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Aspects of Tourism

TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

Themes and Conceptual Schemes

Philip L. Pearce

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Preface

What tourists do, and why they do it has fascinated a lot of people. What tourists think, how they feel and what influences their thoughts and feelings is especially fascinating to tourists themselves, to the people who manage their behaviour and to analysts studying contemporary life.

This volume tackles in a fresh way many of the core topics in tourist behaviour. While it is no way a second edition to one of the author's earliest books - The Social Psychology of Tourist Behaviour, Oxford: Pergamon, 1982 - it does follow in part the structure of that volume, and covers parallel territory. The benefit of nearly 25 years of research, and the changing face of tourism and global travel are reflected in many ways in the present work. There are now a variety of promising schemes and mini theories, 'conceptual schemes' as they will be referred to in this book, which help illuminate long standing tourist behaviour topics.

The author has been fortunate to work with talented colleagues in a stable academic environment. These efforts and forces have fostered a productive publication stream from the James Cook University tourism group, some of which is reported in relevant sections of this volume. In particular, several key individuals have assisted the author's thinking and working environment and deserve special credit. Key colleagues include Gianna Moscardo, Laurie Murphy, Lui Lee, Chiemi Yagi, Aram Son, Pierre Benckendorff, Glenn Ross and Robyn Yesberg.

While it is appropriate to record the special efforts of local colleagues there are also wider influences contributing to the enthusiasm for writing about this area. Colleagues in the Unites States, notably Joe O'Leary and Alastair Morrison, have been good friends, interested observers and at times partners in the author's work. A set of colleagues in Asia, the United Kingdom, Europe and Africa have helped the author maintain an interest in the usefulness and diverse applicability of tourist behaviour across cultures.

The volume is intended to be both a resource and an integrating force for the analysis of an important part of tourism. It seeks to be educational rather than prescriptive, probing new ways of tackling topics. It is eclectic in its methodological tolerance rather than narrowly defined. Like tourism itself, it is hoped that it will fulfil multiple needs in diverse settings.

Philip L. Pearce
Australia, 2005

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Chapter 1

Studying Tourist Behaviour

Beyond the Personal Perspective

The noted adventurer and travel writer Redmond O'Hara argues that you write well about a topic only if you have experienced it and, at times, have been traumatised by it (O'Hara, 2003). Does the author, a Professor of Tourism, have just such a range of traumatic experiences to help him write about tourist behaviour? Fortunately the answer is, yes. Some incidents include being petrified in Panama City, being propositioned in Phuket, and being mugged in Marseille. On other occasions the experiences have included enduring all-day airline delays in China. In one such delay in X'ian, the one available plastic seat in the airport lounge was not made any more comfortable by the public announcer's frequent call – 'The flight to Shanghai is not leaving because the plane is somewhere else'. There is indeed much personal material upon which to draw. Undoubtedly readers too have varied and sometimes traumatic personal experiences to recount: effectively titillating tales to tell about their travels.

Nevertheless this is a research-based account of tourist behaviour and, while it might have been stimulated and enriched by personal experiences, it relies much more on the empirical work of an immediate research circle, on the efforts of leading scholars in tourist behaviour and on a diverse array of insights from occasional contributors to this field of study. It draws on the disciplines of psychology, sociology and anthropology but is most dependent on the emerging specialism of tourism studies, itself now a productive global research field (Jafari, 2000; Pearce, 1993a). The term behaviour will be interpreted in its widest psychological sense in this volume as a summary for the observable activities as well as the mental processes guiding and resulting from social life (Harré & Secord, 1972).

One particular advantage of adhering to a title with behaviour as the leading description of the area of interest is that it provides a focused reminder of the physical nature of human existence. Since much of the writing about tourists' views of their travels is sociological, and hence is often concerned with abstract systems and social structures, there is an emerging argument that demands that researchers recognise the limits, needs and characteristics of the human body in tourist study (Selanniemi, 2003). This may be as simple as recognising motion sickness and the effects of sleep deprivation on mood, or it may generate new conceptual

appraisals such as in augmenting conventional ideas about destination images with a fuller recognition of the sensory responses that humans have to environments (Ashcroft, 2001; Veijola & Jokinen, 1994).

Additionally the term tourist behaviour is useful to both link and differentiate the material from the broader yet distinctively different literature describing consumer behaviour. The nature of these differences will be explored later in this chapter.

A further dimension of interest in the present volume that extends the study beyond a personal perspective lies in the geographical reach and scope of the material considered. A partial focus of this volume will be on emerging studies of tourist behaviour in Asia but these additional contributions will be viewed against a backdrop of several decades of work conducted predominantly in North America, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Some insights from European scholars will also be considered in select chapters.

A final and definitive extension of the present work beyond the personal perspective is the planned and systematic use of conceptual schemes and mini-theories to explain and interpret the topics pursued.

The Sin of Homogenisation

Tourists are not all alike. In fact, they are staggeringly diverse in age, motivation, level of affluence and preferred activities. Galani-Moutafi (1999) and Nash (2001) warn would-be analysts of tourist behaviour to avoid the sin of homogenisation, of treating all travellers as the same. They recommend that researchers should specify, wherever possible, which types of tourists are being discussed. The warning is appropriate at the start of a book on tourist behaviour. There will be few easy generalisations about tourists in the following pages. An important aim of the volume will be to provide multi-faceted accounts of the complexity of tourist behaviour while still recognising that it is convenient for both analysis and practice to work at the level of meaningful groups or market segments rather than purely individual experience. The importance of avoiding the sin of homogenisation will be re-emphasised in Chapter 2, where some of the key demographic factors frequently used to describe tourists are considered.

A Professional Approach: The Etic–Emic Distinction

An important step in moving towards a professional appraisal of tourist behaviour lies in recognising that there are multiple perspectives on behaviour. In particular one important approach arising out of research in linguistics and anthropology is the etic–emic distinction (Pike, 1966; Triandis, 1972). An *emic* approach is one that takes the perspective of the participant – the person engaging in the behaviour. The topic of interest

may be the experiences of a young budget traveller, a senior tourist or an ardent birdwatcher, for example. The emic approach to their behaviour involves finding out from them how they see the world, how they look at the setting, the other people in it and the value of their experience. This can be contrasted with an *etic* approach where the researcher, as an observer and outsider, classifies and describes the tourist's behaviour. An example might be studying a young European budget traveller sun-tanning on an Australian beach. If the researcher asks the traveller to describe his or her experience (i.e. works at obtaining an emic perspective), the response may be 'Actually I'm worshipping the sun god. This is a deep cosmic experience for me to lie in the sun in wintertime because I come from Finland and fundamentally there is so little sun that this is absolutely marvellous for me'. The outside observer may simply have interpreted the behaviour as everyday relaxation. The core distinction is that, when researchers ask people to describe their experiences in their own words and not according to pre-judged categories, they are adopting an emic perspective and beginning to see the socially-constructed world from the participants' point of view (Gergen, 1978).

It can be suggested that both new students of tourist behaviour and senior scholars sometimes struggle with the multiple realities and challenges inherent in identifying emic and etic perspectives. For the new scholar it is sometimes difficult to see that a travel experience that he or she would never undertake could be fulfilling and rewarding for someone else. For example, a not-very-affluent student might find the expenditure on a luxurious hotel room at several hundred dollars a night to be an incomprehensible choice when the same amount of money might buy a camping trip with a white-water-rafting experience and a skydiving thrill. Equally, the cautious quieter tourist with a deep interest in wildlife experiences might find large expenditure on nightclubs, drinks and a party lifestyle in such Mediterranean resorts as Ibiza and the Greek Islands to be socially unattractive. The issues here extend beyond understanding to personal identity and deeply held social values.

Senior scholars too sometimes fail to grasp the range of meanings that certain subgroups of travellers bring to a setting. Thus de Albuquerque (1998) effectively scoffs at the notions of romantic tourism proposed by Pruitt and La Font (1995). He discounts the perspective that indirect payment by women for their companionship experiences with Caribbean beach boys constitutes romantic and meaningful relationships, and argues that it is simply prostitution. The fact that he failed to interview the women themselves and obtain an emic perspective somewhat compromises his argument.

In the arena of research into visitor conflict and crowding, Jacob and Shreyer (1980) have argued that disagreements sometimes arise because

participants have a low tolerance of lifestyle diversity. Such a concept may partially explain the lack of insights described in the examples above, but there is more involved than simple tolerance. It is about recognising the full appreciation and value that other people experience from a different style of travel behaviours. The understanding and empathy for other people's behaviour that can be developed by emphasising an academic emic perspective is of considerable relevance in the tourism educational sphere. Young managers and junior executives assisting tourists, and designing and marketing experiences for them, have to be able to know empathically how their target group of visitors view the world. It can be argued here that a professional and workplace understanding of tourist perspectives can be built from researcher insights generated by building and distinguishing emic and etic perspectives.

Expressions within the Field

Rojek and Urry (1997: 1) report that tourism studies are beset with definitional problems, and comment that tourism 'embraces so many different notions that it is hardly useful as a term of social science'. Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge (1998) suggest that the emphasis placed on defining tourism depends on the goal of the analyst or practitioner. In this view what is emphasised in a definition of tourism will depend on the commentator, with planners, forecasters, academics and managers attending to different processes, connections and hierarchies of interest. For most tourism researchers, a working pathway through this definitional maze has been to subscribe to a basic or *core systems* model of tourism (c.f. Leiper, 1989; Mill & Morrison, 1985). The need to update and expand the reach of this core systems model is a topic of contemporary concern (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004). An additional difficulty is that tourism researchers frequently use words and expressions that are in everyday use. It is then difficult at times to impose more formal, tighter and more specific meanings on top of the existing language use. The very word 'tourist' is its own definitional problem child. Its first use and origins lie in the 17th century as a descriptor of the travellers undertaking the Grand Tour (Hibbert, 1969). It is used pejoratively by some to describe a superficial appraisal or experience of phenomenon and by others as a marker of affluence and freedom (Dann, 1996a). The word is used to describe both international and domestic travellers. The World Tourism Organisation definition of a tourist relates exclusively to international tourists. In this statistics-collecting framework, tourists are overnight visitors who cross international boundaries for periods of up to a year. Some travellers who are not included in the World Tourism Organisation statistics are diplomats, military personnel, refugees, people in transit, nomads and migrants (Pearce *et al.*, 1998). More than 170 countries around the world

have now agreed to conform to these definitional conventions in recording international arrivals. Nevertheless, for a study of tourist behaviour, particularly where there is an interest in the management of tourists, this definition is perhaps not as complex or complete as might be required. In particular it provides no guidance on how domestic tourists should be classified.

A study conducted by Masberg (1998) reflects the slippery and shifting definition of domestic tourists by regional authorities. Masberg interviewed managers and executives of convention and visitor bureaux (CVBs) in the United States. These organisations are often involved in lobbying for the expansion of tourism in the region and offer quite all-inclusive definitions of tourists. Some of the respondents defined their domestic tourists as 'people who travel 50 miles (80 kilometres) to come here', others said 'it's people who stay overnight in our region', while a third group suggested 'it's people who are here for pleasure'. These tourism organisation perspectives from the United States would probably be replicated in many other parts of the world, as an indication of growing visitor numbers is often an important argument when such CVBs seek funding from allied businesses and governments. The critical issue here is to be explicit in the definitions of the term 'tourist' when communicating research findings and in interpreting community perspectives on tourism. Clearly, not all researchers and analysts hold and work with exactly the same definition of the tourist as do their audiences. In the present volume, 'domestic tourists' will usually refer to visitors from outside the region of interest who stay for at least one night. The broader term of 'visitor' will be used to embrace international tourists, domestic tourists and tourist-facility users from the local region or home town.

'Consumer' is also a term used widely in literature that is relevant to this volume. It refers to people in both the public and private sector who are involved in the purchasing and experiencing of products. There are often specialist courses in consumer behaviour in universities and there are many parallels between consumer and tourist behaviour. Regrettably, the term 'consumer' has some negative connotations. Studies of consumer behaviour and the general use of the term 'consumption' have traditionally not addressed good environmental practices, good community links, and socially responsible actions. Overall there has been a tendency for studies in the mainstream consumer behaviour literature to pay limited attention to sustainability issues (Gee & Fayos-Sola, 1997). An awareness of this connotation is necessary in tourist behaviour studies where sustainability issues are a dominant focus (Moscardo, 1999).

The word 'customer' tends to have a business focus, and is used less in public settings, but is frequently employed in business or private sector settings. The term will be used from time to time in this volume, particu-

larly when exploring and reflecting on the large topic of customer satisfaction.

There are some other useful terms that focus on the individual and his or her behaviour in relation to tourism settings. Sometimes the word 'user' is employed. This is a term that is useful in certain public facility contexts. Just as 'customer' is useful in a business context, the term 'user' is valuable when discussing individuals or groups who may be travelling along a highway and using open access public facilities such as a rest area. Both in everyday life and in the existing literature, commentators refer to a highway user or a beach user, rather than to a customer in such contexts.

'Client' is another expression that is occasionally useful. The term is usually reserved for professional services, so there are legal clients and clients for financial services. Travel agents often refer to their customers as clients. It is apparent that the term client connotes a serious professional service and may be used to upgrade the status of an industry sector. Indeed, it is quite common for the word client to be used in the sex trade (Ryan & Kinder, 1996).

'Participants' and 'stakeholders' are further terms of broad relevance to this discussion. They both refer to settings where the person is involved in a partnership, or acts in an advisory capacity. Many natural environment management agencies have stakeholder groups – people who help the agency staff make decisions about the settings that they caretake.

To complete the framework of relevant terms there are other circumstances where a person might be labelled a patient, a player, a spectator, an audience or a crowd member and some of these studies will be relevant to the interest in tourism. Nevertheless the focus of the volume will be specifically on tourists and tourist behaviour.

Tourist Behaviour: To Whom Does It Matter?

First, tourist behaviour tends to matter to tourists. People are concerned with their life experience – what they do – and they like to understand it. So, one answer to the question is that tourists themselves are very concerned with their own experiences and how to maximise each one, whether it be a short regional visit or an extended international holiday.

A second answer to the question is that tourist behaviour matters to people who are making decisions about tourists. There is a whole array of such decision-makers. They may be people in the public sector who provide permits for tour operators; they may be managers who let others go to the Great Barrier Reef or white-water rafting, or canoe down one of the scenic rivers in North America. All sorts of people are concerned with tourist behaviour because their job involves making an enabling decision or policy choice about tourist activities.

A subdivision in the types of decision making clarifies the kinds of people involved. There are public decision-makers who make either policy or management decisions about on-site behaviour. There are marketers in joint public–private cooperative endeavours whose interests include such factors as what will influence travellers to come to place A, B or C. There are also business decision makers concerned with the design and financial success of tourism products. These kinds of interests focus on what tourists will prefer and how they make their travel choices and purchases. Tourism industry lobby groups may also be interested in select tourist behaviour issues, particularly topics such as user-pays fees and taxes on activities.

There are further groups who are less frequently interested in tourist behaviour. For example, if tourists are creating certain kinds of impacts (maybe positive ones such as economic impacts, or even negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts), the local community and then the media may find tourist behaviour noteworthy. In turn political comment

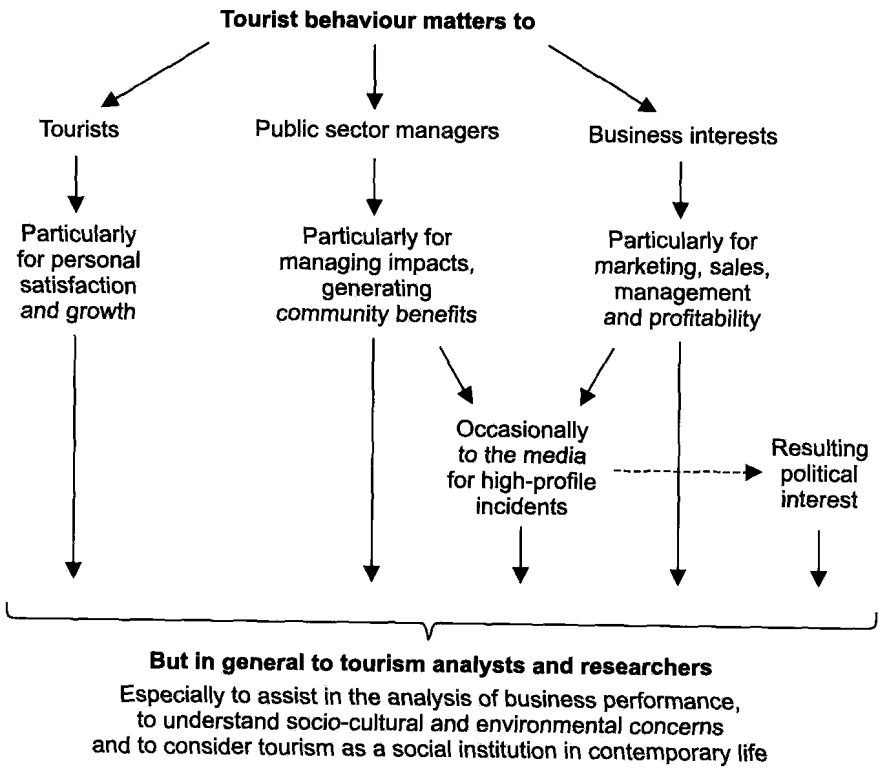

Figure 1.1 To whom does tourist behaviour matter?

on tourist behaviour can quickly follow. In an overarching generic sense, the individuals with the most enduring and consistent interest in studying tourist behaviour are business analysts and academic researchers. Their work influences and considers the needs of the decision-makers as well as addressing the interests of the tourists themselves. It is their work that is the basis of this volume. A summary of these interested parties is presented in Figure 1.1.

Approaching Tourist Behaviour

Links to other study topics in tourism

The topic of tourist behaviour depends upon, interacts with, and occasionally determines other components of tourism. Tourist behaviour is powerfully connected to and often contingent upon marketing activities: it strongly shapes the wellbeing of many small businesses, and it can generate considerable socio-cultural and environmental impacts. These influences should not, however, be extended too far. Tourist behaviour is indirectly connected to tourism issues such as globalisation and localisation; it influences only peripherally major financial decisions on infrastructure investment and as a specific topic it attracts relatively little attention in governmental policies.

It is widely recognised in the tourism literature that the phenomenon of tourism is built on interconnected elements that are variously represented in systems-type diagrams (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004; Gunn, 1994a; Leiper, 1979; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Mill & Morrison, 1992; Murphy, 1985; Pearce, Moscardo & Ross, 1996). The emphasis given to tourists and, implicitly, their behaviour in these global descriptive and summary models is quite varied.

An important feature of these systems models and descriptions of tourism is the way in which change is conceptualised. In some of the early approaches, the systems were implicitly linked to a linear view of change with incremental improvement or growth in one part of the system (such as airport access) generating neatly corresponding growth in other systems elements (such as visitor attendance at attractions) (e.g. Mill & Morrison, 1992; Murphy, 1985). In the last decade a number of tourism scholars, as well as analysts with tourism interests from allied disciplines such as ecology, sociology and biology, have challenged the linear model of change and suggested that a more dynamic, constantly-evolving non-linear and chaos-theory driven approach to the evolution of tourism places is also appropriate (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004; Faulkner & Russell, 1997; McKercher, 1999; Walker *et al.*, 1999).

As Gould (2004) observes, it is sometimes too easy in the world of academic discourse to be drawn into tidy dichotomies where the views of

one group are seen as entirely incompatible with the perspectives of the other. In biology the expression 'consilience' is employed to depict the desire to respect knowledge systems and approaches by identifying those realms of convenience where each approach operates with most insight (Wilson, 1998). It can be proposed that what is needed here in outlining tourism systems and change is intelligent eclecticism where there is 'a patchwork of independent affirmations' (Gould, 2004) rather than a simple victory for one view or a false union of ideas.

The study of tourist behaviour as a consequential and contributing element in tourism systems is rarely treated in a specific way in tourism systems diagrams (c.f. Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004). Nevertheless some of the themes concerning tourist behaviour that are dealt with in this volume (specifically tourist motivation, tourist destination choice, tourist satisfaction and learning) deal with change, growth and development. The conceptual schemes that inform these themes, consistent with the larger perspectives on tourism systems as a whole, will not always be simple linear growth models, but will also consider discontinuous, episodic and chaotic change mechanisms and incidents.

The need not to overstate the role of tourist behaviour is also brought out by the systems-style diagrams. For Gunn, and Farrell and Twining-Ward in particular, there is a range of forces operating outside the core tourism system that are described as salient overarching contexts for the operation of tourism. Tourist behaviour matters, but it is a link and a force in understanding tourism; it is not always going to be what matters most in solving tourism problems or developing tourism in a region.

Tourist Behaviour and Consumer Behaviour

There are several critical dimensions that create differences between tourist behaviour and consumer behaviour. One such major difference lies in the extended phases that surround tourist activities. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) identified five such phases. They noted: (1) an anticipation or pre-purchase (2) a travel to the site segment, (3) an on-site experience, (4) a return travel component, and (5) an extended recall and recollection stage.

Consumer behaviour, as a field of inquiry with its own journals, textbooks and courses, is centrally focused on the choices of products and the satisfaction with products (Bagozzi *et al.*, 2002; Schutte & Carlante, 1998). In each phase of tourist behaviour outlined by Clawson and Knetsch, some differences from the standard consumer behaviour studies can be noted. In the first anticipation phase, many tourists plan for and fantasise about their forthcoming travel for months, sometimes years ahead. While this might be similar for the purchase of a motor vehicle, it is somewhat absurd when

applied, for example, to the purchase of hair shampoo or groceries. Models of behaviour built on the latter examples are unlikely to be relevant to tourist behaviour.

For both the travel to the site and the return travel phases of tourist behaviour there is no sensible analogy in the consumer behaviour literature. Yet, the anticipatory elements of tourist experiences are heightened by the need to access the visited location and such travel is often an integral part of the total experience. Further, and from a business perspective, the pre- and post-travel phases are important subcomponents of the total expenditure that travellers must make to access the on-site experience.

The central phase of Clawson and Knetsch's typology is about being somewhere. Typically this is an intangible experience, an opportunity to view, absorb, feel, hear and sense the place visited. McCarthy describes it as:

> The magic that some places hold, that special feeling that embraces landscape and history and our personal associations, but somehow goes beyond the sum of them. Energy. Spirit ... call it what you like. It's just words to describe a real experience we can't explain when we get that shiver or the hairs stand up. (McCarthy, 2000: 370)

The peak and flow experiences of travellers occupy much attention in the tourism and leisure literature (Bammel & Bammel, 1992; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). While there are clearly other services and intangible products studied in the consumer behaviour literature (education, for example, can be cast in this framework), the deeply personal reactions and sometimes the socio-environmental consequences of the tourists' on-site behaviour are distinctive.

Finally, but not insignificantly, the reflection phase of tourist experience is often long lasting. People think about their tourist experiences a month, two months, sometimes years after they have been to the site. In this sense the experienced product does not decay or wear out and may indeed be augmented by ongoing information about the site or by repeat visits. The centrality of experience as the product in tourism is consistent with the wider treatment of what has been termed the experience economy (Pine & Gilmour, 1999). Certainly individuals frequently tell travel stories, re-examine photographs, have group reunions and write long travelogues about their past adventures (Pearce, 1991a; Yagi, 2001). Consumer behaviour research is concerned with and has produced some distinguished contributions to understanding satisfaction but with many products purchased there is a limited and over time waning enthusiasm to reflect on their lasting contribution to one's life.

The distinctive phases of tourist behaviour study have stimulated a number of conceptual approaches and concerns in the literature. For

example, an emphasis on the meanings of time, on thresholds and change, on place and identity are all partly driven by the distinctive phases of the tourist experience (c.f. Ryan, 2002a).

Another marked difference between much consumer behaviour and tourist behaviour is that the latter is a part of a very social business. Tourism is a people-to-people business in both its consumption and its production. Tourists are frequently with others, and often jointly decide upon and frequently share their tourist experience. The businesses that serve tourists (the hotels, the airlines, the tour operators, the attractions) and the larger visited community (who are sometimes passive extras in the total tourism production) are inherently performers on a social stage (Crang, 1997). It is therefore important to treat models of consumer behaviour built on non-social modes of production and consumption with some caution if attempts to extrapolate them to tourist choice and satisfaction are attempted.

A particular instance of this difficulty of extrapolating a consumer behaviour model to tourist behaviour lies in the treatment of expectations and their role in satisfaction. The topic will be pursued in more detail in Chapter 7 but it is sufficient to note here that the match is inexact. As de Botton observed when writing about arriving in Barbados:

> Nothing was as I had imagined – surprising only if one considers what I had imagined ... a beach with a palm tree against the setting sun ...a hotel bungalow with a view through French doors .. an azure sky .. But on arrival a range of things insisted that they too deserved to be included within the fold of the word Barbados.. a large petrol storage facility ...an immigration official ..in an immaculate brown suit ...an advertisement for rum .. a picture of the Prime Minister .. a confusion of taxi drivers and tour guides outside the terminal building ...we are inclined to forget how much there is in the world beside that which we anticipate. (De Botton, 2002: 13)

De Botton reminds the researcher and tourism analyst that the expectations for even a large and expensive purchase item such as an automobile are likely to be much clearer than for the multi-faceted holiday destination.

There is a further non-trivial distinction between consumer products and the opportunities that arise from travel purchases. Most consumer products of some complexity come with an owner's manual. These kinds of documents provide operational instructions, safety hints, advice on replacement parts or persons to whom one can direct service inquiries. Perhaps the closest parallel in the world of tourist behaviour is the guidebook. Even here, however, there is a range of guide books for any one place. The holiday consumer is free to consult multiple owner manuals, to redesign and further refine his or her experience. Tourists interact with their destination and this mutual influence process is sometimes assisted by