

# **An Experimental Examination of the Differences in Readers' Responses to Editorial versus Advertising for Travel Destinations**

**By Sharna Holben, Nigel de Bussy, Sonia Dickinson and John Allert, School of Marketing, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia**

## **Abstract**

The claim that editorial is superior to advertising, although commonly made by academics and practitioners alike, has received limited empirical support. The belief that editorial is more effective is strongly held, amongst others, by destination promoters, who frequently allocate considerable budgets to media 'familiarisations' in the hope of generating positive press. It was therefore decided to test claims for the promotional advantages of editorial in the context of tourism destinations. Drawing on the Elaboration Likelihood Model, attribution theories and agenda setting theory, the aim of this research was to test experimentally whether potential tourists do indeed respond more favourably to destination editorial than advertising, in relation to affective and conative impacts. A sample of 271 students was exposed to selected editorial and advertising for the destinations New Caledonia and Hong Kong, embedded in 12-page, full-colour, mock travel magazines. The study found that the editorial format was deemed to be more credible by readers than its advertising counterpart, but no direct format based differences were observed for respondents' attitudes to the brand or behavioural intentions. However, source credibility was found to be highly correlated with both brand attitude and behavioural intentions, suggesting editorial has an important indirect effect on these key dependent variables.

## **Key Words**

Advertising, editorial, destination marketing, source credibility, brand attitude, behavioural intention, Elaboration Likelihood Model.

## **Introduction**

Organisations are constantly attempting to promote their offerings to a range of stakeholders, and those who wish to use the mass media for such purposes typically have two avenues available to them: editorial and advertising (Sandler & Secunda in Hallahan 1999a). For Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) promotion is particularly pertinent, as often their principal task is to promote a travel destination (Dore & Crouch 2003; Pike 2004; Weaver & Oppermann 2000). According to Middleton and Clarke (2001), advertising and public relations are the two communication tools most widely used by DMOs to develop awareness, interest and motivation amongst targeted audiences away from the place where the tourism product is delivered and sold. It appears to be an article of faith however, that promotion in the form of editorial is superior to that of advertising. Dore and Crouch (2003) reported that while publicity programs rank third in terms of DMO promotional expenditure, they are ranked first in terms of their perceived promotional importance.

To date there have been mixed empirical results regarding the superiority of editorial over advertising. Whilst some studies have suggested that editorial is uniformly

superior to advertising (Cameron 1994; Putrevu 2005; Schwarz, Kumpf & Bussmann 1986), others have failed to validate the assertion (Jo 2004), whilst some have indicated that assessments are moderated by other factors (Chaiken & Maheswaran 1994; Hallahan 1999a; Salmon et al. 1985). Even when consistent results were reported, the manipulation of the experimental variables has often been somewhat artificial, thus diminishing external validity. The research to date has also largely been limited to the field of tangible products, and has not ventured into the domain of services or brand promotion. There appears to be no research dedicated to the perceptions and impacts of mass media promotional tools on potential tourist audiences. In fact, there has been little attention paid to travel information in the academic tourism literature at all (Manfredo in Nielsen 2001).

There are, however, sound theoretical reasons for the assumption of editorial superiority. The Elaboration Likelihood Model implies that those who are exposed to editorial may engage in deeper processing (elaboration) than those exposed to advertising, as a result of the greater motivation and ability present for editorial over advertising (Lord & Putrevu 1993; Petty & Cacioppo 1986a 1996). This assertion is further supported by agenda setting theory, which suggests that editorial will be more carefully considered than advertising because of the importance attached to the news telling medium, which is otherwise absent in sales directed communications (Dearing & Rogers 1996; McCombs & Shaw 1972). As a result of this heightened elaboration, ELM predicts those who are exposed to editorial will exhibit enduring attitudes that are more predictive of behaviour than those exposed to advertising (O'Keefe 2002; Petty & Cacioppo 1996). Editorial readers should also deem the information provided as more credible than advertising readers, as suggested by attribution theory, which asserts that causal schematas resulting from the socialisation process will encourage people to attribute editorial to 'fact telling', and advertising to 'product selling' (Kelley 1972b; Lord & Putrevu 1993).

This study sets out to determine whether editorial is superior to advertising for destination promotion purposes. This will be achieved by examining readers' responses to the different promotional formats in relation to affective and conative impacts. The affective variables in question are attitude to the brand and attitude to the information source, whilst the conative variable is behavioural intention.

### **The Purported Superiority of Editorial Coverage over Advertising**

Public relations practitioners have long advocated the superiority of publicity over advertising, and according to Hallahan (1999a) these claims are a cornerstone of public relations practice. Marketers also appear to subscribe to this belief. Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2006, p. 482) noted what they call a "peculiar reality of marketing" when they stated that "[n]o matter how many millions are spent on advertising, nothing sells a product better than free publicity." In the context of travel destinations, Dore and Crouch (2003, p. 137-138) agreed: "... anecdotal evidence suggests that publicity can produce significant results, potentially overshadowing the effect of all other promotional efforts combined." This is a sentiment shared by Kotler, Bowens and Makens (2003, p. 221) who wrote, "[w]ith hospitality and travel products, personal and public sources of information are more important than advertisements." This assertion is based on the premise that consumers will attempt to reduce the risk inherent in purchasing an intangible product, by relying on information from those

who have tried the product (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2003). Most people decide what is best by determining what other people think is best, and the two major sources for making such a determination are the media and word of mouth (Ries & Ries 2002). This is as true for public sources as it is for personal sources since journalists reporting on a destination usually do so as a result of a Visiting Journalist Programme (VJP), whereby the journalist actually visits the destination at the expense of the DMO to report what the destination has to offer.

It has been suggested that the purported superiority of editorial over advertising can be attributed to implied third party endorsement, that is, journalists supposedly endorse a product when they run a story about it (Hunt & Grunig 1994). Hallahan (1999b) disagreed with this conceptualisation on the basis that news selection is a complex process which involves such factors as the availability of news, time and staff constraints, and audience demands and interests, and that to select news with the deliberate intention of endorsing particular topics would run counter to professional journalistic standards. While it is no doubt true in most cases that the media do not intentionally or covertly endorse a product, and that a number of factors are at work to gain a particular editorial piece a place in the news, the operations of the media are not the issue here. It is the perceptions the reader has about the motivations and intentions of the media which are of relevance. Hallahan (1999b) asserted that any differences observed between editorial and advertising are a result of inferences made by audiences who use bias processing that favours editorial and disfavors advertising because of 'contracts' that exist between the message producer and audience. Under the 'news contract', audiences believe that information is true, significant and could affect their lives, whereas under the 'advertising contract' audiences are more likely to scrutinise messages as a result of the persuasive intent of the message (Meyer in Hallahan 1999a).

### ***Affective Impacts***

There has been some research conducted into the credibility of editorial versus advertising. Whilst some studies have revealed positive relationships between editorial and participants' assessment of credibility, others have failed to replicate such findings. Putrevu (2005) noted that participants rated the editorial message higher than the advertising message on information source credibility in his study of 104 undergraduate students' responses to pizza and shampoo messages. Similarly, Straughan, Bleske and Zhao (in Hallahan 1999b) concluded that the editorial format had a strong positive relationship with perceptions of the source's expertise, knowledge and believability in their study of 196 university students, which assessed message source and spokesperson endorsement. Support for third party credibility was found in Salmon et al.'s (1985) experiment which compared commercial and non-commercial organisations in both news and advertising formats for 203 undergraduate students. Respondents showed a higher level of agreement with the statement 'most advertisers only tell the good side of things; they don't tell you the bad things' than with 'most newspaper articles are biased'. Hallahan's (1999a) experimental study investigated the impact content (advertising versus publicity), product involvement (high versus low) and argument quality (strong versus weak) had on message believability, attitude toward the brand, attitude toward the message and purchase intention. The study found editorial scored higher than advertising on message believability, however found no other substantial differences between the two promotional formats. Hallahan's (1999a) results contradicted findings from other,

earlier studies, which had suggested a credible source has a greater impact on audience attitudes and behaviours.

Two studies have concluded that publicity is not considered to be more credible than advertising. Jo (2004) found no support for the anticipated finding that news editorial would be more believable than advertising when 160 undergraduate students participated in an experiment examining content type, involvement and argument strength. This suggested that both advertising and editorial exerted a similar impact on credibility (Jo 2004). On the other hand, d'Astous and Hebert's (in Hallahan 1999b) failure to find source credibility effects may be accounted for by reliability and sample size problems. Interestingly, no study found advertising to be more credible than publicity.

In addition to a person's attitude toward the source, the literature has also paid attention to a person's attitude toward the brand. Again, mixed results were produced with regard to whether or not more favourable attitudes toward the brand result amongst those exposed to editorial rather than advertising. Anderson and Abbott (1985) found that an infomercial for a new bacon product generated more positive attitudes than did the comparable advertisement. Putrevu (2005) concurred, finding subjects exhibited more favourable brand attitudes when exposed to editorial than advertising. On the other hand, no significant results concerning the attitude toward the brand variable were yielded by Jo (2004) or Hennessey and Anderson (1990). Whilst Jo's (2004) findings appear to be soundly based, the relevance of Hennessey and Anderson's (1990) results were questionable, given that the stimuli pieces were not integrated into any medium. Finally, Hallahan (1999a) discovered that argument strength and content class interacted so that there was no difference between editorial and advertising with strong arguments. Only in the weak argument condition did editorial score higher than advertising.

### ***Conative Impacts***

A number of studies have reported a higher behavioural response from news pieces as opposed to advertising pieces. Schwartz, Kumpf and Bussman (1986) studied the responses of 54 German female undergraduates to an implicit and explicit journal review and advertisement for a new textbook. They found support for third party endorsement effects, whereby the less explicit book review created the greatest behavioural intent and the most explicit advertisement was considered to be the least effective. The assertion that participants rate publicity messages higher on purchase intention than advertising messages was confirmed by Putrevu (2005). Straughan, Bleske and Zhao (in Hallahan 1999b) concluded that editorial had an indirect effect on behavioural intent, as a result of its credibility. Results from Anderson and Abbott's (1985) study demonstrated that infomercial viewers had a greater purchase intent than advertising viewers, however, Hallahan (1999b) argued these results should be interpreted with caution since the infomercial stimulus was considerably longer than the advertising stimulus.

Other factors have been found to interact with the source format in determining behavioural intent. Hennessey and Anderson (1990) found support for the elaboration likelihood model in their study of 165 students which tested expert endorsement, argument strength, product involvement and source type against behavioural intent. They discovered that the source (university news bulletin versus advertisement from a

fictitious company) had no effect on students with high involvement, but those students with low involvement found the news bulletin from the university more persuasive. Again, there is some question as to the validity of these results since the source stimulus was not integrated into any medium (Hallahan 1999b).

Two studies revealed no significant effects of source type on behavioural intent, but perhaps more interestingly, one found that advertising was in fact more likely to elicit a behavioural response than a publicity item. Whilst the Salmon et al. (1985) study found support for the increased credibility of editorial over advertising, it also indicated that advertisements were considered more trustworthy, interesting and informative by respondents, and thus more persuasive in terms of behavioural intent. This finding could possibly be attributed to the fact the advertisements were discouraging the use of a product, rather than advocating its use as would normally be the case, thus, enhancing perceived credibility (Eagly, Wood & Chaiken 1981; Lord & Putrevu 1993), in keeping with the predictions of expectancy violations theory (Burgoon & LePoire 1993). Chew, Slater and Kelly (in Hallahan 1999b) and Jo (2004) both found no effects on purchase intentions between the different formats in their research.

### **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, in order for an individual to engage in extensive elaboration (that is, the consideration of issue relevant arguments), both motivation and ability to process must be present (O'Keefe 2002). Lord and Putrevu (1993) have argued that there are factors inherent in the editorial format that increase processing motivation and ability over advertising. Firstly, a reader's motivation to process a message is likely to be higher for editorial content than advertising because people intend to expose themselves to editorial. The intentions people have when undertaking an activity are in large part responsible for influencing motivation (Petty and Cacioppo 1986a). Generally, individuals who consume mass media do so with the primary purpose of assimilating themselves with the editorial content of that mass medium, and in the process are inadvertently exposed to advertising content. Thus, the intention of readers to expose themselves to editorial means that it is more likely to reach them in a state of elevated motivation. Advertising, on the other hand, is only the result of incidental viewing, and thus, is likely to reach readers in a relatively lower state of motivation. Secondly, Lord and Putrevu (1993) argued that agenda setting effects motivate people to read messages that appear in editorial format over those that appear in advertising format. Messages are more likely to be viewed by readers as being of greater importance when described in a news story than in an advertisement, because of the ability of news to influence what is salient in the reader's mind (Dearing & Rogers 1996; McCombs & Shaw 1972).

Processing ability is also considered to be higher for the editorial format than the advertising format. O'Keefe (2002) discussed the role of distraction in the persuasive setting as a potential threat to an individual's ability to process. Given that readers intentionally expose themselves to news stories, and are only incidentally exposed to advertisements, any attention paid to advertisements will be more prone to distraction. As a result, the ability of the individual to process advertising messages is decreased. Substantial message elaboration (central route to persuasion) will occur only when both motivation and ability are present (O'Keefe 2002; Petty & Cacioppo 1996),

which it has been argued is more feasible for editorial than advertising. Thus, all other things being equal, promotional information presented to the consumer in the form of editorial is more likely on theoretical grounds to elicit message elaboration than information presented to the consumer in the form of advertising.

In this study, editorial is hypothesised as being more credible than advertising. Attribution theory assumes people attempt to attribute cause to the behaviour of other people. A number of factors are assessed over time to either attribute the cause internally (to the actor) or externally (to something in the actor's environment) (Baron & Byrne 2004). Often though, people do not have enough information to make complete causal conclusions (Kelley 1972a). In the absence of such information, a causal schema is evoked (Kelley 1972b). Lord and Putrevu (1993) argued that the news is a forum which consumers are socialised to depend on as both accurate and objective. Under this 'news contract', discussed by Meyer in Hallahan (1999a), audiences believe that information is true, significant and could affect their lives. Evidence suggests that from middle childhood, people can discriminate between advertising and news (Hallahan 1999b; Lord 1994; Lord & Putrevu 1993), and a large part of this discrimination is derived from the advertiser's self interest (Cameron 1994; Lord 1994). That is, people perceive the role of the advertiser to 'sell' their product, whereas the role of a journalist is to 'tell' the facts (Hallahan 1999b; Lord 1994). The perceived personal gain of the source is likely to be a factor to which promotional claims are causally attributed. When people view an advertisement they expect that its purpose is to sell something, and when this expectation is confirmed, they are more likely to view the source as biased and as such may be persuaded very little (Eagly, Wood & Chaiken 1981). On the other hand, the unclear intention to persuade inherent in publicity pieces (Hallahan 1999b), increases its credibility over advertising. Hence:

H<sub>1</sub>: Readers will rate the editorial message higher on source credibility than the comparable advertisement.

It is expected that brand attitude and purchase intention will reflect the tendencies of cognitive responses and source assessments, since consumers strive for consistency amongst their thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Schiffman et al. 2005). O'Hara, Netemeyer and Burton (in Lord & Putrevu 1993) demonstrated the strong impact of source credibility in the formation of beliefs, evaluations, attitudes and intentions. Hence:

H<sub>2</sub>: Readers will report more positive brand (destination) attitudes after exposure to the editorial message compared with its advertising counterpart.

Similarly, ELM implies that attitudes arising or changed as a result of the central route of persuasion will be more indicative of behaviour (Petty & Cacioppo 1986b). Attribution theories suggest that the construction of causal analyses (the way people perceive the situation) forms the base of a person's behaviour (Fiske & Taylor 1991). For example, if a person thinks an advertisement is biased, they will be less likely to believe and act on its claims. As a result of the hypothesised more positive assessment of the information source for editorial than advertising, a higher purchase intention can also be expected for editorial than advertising. Hence:

H<sub>3</sub>: Readers will report a higher intention to purchase after exposure to the editorial message compared with its advertising counterpart.

### **Measures and Data Collection**

The participants in this study were 271 undergraduate students enrolled in the commerce course at Curtin University of Technology, located in Western Australia's capital city, Perth. The class listing system haphazardly assigns students to tutorial groups, and then each of these tutorial groups was randomly assigned to one of the two experimental groups. According to research conducted by McAweeney and Klockars (1998) haphazard procedures can be as effective, and in some cases more effective, than random assignment. The selection of at least 200 students to participate in this study has been informed by previous experimental studies comparing advertising and editorial, the power analysis formula, and the requirements of the statistical analyses likely to be conducted.

The independent variable in this study is promotional format, i.e. how the promotional information is presented to the reader. Previous authors have manipulated these variables via a labelling procedure, in which the same information is presented, but labelled as either editorial or advertising. This can be criticised for being unrealistic, since media consumers normally infer the classification of the information from the format in which it is presented. As such, both the advertisement and editorial in this study were presented conforming to conventions commonly used by the media today. Both the advertisement and editorial were the same length (double page spread), and contained similar messages with the same intent: to stimulate interest in the destination. Two versions of a full colour, 12-page mock travel magazine containing the stimulus destinations' advertisement and editorial were used to manipulate the independent variables, and a questionnaire was administered to observe the effects of the manipulation. Both the magazines and survey instrument were subject to a pilot study with a sample of 46 commerce students. Both versions of the magazine were identical, except that in version one, information about the destination New Caledonia was presented in the form of editorial, and information about the destination Hong Kong was presented in the form of an advertisement. In version two the conditions were reversed. The information and graphics for the stimulus items were sourced from the Hong Kong and New Caledonia Destination Marketing Organisations, and mirror promotional efforts currently being undertaken in order to provide as realistic a presentation as possible.

Seven-point semantic differential scales were used to measure responses in relation to the dependent variables. The items were drawn from those used in a similar study conducted by Hallahan (1999a). Attitude to the brand was operationalised on a six-item scale, consisting of: bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, low quality/high quality, don't like it/like it, not desirable/desirable, and unfavourable/favourable. A five-item scale consisting of: not informative/informative, untrustworthy/trustworthy, inaccurate/accurate, unconvincing/convincing, and not believable/believable measured attitude to the information source. The behavioural intention scale contained four items, which were: don't intend to/intend to, not likely to/likely to, don't plan to/plan to, and not willing to/willing to. A posttest-only design was selected because of its advantages in controlling for both main and interaction testing effects (Campbell & Stanley 1963). Two groups of students were formed and exposed to either version

one or version two of the mock new travel magazine, under the guise that they were evaluating its informational content. Each group was then given ten minutes to read through the magazine before responding to the questionnaire.

## **Results and Data Analysis**

A total of 271 students participated in the experiment, with a large portion of these students being female (around 69 per cent). Respondents ranged in age from 17 through to 41 years, with a mean age of approximately 21 years and a median age of 20 years. The majority of subjects considered Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) to be their region of residence (approximately 63 per cent), with the next largest response coming from Asian countries (approximately 30 per cent). Countries from Europe, Africa and North America were also represented in the sample. Over 90 percent of those partaking in the experiment had some overseas travel experience; with only 24 subjects in the 271 surveyed not having travelled overseas before.

Principal components factor analysis was performed on the items used to measure the dependent variables in relation to both destinations. The items loaded as anticipated. Subsequently, coefficient alpha was calculated separately for each scale for each destination with the values exceeding the accepted reliability level of .70 in every case (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). For New Caledonia, the six items comprising the brand attitude scale had an alpha of .908, the source attitude scale comprising five items had an alpha of .875, and the behavioural intention scale containing four items an alpha of .931. For Hong Kong, the brand attitude scale had an alpha of .935, the source attitude scale had an alpha of .899, and the value for the behavioural intention scale was .775.

Independent samples t-tests were used to ascertain any differences that existed between editorial and advertising on the attitude to the source variable for both New Caledonia and Hong Kong. Subjects viewed the editorial for both New Caledonia and Hong Kong as being more credible than its counterpart advertisement. The results for New Caledonia were shown to be highly significant ( $p \leq .01$ ) with the mean for the editorial condition (4.83) outperforming the mean for the advertising condition (4.48). Similar results were obtained for the Hong Kong data, with a very highly significant ( $p \leq .001$ ) difference between the impact of editorial and advertising on respondents' source credibility assessments. The editorial group for Hong Kong had a mean credibility score of 5.32, and the advertisement group a mean of 4.72. Thus support is found for H<sub>1</sub>, that readers rate editorial messages higher on source credibility than comparable advertising messages.

Independent samples t-tests were again used to determine whether any significant differences existed between the magazine version groups with regard to the attitude to the destination variable. No significant format based differences were found for either destination. This suggests that despite the fact that editorial is viewed as being more credible than advertising in a destination promotion context; this does not directly impact people's attitude to the destination. Therefore H<sub>2</sub> is not supported. Finally independent samples t-tests for both destinations showed no significant format based differences for behavioural intention, suggesting that a more positive attitude to the information source promoting the destination does not directly convert to a greater likelihood of visiting that destination. Thus, there is no support for H<sub>3</sub>.

***Relationships between the Dependent Variables***

In the absence of any main format based differences for attitude to the brand (destination) and behavioural intention (visitation likelihood), a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted. Theoretically it has been argued that the greater perceived credibility of editorial compared to advertising should favourably impact a person’s attitude to the brand and behavioural intent. Thus, the main aim of the correlation analysis was to determine how strongly the attitude to the source variable was related to the attitude to the brand and behavioural intention variables. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994, p. 94), “[t]he size of the correlation directly indicates the predictive validity”, with correlations above .3 suggesting that scores on the test are important predictors of other attitudes and behaviours.

The results from the New Caledonia and Hong Kong correlation analyses reported in Tables 1 and 2 respectively intimate that attitude to the information source is strongly and significantly correlated with attitude to the brand. Thus, while editorial may not directly impact brand attitudes, it does so indirectly through source credibility. The analysis also shows that attitude to the information source is correlated with behavioural intention. These correlation scores suggest that source credibility is an important predictor of behavioural intent, so whilst editorial may not directly impact an individual’s likelihood to visit a destination, it does so indirectly via source credibility.

**Table 1: New Caledonia dependent variable correlations**

		NC Brand Attitude	NC Source Attitude	NC Behavioural Intent
NC Brand Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.443(**)	.471(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	271	271	271
NC Source Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.443(**)	1	.351(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	271	271	271
NC Behavioural Intent	Pearson Correlation	.471(**)	.351(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	271	271	271

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2: Hong Kong dependent variable correlations**

		HK Brand Attitude	HK Source Attitude	HK Behavioural Intent
HK Brand Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.506(**)	.687(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	271	271	271
HK Source Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.506(**)	1	.405(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	271	271	271
HK Behavioural Intent	Pearson Correlation	.687(**)	.405(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	271	271	271

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Tables 1 and 2 also show the relationship between attitude to the brand and behavioural intention as being strong and significant. Thus, an individual's attitude toward a destination is an important predictor of their visitation likelihood. This suggests a model whereby source credibility of editorial positively impacts destination attitudes, which in turn positively impact behavioural intentions.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is the use of students as respondents. Despite support being found for the appropriateness of students as samples in experimental research, the approach resulted in a much larger proportion of female than male respondents, and a higher proportion of relatively young respondents (aged 17 to 26) than relatively older respondents (aged over 26). Also, the selection of promotional information relevant to an Australian target market may have been somewhat lost with approximately one third of respondents indicating an Asian, European, African or American region of residence. The Asian respondents may also have had a heightened awareness of Hong Kong, which possibly could have influenced the findings.

### **Conclusion**

This study suggests that people view editorial as being more credible than advertising. Despite the absence of any direct differences in promotional format processing for attitude to the brand and behavioural intention, this research has been able to produce results which suggest that editorial indirectly and positively impacts people's brand attitudes and purchase intentions via their higher source credibility assessments. This study corroborates Hallahan's (1999b, p. 13) findings that "...news does not uniformly outperform advertising", however, makes a number of its own significant contributions to the literature. This study provides the first insight into the processing of tourism information by potential tourists. It also builds on the editorial versus advertising processing literature, which has been largely confined to the consideration of tangible products that are relatively simple to purchase. It does this by examining the processing differences in the context of travel destinations, which are considered to be relatively complex purchase decisions (Laws 2004). Unlike previous research, this study has emphasised external validity, and thus provided results with more real-world applicability.

### **References**

- Anderson, P & Abbott, SM (1985) 'Comparing infomercial and commercial on a newspaper cable television channel', in MJ Houston & RJ Lutz (eds.), *Marketing communication: Theory and research*, Chicago, American Marketing Association, pp. 140-144.
- Baron, RA & Byrne, D (2004) *Social psychology*, 10th edn, Boston, Pearson.
- Burgoon, JK & LePoire, BA (1993) 'Effects of communication expectancies, actual communication, and expectancy disconfirmation on the evaluations of communicators and their communication behaviour', *Human Communication Research*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 129-142.

- Cameron, GT (1994) 'Does publicity outperform advertising? An experimental test of third-party endorsement', *Journal of Public Relations Research*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 185-207.
- Campbell, DT & Stanley, JC (1963) *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*, Chicago, Rand McNally.
- Chaiken, S & Maheswaran, D (1994) 'Heuristic processing can bias systematic processing: Effects of source credibility, argument ambiguity and task importance on attitude judgement', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 66, no. 3, pp. 460-473.
- Dearing, JW & Rogers, EM (1996) *Agenda-setting*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Dore, L & Crouch, GI (2003) 'Promoting destinations: An exploratory study of publicity programmes used by National Tourism Organisations', *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 137-151.
- Eagly, AH, Wood, W & Chaiken, S (1981) 'An attribution analysis of persuasion', in JH Harvey, W Ickes & RF Kidd (eds.), *New Directions in Attribution Research*, vol. 3, Hillsdale, Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 37-62.
- Fiske, ST & Taylor, SE (1991) *Social cognition*, 2nd edn, New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Hair, JF, Babin, B, Money, AH & Samouel, P (2003) *Essentials of business research methods*, Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons.
- Hallahan, K (1999a) 'Content class as a contextual cue in the cognitive processing of publicity versus advertising', *Journal of Public Relations Research*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 293-320.
- Hallahan, K (1999b) 'No, Virginia, it's not true what they say about publicity's "implied third-part endorsement" effect', *Public Relations Review*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 331-350.
- Hennessey, J & Anderson, S (1990) 'The interaction of peripheral cues and message arguments in cognitive responses to an advertisement', in M Goldberg, G Gorn & R Pollay (eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 17, Provo, Association for Consumer Research, pp. 237-243.
- Hunt, T & Grunig, JE (1994), *Public relations techniques*, Fort Worth, Harcourt Brace.
- Jo, S (2004) 'Effect of content type on impact: Editorial vs. advertising', *Public Relations Review*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 503-512.
- Kelley, HH (1972a) 'Attribution in social interaction', in EE Jones, DE Kanouse, HH Kelley, RE Nisbett, S Valins & B Weiner (eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour*, Morristown, General Learning Press, pp. 1-26.
- Kelley, HH (1972b) 'Causal schemata and the attribution process', in EE Jones, DE Kanouse, HH Kelley, RE Nisbett, S Valins & B Weiner (eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour*, Morristown, General Learning Press, pp. 151-174.
- Kotler, P, Bowen, J & Makens, J (2003) *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*, 3rd edn, Upper Saddle River, Prentice Hall.
- Lamb, CWJ, Hair, JFJ & McDaniel, C (2006) *Marketing*, 8th edn, Mason, Thomson.

- Laws, E (2004) *Improving tourism and hospitality services*, Cambridge, CABI Publishing.
- Lord, KR (1994) 'Motivating recycling behaviour: A quasiexperimental investigation of message and source strategies', *Psychology and Marketing*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 341-358.
- Lord, KR & Putrevu, S (1993) 'Advertising and publicity: An information processing perspective', *Journal of Economic Psychology*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 57-84.
- McAweeney, MJ & Klockars, AJ (1998) 'Maximising power in skewed distributions: Analysis and assignment', *Psychological Methods*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 117-122.
- McCombs, ME & Shaw, DL (1972) 'The agenda-setting function of mass media', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 176-187.
- Middleton, VT & Clarke, J (2001) *Marketing in travel and tourism*, 3rd edn, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Nielsen, C (2001) *Tourism and the media*, Melbourne, Hospitality Press.
- Nunnally, J & Bernstein, I (1994) *Psychometric theory*, 3rd edn, New York, McGraw-Hill,
- O'Keefe, DJ (2002) *Persuasion: Theory and research*, London, Sage.
- Petty, RE & Cacioppo, JT (1986a) *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*, New York, Springer-Verlag.
- Petty, RE & Cacioppo, JT (1986b) 'The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion', *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 19, pp. 123-205.
- Petty, RE & Cacioppo, JT (1996) *Attitudes and persuasion: Classic and contemporary approaches*, Oxford, Westview Press.
- Pike, S (2004) *Destination Marketing Organisations*, Amsterdam, Elsevier.
- Putrevu, S (2005) 'Differences in readers' response towards advertising versus publicity', *Psychological Reports*, vol. 96, no. 1, pp. 207-212.
- Ries, A & Ries, L (2002) *The fall of advertising and the rise of PR*, New York, HarperCollins.
- Salmon, CT, Reid, LN, Pokrywczynski, J & Willet, RW (1985) 'The effectiveness of advocacy advertising relative to news coverage', *Communication Research*, vol. 12, pp. 546-567.
- Schiffman, L, Bednall, D, O'Cass, A, Paladino, A & Kanuk, L (2005) *Consumer behaviour*, 3rd edn, Frenchs Forest, Prentice Hall.
- Schwarz, N, Kumpf, M & Bussmann, W (1986) 'Resistance to persuasion as a consequence of influence attempts in advertising and non-advertising communications', *Psychology: A Journal of Human Behaviour*, vol. 23, no. 2-3, pp. 72-76.
- Weaver, D & Oppermann, M (2000) *Tourism management*, Brisbane, John Wiley & Sons.