

PERCEPTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAVEL TO
CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAVEL TO
CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

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California and its Central Coast is an extremely popular destination for international and non-Californian U.S. travelers. The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and perceptions of international and non-Californian residents who may travel to the Central Coast of California. Data were collected through an online questionnaire. One hundred and seventeen subjects participated in this study. Non-Californian and international tourists are motivated to travel to the Central Coast to visit friends and family, and to discover and learn about an unknown destination. Perceived destination is a large reason why people choose to travel to California and the Central Coast. The most popular activities and destinations on the Central Coast that respondents were interested in were driving the Pacific Coast Highway, visiting Monterey, Big Sur, and Santa Barbara. The high costs of travel to and within California also deter people from choosing it as their destination.

Keywords: California, Central Coast, travel, motivations, perceptions, constraints

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

Travel and tourism can be defined as the “temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and their activities during the stay at these destinations” (Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p. v). The act of travel can be culturally enriching for individuals, and can also generate wealth, employment, and destination awareness. Tourism not only affects locals and foreigners, but also large firms and businesses can be impacted by one’s choice to travel. According to Burkart and Medlik, the term tourism was not a part of the English language until sometime in the nineteenth century. The idea of an individual being temporarily away from home for pleasure or leisure purposes was unheard of. Tours were referred to more as voyages, or circuits, like a theatrical tour, and remained primarily for the wealthy and elite. Interest in understanding the way people lived in foreign places began to change the concept of travel from an educational or business purpose, to focus more on satisfying human curiosity and self fulfillment (Burkart & Medlik).

One of the most popular destinations in the United States is the state of California. From its varied scenery and climate, it contains a diverse assortment of activities and attractions appealing to visitors from all over the world. In 2011, travel spending in the state of California generated \$2.3 billion in local taxes and \$4 billion in state taxes, and it directly supported 893,000 jobs, with earnings of \$30.4 billion (Visit California, n.d., para. 2-4). California is not just a domestic destination, 13.6 million international visitors

also traveled to California in 2010, with a majority coming from Mexico, Canada, the UK, Japan, Australia, China, South Korea, Germany, France and India (Visit California, n.d., para. 8).

The Central Coast of California is an area generally unfamiliar to international travelers. Running from Monterey county down the coast to Santa Barbara county, the Central Coast includes the cities of Santa Cruz, Salinas, Monterey, Carmel, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and more. While many international travelers are familiar with Los Angeles and San Francisco, the Central Coast provides many historical and beautiful tourist attractions as well. These include, but are not limited to, Cannery Row in Monterey, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Pebble Beach golf courses, Big Sur, Hearst Castle, Morro Bay Rock, and various wine regions. It is important to highlight the different and diverse attractions in California that not all international travelers are necessarily aware of. Increasing tourism is not only economically beneficial, but it also enhances awareness for a specific destination. The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and perceptions of international and non-Californian residents who may travel to the Central Coast of California.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, psycINFO, and Proquest.

This review of literature is organized into the following topic areas: motivations and barriers of travel, and destination image and perceptions.

Motivations and barriers for travel. There are many factors that motivate travel to a destination. There are also many barriers that deter people from traveling. It is important to understand what classifies a person as a tourist. Tourism is defined by Bowen and Clark (2009) as a voluntary movement outside one's usual environment of work or residence, traveling a distance of more than 160 km, lasting from one day to one year, whilst collecting no wages or salary, and fitting into the category of recreation, business, educational studies, health treatment, or visiting friends and relatives (p. 3). This topic section focuses upon the motivations and influences that lead people to travel, and in contrast, the barriers that prevent it.

There are several factors that influence how and why a tourist decides to travel. According to Bowen and Clark (2009), a person considers the following in their decision making process: trip distance, cost, value, duration, party size, confidence in travel, perceived risk and uncertainty, travel desires, image of destination, ease of information search, and travel arrangements and decisions (p. 71). The push-pull framework can also describe a tourist's motivation to travel. Push factors are inherent and come from within individuals, where as pull factors are destination specific (Yong, Mak, & McKercher, 2009). Bowen and Clarke state that the two main economic factors influencing a person's choice to travel are income and price (p. 76). These two variables fluctuate depending on how the other changes. For example, as a potential traveler's income goes up, the limit price of the trip goes up and vice versa. There are also several social influences that may affect a person's decision to travel. For example, religious pilgrimages can be defined as

the “movement of tourists to some destinations” (Bowen & Clarke, p. 78). The Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca attracts 13 million religious tourists to Saudi Arabia every year (Bowen & Clarke). Another social influence that either increases or decreases travel motivation is “the effect of cultural distance” (Bowen & Clarke, p. 85). Native English speakers, for example, are more likely to travel to English-speaking destinations. Therefore, the native language of a destination can be an attraction or motivation for traveling to that location. As mentioned previously by Bowen and Clarke, development of tourism cannot only be determined by economic and social factors but also by the providers of the tourist services. Thus, making it possible for people to engage in tourism (Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p. 50).

Motivation is described as “an intrinsic emotion that moves an individual” (Edginton, Hudson, Lankford & Larsen, 2008, p. 119). There are two types of motives that influence a person: primary and secondary. Primary motives are generally unlearned and physiologically based, whereas, secondary motives are ones that impact individual’s interest (Edginton, et al., 2008). Motivation begins with a need, followed by the drive or action to satisfy that need, and finally ends with the fulfillment of that need (Bowen & Clarke, 2009). For those visiting a certain place for business travel or to visit friends and family, most travel decisions are essentially outside of their control. These travelers are less influenced by their income, the price of travel, or distance, and more by social pressures. Holiday tourists, on the other hand, make their own decisions when it comes to spending their free time and income. They are motivated to engage in tourism so they can escape from the stresses of everyday life. It is from this form of motivation that the terms “wanderlust” and “sunlust” have been identified (Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p. 57). Burkart

and Medlik describe wanderlust as the desire and want to exchange the known for the unknown, to learn about and immerse oneself in a completely different culture, and to understand the past by visiting historical sites and monuments (p. 58). Sunlust represents a more intrinsic and selfish pleasure, where a person seeks to travel to a destination which offers out of the ordinary facilities or amenities creating a more luxurious experience (Burkart & Medlik, p. 58). Along with their two terms for tourists, Burkart and Medlik also identified more motivations for travel and participation such as the influences of politics, society, education, and culture (p. 59).

Motivations are also described in a number of categories that stimulate travel. According to Bowen and Clark (2009), these categories include:

Positive motivations (the need to seek positive situations) and negative motivations (the need to escape from negative situations); internal motivations (the drive from within) and external motivations (the drive from external stimuli such as promotional marketing); cognitive motivations (the need for meaning) and affective motivations (the satisfaction of feelings and the achievement of emotional goals).
(p. 89)

Furthermore, tourist motivations have also been divided into five hierarchical levels, known as the “Travel Career Ladder” (Yong, Mak, & McKercher, 2011, p. 122). Starting at the bottom, a tourist is motivated by relaxation needs, followed by stimulation, relationships, self-esteem and development, and at the top of the ladder, self-actualization and fulfillment (p.122). The Travel Career Ladder can be applied to such a broad spectrum of tourists, thus helping understand the wide variety of motivations that influence people in travel. Yong, et al. also state that the travel experience, referring to

the depth of travel and involvement at a destination, is the fundamental force that drives tourists up the Travel Career Ladder. A tourist must first reach the lowest goal of relaxation to be able to pursue higher goals as they gain more travel experience (Yong, Mark, & McKercher).

Tourists either experience fear and avoidance, or destination attraction depending upon their personalities (Korstanje, 2011). Fears and anxiety affect the travel and tourism industry, as these negative factors often deter people from traveling. Fear of travel can be defined many ways. Most commonly it is known as the “panic people feel when passing through the boundaries of certainty” (Korstanje, p. 224). Bowen and Clarke (2009) also state that fear in the tourism industry is created from “manmade and natural crises, health risks, and crime” (p. 200). They deduced that fear whilst traveling could be caused from any of the following feelings: “the fear of traveling alone, the act of travel itself, the stress of getting to a destination, fear of flying, health risks (travel sickness and destination illnesses and diseases), and destination crime” (pp. 203-211). Korstanje further describes traveling as not only a vacation, but also as a common source of panic and concern as travelers temporarily lose their center of security and feel more vulnerable in unfamiliar environments.

A study conducted by Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) demonstrates that “culture, personality, and motivation to travel have significant influence on perceptions of travel risk, anxiety, and safety” (p. 222). Reisinger and Mavondo also state that:

These issues are important for understanding the marketability of tourist destinations and reflect destination characteristics that are important to tourists.

The perception of high risk associated with international travel can have a devastating effect on not only tourism but also the entire region. (p. 222)

An example of this can be seen in Bali, when two nightclub bombings cost \$2 billion from international and domestic tourism earnings and resulted in 2.7 million Indonesian people becoming unemployed (World Trade Organization [WTO], 2002). An incident like this not only creates mass unemployment in the tourism industry, but also psychological effects that may influence a person's future decision to travel because of the new risk factors; "The impact of the crisis varied widely in market segments... air travel was most affected" (WTO, para. 8). International flights are more likely to be perceived as negative and create more anxiety amongst travelers, as opposed to domestic ones. This is because of the negative feelings associated with political instability people experience when traveling between different countries (Korstanje, 2011).

Unfortunate instances occur all over the world and therefore, the WTO has taken a few steps in attempt to alleviate some of these worries for future travelers. Following the Bali tragedy, the World Trade Organization (2002) has established an internal Emergencies Task Force and posted the following statement: "WTO will take all actions necessary to help consumers regain confidence in the tourism industry" (para. 10).

Another way of overcoming fears would be to utilize travel agents, local destination tourist bureaus, chambers of commerce, and other travel companies to gather information about the destination before a trip. For example, Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) state that there are three groups of travelers: risk neutral, functional risk and place risk. Risk neutral tourists view travel as a fairly safe activity, even though they are most likely to be visiting a place that they have not traveled to before, and will most likely stay with

people they do not know. However, they are also more likely to utilize travel agents and tourist offices prior to their trip for pre-planning to gain valuable knowledge about their destination, thus eliminating anxiety and answering any questions of perceived problems or risks at their destination. This concept is known as *risk handling behavior* (Roehl & Fesenmaier, p. 21). Even though it is their first time at the specific destination, the neutral tourists' planning tactics help reduce fear and anxiety while traveling. There are always going to be perceived problems and destination fears, but there are ways to get around these barriers to overcome travel anxiety.

Destination image and perception. The way individuals imagine a specific place, as seen in films, on television, or even in their own minds, can greatly impact a traveler's choice of destination. "Destination choice is predicated on internalized mental pictures" (Dann, 1996, p. 51). Furthermore, these pictures are based on the various ways people look at the world. When destinations are advertised, subconscious messages are targeted at individuals and create memories for them in personality, wanted experiences, interests, needs, motives, and mood (Dann, p.51). This topic section will focus upon tourists' image of a destination, perceptions and stereotypes of California, and film influence on travel.

Dann (1996) stated that no two people see a destination in exactly the same way. People's perceptions are selective, and they vary not only from person to person but also from one country to another. During the destination decision process, potential tourists can "project themselves into an imag(e)-ined future situation" as if they had already experienced it (Dann, p. 49). People perceive California in a variety of ways. A majority of international tourists perceive Californians to be surfers, celebrities, yoga enthusiasts,

convertible drivers, living in bikinis, acting like movie stars, and owning skateboards and wineries (Visit California, 2013). However, just as the “Misconceptions” video from the Visit California website states, the one way you can find out the truth about life in California, is to visit it.

Destination stereotypes are often formed through an individual’s predictions and mental images of a specific location and the people who inhabit that area. For example, Hottola (2012) discussed the sociotype of “Mr. Brad America and Mrs. Pamela America from California, the state most representative of the US” (p. 559). They live in a Californian suburb, such as Malibu Beach or Hollywood, and are frequently found on the beach, socializing and relaxing with their friends. The perception is that people on the West Coast tend to spend their leisure time eating, drinking and talking (Hottola, p. 559). Californians looks are even generalized. For example, women such as “Pamela America” are gorgeous, blonde, and tan, with long, abundant hair, and always smiling (Hottola). Furthermore, their characters, lifestyles, and every detail of their lives can be found in sweeping generalizations of what life is like in California. The existing sociotype, however, benefits US tourism, as it keeps California in the minds of global tourists (Hottola).

Many of these sociotypes and stereotypes are formed from the influences of Hollywood and other film media. The American film industry, most commonly known as Hollywood, has had a profound influence on not only cinema and fashion, but also, tourism worldwide (Spears, Josiam, Kinley, and Pookulangara, 2012). Carl, Kindon, and Smith (2007) suggest that when watching a film, the audience is thrown into a world in between imagination and real life. Therefore, destination tourism is partly based on

tourists' desire to escape into this in-between world and experience life as seen in these films. A survey conducted by Beeton (2005) in the United Kingdom found that "8 out of 10 British people get their holiday destination ideas from films, and one in five will travel to the location of their favorite film" (as cited in Hudson, Youcheng, and Gil, 2011, p. 178). Their study also found that 13 percent of people initially become interested in a country after seeing the destination on television or film.

Spears, et al. (2012) discovered that the destination image of a place largely depends upon how the destination is projected in a Hollywood movie or television production. Hollywood movies and television are two major sources of information for people today. Therefore, if the story of the Hollywood movie or TV program completely embraces the destination, viewers may be more influenced to visit the destination.

Television series are often watched on regular basis thus, viewers are more likely to be exposed to the destination image for a longer period of time (Spears, et al. p. 72). In fact, people have become so comfortable relying on gaining information through these visual forms that they place less importance on reading and researching to gain knowledge for their travels (Hudson, et al. 2011). Hollywood movies and television are a "significant medium in promoting tourism products and services" (Spears, et al., p. 72).

Movies, TV shows, and other visual forms of advertising greatly affect perceptions of a destination. How places are portrayed generally affects how potential tourists will envision that destination. Therefore, it is important for tourism bureaus in California and other promotional businesses to advertise places in ways that are not commonly seen through the eyes of international and non-California residents.

Summary. Understanding the motivations and barriers influencing peoples' choice to travel are crucial in understanding how to continually promote and develop tourism at a certain destination. There are many reasons that give a person the incentive to choose to travel to a destination. People are motivated to travel due to a variety of factors, variables, influences, and emotions. Yet there are many barriers that also deter people from traveling. Fear and anxiety are caused when a traveler leaves their comfort zone and enters an unfamiliar setting. There are many reasons which make a person feel uncomfortable; the fear of traveling alone, the act of travel itself, the stress of getting to a destination, fear of flying, health risks, and more. Understanding these anxieties can help destination experts make a trip less stressful and can increase a traveler's overall happiness and satisfaction.

Perceptions of a specific place, can also impact a traveler's choice of destination. Destination stereotypes are often formed through people's predictions and mental images of a specific location and the people who inhabit that area. California is typically stereotyped by a lot of international travelers. Many of these sociotypes and stereotypes are formed from the influences of Hollywood and other film media that people all over the world are regularly exposed to. When watching a film, the audience is thrown into a world in between imagination and real life. Destination tourism is therefore partly based on a tourists' want to escape into this in-between world and experience life as seen in these films. Depending on how places are portrayed, generally affects how potential tourists envision that destination. Therefore, it is important for tourism bureaus in California and other promotional businesses to advertise destinations that are not commonly seen through the eyes of international and non-California residents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and perceptions of international and non-Californian residents who may travel to the Central Coast of California.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What motivates non-Californian and international tourists to travel to the Central Coast?
2. Is destination image a factor for non-Californian and international tourists traveling to California?
3. What activities and/or attractions are most likely to be visited by those interested in traveling to the Central Coast?
4. What factors are currently deterring non-Californian and international tourists from traveling to the Central Coast?

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the following parameters:

1. Information on travel and tourism in California was gathered from non-Californian and international tourists who are active travelers.
2. Perceptions, motivations, and visitor characteristics were analyzed.
3. The data were collected during Spring 2013.
4. Information for this study was gathered using online questionnaires.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. The instrument used in this study was not tested for validity or reliability.
2. Online questionnaires sent through e-mail may have been rejected or deleted by the user, may have been automatically sent to junk folders, or connection errors may have occurred while completing the questionnaire.
3. The sample size may have been too small to employ inferential statistics.
4. Participants may have answered with social desirability bias.
5. The snowball sampling method, a form of convenience sampling, may have prevented generalization to a larger population.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. It was assumed that participants would respond honestly and to the best of their knowledge.
2. It was assumed that participants lived outside the state of California.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Destination image. The way individuals imagine a specific place (Dann, 1996)

Motivation. A need, followed by the drive or action to satisfy that need, and finally ends with the fulfilment of that need (Bowden & Clark, 2009)

Perception. The way tourists imagine a certain destination

Push-pull framework. “A functional approach to modeling tourist motivation by distinguishing between push factors, which are inherent with individuals, and pull factors, which are destination specific” (Yong, Mak, & McKercher, 2009, p.121)

Sociotype. An individual’s predictions and mental images of a specific location and the people who inhabit that area (Hottola, 2012)

Stereotypes. The generalization of certain people from a certain area

Sunlust. A person seeks to travel to a destination which offers out of the ordinary facilities or amenities (Burkart & Medlik, 1981)

Wanderlust. The desire and want to exchange the known for the unknown, to learn about and immerse oneself in a completely different culture, and to understand the past by visiting historical sites and monuments (Burkart & Medlik, 1981)

Chapter 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and perceptions of international and non-Californian residents traveling to the Central Coast of California. This chapter contains the following sections: description of subjects, description of instruments, description of procedures, and method of data analysis.

Description of Subjects

The subjects for this study were non-Californian residents and international travelers. This study was not gender specific, restricted by age, race, or travel experience. The subjects were selected because they were not residents of the state of California. An online questionnaire was sent out via email to as many non-Californian and international residents as the researcher could reach. Participation in the study was voluntary, and no external incentives were given in exchange for participation.

Description of Instrument

The instrument used to gather data for this study was an online questionnaire that was sent to non-Californian and international residents. The questionnaire was created by the researcher with the use of SurveyMonkey (see Appendix A). The instrument was field tested in winter 2013 and also pilot tested in early spring 2013. During pilot testing, the survey was distributed to a group of individuals who were asked to complete the survey and provide feedback on the clarity of the questions and response options. A few

adjustments to the questions and answer options were made after the pilot test was completed. The questionnaire was designed to assess travelers' perceptions of California and their interests in traveling to the Central Coast of California. It began with a description of the study with an informed consent waiver declaring that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

The questionnaire consisted of seventeen questions. Questions utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strong disagree, were used to assess different influences of travel, why people participate in travel to California's Central Coast, and current deterrents from travel to California's Central Coast. An open-ended question asked participants what three words they would use to describe California. Respondents were asked to check a Yes or No box to indicate a variety of responses, including: if they associated California with San Francisco, or with Hollywood, if the appeal of the typical "California Lifestyle" influenced their perceptions on traveling to California, if they had previously traveled to California, and if they were familiar, had ever, or were interested in traveling to the Central Coast. Multiple choice questions were used to ask participants what they associated with the "typical California lifestyle", what other areas of California they had previously chosen to travel to, and which destination attractions on the Central Coast they would be most interested in visiting.

The demographic questions requested that subjects select either a Male or Female box, and the final question asked them to select their age group. The procedures and instrument were reviewed and approved by Cal Poly's Human Subjects Committee in April 2013 (see Appendix B).

Description of Procedures

After the questionnaire was developed and transferred to SurveyMonkey, a link was sent as a mass e-mail to as many non-California residents and international travelers as the researcher was able to contact in Spring 2013. Utilizing the snowball sampling method, the researcher asked survey participants to send the survey link on to as many of their friends, family, colleagues, and associates, as possible, and/or supply additional email addresses for the researcher to contact. Participants who clicked on the link in the e-mail were sent to the SurveyMonkey website to complete the questionnaire. The purpose of the study was disclosed along with an informed consent form that expressed that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. As the subjects completed the questionnaire, the SurveyMonkey website compiled the responses into data that could then be analyzed. Data were collected from April 5, 2013 through May 5, 2013.

Method of Data Analysis

Once the questionnaires were completed, the data were exported from SurveyMonkey to Microsoft Excel. To answer the research questions, various statistical analyses were conducted.

For the research questions investigating current travel motivations and barriers, a 5-point Likert-type scale was used. These results were examined with measures of central tendency (i.e., mean and standard deviation), and the scores for each were compared. To answer the second research question comparing destination image and influences on travel, categorical data analysis was used. The frequency and percentage of the various results were calculated. Research question number three, concerning what activities or

attractions were most likely to be visited by those interested in California's Central Coast, were answered through survey question fifteen. These results were analyzed through frequencies and percentages. For survey question four, participants were asked to fill in three words they used to describe California. These open-ended results were analyzed using open and axial coding.

Survey questions one, two, three, six, nine, and thirteen also allowed subjects to type in personalized responses. Those responses were classified into push and pull categories. The two demographic questions at the end of the survey were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Any further comparisons made through gender or age differences were analyzed using t-test calculations.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and perceptions of International and non-Californian residents who may travel to the Central Coast of California. Data were gathered online from April 15, 2013 through May 3, 2013 with the use of SurveyMonkey. The questionnaire was distributed using email, the online survey tool, and social media (Facebook and Twitter status updates). A total of 117 participants visited the SurveyMonkey website, and 112 (95.7%) completed the questionnaire.

Sample Demographics

Of the 112 respondents, 66 (59%) were female and 46 (41%) were male. The participant ages included those younger than 18 (n = 3, 2.7%), in between the ages of 18 and 25 (n = 44, 39.3%), between the ages 26 to 35 (n = 8, 7.1%), between the ages 35 to 50 (n = 26, 23.2%) and respondents over the age of 51 (n = 31, 27.7%). Of the 117 respondents, 81 (69.2%) had traveled to California before and 36 (30.8%) had not.

Motivations to Travel

To assess motivations and influences of travel, participants were asked to rate various scenarios on a 5-Point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree). Respondents marked destination location as the primary influence to participate in travel (mean = 4.63, SD = 0.57) and language spoken at destination as the least important

motivation (mean = 2.89, SD = 1.14). Refer to Table 1 for the mean and standard deviation of subjects' motivations to participate in travel.

Table 1
Motivations to Participate in Travel According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Travel Influence	Mean	SD
Destination location	4.63	0.57
Average price of the trip	3.79	0.91
Destination recommendation from friends and family	3.72	0.93
Research done about location before arriving	3.67	0.87
Destination perception from films or television shows	3.09	1.02
Language spoken at destination	2.89	0.91

Note. Respondents used a Likert-type scale. A rating of 1 means “Strong Disagree” and a rating of 5 means “Strongly Agree”.

When asked specifically about traveling to California’s Central Coast, participants rated their level of agreement with five different reasons for travel. Participants marked visiting friends and family as the primary influence (mean = 3.62, SD = 1.39) and religious purposes as the least important motivation (mean = 1.45, SD = 0.76). Refer to Table 2 for the mean and standard deviation of subjects' motivations to participate in travel to California’s Central Coast.

Table 2
Motivations to Participate in Travel to California’s Central Coast According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Reasons	Mean	SD
To Visit Friends and Family	3.62	1.39
To Discover and learn about an unknown destination	3.43	1.04
For a Luxurious Experience	3.20	1.15
To Escape from Negative Situations	2.15	1.11
For Religious Purposes	1.45	0.76

Note. Respondents used a Likert-type scale. A rating of 1 means “Strong Disagree” and a rating of 5 means “Strongly Agree”.

The subjects also indicated their level of agreement with statements about current constraints to participate in travel to California’s Central Coast (see Table 3). The highest mean scores indicated that most subjects couldn’t financially afford to travel to California (mean = 3.38, SD = 1.15). The lowest mean scores were for potential health risks during travel (mean = 1.32, SD = 0.63) and fear of flying (mean = 1.36, SD = 0.74).

Table 3
Deterrents from Participation in Traveling to California’s Central Coast According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Deterrents	Mean	SD
The Price of the Trip	3.38	1.15
Perception of Crime at a Destination	2.01	1.00
Feeling Vulnerable through Cultural Differences	1.59	0.83
Fear of Flying	1.36	0.74
Potential Health Risks	1.32	0.63

Note. Respondents used a Likert-type scale. A rating of 1 means “Strong Disagree” and a rating of 5 means “Strongly Agree”.

Interest in California’s Central Coast

The majority of respondents showed interested in California’s Central Coast, with 52 (49%) definitely interested and 48 respondents (45%) maybe interested. Of those 100 respondents (94%) expressing interest, their choices of activities and/or attractions that they would most likely visit traveling to the Central Coast varied. This section presents the results of the questionnaire that was conducted in order to answer the research question, “What activities and/or attractions are most likely to be visited by those interested in traveling to the Central Coast?”. For a complete presentation of these findings, see Table 4.

Table 4
Attraction and/or Activity Selected to Visit While Traveling to California’s Central Coast by Frequency and Percentage

Attraction	<i>f</i>	%
Pacific Coast Highway	68	66.7
Monterey Bay	67	65.7
Big Sur	59	57.8
Santa Barbara	59	57.8
Historical Spanish Missions	40	39.2
San Simeon & Hearst Castle	39	38.2
Pismo Beach	32	31.4
Santa Ynez Wine Country	32	31.4
“Happiest City in North America”: San Luis Obispo	31	30.4
Paso Robles Wine Country	31	30.4

Note. Some subjects selected more than one response.

Destination Image and Perceptions of California

A majority of respondents (n = 79, 67.5%) are influenced to travel to California because of the “typical Californian lifestyle”, as commonly seen in movies and TV shows. Participants were asked to reflect on their views and opinions of California in an open response question by providing the first three words they thought of when thinking of California. These responses were coded into common themes. Several themes emerged including sun/warm weather, beaches/surfing, scenic beauty and landscapes, activities, wine, celebrities, specific destinations in California, the economy, family, different foods,

perceived Californian lifestyles, and physical appearances. Participant A best reflected a destination specific theme by stating “San Francisco Streets” as their three describing words. Other participant descriptions that helped form the different data categories included “sun, beach, beautiful, fun, wine, Golden Gate Bridge, Hollywood, Disneyland, oranges, surf, Beach Boys, coast, sea, scenery” and more. See Table 5 for a complete presentation of these findings.

Table 5
Generated Themes from Open Ended Question about Perceptions of California by Frequency and Percentage

Coded Themes	<i>f</i>	%
Sun/Warm Weather	93	80
Beaches/Surfing	49	42
Perceived Californian Lifestyle	33	28
Specific Destinations	30	25
Scenic Beauty and Landscape	21	18
Activities	13	11
Celebrities	12	10
Wine	11	9
Physical Appearances	5	4
Californian Economy	4	3

Note. Some subjects selected more than one response.

Participants were then asked if they associated California with San Francisco and/or Hollywood. Ninety-one respondents (77.8%) agreed that they associated California with San Francisco, and 86 (73.5%) did with Hollywood. Of the 91 who related California to San Francisco, a majority (43.8%), 42 respondents, related the city with The Golden Gate Bridge, 16 (16.7%) with different diverse cultural districts, 12 (12.5%) as an international port, 2 (2.1%) saw the city as an international port, and 24 (25%) associated San Francisco with an ‘Other’ option.

Participants were also asked to select and provide other associations with the “Typical Californian Lifestyle”. A majority (n = 104, 88.9%) of respondents associated California with going to the beach, and surfing (n = 68, 58.1%). For a complete presentation of these findings, see Table 6.

Table 6
Participants Associations with the Typical Californian Lifestyle by Frequency and Percentage

Association with Californian Lifestyle	<i>f</i>	%
Going to the Beach	104	88.9%
Surfing	68	58.1%
Stereotypical Physical Appearances	62	52.9%
Seeing Celebrities	44	37.6%
Drinking Wine	44	37.6%
Other	34	29.1%

Note. Some subjects selected more than one response.

Summary

The majority of respondents were female and between the ages of 18-25. Most subjects had traveled in California before and expressed an interest in traveling to California's Central Coast. Visiting friends and family and learning about an unknown destination were the highest motivation factors for participations in travel to California's Central Coast. However, the price of traveling to California was the biggest constraint. The most popular activities and destinations on the Central Coast that respondents were interested in were the Pacific Coast Highway, Monterey, Big Sur, and Santa Barbara. A majority of respondents also typically associate California with San Francisco and Hollywood. The results in this chapter indicate an interest in traveling to Californian's Central Coast by international and non-Californian residents. See Chapter 4 for a complete analysis and summary of the results.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study provides information that can be helpful for California tourism boards and companies, and tour operators to market experiences to California's Central Coast based on international and non-Californian travelers interest in California. This concluding chapter will include the following: a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings including limitations, conclusions based on the research questions, and recommendations.

Summary

Understanding the motivations and barriers influencing an individual's choice to travel is crucial in understanding how to promote and develop tourism at a certain destination. There are many reasons that give a person the incentive to choose to travel to a destination. People are motivated to travel due to a variety of factors, variables, influences, and emotions. Yet there are many barriers that also deter people from traveling. Understanding these anxieties can help destination experts make a trip less stressful and can increase a traveler's overall happiness and satisfaction. Perceptions of a specific place, can also impact a traveler's choice of destination. Destination stereotypes are often formed through an individual's predictions and mental images of a specific location and the people who inhabit that area. California is stereotyped by many international travelers. Many of these socio-types and stereotypes are formed from the influences of Hollywood and other film media that people all over the world are regularly

exposed to. Depending on how places are portrayed, generally affects how potential tourists envision that destination. Therefore, it is important for tourism bureaus in California and other promotional businesses to advertise destinations that are not commonly seen through the eyes of international and non-California residents.

A survey was conducted to determine the motivations and perceptions of international and non-Californian residents traveling to the Central Coast of California. The questionnaire contained 18 questions that took respondents five to seven minutes to complete. The researcher received 117 responses, 66 were female, 46 were male, and 5 did not state.

Most subjects had traveled to/in California before and expressed an interest in traveling to California's Central Coast. Visiting friends and family, and learning about an unknown destination were the highest motivation factors for participation in travel to California's Central Coast. However, the price of traveling to California was the biggest constraint. The most popular activities and destinations on the Central Coast that respondents were interested in were the Pacific Coast Highway, Monterey, Big Sur, and Santa Barbara. A majority of respondents also typically associate California with San Francisco and Hollywood.

Discussion

The top three motivational factors for participating in travel in order are destination location, average price of trip, and destination recommendation from friends and family. The lowest motivating factors to influence travel are language spoken at destination, destination perception from films or television shows, and research done

about location before arriving. By knowing that the subjects would be motivated to participate in travel for these main reasons, tour operators and California tourism bureaus can better market tourism products to the subjects. These results indicate that people are more interested in the budget of their trip and where their trip will take place, rather than what they already know about the location from either friends and family, online information, TV and movies, travel agents, or any other information source. Based on previous research, Bowen and Clarke (2009) also infer that a person considers trip distance, cost, value, duration, and travel arrangements in their decision making process. They also state that two of the main factors influencing a person's choice to travel are economic, and these include income and price. Therefore, the findings show consistent results with the various motivational factors. Furthermore, Bowen and Clarke state that native English speakers are more likely to travel to English-speaking destinations. This remains consistent with the survey results because even though participants said language spoken at destination was not an influential factor, all the respondents spoke English and that is the native language of California as well.

When asked their primary reason to visit California's Central Coast, participants responded to visit friends and family and to discover unknown places. The reasons with the least agreement were traveling for religious purposes, to escape negative situations, and for a luxurious experience. These results indicate that travelers interested in the Central Coast are looking for a more wanderlust experience than a sunlust as defined by Burkart and Medlik (1981). Central Coast travelers are less interested in traveling to a destination that offers out of the ordinary facilities or amenities and more interested by the desire and want to exchange the known for the unknown, to learn about and immerse

oneself in a different culture, and to understand the past by visiting historical sites and monuments. These results are further verified when respondents were asked to select which attractions and/or activities they were interested in on California's Central Coast.

The main attractions participants were interested in visiting on the Central Coast were as follows from most popular: Pacific Coast Highway, Monterey Bay, Big Sur, Santa Barbara. The rest of the attractions received less interest: Historical Spanish Missions, San Simeon and Hearst Castle, Pismo Beach, Santa Ynez Wine Country, San Luis Obispo, and the Paso Robles Wine Country. This information, based on subjects' responses, can help tour operators and tourism bureaus customize what locations on the Central Coast could use more out of state advertisement and marketing. The results from the activities and attractions on the Central Coast also remain consistent with the various themes respondents created when answering a question asking them three words to describe California. The Pacific Coast Highway, Monterey Bay, Big Sur, and Santa Barbara all run directly on the coastline, further reflecting tourists' opinion of California as sunny and warm, and full of beaches and surfing.

When asked if destination perception from films or television influenced their choice to travel, participants answered fairly low, however, when asked if it influenced their choice to travel to California, the results were much higher. These results directly reflect the previous research of Dann (1996), who stated that the way individuals imagine a specific place, as seen in films, on television, or even in their own minds, can greatly impact a traveler's choice of destination. This means that with Hollywood's influence, travel in California is due in huge part to the TV and movie industry in Los Angeles.

There are several limitations present in this study. Snowball sampling was conducted resulting in a sample size of 117 subjects. Because of the small sample size and snowball sampling, a generalization to all international and non-Californian travelers cannot be made. In order to get more accurate data much more sampling needs to be undertaken.

This research provides California tourism businesses with insight regarding travelers' behaviors, wants, and needs. The findings identify that perceived destination is a large reason why people choose to travel to California and the Central Coast. However, the price of travel and high costs in California also deters people from choosing it as their destination. Based on research, international and non-Californian travelers express a high amount of interest for participating in travel on the Central Coast, with various levels of interest in different activities and attractions in the area.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Non-Californian and international tourists are motivated to travel to the Central Coast to visit friends and family, and to discover and learn about an unknown destination.
2. Destination image is a factor for non-Californian and international tourists choosing to travel to California, as a majority of respondents are influenced to travel to California because of the "typical Californian lifestyle", as commonly seen in movies and TV shows.

3. The most popular activities and destinations on the Central Coast that respondents are interested in are driving the Pacific Coast Highway, visiting Monterey, Big Sur, and Santa Barbara.
4. The price of traveling to California is the biggest constraint and deterrent for non-Californian and international tourists interested in traveling to the Central Coast.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Provide discounts on tourism products for out of state travelers visiting California's Central Coast through the Visit SLO County website.
2. Destination Management Organizations in SLO County should focus on marketing cheaper flights, hotel options, and activities for international travelers to make California more affordable to them.
3. Advertise destinations on the Central Coast that are less well-known to international and non-Californian residents through the Visit SLO County website.
4. Collect more data from international and non-Californian travelers to increase sample size and accurately represent the population.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A
Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

I am currently working on my senior project in my final year at Cal Poly and I need some of your help. The topic of my project focuses around the motivations and perceptions of international and non-Californian residents traveling to the Central Coast of California. I would greatly appreciate it if you could please take 5 minutes to complete this survey and hopefully pass it on to as many of your non-Californian friends via email or send me as many email addresses as possible, and I would be happy to contact them. It would really help me out, as I need as many responses as possible to properly analyze your responses and start writing.

1. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. I am influenced to travel because of:

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| a. Destination location | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| b. Average price of the trip | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| c. Language spoken at destination | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| d. Research done about location before arriving | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| e. Destination recommendation from friends or family | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| f. Destination perception from films or tv shows | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| g. Other factors _____ | | | | | |

2. What are the first three words you think of when you think of California?

_____, _____, _____.

3. Do you associate California with San Francisco?

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. If yes, do you associate San Francisco:

- a. With the Golden Gate Bridge
- b. As an international port
- c. Being traditionally accepting of LGBT lifestyles
- d. With the different diverse cultural districts (China Town, Mission District, Little Italy, Japan Town, etc).
- e. Other: _____

5. Do you associate California with Hollywood?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. **Does the appeal of the typical Californian lifestyle, as commonly seen in movies and TV shows, influence your perceptions on traveling to CA?**
- Yes
 - No
7. **You associate the typical California lifestyle with:**
- Drinking wine
 - Going to the beach
 - Seeing celebrities
 - Surfing
 - Stereotypical physical appearances
 - Other: _____.
8. **Have you traveled to/in California before?**
- Yes
 - No
9. **If yes, please check the option that best describes your previous travel experiences to California:**
- Never traveled in California
 - Briefly for work
 - Briefly for vacation
 - Several times to one location
 - Several times to multiple location
 - Extensively traveled throughout California
10. **Are you familiar with California's Central Coast (an area ranging from Monterey County to Santa Barbara County)**
- Yes
 - No
11. **If yes, have you traveled to California's Central Coast before?**
- Yes
 - No
12. **If no, what other CA locations did you chose to travel to on your trip(s) to CA:**
- Los Angeles
 - San Francisco
 - Lake Tahoe
 - San Diego
 - Silicon Valley
 - Other: _____
 - I have not traveled in CA
13. **Do you have interest in traveling to California's Central Coast?**
- Maybe

- b. Yes
- c. No

14. Please select which attractions you would be interested in visiting on a trip to California's Central Coast:

- a. Monterey Bay _____
- b. Big Sur _____
- c. Pacific Coast Highway _____
- d. Paso Robles Wineries _____
- e. "Happiest City in North America": San Luis Obispo _____
- f. Santa Ynez Wine Country _____
- g. Santa Barbara _____
- h. Historical Spanish Missions _____
- i. Pismo Beach _____
- j. San Simeon & Hearst Castle _____

15. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

- a. I would travel to California's Central Coast to visit friends and family
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- b. I would travel to California's Central Coast to discover and learn about an unknown and/or foreign destinations
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- c. I would travel to California's Central Coast for luxurious experience
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- d. I would travel to California's Central Coast for religious purposes
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- e. I would travel to California's Central Coast to escape from negative situations
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- f. I would travel to California's Central Coast for other reasons: _____

16. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about what deters you from participating in travel to California's Central Coast:

- a. Fear of flying
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- b. Potential health risks, ie. travel sickness and/or destination illnesses and diseases
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- c. The price of a trip
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- d. My perception of crime at a destination
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- e. Feeling vulnerable through cultural differences
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
- f. Other factors: _____

17. **I am:**

- a. Female
- b. Male

18. **I am:**

- a. Younger than 18
- b. 18-20
- c. 21-25
- d. 26-35
- e. 35+

Appendix B

Informed Consent Letter

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT ON MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST.

Senior project research on motivations for travel is being conducted by Lisa Baird, a student in the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, under the direct supervision of Dr. Jerusha Greenwood. The purpose of the study is to determine the motivations and perceptions of international and non-Californian residents traveling to the Central Coast of California.

You are being asked to take part in this study by completing an online questionnaire. Your participation will take approximately 3 to 5 minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also omit any items on the questionnaire you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated with participating in this study.

Your responses will be provided anonymously to protect your privacy. Potential benefits associated with the study include highlighting the different and diverse attractions in California that not all international travelers are aware of, and to understand the motivations for travel and tourism in California's Central Coast.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Lisa Baird at lbaird@calpoly.edu or Dr. Jerusha Greenwood at (805) 756-2050, jbgreenw@calpoly.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at (805) 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Dean Wendt, Interim Dean of Research, at (805) 756-1508, dwendt@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by visiting <https://s.zoomerang.com/s/CaliforniaCentralCoast> and completing the online questionnaire. Please print this consent form NOW for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.