferred driving
Distance of Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First timers tended to travel greater distance than repeaters (Tiefenbacher, Day & Walton, 2000) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First timers tend to travel greater distance than repeaters
Length of Stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeat visitors generally stayed longer than first-time visitors although a reversal result was found from the specific market segment (Opperman, 1997) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First timers tend to stay longer than repeaters

Tripographic Characteristics

Variables		Previous Findings	Current Study
Individual Daily Expenditure		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenditures of first-time visitors are higher than repeat visitors although it is different by the countries of origin (Opperman, 1997) Expenditures of repeat visitors are higher than first-time visitors (Wang, 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although there is little difference between first-timers and repeaters' individual daily expenditures, first-timers tend to spend significantly more money on transportation and accommodations than repeaters
	Travel Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeaters rely on their prior experience as a major information source in travel planning (Andereck and Caldwell 1993; Assael 2004; Fodness and Murray 1997; Woodside and Dubelaar 2002). Repeaters also search information extensively in travel planning (Lehto et al., 2004; Shanka & Taylor, 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First-timers appear to be active travel planners, who start seeking information much earlier. Their travel planning behavior, as well as their travel consumption pattern, seems to be "tourism/travel" oriented, while repeaters' planning behavior seems to be more "recreation/activity" oriented.
Activities Pursued (Interested)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although most travelers tend to overplan their travel, repeat visitors tend to make more congruent plans than first-time visitors, and are less likely to change their plans (S. Stewart & Vogt, 1999). Previous destination experience did not significantly influence the incongruence between planned and realized spending or length-of-stay (March & Woodside, 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeaters were more consistently interested in visiting family and friends, and casino gaming, while first-timers tended to be more consistently interested in general sightseeing
	Future Return Intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit intention was higher for repeat visitors than first-time visitors (Kozak, 2001; Lau & McKercher, 2004) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat intention within the next 2 years was higher for repeat visitors than first timers
Word-of-Mouth	N/A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeaters were more likely to give positive word-of-mouth than first timers
Overall and Attribute Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First-time visitors were more satisfied with their experience in Hong Kong than repeat visitors (McKercher & Wang, 2004) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeaters were significantly more satisfied with attractions, accommodations, and restaurants than first timers
Post-Trip Evaluation			

Figure 1. First-timers' and Repeaters' Satisfaction Decay: A Postulation

