

TRAVEL PERSONAE OF AMERICAN PLEASURE TRAVELERS: A NETWORK ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT. Travel style has been shown to be a useful concept for understanding travelers. In this study it is argued that the portfolio of trips (specifically, the portfolio of various trip styles) one takes can be used to describe his/her overall travel persona. Network analysis was used to examine the structural relationships between types of trips based upon the assumption that each travel style may be considered as a “node,” and its association with other travel styles may be represented by the links within the network. Analyses indicate that American travelers take on a wide range of different travel personae which, in turn, are related to their choices of places visited and their response to advertising materials. It was concluded that the framework provided by these findings along with new tools on the Internet offer the potential to develop highly personalized communications with existing and potential visitors.

KEYWORDS. Travel persona, travel styles, network analysis, destination marketing, Internet

INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental tasks for destination marketing organizations is to understand potential visitors (Miguens & Mendes, 2008). Tourism researchers have identified several factors that explain travel behaviors (e.g., where to go, what

to do, and how much one spends at a particular destination) including demographics (Schul & Crompton, 1983), geographics and psychographics (Dimanche, Havitz, & Howard, 1993), sensation seeking (Pomfret, 2006), involvement (Pyo, 1996), travel motivation (Beh & Bruyere, 2007), past experiences (Petrick, 2002), and

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travel personality (Plog, 2002). Among these variables, travel personality is regarded as one of the most powerful concepts that can be used for understanding differences in traveler behavior. In general, the notion of personality represents individual differences and “refers to the characteristics which determine general patterns of behavior” (Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1969). In the context of travel, travel personality is generally understood as the complex of all the attributes (e.g., behavioral, emotional, and mental) that relate to travel activity. Several scholars have sought to define travel personality within the context of allocentric–psychocentric (Nickerson & Ellis, 1991; Plog, 2002; Smith, 1990), involvement (Fesenmaier & Johnson, 1989), sensation seeking (Pomfret, 2006), risk perception (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005), intrinsic leisure motivation (Iwasaki & Mannell, 1999), and social responsibility (Gramann, Bonifield, & Kim, 1995).

Other researchers have argued that travel markets can best be understood through actual travel behavior; that is, the nature of the trip one takes provides a better means for understanding how a traveler negotiates his/her personal, social, and geographic situation (Fesenmaier, 1988; Hardy, 2003; Hu & Morrison, 2002; Pearce, 2005). Pearce, in particular, describes a number of examples of travel style typologies including short- vs. long-haul travel, VFR travel, and venture tourism and argues that there are a huge number of useful strategies for classifying travel behavior. Recently, Gretzel, Mitchel, Hwang, and Fesenmaier (2004) examined the notions of travel personality and travel style within the context of online destination recommendation systems. Park, Kim, and Fesenmaier (2008) expanded the travel styles based upon Gretzel et al. (2004) where they identified 20 different traveler styles based upon the notions of novelty (Cohen, 1972), environment (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997) and involvement (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and concluded that they can be used to effectively describe travel markets.

An important limitation of these travel typologies is that they are static in that they describe a specific travel personality or a specific type of trip without the possibility that the traveler will take on different traveler personalities, or indeed,

a number of different types of trips over a period of time. Research by Pearce (2005), among others (Gretzel, Hwang, & Fesenmaier, 2006; Huan & Beaman, 2004; Kim & Fesenmaier, 1990; Nichols & Snepenger, 1988; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992); however, found that travel behavior is largely situational (and, perhaps, evolutionary in the case of Pearce’s travel career model), whereby one may take a variety of different trips depending upon the nature of the travel group, motivations for the trip, etc. Further, Pearce, Gretzel et al. (2006), and Fesenmaier (1985, 1988) argue that travelers tend to “frame” their travel choices in building a reasonably consistent “portfolio” of activities and destinations. Based upon these two literatures, it is argued in this article that the integration of the concepts of travel style and trip portfolio within the notion of “travel persona” is a useful way of characterizing one’s choices of activities and the intensity/involvement in these activities over a period of time; and therefore, can be linked to traveler behavior. Thus, the goal of this study is to examine the concept of travel persona by first identifying travel personae among American travelers. Then, the study examines the extent to which the travel personae differ in terms of demographic characteristics, travel activities, and information search behaviors.

DEFINING TRAVEL PERSONAE

The tourism literature suggests that the concept of travel personality reflects the enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself (Cohen, 1972; Nickerson & Ellis, 1991). Based upon this notion of traveler personality, a number of studies (Madrigal, 1995; Nickerson & Ellis, 1991; Plog, 2002; Zins, 1998) have been conducted to identify and evaluate traveler types. Arguably, the most recognized model of travel personality was developed by Plog (1974) who proposed five distinct types of travel groups: (a) Allocentric, (b) Near-allocentric, (c) Mid-centric, (d) Near-psychocentric, and (e) Psychocentric. Allocentric (i.e., Venturers) travelers prefer exotic destinations and an unstructured vacation itinerary rather than a

packaged plan, whereas Psychocentric (i.e., Dependables) travelers tend to seek out familiar destinations and packaged tours. Many tourism studies have used the Plog's travel personality framework as a foundation for understanding destination choice (Nickerson & Ellis), holiday preferences (Eachus, 2004), and other travel-related decisions such as accommodation, travel groups, and leisure style (Basala & Klenosky, 2001; Madrigal). However, several researchers have challenged the reliability of Plog's personality typology. For example, Smith (1990) found that Plog's personality framework does not match the expected pattern of destination preferences. More recently, Litvin (2006) confirmed that Plog's theory of traveler personality is largely theoretical and concluded that there is little practical value for marketing a destination, cautioning travel marketers to be extremely careful to focus on travel aspirations rather than travel behavior.

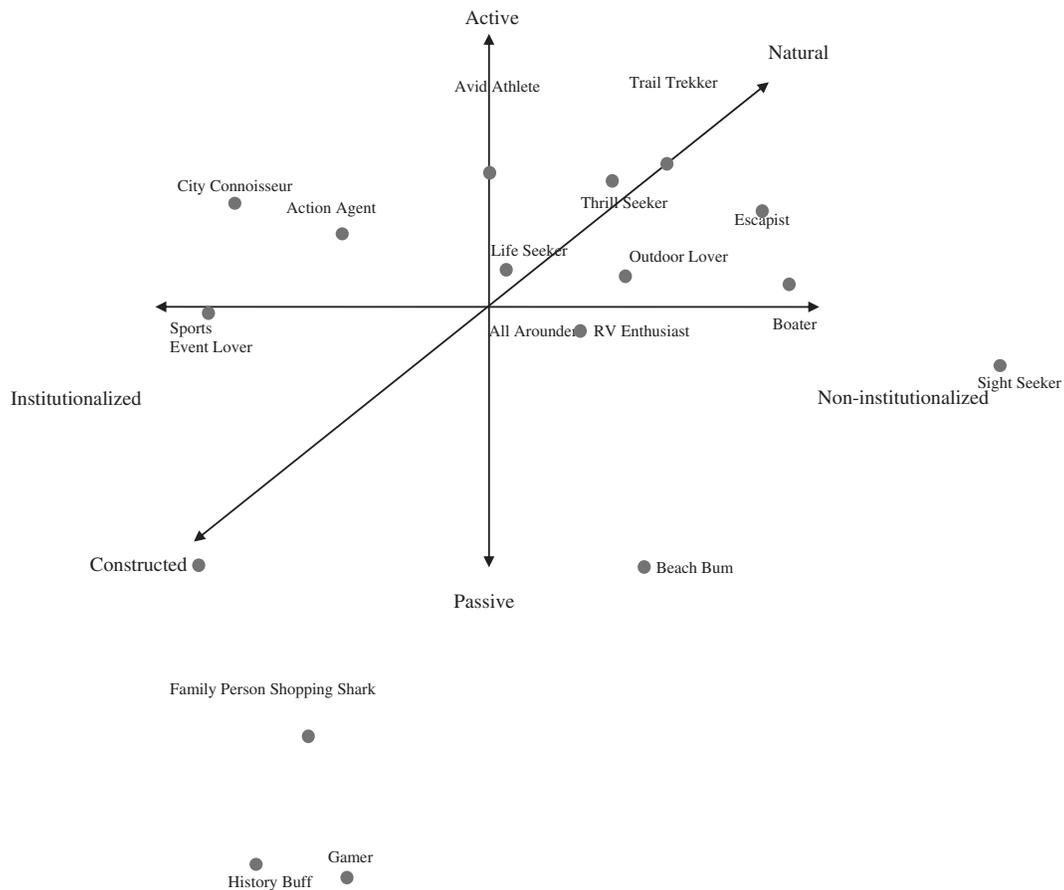
Pearce (2005), Gretzel et al. (2004, 2006), and more recently, Park et al. (2008), argue that traveler behavior can be better understood by assessing the nature of trips—the travel styles—a person actually takes. Gretzel et al. (2004) and Park et al. proposed that pleasure trips can best be defined by three dimensions which are deeply rooted in the travel literature: (a) Cohen's (1972) novelty-familiarity continuum (i.e., from institutionalized to non-institutionalized); (b) MacKay and Fesenmaier's (1997) environmental characteristic continuum (i.e., from natural to constructed); and (c) Pine and Gilmore's (1999) involvement continuum (i.e., from active to passive). Cohen argued that travelers can be understood by the extent to which one seeks places that are familiar, whereby the "institutionalized tourist" is compared to reading a fiction novel and/or watching beautiful pictures, rather than being involved in the environment; non-institutionalized tourists (i.e., drifter and explorer), on the other hand, travel away from established tourism destinations. Further, MacKay and Fesenmaier argued that four elements (activity, familiarity, holiday, and atmosphere) of the environment can be used to describe a tourism destination; importantly they found that the natural environment is often associated with wild and unsafe, a place

almost untouched. In contrast, constructed environments connote "tame" and "safe." Following Pine and Gilmore, it also argued that the level of involvement is important in understanding the nature of the trip. That is, "active" indicates direct participation, whereas "passive" reflects indirect participation in the tourism experience. Thus, Gretzel et al. (2004) and Park et al. argue that people who enjoy outdoor recreation such as hiking and biking can be regarded as "active" tourists, whereas those who travel to see historical attractions and watch sporting events may be regarded as "passive" tourists.

The framework proposed by Park et al. (2008) includes 20 trip types (see Figure 1), whereby each trip type is represented by a rich description of a trip reflecting the three dimensions discussed above. Following Gretzel et al. (2004), it is argued that this strategy in representation of the travel styles enables a traveler (i.e., the respondent) to better understand/identify with the nature of the trip in terms of familiarity, activities, and involvement. As can be seen in Figure 1, the travel styles described as Trail Trekker, Thrill Seeker, Avid Athlete, and Action Agent are located along the "active experience" axis, whereas those trips labeled Beach Bum and Gamer represent more "passive" travel activities (Park et al.). These types of trips differ substantially from History Buff, Family Person, and Shopping Shark in that they connote visitors to more institutionalized and constructed environments; while Escapist, Outdoor Lover, and Boater-oriented travel are somehow related to more undeveloped and unknown circumstances. Additionally, City Connoisseur, Sports Event Lover, and Sight Seeker-oriented travelers are more likely to visit popular destinations regardless of the type of environment (i.e., natural or constructed). Thus, it appears that these 20 travel styles reasonably delineate the three dimensional framework proposed by Park et al.

Following from Pearce (2005), Fesenmaier (1988), and Kim and Fesenmaier (1990); however, it is argued that one may take a variety of trips over a period of time, and that this combination (i.e., portfolio) of trips reflects what one might describe as a "travel persona." For example, on one occasion a traveler may go shopping

FIGURE 1. Dimensions of Travel Style.



as the primary benefit/activity of his/her trip, and then on another trip he/she might go with friends to a sporting event or a casino; and, on a third trip, the same person may travel with other friends to hike up a mountain. However, it is argued that there are “limits” to the combinations of trips that one might take. For example, an older person may be less likely to participate in “extreme” sports, go hiking/camping in the wilderness, or go to a night club. Thus, it is posited that the portfolio of trips (specifically, the types of trips) one takes can be used to describe his/her overall travel persona. The goal of this study is to identify the combinations of the various types of trips people take (i.e., travel personae), and to see if these combinations differ substantially in terms of demographic characteristics, trip activities, and information-seeking behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

An online survey was sent to 198,272 Americans who had requested travel-related information from 20 different state and regional tourist offices throughout the United States during 2008. The travel survey was distributed to these people throughout 2008–2009 based upon the date of contact (within 3 months of the request for travel information) and the destination from which information was requested. A three-step process was used to maximize the response rate: (a) an initial invitation was sent out along with the URL of the survey; (b) 4 days later, a reminder was delivered to those who had not completed the survey; and (c) the final request for participation was sent out to those who had not completed the survey 1 week later. An “Amazon.com” gift card valued at \$100 was

provided to one winner for each destination as an incentive to participate in the study. The survey effort resulted in 16,732 usable responses, reflecting a response rate of 8.4%.

The online survey was comprised of a number of sections of which three provided data relevant to this study. The first section asked respondents to select activities during recent travel to U.S. destinations, allowing selection up to 3 from 18 activities: “Participate in a tour,” “Visit a cultural site/event,” “Visit a theme/amusement park,” “Visit a national park or state park,” “Visit a historic site,” “Dine at a good restaurant,” “Hike, bike etc.,” “Participate in outdoor activities,” “Go boating,” “Play golf or tennis,” “Snow ski,” “Visit a beach/water front area,” “Go shopping/antiquing,” “Attend a festival, craft fair, etc.,” “Attend a boat, auto, antique show,” “Participate in a sports event,” “Watch a sports event,” and “Gamble.” In addition, respondents were asked questions concerning their intention to visit places in the United States, Canada, Caribbean, and Mexico. In the second section, respondents were asked to select (using an interactive tool to drag and drop) up to three trip types that best describe the nature

of their pleasure travel in North America over the past 3 years (see Figure 2). The last section of the survey included questions regarding age (of the respondent, partner, and children) and the total annual income of the household.

A descriptive analysis was first conducted to identify the distribution of the respective trip types. The travel style data was then analyzed to identify the various combinations of the (up to) three trip types as selected by the respondents; this effort resulted in a total number of 955 combinations of trip types (i.e., travel persona) from the 16,732 respondents. The total number of possible combinations when selecting three trip types is 1,350 (${}_{20}C_3 + {}_{20}C_2 + {}_{20}C_1 = 1,350$ where C refers to combination, 20 refers to total number of elements such as 20 travel types, and 1, 2, and 3 refer to possible cases that can be selected when responding the survey), indicating that 71.3% of all possible combinations were identified by the respondents. This finding suggests that travelers take on a wide range of travel persona. Network analysis using UCINET 6.0 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) was then used to examine the relational characteristics of travel persona based upon the assumption that

FIGURE 2. Questionnaire Design for Travel Style Selection.

Below are several different travel personalities. Please choose three travel personalities that “best” describe you as a traveler in North America (Click and drag your selections to the box on the right).

<p>Culture Creature - You love everything cultural – theater, shows, museums, festivals and fairs and local culture, too!</p>	<p>City Connoisseur - A creature who simply enjoys the pulse and amenities of a city.</p>	<p>Sight Seeker - Always ready to stop for that landmark, event, scenic vista or attraction.</p>	<p>Family Person - The destination is not what counts, it is the time you spend with family and friends that makes your vacation.</p>	<p>Your Selections</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>Clear</p>
<p>Beach Bum - Interested primarily in relaxing and sunbathing in warm places with lots of sun, sand and water.</p>	<p>Sports Event Lover - You enjoy vacations where you can attend a sporting event whether it's a bowl game or a local tournament.</p>	<p>Outdoor Lover - The outdoors is your home.</p>	<p>Shopping Shark - Shops, antiques, that special something... stopped looking for a cure for your shopaholism?</p>	
<p>Action Agent - A person who goes where the action is. Loves night clubs, good restaurants and entertainment.</p>	<p>Thrill Seeker - You are interested in risky, exhilarating activities which provide emotional highs such as sky diving.</p>	<p>Avid Athlete - The primary emphasis of your vacation is to remain active in your favorite sport, whether is it golf or tennis.</p>	<p>Trail Trekker - If it's outdoors – you're there. Hiking, walking, parks, forests, mountains, birdwatching, etc.</p>	
<p>Boater - Your world is on the water and your boat is your home. Feeling the breeze is what you really care about.</p>	<p>History Buff - Travel back in time. Your vacation is a learning experience that focuses on historic facts and sites.</p>	<p>Gamer - Electrifying slots and table games, fantastic fare and nightly entertainment are a crucial part of your trip.</p>	<p>Escapist - You enjoy vacations where you can get away from it all in order to relax in quiet and peaceful places.</p>	
<p>Life Seeker - In your travels, you seek spiritual and/or personal knowledge to understand self and the meaning of life.</p>	<p>RV Enthusiast - You enjoy traveling the back roads of America. For you, the journey is THE destination.</p>	<p>All Arounder - You need to have it all. You go where there is a lot to do and see. You draw strength from nature by being part of it.</p>	<p>Romantic - You enjoy looking for a 'Special' place to enjoy being with the special person in your life.</p>	

each trip style may be considered as a “node,” and its association with other trip styles may be represented by the links within the network (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Based upon this notion, network analysis was used to assess the structure of relations between the respective travel styles (Gretzel, Xiang, Wöber, & Fesenmaier, 2008; Hanneman, 2000; Hwang, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2006). Measures of centrality (i.e., the number of nodes to which a particular node connects), closeness (i.e., how close a node is to all the other nodes in the network), and betweenness (i.e., the degree to which a particular node lies between the various other nodes in the network) were calculated to identify important relationships between the respective trip types. Finally, a series of post-hoc analyses using chi-square analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine if demographic characteristics, travel behavior, and information search behaviors differ significantly across travel persona profiles.

RESULTS

As can be seen in Table 1, over 50% of travelers who requested the destination information were over 45-years-old (i.e., 45–54 years: 32.7%, 55–64 years: 27.9%, and 65 or older: 12.6%). Most of the travelers’ annual household income was below \$100,000 (i.e., less than \$50,000: 25.7%, \$50,001–\$75,000: 26.9%, \$75,000–\$100,000: 23.4%). Respondents were largely residents of 12 states including Texas (11.1%), Illinois (9.2%), California (6.7%), New York (4.9%) and Missouri (4.6%), reflecting the population of the state and the nature of the advertising markets of the participating state and regional tourist offices.

The results of the frequency analysis are presented in Table 2 and indicate that almost all respondents (99.9%) chose one of three travel styles to characterize the nature of their travel in North America; of these three travel styles, almost half (44.6%) of the respondents described their travel as Sight Seeker, closely followed by Family Person (31.6%), Beach Bum (29.3%). However, All Rounder (27.7%),

TABLE 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic characteristic	Frequency	Percent of respondents
Age (<i>N</i> = 15,012)		
18–24 years	228	1.5
25–34 years	1,089	7.3
35–44 years	2,707	18.0
45–54 years	4,904	32.7
55–64 years	4,190	27.9
65 or older	1,894	12.6
Annual household income (<i>N</i> = 14,197)		
Less than \$50,000	3,649	25.7
\$50,001–\$75,000	3,814	26.9
\$75,001–\$100,000	3,315	23.4
\$100,001–\$125,000	1,554	10.9
\$125,001 or more	865	6.1
No comment	1,000	7.0
Number of trip types chosen (<i>N</i> = 15,318)		
1	7	.1
2	0	0
3	15,311	99.9
Resident states (<i>N</i> = 15,318)		
Texas	1,693	11.1
Illinois	1,410	9.2
California	1,029	6.7
New York	747	4.9
Missouri	704	4.6
Florida	622	4.1
Pennsylvania	599	3.9
Arizona	524	3.4
New Jersey	501	3.3
Ohio	485	3.2
Michigan	440	2.9
Colorado	396	2.6
Wisconsin	383	2.5
Massachusetts	382	2.5
Washington	348	2.3

Escapist (25.3%), Culture Creature (24.8%), and History Buff (22.1%) also appear to be popular style of trips (see Table 2). Consistent with a number of studies, the findings seem to indicate that most American respondents travel with family to popular and well-known tourism destinations, or they seek beaches so as to escape from everyday life.

Assessing Travel Personae

The second phase of the study focused on assessing the relationships between the 20 travel styles. In total, 955 unique travel style combinations (i.e., traveler personae) were

TABLE 2. Frequency of Travel Styles

Travel styles	Frequency	Percent of respondents
Sight Seeker	6,834	44.6
Family Person	4,842	31.6
Beach Bum	4,490	29.3
All Arounder	4,236	27.7
Escapist	3,868	25.3
Culture Creature	3,800	24.8
History Buff	3,379	22.1
Romantic	2,213	14.4
Shopping Shark	2,073	13.5
Outdoor Lover	2,007	13.1
Trail Trekker	1,577	10.3
City Connoisseur	1,419	9.3
Gamer	1,187	7.7
Sports Event Lover	748	4.9
Action Agent	682	4.5
RV Enthusiast	644	4.2
Life Seeker	614	4.0
Avid Athlete	473	3.1
Thrill Seeker	338	2.2
Boater	338	2.2
Total	45,762	298.8%

Note. Up to three choices were allowed; N = 15,318.

identified where the proportion of each profile is very small (the highest is 2.6% of the responses). Importantly, this finding seems to indicate that while there are a number of different traveler personae, the differences in the more popular profiles may be slight in that they share two of the three trip types (see Table 3). For example, the most popular travel persona

TABLE 3. Top 10 Travel Persona Profiles

Travel persona	Travel styles within travel persona	%
1	Culture Creature, Sight Seeker, History Buff	2.6
2	Sight Seeker, History Buff, All Arounder	1.9
3	Sight Seeker, Family Person, All Arounder	1.8
4	Culture Creature, Sight Seeker, All Arounder	1.8
5	Sight Seeker, Family Person, Beach Bum	1.7
6	Family Person, Beach Bum, Escapist	1.7
7	Sight Seeker, Family Person, History Buff	1.5
8	Culture Creature, Sight Seeker, Family Person	1.5
9	Culture Creature, City Connoisseur, Sight Seeker	1.4
10	Beach Bum, Escapist, Romantic	1.3

(representing 2.6% of the respondents) is defined by Culture Creature, Sight Seeker, and History Buff travel styles; whereas the second travel persona (representing 1.9% of the respondents) is comprised of Sight Seeker, History Buff, and All Arounder travel styles. In comparing the two traveler profiles, it seems that both types of traveler groups are likely to go sightseeing and visit historical attractions; however, travelers with the former travel persona (i.e., Culture Creature, Sight Seeker, and History Buff) appear to prefer cultural experiences, while the latter (i.e., Sight Seeker, History Buff, and All Arounder) prefer to go to places where “there are lots of things to do and see.” Interestingly, the top six traveler personae are some combination of Sight Seeker, Family Person, and Culture Creature, with another travel style defining the unique aspect of the persona. For example, the third most popular traveler profile (1.8% of the respondents) includes Sight Seeker, Family Person, and All Arounder; the fourth profile (1.8%) includes Culture Creature, Sight Seeker, and All Arounder; the fifth travel personality profile (1.7%) is comprised of Sight Seeker, Family Person, and Beach Bum; and the sixth profile (1.7%) includes Family Person, Beach Bum, and Escapist. Interestingly, all except the sixth travel persona includes the Sight Seeker travel style, and three out of six personality profiles include All Arounder and Family Person travel style.

In the next step of the study, network analysis was used to examine/describe the relationships between the 20 travel styles by utilizing UCINET 6.0 where the width of lines describes the strength of the relationship (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). The results are represented in a network map that describes the patterns of connections among the respective travel styles. A symmetric matrix of the joint occurrences was constructed to measure/describe the associations between the 20 travel styles; the results of this analysis show that all of travel styles were connected, ranging from a low of 2 cases to a high of 1,747 whereby individuals bundled together the two trip types (see Table 4). UCINET 6.0 was then used to assess the relationships among the respective travel styles and the diagnostic statistics of the network including Degree Centrality, Closeness

TABLE 4. Travel Style Concurrence Matrix

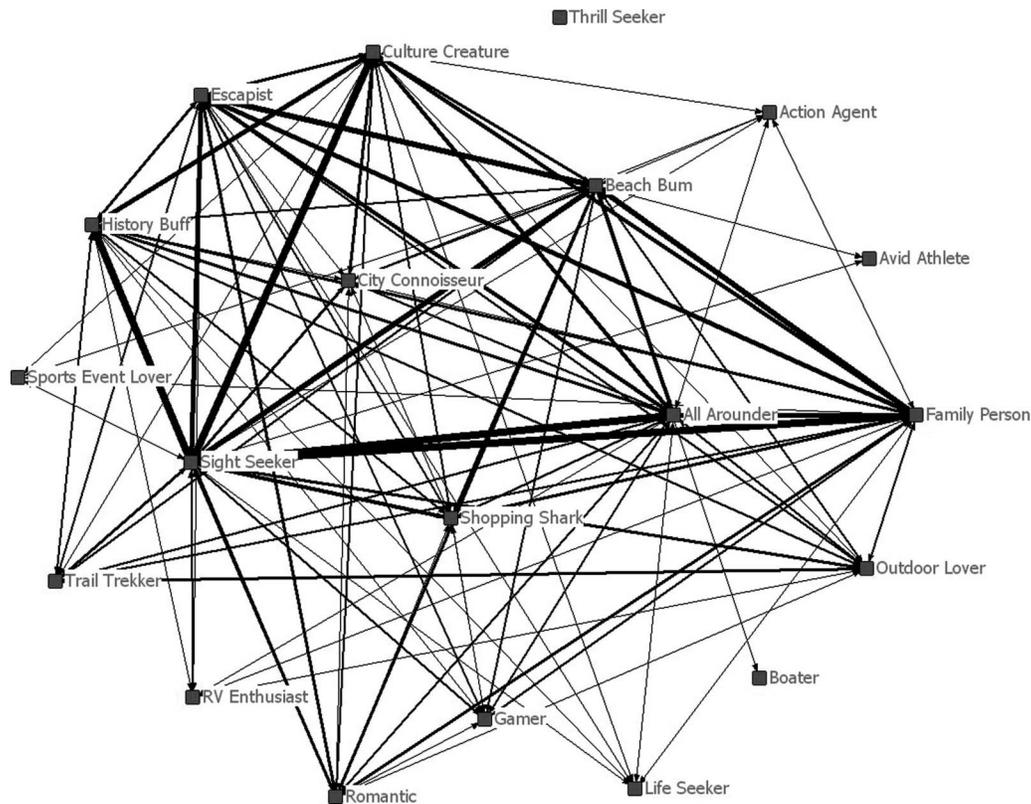
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1 Culture Creature	0																		
2 City Connoisseur	545	0																	
3 Sight Seeker	1673	525	0																
4 Family Person	789	218	1783	0															
5 Beach Bum	544	297	1206	1400	0														
6 Sports Event Lover	111	75	202	197	214	0													
7 Outdoor Lover	187	36	673	452	430	59	0												
8 Shopping Shark	420	193	702	563	507	77	89	0											
9 Action Agent	126	102	159	102	205	52	29	76	0										
10 Thrill Seeker	34	23	93	59	84	10	46	32	27	0									
11 Avid Athlete	46	14	104	95	105	47	81	40	24	11	0								
12 Trail Trekker	180	44	580	275	236	29	481	64	14	29	52	0							
13 Boater	28	5	52	81	143	7	62	8	12	5	5	23	0						
14 History Buff	969	157	1747	676	409	84	234	227	37	38	45	241	60	0					
15 Gamer	120	55	336	223	322	69	72	166	79	35	43	27	21	137	0				
16 Escapist	528	142	1080	969	1245	79	377	322	85	37	74	283	56	551	237	0			
17 Life Seeker	148	20	124	129	94	7	38	55	12	12	7	55	10	100	10	161	0		
18 RV Enthusiast	50	14	262	143	79	10	134	21	5	2	14	57	14	108	35	143	17	0	
19 All Arounder	788	263	1746	998	782	94	362	367	137	69	86	381	55	657	227	713	173	130	0
20 Romantic	293	101	586	498	655	69	144	214	79	29	52	97	28	263	151	640	56	50	415

Centrality, and Betweenness Centrality were calculated to provide insight into the “centrality” of the respective trip types within the overall network. Following Freeman (1979), Degree Centrality measures the number of direct connections the node (i.e., travel style) has within the network; thus, the more links a travel style has, the more “central” it is. Closeness Centrality measures, on the other hand, describe the relative “position” of a travel style in terms of having the shortest path to all other nodes; thus, travel styles that have a high Closeness Centrality are more easily connected to other travel styles. Last, Betweenness Centrality measures the degree to which the node acts as a “bridge” or “connection” to clusters of nodes within the overall network. That is, measures of Betweenness enable one to identify nodes (i.e., travel styles) that “link” other travel styles within the overall network.

As can be seen in Figure 3 and Table 5, Sight Seeker is one of the central nodes (travel styles) in the network that lies within the central frame of the travel styles and is the highest degree on all measures of centrality (degree centrality = 13,633; closeness centrality = 1,883.5; betweenness centrality = 49.4); this finding is consistent with the expectation

that sightseeing is a common “characteristic” of travel. Additionally, Family Person (degree centrality = 9,560; closeness centrality = 1793.7; betweenness centrality = 35.5), Beach Bum (degree centrality = 8,957; closeness centrality = 1777.1; betweenness centrality = 41.48), and All Arounder (degree centrality = 8,443; closeness centrality = 1753.6; betweenness centrality = 33.43) are central in that they lie within the central part of the network and, individually, are linked to many of the other trip types. These findings contrast sharply with Boater (degree centrality = 675; closeness centrality = 555.7; betweenness centrality = 2.5), Thrill Seeker (degree centrality = 675; closeness centrality = 557.0; betweenness centrality = 3.1), and Avid Athlete (degree centrality = 945; closeness centrality = 707.1; betweenness centrality = 4.6), whereby they are only loosely connected within the network. Further, the results of the network analysis show that there are a number of interesting relationships among travel styles. For example, there appear to be close associations among All Arounder, Family Person, and Sight Seeker travel styles, but not with RV Enthusiast. Additionally, the All Arounder travel style is connected to Culture Creature and Outdoor Lover, but not with, for

FIGURE 3. Structural Relationships Among Travel Styles.



example, Avid Athlete; also, Escapist is closely connected to Beach Bum and Family Person, but not with Action Agent or Life Seeker. Finally, Gamer has indirect relationships with Culture Creature and City Connoisseur while having direct relationships with All Arounder and Escapist nodes.

Comparing Travel Personae

The last series of analyses focused on assessing differences among four selected travel personae (i.e., Persona 1 includes “Culture Creature,” “Sight Seeker,” and “History Buff”; Persona 2 includes “All Arounder,” “Sight Seeker,” and “History Buff”; Persona 3 includes “All Arounder,” “Sight Seeker,” and “Family Person”; and, Travel Persona 4 includes “All Arounder,” “Beach Bum,” and “Family Person”) in terms of demographic characteristic, travel behaviors, and travel intention to visit

destinations. These profiles were chosen for the following reasons: Persona 1 is the most popular group, representing 2.6% of total respondents; Persona 2 is also popular (1.9% of total respondents) and differs slightly from Profile 1 as it includes one different type of trip. The Persona 3, on the other hand, differed substantially from Persona 1 (1.8% of total respondents) in that it included two different travel types which are popular—All Arounder and Family Person. Last, Travel Persona 4 (1.0% of total respondents) included three popular but completely different trip types than Persona 1.

Chi-square analysis was conducted to compare all four travel personae in regard to demographic characteristics. As can be seen in Table 6, those respondents with a Persona 1 (38.0% of which in 55–64 years and 23.8% in 65 or older) and Persona 2 (40.7% and 19.3%) are significantly ($\alpha = .05$) older than those with Persona 3 (19.1% and 8.1%) and

TABLE 5. Summary Measures of Network Analysis

Travel style	Degree centrality	Closeness centrality	Betweenness centrality
Sight Seeker	13,633	1883.5	49.4
Family Person	9,560	1793.7	35.5
Beach Bum	8,957	1777.1	41.5
All Rounder	8,443	1753.6	33.4
Escapist	7,722	1721.7	29.1
Culture Creature	7,579	1707.8	25.6
History Buff	6,740	1664.6	22.3
Romantic	4,420	1495.9	16.0
Shopping Shark	4,143	1464.8	14.2
Outdoor Lover	3,986	1450.5	19.9
Trail Trekker	3,148	1328.2	12.5
City Connoisseur	2,829	1272.1	9.5
Gamer	2,365	1186.7	11.1
Sports Event Lover	1,492	937.9	6.7
Action Agent	1,362	890.3	7.1
RV Enthusiast	1,288	857.5	4.2
Life Seeker	1,228	833.7	4.1
Avid Athlete	945	707.1	4.6
Thrill Seeker	675	557.0	3.1
Boater	675	555.7	2.5
<i>Descriptive statistics</i>			
Sum	91,280	25839.5	352.2
Mean	4,564	1291.9	17.6
Variance	13,076,861	188294.9	186.2
Standard Deviation	3,616	433.9	13.7
Minimum	675	555.7	49.4
Maximum	13,633	1883.5	2.5

Persona 4 (12.8% and 5.5%). In terms of annual income, those travelers with a Persona 4 (28.1% of \$75,001–\$100,000 and 16.3% of which in \$100,001–\$125,000) have a relatively higher annual income than those travelers characterized as Persona 1 (20.1% and 8.7%) or Persona 2 (23.7% and 9.3%).

Travel activities were also compared among four travel personae. Out of 18 activities included in the study, the four personae differed significantly ($\alpha = .05$) for 15 activities (see Table 7). Specifically, it appears that the American travelers characterized as Persona 1 tend to Tour, Visit a culture site/event, Visit historic site, and Attend a festival, craft fair. On the other hand, those described as Persona 2 (All Rounder, Sight Seeker, and History Buff) are likely to do a general tour, Visit a national

park or state park, and Visit a historic site. American travelers with a Persona 3 (consisting of All Rounder, Sight Seeker, Family Person) prefer to Visit a theme/amusement park, Dine at a good restaurant, and Hike, bike, etc. Last, travelers with a Persona 4 are likely to Visit a theme/amusement park, Dine at a good restaurant, Participate in outdoor activities, Visit a beach/water front area, and go shopping.

Last, chi-square analysis was used to examine differences in intention to visit destinations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean among the four travel personae. The results (see Table 8) indicate that travelers with a Persona 1 showed significantly ($\alpha = .05$) higher interest in visiting the North Central parts of the United States (47.7%) and Canada (44.1%), while those respondents described as Persona 2 indicated that they were more likely to visit places in the Northwest (51.0%) and Southwest United States (65.7%). In addition, travelers with a Persona 4 showed the highest intention to visit the Southeast United States (78.3%), the Caribbean (51.0%), and Mexico (35.2%).

DISCUSSION

This study builds upon recent research suggesting that travel persona may be measured by identifying the combination of travel styles that one takes over a period of time; that is, while the decision to take any particular trip is largely based upon situational factors, it is argued that the overall portfolio of trips one takes can be used to describe how a traveler experiences travel. Therefore, this study posits that the notion of travel persona is a useful way to understand travelers and, therefore, provides an effective basis for developing strategies to market a destination. The results of this study of American travelers indicate that sightseeing, being with family, and relaxing on the beach, individually, represent the “core” of domestic pleasure travel in that these types of trips establish the basis for a large majority of all American pleasure trips. Thus, it appears that there is a great degree of homogeneity in American travel markets. However, when considering the specific combinations of travel styles, the traveler

TABLE 6. Demographic Characteristics of Travel Personae

Demographic characteristics	Travel personae			
	Persona 1 Culture Creature Sight Seeker History Buff (2.6%)	Persona 2 All Rounder Sight Seeker History Buff (1.9%)	Persona 3 All Rounder Sight Seeker Family Person (1.8%)	Persona 4 All Rounder Beach Bum Family Person (1.0%)
Age				
18–24 years	.7 ^{a,b,c}	1.0 ^{a,d,e}	.3 ^{b,d}	.0 ^{c,e}
25–34 years	4.2	3.9	7.0	11.6
35–44 years	13.5	5.9	29.2	37.2
45–54 years	19.8	29.2	36.2	32.9
55–64 years	38.0	40.7	19.1	12.8
65 or older	23.8	19.3	8.1	5.5
Annual income				
Less than \$50,000	25.4 ^c	19.4	23.0 ^f	15.0 ^{c,f}
\$50,001–\$75,000	31.6	31.9	29.8	22.2
\$75,001–\$100,000	20.1	23.7	23.0	28.1
\$100,001–\$125,000	8.7	9.3	12.4	16.3
\$125,001 or more	5.7	7.2	5.0	6.5
No comment	8.5	8.6	6.7	11.8

Note. Statistically significant difference ($\alpha = .05$) using chi-square analysis. In the following superscripts: a = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 2; b = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 3; c = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 4; d = a comparison between Type 2 and Type 3; e = a comparison between Type 2 and Type 4; f = a comparison between Type 3 and Type 4.

persona, the results present an entirely different picture. Examination of the popular travel persona seems to suggest that travelers are much more idiosyncratic as reflected by the rich combination of the trips they take over a longer period of time. Indeed, this study identified 955 different travel personae, where the most popular travel style—Culture Creature, Sight Seeker and History Buff—comprises only 2.6% of the respondents. Additionally, there appears to be very subtle differences among the most popular travel persona; for example, a group of respondents (labeled Persona 1) differs slightly from those described as Personae 2 and 3—all three include Sight Seeker, but differ in terms of a focus on history, culture, and being an All Rounder. Similarly, Travel Persona 4 includes Family Person and All Rounder, but swaps All Rounder with Beach Bum. The importance of this (slight) difference is reflected in significant differences in demographic characteristics and travel preferences. More specifically, Persona 4 includes active and non-institutionalized travel styles (e.g., All Rounder and Beach Bum), is younger, and has a higher annual income than

other personae involving relatively passive and institutionalized travel types (e.g., mainly Sight Seeking). Interestingly, the top four travel personae have different travel interests as reflected by difference in the likelihood of visiting destinations in North America; for example, Persona 4 is much more likely to visit international destinations (e.g., Caribbean and Mexico) than three other travel personae. These findings are consistent with previous literature suggesting that different travel styles result in different travel behaviors (Pearce 2005).

Network analysis was used to assess the relationships among the travel styles. Interestingly, Thrill Seekers, Boaters, and Sports Events Lovers were not substantively connected with the other types of trips; this finding can be interpreted that these travelers tend to take a majority of their trips that are somehow focused on these specific trips. Further, the network analysis identified important relationships (i.e., tendencies to take various types of trips) between a number of travel styles. For example, respondents self-identified as Culture Creature tend to mainly take trips that can be

TABLE 7. Primary Trip Activities of Travel Personae

Trip activities	Travel personae			
	Persona 1 Culture Creature Sight Seeker History Buff (2.6%)	Persona 2 All Arounder Sight Seeker History Buff (1.9%)	Persona 3 All Arounder Sight Seeker Family Person (1.8%)	Persona 4 All Arounder Beach Bum Family Person (1.0%)
Tour	33.6 ^{b,c}	34.3 ^{d,e}	22.3 ^{b,d,f}	13.2 ^{c,e,f}
Visit a cultural site/event	72.5 ^{a,b,c}	37.2 ^{a,d,e}	24.9 ^{b,d}	18.6 ^{c,e}
Visit a theme/amusement park	5.6 ^{a,b,c}	10.7 ^{a,d,e}	42.3 ^{b,d}	49.7 ^{c,e}
Visit a national park/state park	42.8 ^{a,b,c}	64.4 ^{a,d,e}	54.8 ^{b,d,f}	31.1 ^{c,e,f}
Visit a historic site	77.8 ^{b,c}	74.8 ^{d,e}	42.0 ^{b,d,f}	14.4 ^{c,e,f}
Dine at a good restaurant	25.5 ^{b,c}	26.2 ^e	32.8 ^b	39.5 ^{c,e}
Hike, bike, etc.	1.6 ^{a,b}	4.5 ^a	6.9 ^b	4.2
Participate in outdoor activities	1.6 ^{b,c}	1.9 ^e	4.6 ^b	7.2 ^{c,e}
Go boating	.2 ^c	.6	1.0	2.4 ^c
Play golf or tennis	1.4 ^{a,b,c}	5.2 ^a	4.3 ^b	7.8 ^c
Snow ski	.5 ^{b,c}	1.0 ^e	3.0 ^b	4.8 ^{c,e}
Visit a beach/waterfront area	5.1 ^{a,b,c}	10.0 ^{a,d,e}	28.5 ^{b,d,f}	70.7 ^{c,e,f}
Go shopping/antiquing	14.1	11.0 ^e	15.4	18.0 ^e
Attend a festival, craft fair, etc.	10.0 ^{b,c}	8.4	5.6 ^b	4.2 ^c
Attend a boat, auto, ant. show	.9	1.3	1.0	.6
Participate in a sports event	.5	1.6	.3	.6
Watch a sports event	1.2 ^{b,c}	2.9 ^e	4.3 ^b	6.6 ^{c,e}
Gamble	2.3	1.6	3.6	1.8

Note. Statistically significant difference ($\alpha = .05$) using chi-square analysis. In the following superscripts: a = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 2; b = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 3; c = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 4; d = a comparison between Type 2 and Type 3; e = a comparison between Type 2 and Type 4; f = a comparison between Type 3 and Type 4.

TABLE 8. Intention to Visit Destinations Among Travel Personae

North American destinations	Travel personae			
	Persona 1 Culture Creature Sight Seeker History Buff (2.6%)	Persona 2 All Arounder Sight Seeker History Buff (1.9%)	Persona 3 All Arounder Sight Seeker Family Person (1.8%)	Persona 4 All Arounder Beach Bum Family Person (1.0%)
Northeast U.S.	56.9	63.3	56.3	54.4
Southeast U.S.	58.9 ^c	61.4 ^e	66.0 ^f	78.3 ^{c,e,f}
North Central U.S.	47.7 ^c	45.1 ^e	46.7 ^f	34.9 ^{c,e,f}
Northwest U.S.	49.1 ^c	51.0 ^e	43.8	33.3 ^{c,e}
Southwest U.S.	60.7 ^{a,b}	65.7 ^{a,e}	57.2 ^b	56.0 ^e
Canada	44.1 ^{a,b,c}	42.7 ^{a,d,e}	30.1 ^{b,d}	23.6 ^{c,e}
Caribbean	25.6 ^c	27.2 ^e	30.5 ^f	51.0 ^{c,e,f}
Mexico	20.0 ^{a,b,c}	23.7 ^{a,e}	24.9 ^b	35.2 ^{c,e}

Note. Responses are based upon a 5-point scale ranging from *very unlikely* to *extremely likely* to visit places in the region. Statistically significant difference ($\alpha = .05$) using ANOVA. In the following superscripts: a = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 2; b = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 3; c = a comparison between Type 1 and Type 4; d = a comparison between Type 2 and Type 3; e = a comparison between Type 2 and Type 4; f = a comparison between Type 3 and Type 4.

characterized as Sight Seeker, All Arounder, Escapist, History Buff and/or Beach Bum; however, it has weak relationships (i.e., very few travelers combine these types of trips) with

Trail Trekker, Outdoor Lover, and Sports Event Lover. Further, the travel styles located on the outer part of the network map represent those trips that comprise more unique travel persona.

For example, Boater has only one association with All Rounder and Avid Athlete has two relations with Beach Bum and Sight Seeker. In other words, travelers who are likely to identify strongly with boating also tend to identify themselves as an All Rounder; and travelers who identify with Avid Athlete are inclined to go to the beach and sightseeing.

The last set of analyses attempted to address a question regarding whether or not there are meaningful behavioral differences between the respective travel personae. That is, one might ask if the “slight” differences between travel groups whereby they share 2 of 3 traits (i.e., travel styles) result in meaningful differences from a destination marketing perspective. The results of the post hoc tests (based upon demographic and travel-related characteristics) seem to indicate that there are significant differences in the underlying travel behaviors of the respective travel personae. For example, those identified as Persona 1 (Culture Creature, Sight Seeker and History Buff) were, as one might expect, much more likely to visit places with cultural and historic sites, and/or attend a festival or craft fair. This pattern of travel contrasts sharply with those described as Persona 2 (which shares two facets—Sight Seeker and History Buff) in that they were much more likely to visit a national or state park, or visit a beach/water front. Similar analyses comparing Travel Personae 2, 3, and 4 show significant differences in both demographic and travel-related characteristics.

The findings of this study appear to support the idea that the American pleasure travel market is simultaneously simple (and therefore easily segmented) and extremely complex. Simple in that there are relatively few central drivers (i.e., 5–6 popular trip types) of travel behavior; complex in the sense that the number of combinations of these drivers translate into very small and reasonably unique segments (i.e., 955 travel personae) of the overall pleasure travel market. Thus from a marketing perspective, it seems that developing rather straightforward destination marketing strategies that appeal in terms of specific/individual travel styles such as culture, history, or relaxation should be extremely effective. The complex relationships between

trip types, however, seem to stress the need to develop a much more sophisticated understanding of travel markets. That is, one of the central tenets of destination marketing focuses on relationship marketing and repeat visitation whereby it is important to understand how to appeal to the visitor over a life time of visits.

With this in mind, the results of this study provide a useful foundation for understanding how this can be achieved. Specifically, this study identifies the core drivers of most pleasure travel; clearly, these provide the direction for targeting messaging, etc. In addition, this study identifies the extent of complementarity between travel styles; as such, it provides needed information regarding which activities can be used to encourage cross-selling, variety seeking, etc., which are necessary to encourage the visitor to come back again and again. However, a significant challenge is to develop messaging that distinguishes the many travel personae. Importantly, the Internet now provides the foundation for developing a highly customized marketing strategy that enables a tourist to “self-select” information so as to provide a more personalized information environment (i.e., advertisement). For example, a destination website may invite visitors to self-identify their travel persona, and based on these results, marketers can suggest appropriate destinations, attractions, or events; examples of these systems exist (e.g., Expedia.com and visitlasvegas.com), but appear to be very narrow in scope and implementation. Based on such a marketing approach, however, the development of such online systems enable tourism marketers to provide personalized information based upon a much deeper understanding of the personal characteristics, travel needs, and decision frames of the traveler (Fesenmaier, Werthner, & Wöber, 2006). Similarly, destination marketing organizations are beginning to use blogs, ratings, and other form of social media which, by definition, are self-selected. Thus, it is posited that the notions of travel persona proposed in this study along with the emerging tools provided through the Internet should enable destination marketing organizations to reach the notion long advocated by Negroponte (1995); that is, developing markets of “one.”

There are a number of important limitations in this research that may affect the results of the study including the sources of the respondent pool and the design of the survey. First, while the sample size is quite large, the response rate and the sources for respondents pose important threats to the validity of the study in representing the popularity of trip types for all American travelers. Therefore, additional studies should be conducted that are representative of all travelers. However, it is argued that the distribution of trip type combinations (i.e., travel personalities) identified here should not be seriously affected by the biased sample as network analysis focuses on the relative relationships between trip types, rather than absolute numbers. And, for the same reason, the results of the post hoc tests assessing the differences in travel behavior among travel personalities should not be affected by this threat. Second, the response format may have limited respondents' ability to describe their travel personality in that they were allowed to choose up to three different trip types. In this study almost everyone chose three trip types, suggesting that people see their travel personalities in many complex ways which were not possible within this limitation. In addition, the response descriptions may have been incomplete or lacking in clarity, thereby limiting the ability of respondent to clearly understand the trip type. Therefore, additional studies should be conducted to provide a richer or more in-depth description of the individual. Finally, the travel behavior considered in this study was measured at one point in time. It would be interesting (and important) to conduct studies that are longitudinal whereby they include travel over a period of time, say 2–3 years, in order to examine the extent to which various trip types are bundled (or not bundled). With these limitations in mind, however, it is argued that the results of this study provide a useful foundation for developing highly personalized, and therefore, extremely effective destination marketing tools.

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