



Università della Basilicata
L.M. Natural & Cultural Resources Economics

Traveller Decision Making: The Experientialist Stance

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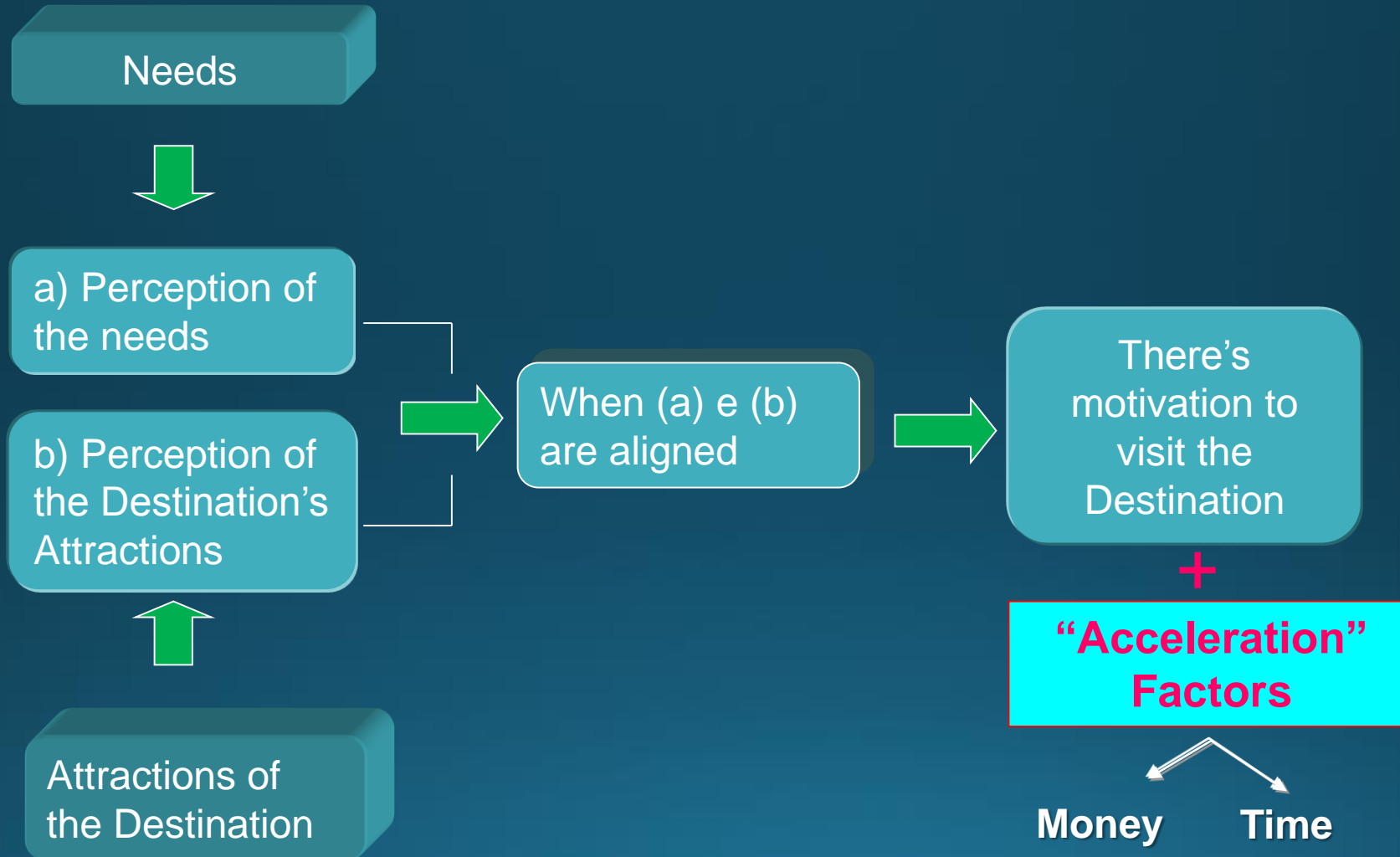


Tourism Destination Marketing & Management

Proff. C. Rossi e R. Micera



Traveller Decision Making: Motivation





Traveller Decision Making: AIDAS Model





Traveller Decision Making: the forces

External forces' perception



- a) **significant**: those deriving from personal experiences
- b) **symbolic**: derived by the image spread by media and by official promotion of the site
- c) **social**: derived by opinions of those which have already spent time in the location

Internal forces' perception



It derives from **personal attributes**, as attitude, motivations, values, the leaning toward some kind of experience



Traveller Decision Making: The Never Ending Journey

Experientialist approach
to theory and research



Limitations of **objectivism**

Limitations of **subjectivism**

A **Grounded Theory** approach allows researchers to build and to revise propositional statements of relationships and observe people in specific use-contexts



Questioning and observing tourists *in situ*



Traveller Decision Making: The Never Ending Journey



In situ





Decision-Making Processes

Gilbert's (1991) finds six commonalities...

1. **Consumer behaviour** is a constant decision-making process
2. The **individual consumer** is emphasized
3. Behaviour is **rational or utilitarian** and can be explained
4. A buyer actively searches for **evaluates and stores** information
5. **Collected information** is narrowed down to choose alternatives
6. **Future purchases** are affected by the final purchases



Decision-Making Processes

**Constructive
Choice Theory**



**Subconscious
information**

Choice-making strategies

Cognitive processing of information

The **desire** to confront

To avoid **negative feelings**

cognitive effort



choice accuracy



Decision-Making Processes

The awareness of one's environment is the foundation of **ecological systems theory**





Decision-Making Processes

Constructive choice theory

Ecological systems theory



FLAG Model

*informants' lived experiences as
'causal historical waves'*

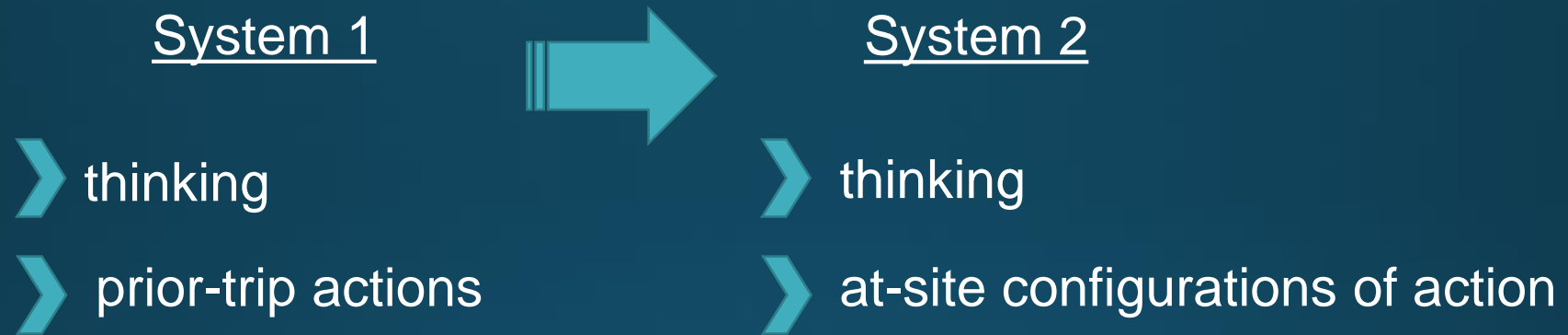


Decision-Making Processes

- Modelling tourist decision making appears to be **complex** because both antecedents to the trip and at-site 'in-contexts' affect the process.
- Rational constraints and hedonic desires, as well as **internal and external elements**, affect decision makers.
- Decisions may be **cognitive** and require considerable planning and weighing of alternatives, or **instinctive** because they feel right.
- Leisure travel also involves continuous **high involvement** purchase decisions, which makes the process dynamic.
- More **internal and external variables** affect the decision process once the traveller arrives

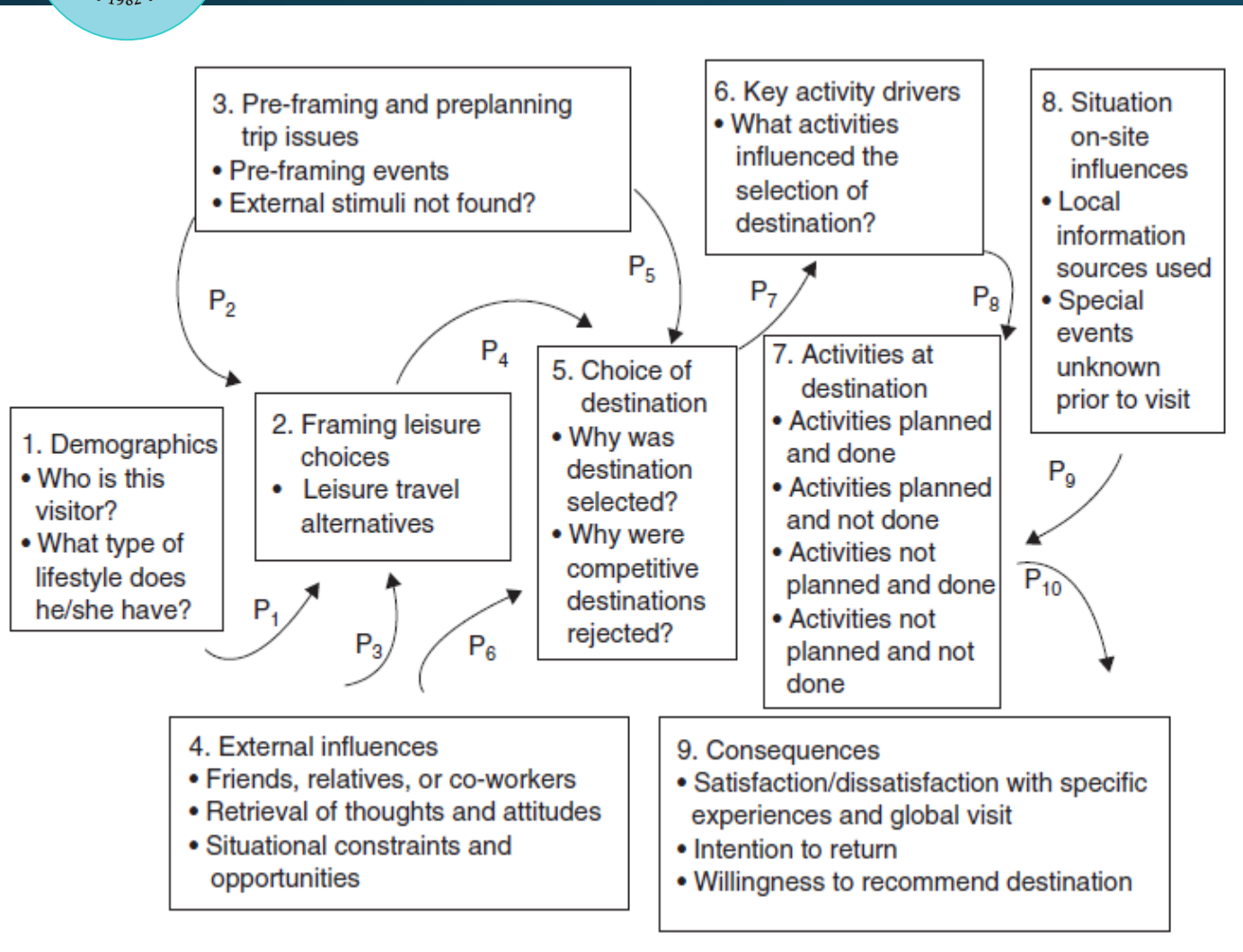


Decision-Making Processes





Tourist Decision Dynamics: Theoretical Map



- demographic and lifestyle differences
- unexpected or unplanned events
- external and internal personal features and possible benefits that help to frame leisure choices
- Information collected while framing and planning a trip
- social forces influence the selection or rejection
- key activity drivers solidify the destination choice
- key activity drivers affect planned and accomplished activities at the destination
- visitors interpret events and change plans while visiting
- visitor experiences resulting in specific outcomes are the antecedents to a good or bad trip

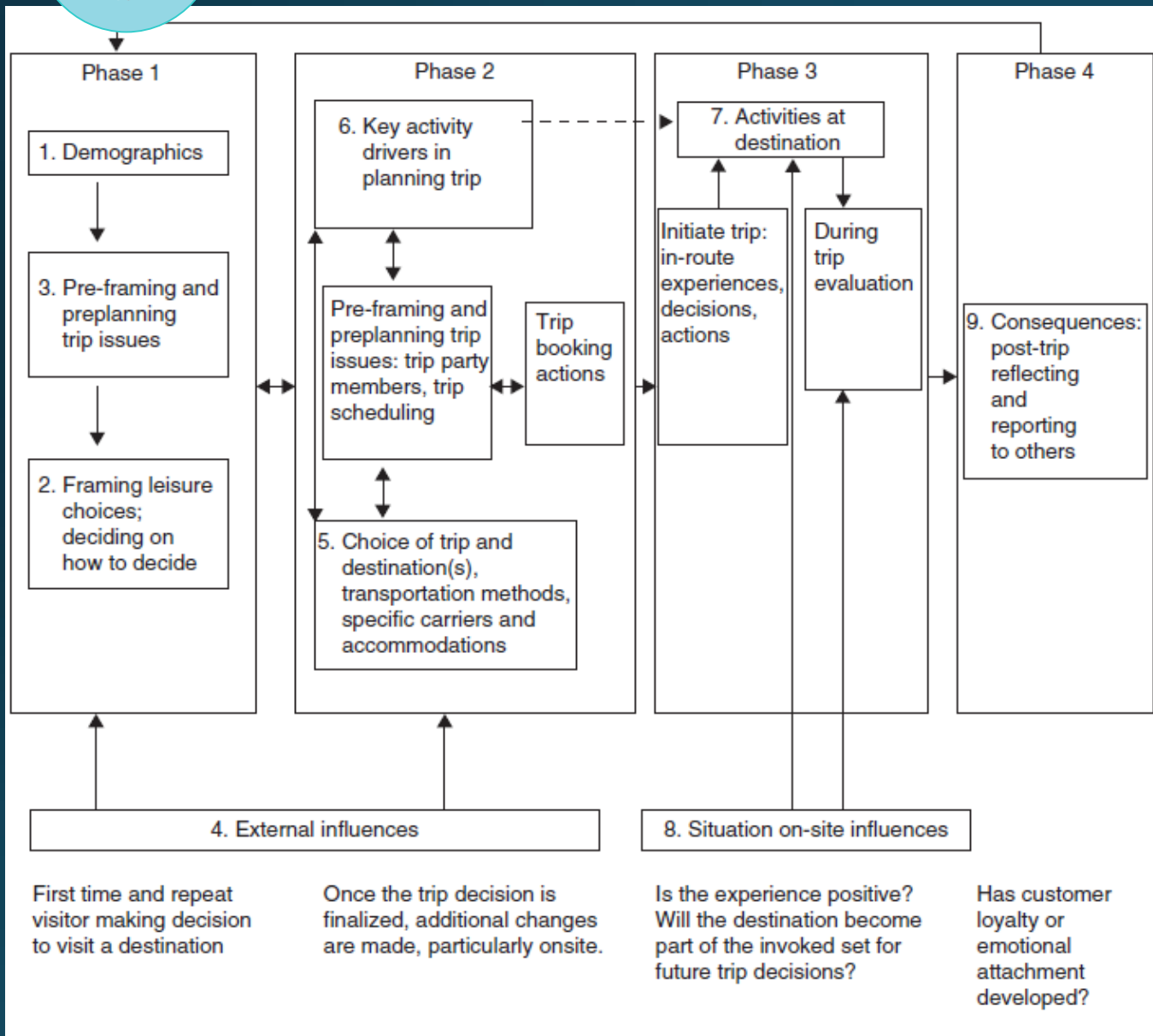


The Dynamic Modelling Theory of Travel Decision Making

- **To prevent being overwhelmed with decisions and alternatives**, travellers typically split decisions into smaller and more familiar decisions.
- **The unstructured decision-making model** of Mintzberg *et al.* (1976) maps a process that organizations may employ when encountering unfamiliar decisions.
- **This model reduces decisions into three main phases:** identification, development and selection.



Unstructured–structured process model for travel decision making



Phase 1: the foundation for destination selection

Phase 2: key activity drivers (e.g. budget or time constraints) help to evaluate alternative destination choices

Phase 3: additional stimuli create some opportunities and eliminate others

Phase 4: a self-reflection process. The evaluation of the trip affects the first phase of the next travel planning process



Drilling Down with Grounded Theory

EP method

- ❑ Grounded theory is a common approach for interpreting **traveller experiences**.
- ❑ Grounded theory development usually includes ***in situ* observations and face-to face informant questioning** by the researcher.



Emic interpretation
captures the essence of
a larger social issue.

Etic viewpoint
studies behavior from outside
a particular system' and is vital
to understand an alien system.



Data Collection Methodology

- For tourism research, the inquiries need to uncover the rationale behind the visitor's decision-making process, **outcomes and feelings throughout the trip.**
- Interviews should take place at locations and situations considered to provide the 'greatest opportunity to gather **the most relevant data about the phenomena under investigation**'
- Prospective informants should be prescreened with **general questions about their visits and asked whether they would participate in an interview.**



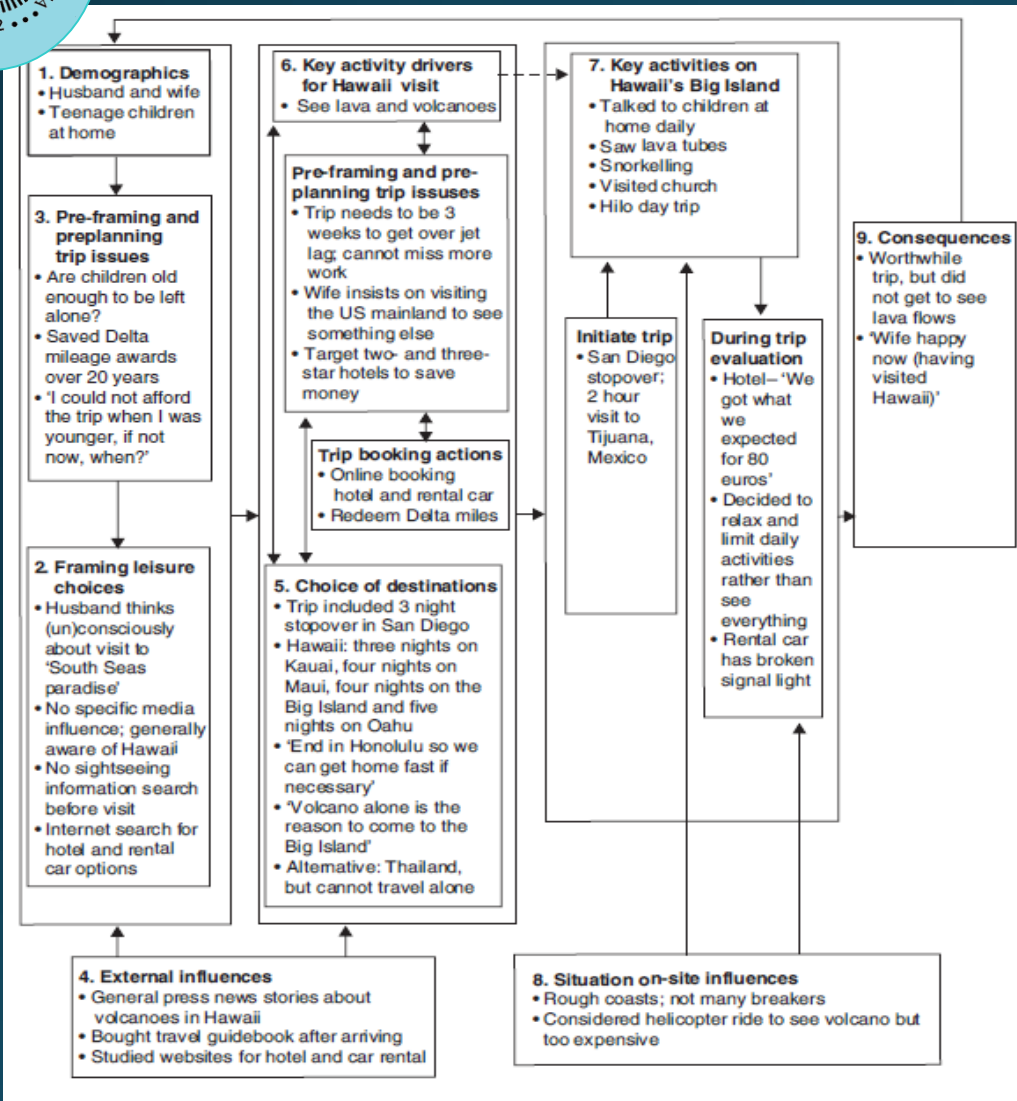
Data Collection Methodology

For the Helmut and Helga interview, questions addressed:

- (i) demographic information
- (ii) pre-trip planning and sources of information
- (iii) activities and destinations – both planned and unplanned
- (iv) issues surrounding flights, accommodation and ground transportation
- (v) overall impressions of the travel experience



Helmut and Helga Uncovered



Helmut and Helga were interviewed poolside at their Big Island hotel located in downtown Kailua-Kona



Explaining Tourism Behaviour

Phase 1: memories, demographics, ecological factors and unconscious memories influenced Helmut and Helga's decisionmaking criteria. They could not take the trip until their children were old enough to manage for themselves.

Phase 2: the decision to making actual plans. Key activity drivers would make or break the trip.

Phase 3: travel behaviour departs from the traditional consumer decision making funnel. At the trip destination, each travel party was exposed to unexpected occurrences and activities

Phase 4: questions whether or not the visitor developed an attachment to the destination



Conclusions

- A thinking-action-thinking streaming approach for understanding the complex and extended decision making that takes place in **leisure travel pre-trip, at-site and post-trip interpretations by travellers.**
- Trip planning involves **many steps and includes many variables**: the unstructured decision model allows the decision maker to break down the decisions into manageable feedback loops.
- Long interviews consider the importance of **conscious and unconscious thinking** in travel decisions
- One surprise is **how little pre-trip planning** is done possibly by most visitors.
- On-site adjustments are likely to involve **a quick evaluation of the trade-offs with little or no cognitive thought**. Unconscious thought is important for making these quick decisions because they feel right. *In situ* interviews allow researchers to observe external influences on tourists' decisions.
- Case study research methods are sometimes criticized because **the findings are difficult to generalize to a broad population**. However, achieving replication using theoretical sampling of a few cases (five to ten) of narrowly defined population segments helps to overcome such criticism and provides the opportunity to construct Boolean-algebra based predictive models