



TOUR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT [PART 1]

HOW DO TOUR OPERATORS SELECT SECONDARY DESTINATIONS?

Researcher: Fanny Lawren, DBA @ Siena College | Advisor: Richard Baskerville, PhD @ Georgia State University



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PRIMARY DESTINATIONS

- Popular
- Many attractions
- Extensive service network
- Convenient transportation

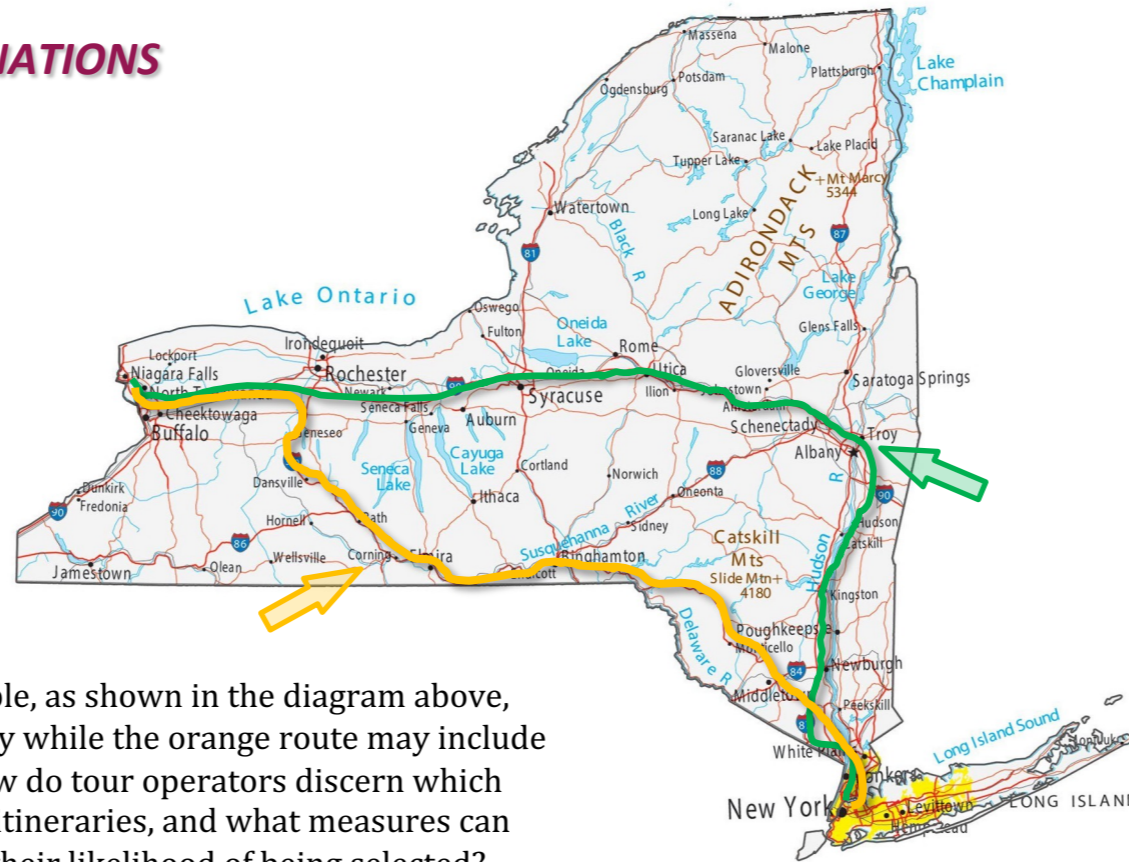


SECONDARY / STOPOVER DESTINATIONS

- Less-known but interesting
- Fewer resources to attract visitors
- Extension of the primary destination
- Complementary to the main trip

Consider

The New York State tours commonly feature visits to New York City and Niagara Falls as the primary destinations, approximately a seven-hour drive apart. By incorporating additional activities, meals, and potential overnight stops along the route, tour operators aim to enhance the overall experience. For example, as shown in the diagram above, a possible stop on the green route is Albany while the orange route may include a visit to the Corning Museum of Glass. How do tour operators discern which secondary destinations to include in their itineraries, and what measures can these destinations implement to improve their likelihood of being selected?



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM 2019



Consider

- Problem of Overtourism
- Concern of Sustainability
- Sharing of Wealth

Practical Problem

Tour operators play a pivotal role in designing travel products for escorted tours, private groups, independent tourists, and other travel companies¹. Secondary destinations are often added to a tour product to enhance the travel experience and logistics. These destinations rely on tour operators to bring in visitors, as they do not have the resources to attract them^{2,3,4}. Despite the complexity of tour product development, there is a lack of literature on the subject.

Research Questions

What factors impact tour operators' secondary destination selection for their products? What are the best practices to influence their decisions?

Design & Method

The study is based on the *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)*, which suggests that human behaviors are rational, and that behavioral intention results from an individual's attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control⁶. The research aims to understand tour operators' beliefs about including secondary destinations in their tour itineraries and the factors influencing these beliefs.

Over 200 email invitations were sent to members of the National Tour Association and the U.S. Tour Operators Association. Interested tour operators had to complete an online screener to ensure active participation in tour product development. Thirteen diverse participants, each with 20+ years of tourism experience, representing different regions globally, were interviewed online for 50-75 minutes using a semi-structured format based on TPB constructs. The interview transcripts were sent to participants for verification, then coded and analyzed using the *Thematic Analysis Method*⁷.

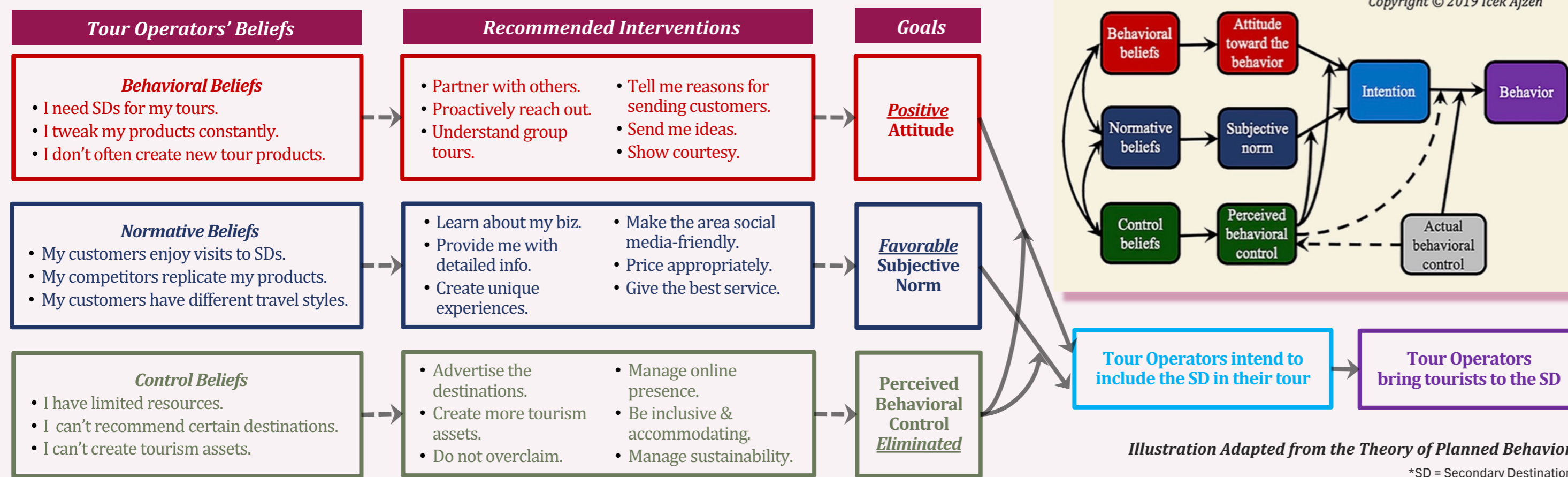
Contributions & Future Research

The study offers a comprehensive exploration of the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs that underpin tour operators' intrinsic motivations. It not only demonstrates the TPB framework's applicability in understanding and influencing complex business decisions but also how stakeholders can effectively use TPB constructs to intervene in decisions.

Furthermore, the research investigates the impact of tour operators' views on customer preferences, industry standards, and competitive positioning on their choices to incorporate or exclude secondary destinations. It provides a blueprint for strategic actions in tour product development and other aspects of business decision-making and highlights practical insights for guiding tour operators' product development choices.

While the research design effectively identifies the issues, involved parties, and possible solutions, it does not establish direct cause-and-effect relationships. Future studies could adopt an action research approach, collaborating with various stakeholders to implement, verify, and measure the impact of the recommendations. Such research could lead to the development of evidence-based strategies for integrating secondary destinations into tour itineraries more effectively.

Findings & Best Practices



Economic stats sources: (a) World Travel & Tourism Council. *Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2021*. <https://wtcc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2021/Global%20Economic%20Impact%20and%20Trends%202021.pdf>. (b) World Tourism Organization. *International Tourism Highlights 2020 Edition*. <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284422456>. (c) U.S. Department of Commerce. *2022 National Travel & Tourism Strategy*. <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/National-Travel-Tourism-Strategy.pdf> **References:** [1] Ladplee, N. (2018). *Secondary Tourism Destination with Heritage Potential, Khirivong Community, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand*. Paper presented at the The International Academic Research Conference, Vienna. [2] Liu, C. M. (1999). *Tourist Behaviour and the Determinants of Secondary Destination*. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. [3] Lumsdon, L. M., & Swift, J. S. (1999). *The Role of the Tour Operator in South America: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay*. *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1(6), 429. [4] McKercher, B. (2001). *A Comparison of Main-Destination Visitors and through Travelers at a Dual-Purpose Destination*. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(4), 433-441. [5] Copyrighted Theory of Planned Behavior Diagram: Retrieved from <https://people.umass.edu/ajzen/tpb.diag.html>. [6] Ajzen, I. (1985). *From Intentions to Actions: A Theory of Planned Behavior*. Springer. Ajzen, I. (1991). *The Theory of Planned Behavior*. *Organizational Behavior And Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211. Madden, T. J., Ellen, P. S., & Ajzen, I. (1992). *A Comparison of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action*. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18(1), 3-9. [7] Holton, G. (1988). *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Einstein*. Harvard University Press.