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## **The Influence of Personality Traits on Tourism Information Search Behavior in Choosing a Foreign Package-tour**

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### **Extended Abstract**

Present study aimed to examine the influence of tourists' personality traits on their information search behavior while purchasing an outbound package tour. The statistical population of the study were heads of household from Isfahan who had purchased an outbound package tour during last year. For the purposes of data gathering, John and Srivastava's (1999) questionnaire for personality traits and a researcher-made questionnaire for perceived values were used. Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares method was applied to analyze the data.

The findings of the study showed that conscientiousness and neuroticism have a significant effect on the extent of internal information search by perceived value for internal search. Indeed, the results showed that conscientiousness has influence on perceived value for familial search. On the other hand, openness to new experience has a significant influence on the extent of external information search through perceived value for external search. The study affirmed the influence of agreeableness on perceived values for familial sources of

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information. But, extraversion's had no significant effect on perceived value for familial and external information search.

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, due to the increasing competition in tourism market, marketers are looking for ways to influence on consumers' decision. Variety and diversity of tourism destinations and significant role of information in facilitating the tourists' decisions, increased the importance of understanding tourists' information search behavior (Jani,2011; hamidizadeh et al, 2016). Of course one of the most important psychological mechanisms which guides behavior is personality. Based on the theory of personality traits, important aspects of human behavior and experiences can be described with a limited number of traits. These traits may affect the attitudes and behaviors of people in the field of information seeking. One of the most important theoretical foundations in information search behavior is the economics approach that uses the profit-benefit framework to information search (Erawan et al, 2011). Based on this approach, consumers are assumed to be rational. They evaluate the costs and benefits of their search when searching for information. Therefore, the perceived value of the information search process will have a significant effect on the information search behavior.

Considering family as an important consumption and decision-making unit, family members have influence on each other's decision-making process. Even though, literature indicate, information search is divided into internal and external search, present study also examined household information as another source of information alongside internal and external resources. So, present study aims to investigate the influence of personality traits on tourists' information search behavior in purchasing an outbound package tour

### **Materials and Methods**

The research was conducted using descriptive- survey method. For the purposes of data gathering, some questionnaires were used. The first was John and Srivastava's (1999) questionnaire for personality traits. Other questionnaires were researcher-made for perceived values. The statistical population of the study were heads of household from Isfahan who had purchased an outbound package tour in the Last 5 years. Convenient sampling method has been applied. In order to test the hypotheses Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares method by means of SMART PLS software package and SPSS was used.

### **Discussion and Results**

The paper provides a model for measuring the influence of personality traits on tourists' information search behavior in purchasing an outbound package tour. The findings of the study showed that conscientiousness and neuroticism have a significant effect on the extent of internal information search by tourists. Indeed,

perceived value for internal search has influence on the extent of internal information search. On the other hand, conscientiousness and agreeableness have a significant effect on perceived value for familial as a sources of information. The study also affirmed the influence of openness to new experience on the extent of external information search by tourists. Finally, results of the study revealed that perceived value for external search has influence on external information search extend.

### **Conclusions**

The results showed that conscientiousness has a significant effect on the extent of internal information search by tourists. The results have been confirmed by previous researches such as Halder et al., (2010) and Gul et al., (2014). The effect of perceived value for internal search on extent of internal information search and the influence of perceived value for external search on extent of external information search has indicated by previous studies such as Gursoy and McCleary (2004). An increase in costs of external search is expected to lead to a decrease in the amount of external search effort. Similarly, the internal information search is probable to decline with an increase in the internal search cost. On the other hand, the results highlight the effect of openness to new experiences on external information search. Furnham and Thorne (2013) believe that openness to new experiences lead to an increase in need to know.

It is recognized by previous researches such as Amaro and Duarte (2012) that neuroticism and extraversion have a significant effect on the extent of external information search. But the results of this study doesn't confirm it. In our opinion, this may be due to distrust of heads of household to travel agencies due to previous unpleasant experiences and not using proper promotional tools by travel agencies. Finally, the effects of conscientiousness and agreeableness on familial information search behavior have indicated by this study.

In sum, it can be said that although personality traits can influence the information seeking behavior, but these factors should be considered in conjunction with other factors such as situational, social class and familiarity with travel destination.

**Keywords:** Personality traits, internal information search, external information search, familial information search, tourism.

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