SEGMENTING THE TRAVEL MARKET BASED ON THE TOURISTS' NEED FOR NOVELTY: INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDITERRANEAN DESTINATIONS

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Abstract: *This study examines segmentation of the Mediterranean travel market based on 450 European subjects who visited Mediterranean destinations during 2009. Using cluster, chi-square, and ANOVA analyses, the results indicated that travelers can be grouped into three segments based on novelty-seeking behavior (high, medium, and low). Significant differences were found between the three segments regarding age and travel companions, as well as previous visit status (first or repeat trip). The results also demonstrate significant differences across the three segments in terms of revisit intentions, with the low-novelty seeking group exhibiting the highest likelihood of returning, followed by medium-novelty seekers. High novelty seekers displayed the lowest propensity to return to a destination.. The findings present new insights on tourist segments, in general, and in Mediterranean destinations in particular, providing an effective tool to segment the travel market based on novelty-seeking behavior. The findings also emphasize the need for both tourism scholars and practitioners to consider novelty when segmenting and profiling market segments, as novelty was found to influence revisit intention. Implications are presented for managers of Mediterranean based organisations to help them understand their market segment groups and develop marketing mix strategies to attract tourists in the future.*

Keywords: *tourism, novelty-seeking, Mediterranean, segmentation*

Introduction

The Mediterranean region - which is defined as the geographical area comprising 22 countries that share the common characteristic of bordering the Mediterranean Sea, including European (e.g., Spain, Italy, France, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece), North African (e.g., Morocco, Tunisia), and Middle Eastern countries (e.g., Egypt, Turkey) - has emerged in the last decade as the world's leading tourist destination (Erbina, Garau, &Molina de Dios, 2010). Recent figures from the

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World Travel Organization indicate that 52% of international travel occurs within this geographic region, with a total of 534 million international tourists having visited this region in 2013 (UNWTO, 2013). Subsequently, the Mediterranean region represents an information-rich geographic area that can reveal a great deal of information regarding tourist behavior and specific market segments that can be applied to other destinations (Assaker & Hallak, 2013).

Tourism researchers have often used psychographic information to identify and define market segments. The psychographic variable of 'novelty-seeking' is widely recognized as a critical factor in understanding travel behavior (Cohen, 1972; Bello & Etzel, 1985). Previous studies have considered novelty as one criterion in identifying specific market segments (e.g., Crompton, 1979; Petrick, 2002). Other studies have explored the effects of tourists travel –seeking tendencies on repeat visitation (e.g., Assaker et al., 2011; Jang & Feng, 2007).

This research explores the use of 'novelty seeking' as a way to segment the leisure travel market for Mediterranean destinations. Specifically, it uses cluster analysis to identify and profile particular segment groups of travelers to major Mediterranean sun-and-sand destinations based on their novelty-seeking behavior. The aim is to examine whether travelers' novelty-seeking behavior affects their likelihood to return to the destination. After identifying the segments based on the novelty-seeking behavior, the present study examines differences in segments regarding revisit intention using analysis of variance (ANOVA). This will validate the proposed clusters and examine their criterion/external validity (Aldenderfer & Bashfield, 1984).

Previous studies focusing on tourists' novelty-seeking have focused on a single country, a single destination, or an individual activity (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Petrick, 2002; Chang & Chiang, 2006; Sangpikul, 2008; Kim, Kim, Park, & Guo, 2008) and have thus reached conclusions specific to a particular destination or activity (Weaver et al., 2009). Therefore, the present study is unique in that it uses multiple international destinations within the Mediterranean region as reference points to validate the segments and their corresponding behavior.

Thus, the study presents a cluster analysis approach and describes its usefulness in segmenting and profiling travelers according to their novelty-seeking behavior. By doing so, it contributes to our understanding of specific groups of travelers that could be assumed to be based on novelty-seeking behavior, as well as the demographics and characteristics of travelers who actively seek novelty when they travel compared to those who do not. This research expands on the body of knowledge examining the complex relationships between novelty-seeking and revisit behavior It examines the extent to which groups of tourists with

different levels of novelty seeking tendencies also demonstrate varying intentions to revisit a destination. From a practical perspective, the findings will provide valuable information to policymakers and destination managers of Mediterranean sun-and-sand destinations in market segmentation strategies and building customer loyalty.

Novelty seekers

An important psychological concept in the marketing literature relevant to consumer behavior is the need for variety (Chen & Paliwoda, 2004). In the tourism context, seeking variety is described as the travelers' inclination to seek novelty (Crompton, 1979; Feng & Jang, 2004; Zbuchea &Radu, 2009; Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Faison (1977) defined novel travel as a trip characterized by new and unfamiliar experiences that differ from prior life experiences. Novelty acts as an opposite concept to familiarity (Pearson, 1970).Crompton (1979) referred to the use of novelty in the travel context to refer to a new experience but not necessarily new knowledge. Furthermore, according to Bello and Etzel (1985), novelty-seeking theory is based on optimum levels of stimulation that can be described by three propositions: (1) an organism prefers a particular level of stimulation; (2) when the stimulation in the environment does not reach this optimal level, the organism is motivated to seek novelty, complexity, adventure, or other similar conditions; and (3) when stimulation exceeds this optimal level, the organism will find ways to reduce it.

Zuckerman (1971, 1979) identified four novelty factors: thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and boredom susceptibility. In a tourism context, Lee and Crompton (1992) identified four dimensions for their novelty scale: thrill, changing one's routine, alleviating boredom, and surprise. Mo, Howard, and Harvitz (1993) and Yianniks and Gibson (1992) identified three distinct dimensions for novelty: destination-oriented dimensions, travel services dimension, and social contact dimension, as well as high structure low structure, strange familiar environments, and stimulating tranquil environments, respectively.

McIntosh et al. (1995) - adapting a scale from Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1992) – identified categories of novelty sources ranging from discovering innovative physical places to gaining prestige and attention from others. The 9-item scale by McIntosh et al. (1995) captures different aspects of tourists' propensity to seek novelty experiences in holiday destinations and has been used extensively in the tourism literature (see Assaker et al., 2011; Barroso et al., 2007; Jang & Feng, 2007). The search for novelty is often seen as an innate quality among travelers (Cohen, 1979; Lee & Crompton, 1992). Understanding tourist novelty-seeking is particularly important in explaining travelers' choice

of travel destinations and their intentions to return to a specific destination (Szivas & Riley, 2004).

Returning to the destination

Previous studies that have examined the complex relationship between novelty-seeking and travel behavior (see Niininen et al., 2004, Barroso et al., 2007, Jang & Feng, 2007, Bigné et al., 2009, Assaker et al., 2011, and Assaker & Hallak, 2013) argue that there is a negative relationship between novelty-seeking tendencies and intention to revisit the destination in the future. Niininen et al. (2004) analyzed the role played by novelty-seeking propensity in tourist destination choice in order to better understand tourist loyalty. They found evidence to partially support the proposition that tourists with high novelty-seeking propensity show varied patterns of destination choice and are thus less likely to return to the same destination. However, these findings are limited due to the small sample size used (123 observations in total).

Jang and Feng (2007) focused on destination revisit intention from a temporal perspective. They found that continuous repeaters could be comparable to lower novelty-seeking tourists while deferred repeaters represent tourists with a mid-range level of arousal. The study of Jang and Feng (2007) revealed a new function of novelty in reinforcing revisit intention. They, however, ruled out any relationship between short-term revisit intention and novelty seeking. Bigné et al. (2009) also examined destination-revisit intention from a temporal perspective by examining the influence of variety seeking, and other antecedents of revisit intention such as perceived value, destination image, satisfaction, switching costs, and past switching behavior on both short- and long-term revisit intentions. In particular, the authors found that variety seeking is a significant determinant of return intention in both the short- and long-term. Assaker at al. (2011) also based their study on the temporal perspective of return intentions, using a latent growth model to examine the effect of image, satisfaction, and novelty seeking on return intention trajectory. Assaker et al. (2011) discovered that novelty seeking affects revisit intention directly and indirectly through satisfaction. However, contrary to Jang and Feng's (2007) and Bigné *et al.* (2009) findings, Assaker et al. (2011) found that novelty has a significant negative effect on the intercept of return-intention trajectory, suggesting that high novelty seeking travelers are less likely to return to that destination.

Barroso et al. (2007) postulated a moderator effect of variety-seeking propensity on the relationship among destination image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and tourists' future behavioral intentions. Respondents were segmented into four groups (tourists with a medium need for variety, tourists who need

continuous change and new experiences, tourists who do not need variety, and tourists who want to experience change but only occasionally) according to their level of novelty seeking and the way they perceive it. Two of these segments (medium need for variety and want to experience change occasionally) were almost identical. Their results supported the effect of novelty as a moderator in that all variables depend on tourists' tendency to seek novelty. Specifically, the relationships among image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions were non-significant for the group of travelers who need continuous change and new experiences, suggesting that this group will not return regardless of the positive experience (Barroso et al., 2007).

Finally, Assaker and Hallak (2013), similar to Barroso et al. (2007), also examined the moderating effect of novelty seeking on the relationships among destination image, satisfaction, and return intention; however Assaker and Hallak (2013) in their study considered both the short- and long-term return intentions.Assaker and Hallak (2013) first identified three distinct respondent groups in terms of their novelty-seeking behavior (high novelty seekers, medium novelty seekers, and low novelty seekers). The authors (Assaker & Hallak, 2013) argued that differences in the number of segments generated from cluster analysis from the work of Barroso et al. (2007) might be due to the different scales each study used to measure novelty. Barroso et al. (2007) used a more general scale for novelty based on Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1992), whereas Assaker and Hallak (2013) used a more extensive scale adapted to the specific case of a destination. Moreover, Assaker and Hallak (2013) validated their three-cluster solution and used multigroup analysis to examine the moderating effects of novelty-seeking tendencies on the structural relationships among destination image, satisfaction, and return intentions. In particular, the authors found that the effect of destination image on visitor satisfaction, as well as satisfaction on short-term revisit intentions, is significantly weaker for high-novelty seekers as compared with low-novelty seekers. Thus, empirical evidence suggests that high-novelty seeking travellers are less likely to revisit a destination regardless of their level of positive experience and the perception they have of the destination, at leastin the short-term (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Barosso et al. 2007).

The present study will further explore the relationship between travelers' novelty-seeking and return behavior. First, we identify segments/clusters of travelers to the Mediterranean according to their novelty-seeking behavior. Then, we examine differences among those segments with regard to their intentions to return to the destination. A closer examination of the profiles and characteristics of market segment presents important insights for destination managers in developing their marketing mix strategies.

Research Design

Data collection

Data for this research came from a large scale study examining French, English, and German travelers to the Mediterranean in 2009. These three nationalities were chosen as they provide the highest number of visitors to the Mediterranean (European Commission, 2010). Thus, selecting a sample of respondents from these nationalities represents a good proxy to approximate and examine the behavior of all tourists to the area (Alegre & Cladera, 2006). A screening question at the start of the questionnaire ensured that only those respondents who had flown at least two hours to visit a Mediterranean sun-and-sand destination for leisure purposes within the seven months prior to the survey were included. This filter question aimed to reduce bias related to extreme travel behaviors caused by respondents visiting domestic destinations close to home.Moreover, given the survey was administered in February, seven months represented the ideal time to visit that type of destination as this dates back to July.

Out of the 634 questionnaires sent, 450 usable responses (150 from each nationality) were received resulting in an average response rate of 71%. The sample size is suitable for cluster analysis and dividing respondents into different groups according to their degree of novelty seeking (Hair et al., 2010). The survey collected information regarding gender, age, and trip characteristics such as travel companions and repeat visit status (i.e., first time vs. repeat). Likelihood to return was also measured using a single question: "How likely are you to return to that destination?" (1=not at all likely, 7=very likely).A single-item rating scale for return likelihood is commonly used in tourism research (see, Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Barroso, Armario, & Ruiz, 2007; Hsu & Kang, 2007). Novelty seeking was operationalized using nine questions based on McIntosh et al.'s (1995) travel stimuli theory to capture the different aspects of the experience (Lee & Crompton, 1992). McIntosh et al.'s (1995) scale suggests various categories of novelty sources, ranging from the discovery of innovative physical places to the gaining of prestige and attention from others. A seven-point Likert scale (1=very unimportant, 7=very important) was used to measure the nine novelty-seeking items.

Cluster analysis

Cluster analysis was applied to the scores of the aforementioned nine novelty items to identify specific groupings of respondents (see Mo et al. 1993). The first step involved performing hierarchical clustering to identify the preliminary solution(s) regarding the number of clusters to analyze (Hair et al., 2010). Hierarchical clustering groups objects (observations) based on their characteristics such that the group identified exhibited high internal

(within-cluster) homogeneity and high external (between-cluster) heterogeneity (Robles & Sarathy 1986). In grouping observations, the present study selected the Ward method to determine how similarity is defined between member clusters in the clustering process. Furthermore, the squared Euclidean distance (i.e., the sum of squared differences without taking the square root) was used to measure the resemblance (similarities) between objects or observations to be clustered, this accelerates the computation when analyzing large datasets (> 200 observations) (see Hair et al., 2010). Finally, we used the agglomeration coefficient to assess the percentage change in heterogeneity within groups as we moved from one stage to another (i.e., as we continued combining groups). When large increases in heterogeneity occurred in moving from one stage to the next, we selected the prior cluster solution(s), because the new combination required joining of quite different clusters (Bailey, 1994).

K-means clustering was then used to test the results from the hierarchical clustering process and further validate the preliminary solution(s) identified. We identified starting points, or cluster 'seeds,' for each cluster in a random process using SPSS 17.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Then, we assigned each observation to a cluster based on the optimization clustering algorithm to create distinct and accurate clusters (Long, 1997). Multivariate statistics from the *K*-means were used to confirm whether statistically significant differences existed among the examined clusters. In particular, ANOVA tests revealed whether selected items (the nine novelty items) helped differentiate the groups from a specific cluster solution. Scheffe multiple-range tests further examined differences between groups with respect to each novelty item (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). Statistically significant differences among clusters supported the choice of the preliminary examined solution(s).

The third step involved using external variables (which is referred to as criterion validity) to further validate the final cluster solution (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). In order to validate the cluster solution, we selected variables not used to form the cluster but that were known to vary across the clusters. In our example, we know from past research that tourists' return behavior varies according to their degree of novelty; therefore, we tested for differences in return intention variable scores across the clusters with significant differences found to support the generalizability of choosing that specific sample cluster solution (Ketchen & Shook, 1996).

Once the solution was validated, the final step involved profiling the various clusters based on a set of additional variables not included in the clustering variate or used to group the respondents. This step emphasized identification of characteristics on which the clusters differ significantly and the factors that could predict membership in a particular cluster.

Results

Respondents demographic and travel profile

Table 1 presents the descriptive summary of respondents. The mean age of the respondents was 38, with a minimum age of 18 and a maximum of 69. There was an equal representation of male and female respondents. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents traveled with a partner/spouse or children (this is typical for this type of destination (La Mondia, Snell, & Bhat, 2009). Of the sample, 21% traveled with friends or relatives, and only 14% traveled alone. Over 39% of respondents were first-time visitors to the destination, whereas 60.4% were repeat visitors. This percentage is also concordant with the high level of repeat visitation found for this type of destination (Alegre & Caldera, 2006; Alegre & Garau, 2011). Finally, more than half of the respondents exhibited a "likely to return" behavior to the destination (52.4% of respondents answered the "How likely are you to return to that destination?" question by either 5=somehow likely, 6=likely, or 7 = very likely).

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Sample Responses by Demographic and Other Characteristics

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sex			
Male	223	49.6%	49.6%
Female	227	50.4%	100.0%
Travel Companions			
Alone	63	14.0%	14.0%
Partner/Spouse	191	42.4%	56.4%
Spouse and children	81	18.0%	74.4%
Children	21	4.7%	79.1%
Friends and relatives	94	20.9%	100.0%
Visit Status			
First time	272	60.4%	64.0%
Repeat Visit	178	39.6%	100.0%
Return Intention			
Very unlikely	18	4.0%	4.0%
Somehow unlikely	48	10.7%	14.7%
Unlikely	65	14.4%	29.1%
Neither/nor	83	18.4%	47.6%
Somehow Likely	91	20.2%	67.8%
Likely	92	20.4%	88.2%
Very Likely	53	11.8%	100.0%

Cluster analysis results and external validity

Hierarchical analysis was applied to the nine items of novelty-seeking behavior based on the Ward clustering algorithm and squared Euclidean distance (Bailey, 1994). The agglomeration coefficient method identified two distinct clusters (Table 2).

Table 2: Agglomeration Schedule for the Reduced Novelty Seeking Cluster Sample (Showing only Steps 425 to 450)

Cluster Combined						
Stage	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Coefficient	Number of Clusters after combining	Differences	Proportionate increase in Homogeneity to the Next Stage
425	4	109	2058.41	-	39.93	1.9%
426	9	10	2098.34	-	42.05	2.0%
427	69	102	2140.39	-	44.01	2.1%
428	22	50	2184.40	-	44.50	2.0%
429	14	225	2228.90	-	48.65	2.2%
430	21	52	2277.56	-	51.91	2.3%
431	3	88	2329.47	-	54.59	2.3%
432	17	27	2384.06	-	55.63	2.3%
433	5	7	2439.69	-	59.25	2.4%
434	19	58	2498.94	-	64.44	2.6%
435	14	28	2563.38	-	69.71	2.7%
436	6	21	2633.09	-	100.86	3.8%
437	3	22	2733.96	-	103.12	3.8%
438	9	12	2837.07	-	111.25	3.9%
439	2	17	2948.32	-	111.94	3.8%
440	1	117	3060.26	-	155.05	5.1%
441	19	69	3215.31	-	168.19	5.2%
442	6	14	3383.49	-	178.98	5.3%
443	1	2	3562.48	-	212.31	6.0%
444	3	5	3774.79	6	260.23	6.9%
445	1	6	4035.02	5	269.45	6.7%
446	3	19	4304.48	4	679.28	15.8%
447	**3**	**9**	**4983.76**	**3**	**831.56**	**16.7%**
448	1	4	5815.32	2	3898.67	67.0%
449	1	3	9713.99	1	-	-

Note: If we discard the two cluster solution corresponding to stage 448, the second highest increase in heterogeneity corresponds to a three cluster solution corresponding to stage 447

However, the agglomeration coefficient method needs to be treated with caution as it has a tendency to indicate too few clusters (Milligan and Cooper 1985). This is because the maximum heterogeneity is always attained when we move from a two- to one-cluster solution (Hair et al., 2010). As such, a more thorough visual re-inspection of the agglomeration coefficients table is undertaken, revealing that the second-highest increase in heterogeneity corresponds to a three-cluster solution for the sample investigated (corresponding to a 16.7% increase in homogeneity as compared to 15.8%, 6.7%, and 6.9% increases for the four, five, and six clusters solutions, respectively). As such, three groups were preselected to group the respondents in this study in terms of their different degrees of novelty-seeking tendencies.

The *K*-means clustering procedure refined the results from the hierarchical clustering process and validated our three-cluster solution. Cluster seeds were chosen through a random process using SPSS 17.0. The optimization clustering algorithm was then used to assign each observation to one cluster based on similarity (Long, 1997). The results of the *K*-means procedure indicated that all nine novelty items contributed to the differentiation between the three novelty clusters ($p < 0.001$). Scheffe multiple-range tests were also employed to examine the differences between clusters with respect to each novelty item (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). The results again revealed statistically significant differences among clusters (Table 3).

Table 3: Summary Statistics of k-Means Cluster Analysis of Novelty Seeking

	Cluster I (n =68)	Cluster II (n=188)	Cluster III (n=194)	F-Value	Sig.	Games-Howell Test		
						I-II	I-III	II-III
NS1	6.27[a]	2.1	4.66	382.062	***	***	***	***
NS2	5.65	2.20	4.12	228.772	***	***	***	***
NS3	6.22	2.43	4.73	339.607	***	***	***	***
NS4	6.38	2.84	4.87	307.347	***	***	***	***
NS5	6.16	2.35	4.49	380.179	***	***	***	***
NS6	5.75	2.49	4.19	205.210	***	***	***	***
NS7	6.25	2.61	4.84	299.764	***	***	***	***
NS8	5.73	2.86	4.60	109.410	***	***	***	***
NS9	6.37	3.18	5.11	217.769	***	***	***	***
Cluster Name	*High Novelty*	*Seekers*	*Low Novelty Seekers*	*Medium Novelty Seekers*				

*** $P < .001$
[a] *Mean Values measured on the basis of seven point Likert scale (1= Very unimportant, 7=Very important)*

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The first of the three clusters (68 observations) appeared to have the highest mean scores on the nine novelty-seeking items. This cluster was labeled "high novelty seekers." The second cluster (188 observations) was found to have the lowest mean scores on the nine novelty items, suggesting that this group is formed by tourists with low novelty-seeking tendencies. This cluster was labeled as "low novelty seekers." Finally, the third cluster (194 observations) showed average mean scores across the nine novelty items; this cluster was called "medium novelty seekers."

Finally, as Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) recommended, external variables were used to validate the choice of the three-group solution. We examined differences in return intention scores across the three-cluster solution using ANOVA tests (Hair et al., 2010). The results of the ANOVA Levene's test demonstrated that the equality of variance could not be assumed ($F = 15.710$, d.f. = 2, p-value = .000). The Games-Howell post hoc test for unequal variances was subsequently used to compare differences in return intention scores across the three groups (Ananda & Weerahandi, 1997). Results of the Games-Howell ANOVA test indicated that the three segments (taken on a two-by-two basis) differed significantly in their return intention (see Table 4). In particular, based on the aggregate means by cluster 1 (high novelty seekers) exhibited the lowest return intention, followed by group 3 (medium novelty seekers), and 2 (low novelty seekers), the present results further validate the choice of the three-group solution for segmenting travelers in terms of novelty-seeking behavior.

Table 4: Differences in Return Intention Among the Three Derived Segments

ANOVA Results	Cluster I (N=68)	Cluster II (N=188)	Cluster III (N=194)	F	P-value
Return Intention	4.02[ac]	5.13[ab]	4.73[bc]	15.710*	0.000

*Notes: N corresponds to the segment size; * Welch ANOVA F; [ab] Games-Howell Post Hoc Tests: a pair of means with the same superscript indicates a significant difference between the two segments at p<0.05*

Profiling tourist clusters by demographics and travel characteristics

Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and nationality and other trip characteristics of the surveyed travelers (such as travel party and previous visits status) were used to profile the three clusters. Results from the ANOVA and cross-tabulation tests indicated that the three clusters showed significant differences in terms of 1) age, 2) travel party, and 3) previous visit status (Tables 5 and 6). Particularly, the cluster analysis found that the high novelty seekers (Group 1) consisted of 1) younger travelers; 2) travelers who were either on their own or with friends and relatives and 3) mainly travelers who

visited the destination for the first time. The Low Novelty Seekers (Group 2) consisted of 1) older travelers, 2) travelers who traveled with children or spouse and children, and 3) mainly repeat travelers who had visited the destination previously. Finally, the Medium Novelty Seekers (Group 3) consisted of 1) older travelers, 2) travelers who traveled with a spouse, and 3) a combination of those who were visiting for the first time as well as repeat visitors. Table 7 summarizes the profiles of each group. Finally,the cluster analysis, ANOVA, and cross-tabulation results found no evidence of differences between the clusters with regard to gender (X^2 = 2.05, p >.05) and nationality (X^2 = 6.960, p >.05).

Table 5: ANOVA Scores of Respondents Age by Cluster

ANOVA Results	Cluster I (N=68)	Cluster II (N=188)	Cluster III (N=194)	F	P-value
Age	25.8[ab]	41.18[a]	40.9[b]	13.877*	0.000

Notes: N corresponds to the segment size; * Welch ANOVA F; [ab] Games-Howell Post Hoc Tests: a pair of means with the same superscript indicates a significant difference between the two segments at p<0.05

Table 6: Cross-Tabulation Scores of Respondents Profiles by Cluster

Variables		Clusters 1	2	3	Statistic Results
Travel Companions					χ^2=25.289
Alone	Count	19	16	28	p=0.01
	Expected Count	9.5	26.3	27.2	df=8
Partner/Spouse	Count	17	83	91	
	Expected Count	28.9	79.8	82.3	
Spouse and children	Count	9	38	34	
	Expected Count	12.2	33.8	34.9	
Children	Count	3	11	7	
	Expected Count	3.2	8.8	9.1	
Friends and relatives	Count	20	40	34	
	Expected Count	14.2	39.3	40.5	
Total		68	188	194	
Visit Status					χ^2=6.947
First Time	Count	50	104	118	p=0.030
	Expected Count	41.1	113.6	117.3	df=2
Repeat Visit	Count	18	84	76	
	Expected Count	26.9	74.4	76.7	
Total		68	188	194	

Gender					χ^2=2.05
Male	Count	39	89	95	p=0.359
	Expected Count	33.7	93.2	96.1	df=2
Female	Count	29	99	99	
	Expected Count	34.3	94.8	97.9	
Total		68	188	194	
Nationality					χ^2=6.960
Germans	Count	25	63	62	p=0.138
	Expected Count	22.7	62.7	64.7	df=4
French	Count	28	65	57	
	Expected Count	22.7	62.7	64.7	
British	Count	15	60	75	
	Expected Count	22.7	62.7	64.7	
Total		68	188	194	

Table 7: Characteristics of the three Groups

Clusters	Characteristics
Group 1:High Novelty Seekers	15% of total respondents Younger travelers Travelers who were on their own or with friends and relatives Travelers who visited the destination for the first time
Group 2: Low Novelty Seekers	42% of total respondents Older travelers Travelers who traveled with children or spouse and children Repeat travelers who visited the destination previously
Group 3: Medium Novelty Seekers	43% of total respondents Old travelers Travelers who traveled with a spouse Combination of those who were visiting for the first time as well as repeat visitors

Discussion and Conclusions

Using a nine-item measure of novelty seeking (McIntosh et al., 1995), our analysis found that visitors to the Mediterranean region could be grouped into three distinct respondent groups: high novelty seekers (15.1%), medium novelty seekers (43.1%), and low novelty seekers (41.8%). Interestingly, we found no significant differences between the three groups of travelers in terms of nationality or gender. The first group (high novelty seekers) consisted of younger travelers and was found to significantly differ from the low and medium novelty

seekers which consisted of older travelers. These results are similar to Chang and Chiang (2006) who found age to be a discriminating factor across three groups of Americans and two groups of Japanese tourists visiting the night market in Taiwan (Chang & Chiang, 2006).

The present results, however, contradict other existing studies (e.g., Weaver et al., 2009; Keng & Cheng, 1999). For example, Keng and Cheng (1999) found that the three novelty clusters they identified among international travelers to Singapore were homogenous with respect to their sociodemographic characteristics. Likewise, Weaver et al. (2009) found only gender and education (among a set of demographics that included age, marital status, income, and number of children) to be significantly different among clusters of US (Virginia) residents visiting Japan and Australia during the year 2000. The differences in findings could be due to the different scales adopted to measure novelty. These inconsistencies in the results emphasize the need for tourism destination marketers to consider not only visitors' socio-demographic and geographic characteristics, but also travel characteristics and preferences when they segment their market and develop marketing strategies.

In terms of travel characteristics, the present study found that the three clusters could be distinguished in terms of travel companions and previous visit status. High novelty seekers consisted mainly of first-time visitors who travelled either alone or with friends and family, whereas medium-novelty seekers travelled principally with their spouse and consisted of both first-time and repeat visitors. Finally, low-novelty seekers traveled mainly with children and/or their spouse and were mostly repeat visitors. These findings support those of Keng and Cheng (1999) who found that high novelty-seekers are more likely to be travelling alone and are visiting the destination for the first time.

This study has identified the important role of tourists' novelty-seeking tendencies in influencing their intentions to return to a destination.High novelty seekers had the lowest likelihood to return.These findings support the negative relationship between novelty and revisit intentions.(Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Assaker et al., 2011; Bigné et al., 2009; Petrick, 2002; Feng & Jang, 2007). However,the findings from the present study further expand on the relationships between novelty and revisit behavior by clearly showing that groups of tourists with different levels of novelty-seeking behavior actually show different levels of revisit intention.

By segmenting and profiling visitors to the Mediterranean in terms of their novelty seeking, travel characteristics, demographics, and their intent to return, destination managers can gain practical information regarding their market

segments. They can act on this information to increase revisits to their destination. Specifically, the low- and medium-novelty-seeking groups, which consist primarily of families (with children, a spouse, or spouse and children), who tend to be older, and who previously visited the destination, composed the main market for the destinations examined. The main focus of Mediterranean sun-and-sand destination marketers, therefore, should fall on medium- and low-novelty-seeking groups who represent the majority of travelers and who indicated a higher likelihood to return. Subsequently, appropriate offers and targeted marketing strategies can be developed to fit these travelers' needs.

In terms of limitations, a limited number of demographic and trip characteristic variables were measured; thus future research should include other characteristics such as travel type, choice of accommodation, and occupation. This information would result in a more comprehensive assessment of market segment characteristics. Moreover, although country of origin of respondents did not discriminate between the novelty groups, future studies could examine levels of novelty-seeking behavior related to other activities and to other destinations to investigate if the same (or different) segments can be identified across different destinations. This is important considering recent changes in tourism developments in the Mediterranean regions.These changes include development of new products and services (e.g., ecotourism in Greece and Tunisia), the rapid rise of Turkey, and the emergence of new destinations such as Algarve, Croatia, etc.. Finally, a long-term study collecting longitudinal data is also required to examine whether novelty-seeking behavior influences return behavior over time in similar ways.

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