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Towards A Model of the UK Association Conference Attendance Decision-Making Process

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ASAE	American Society of Association Executives
ATC	Australian Tourist Commission
BACD	British Association of Conference Destinations
BCMTS	British Conference Market Trends Survey
BCVS	British Conference Venues Survey
C&E	Conference & Exhibition
EKB	Engel, Kollat, Blackwell (model)
EPS	Extensive Problem Solving
ICCA	International Congress and Convention Association
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
K-S	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (test)
LPS	Limited Problem Solving
MIA	Meetings Industry Association
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events
NBES	National Business Events Survey
PCA	Principal Components Analysis
RPS	Routine Problem Solving
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SMERF	Social, Mutual, Educational, Religious & Fraternal
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
S-W	Shapiro-Wilks (test)
TUC	Trades Unions Congress
VALS	Values and Life Styles
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the nature of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process and proposes a behavioural model representing this concept. Attendance at association conferences is often discretionary and moreover, association conferences are usually longer than other types of conference and are frequently larger in scale. Such characteristics potentially give rise to a complex decision-making model with regard to conference attendance. The research aims to investigate the precise nature of this model. Additionally it appears that very little is known about the characteristics of association conference delegates in the UK and this study aims to widen understanding of these characteristics by examining membership and attendance, socio-demographic, and demand and trip profile characteristics.

Initially the consumer behaviour literature is reviewed and it is argued that existing models of leisure tourism decision-making can be adapted to be representative of decision-making in the UK association context. The evaluation of alternatives stage of the decision-making process is the most complex and offers the best opportunity for empirical testing. Six proposed components of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process are identified.

Interviews with conference professionals and a questionnaire including two attribute-based measurement scales are identified as the most appropriate research methods, and the data obtained is subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. Six salient components of the conference attendance decision-making process emerge: location, cost, networking opportunities, personal/professional development, health and wellbeing, time and place. These were incorporated into the five-stage behavioural model of the UK association conference decision-making process proposed by this study.

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.0 Introduction

The aim of this research is to develop existing knowledge of business tourism and particularly of the conference industry. Business tourism, where the trip is undertaken for business purposes and not for leisure, is a major segment of the tourism market and is vitally important to the economies of many countries worldwide. Paradoxically however, the business tourism sector is less well-researched than other sectors of the tourism industry. This is particularly apparent in the area of conference tourism.

This research will focus on the conference industry, which until now has arguably been defined from a supply-side perspective, as will be documented in this thesis. In order to address this gap, this study will examine demand-side issues from the perspective of individual conference delegates and will particularly focus on why association conference delegates choose to attend a conference.

The research will link the decision-making process of conference delegates with established decision-making theory in consumer behaviour, and will propose a model of the UK association conference decision-making process. In addition, the extension of consumer behaviour theory to the conference context will demonstrate the wider application of consumer behaviour theory and in a sense will contribute towards further validation of the theories of leisure tourism decision-making.

1.1 Background

The business and conference tourism sector is often referred to as the MICE sector. "MICE" includes meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions and each will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The acronym MICE came into being in the mid-1990s and has generally been adopted by the industry. There have been criticisms of

the term, with one Australian academic complaining that "a mouse is a rodent making little contribution to anything" (McCabe *et al* 2000). However, the name has continued to be used and is often interchangeable with other terms such as business and conference tourism, or conventions and meetings.

According to McCabe *et al* (2000), the MICE sector is one of the fastest growing and most lucrative areas of the tourism industry. The benefits of the MICE industry include not just the obvious financial benefits (e.g. revenue generation, creation of employment), but also benefits such as generating investment in the tourism infrastructure and providing facilities that can be used for continuing education and training. Additionally there can be less tangible benefits of a successful MICE sector, such as improving the reputation and image of a destination.

Examination of the statistics for just one aspect of the MICE market, association conferences, illustrates the enormous impact of this industry. According to the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), who claim to represent 207 million members of associations worldwide, associations throughout the world annually spend $56 billion on conventions, expositions and seminars (ASAE 2005). This figure may be inflated as it is clearly in the interests of ASAE to promote association conferences, but nonetheless it serves to underline not just the economic importance of this sector, but also the importance of further research into this multi-billion dollar industry.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

As discussed, very little empirical work has been carried out on conferences, and in particular into the decision-making process undertaken by a potential conference delegate when deciding whether or not to attend an association conference. The research that has been carried out in the business tourism and MICE sectors has also focused predominantly on the supply side, in areas such as economic impacts and convention destination competitiveness. It appears that the conference market is being defined primarily from the supply-side and that there is a gap in the literature

concerning the individual conference delegates and their needs and wants, which offers an opportunity to advance knowledge in the area of conference and business tourism. Any research conducted by the industry itself generally investigates the economic impacts of conferences and their size and scale, such as for example the British Conference Venues Survey (BCVS 2004). The point of view of individual delegates has rarely been taken into account.

Although some initial work has been carried out into the factors that have a bearing on the attendance decision-making process, notably by Oppermann (1995b) and by Oppermann and Chon (1995 and 1997), further research in this area is still required. The underlying concepts and theories which underpin research into the conference attendance decision-making process are still very much in development and the research documented in this thesis aims to clarify the situation in this regard.

1.3 Research Questions

The literature review that formed part of this study identified several gaps in our knowledge of the conference industry, and the primary aim of this study is to contribute to filling these gaps through the investigation of why association delegates choose to attend conferences.

Four main research questions were identified, along with research objectives corresponding to each question which should provide the basis for the conceptual framework and model to be proposed by this study. There are two different types of objectives in this study – those that involve either desk-based research or literature review and those that can be measured statistically. In order to differentiate these two types of objectives, those that involve qualitative research will be labelled with letters (e.g. A, B, C) and those that can be measured statistically will be labelled with numbers (1, 2, 3 etc.). The hypotheses that are associated with the numbered objectives will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four

Research Question 1: To what extent can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context?

A thorough review of the literature on consumer behaviour in general and leisure tourism decision-making in particular was carried out in order to assess how and to what extent these decision-making models can be adapted to be representative of decision-making in an association conference context.

Research Question 2: How can the characteristics of UK association conference delegates best be defined?

Investigation of the existing conference tourism literature has shown that very little is currently known about UK association conference delegates. A deeper understanding of some of the characteristics of delegates will be of practical value to conference organisers and associations and will provide a foundation and point of comparison for further research in the future.

Research Question 3: Can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend?

The literature review also highlighted the main attributes that seem important to delegates as part of their decision-making process. Examination of these attributes will contribute to identifying any underlying dimensions that may be present.

Research Question 4: To what extent can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making?

The adaptation of the leisure tourism decision-making models to the conference context and the integration of the underlying dimensions identified as forming part of the conference attendance decision resulted in the proposal of a model of the

conference attendance decision-making process. This proposed model was subjected to empirical testing and the results of this testing informed the content and structure of the final model.

From these research questions, a series of research objectives was devised (again, those research objectives that involved a literature review or qualitative research have been labelled with letters, whilst those that can be measured statistically have been labelled with numbers).

Research Objective A

To examine those delegate characteristics about which little is currently known and that may be of interest to practitioners in the conference industry and to structure these characteristics into meaningful groupings in order to create a classification system that can be used as a basis for any future research.

Research Objective B

To analyse the available literature on consumer behaviour, decision strategies and leisure tourism decision-making models and assess their applicability in the conference context

Research Objective C

To give consideration to the decision strategies and rules that may be in operation in the association conference attendance decision-making process.

Research Objective D

To propose a model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process taking into account any changes occasioned by the results of the data analysis.

Research Objective E

To re-visit the literature on conference attendance in the light of the results of the data analysis in order to assess to what extent the conference factors identified are in line with any previous findings

Research Objective 1

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the membership and attendance characteristics and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 2

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the age characteristics of the delegates and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 3

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the gender characteristics of the delegates and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 4

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the demand and trip profile characteristics of the delegates and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 5

To identify the number and characteristics of the factors underpinning the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate

In the light of these research questions and objectives, it is important to consider the epistemological standpoint of this research. It has been argued that all observation is fallible and has error, and that all theory is revisable (Trochim 2004) and this

argument is usually advanced by critical realists. Proponents of critical realism argue that since measurement is fallible, multiple measures and observations are vital. This research is grounded in the principles of critical realism, and was designed in such a way as to attempt to minimise the fallibility of the measures used by introducing a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods as a form of triangulation. The researcher also believes that the research process is cyclical in nature and as such this research used a mixture of inductive and deductive reasoning.

Therefore, a combination of desk-based research and qualitative fieldwork was employed in order to gather information on the different components and factors that inform attendance decisions and these formed the theoretical framework to be presented in this research. This theoretical framework was then be tested during the fieldwork stage using quantitative methods and the final proposed model takes account of any amendments required following the results of data analysis.

1.4 Justification for the Research

As has been previously mentioned there are notable gaps in the literature on conference tourism, both in terms of areas where research has not yet been undertaken at all, and also in terms of the current supply-side focus of existing research. This research aims to contribute to knowledge in this area by examining decision-making from a demand-side perspective.

Furthermore, the work that has been carried out has not reported on the situation in the UK. It can be argued that there may be cultural and spatial reasons for suggesting that decision-making in the UK domestic context is distinct from decision-making domestically within other countries, or from decision-making at an international level. Oppermann (1995b) and Oppermann and Chon (1995 and 1997) examine the situation from a USA domestic context, and Witt, Sykes and Dartus (1995) consider forecasting international conference attendance. However, there is little in the way of research into decision-making in the UK domestic context. This

research will take the UK as its focus and it will contribute specifically to knowledge on the UK association conference sector.

Additionally, the limited research that has already been undertaken into attendance decisions has suggested a range of components or factors that play a part in the decision-making process, but none (to the author's knowledge) has gone on to incorporate these factors into a behavioural model of decision-making. This research aims to create a synthesis between the components identified from the existing research as being important in the attendance decision and the models of the leisure tourism decision-making process. The research therefore presents an original contribution to knowledge in this area by proposing a behavioural model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process.

Finally, it appears there is currently no widely accepted typology of the UK association delegate, and this research will help to establish the delegate characteristics that can be taken forward and used in further research. This too represents an original contribution to knowledge.

1.5 Definitions used within the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) industry

Before moving on to the literature review it is important at this stage to define the concepts and terms that will be central to this research.

Within the MICE industry there is a plethora of designations for what is essentially the same thing. Conference, convention, congress, symposium, forum, seminar and workshop – all can be said to be in essence a meeting. The difference is generally one of size and scale.

Definitions also vary according to country. For example '*convention*' could be described as the American word for what is called a '*conference*' in Britain. A '*congress*' is perceived as being a larger event, and is also often used as the English translation for European events.

In 1996, the Meetings Industry Association (MIA) defined a conference as "an event involving 10 or more people for a minimum of 4 hours during one day or more, frequently held outside the company's premises" (cited in Shone 1998). However, this is a very wide-ranging definition and would certainly include what most people would deem to be a fairly short, small meeting.

Weirich illustrates the difference between what a UK audience would consider to be a '*conference*' – a large event involving many participants – and what the term is taken to mean in the US: (a conference is) "a formal interchange of views, a meeting of two or more persons for discussing matters of common concern" (Weirich 1992, p 27). In contrast, her definition of '*convention*', as "an assembly of persons met for a common purpose [...] consisting of a dual meeting encompassing both the business for which the convention is called and a social interchange between attendees" (Weirich 1992, p 27), seems to be a suitable description of what the word '*conference*' means in the UK. All definitions from Weirich's book come from Webster's Dictionary, a reference book also used by Rutherford who goes on to add a list of other factors present at a meeting that is to be termed a '*convention*':

- It should occur at specific places called 'facilities'
- It should involve a food and beverage service
- It should provide for specialised technical support and audiovisual equipment
- Delegates will require transportation
- Delegates will require housing
- It should involve exhibitions of products
- It will require delegate entertainment

(Adapted from Rutherford 1990)

This list implies that a convention will include overnight stays and in this he differs from other authors who consider that a conference or convention can easily take place in one day without any overnight stay.

It is clear already that the issue of definition is a thorny problem and the differences in definitions between the US and the UK can only compound things. However, the British definitions will ultimately be of greater relevance to this study since it will take the situation here as its focus.

The British Conference Market Trends Survey (BCMTS) defines a conference as "an event that involves 15 or more people and occupies the venue for six hours or more during the course of one or more days" (quoted in Shallcross 1998, p B-39). This is similar to the definition given by the MIA, but different enough to allow for huge variations in what might be considered to be a conference.

A more recent definition is that used by the British Conference Venues Survey (BCVS 2004): "an out-of-office meeting of at least four hours' duration involving a minimum of eight people". This again is similar, but not identical to the definitions used in other research.

Davidson (1998, p 175) adds a note of caution to anyone trying to define '*conference*', saying, "it is important to recognise that a distinguishing characteristic of this market is that the different categories often merge into one, blurring the distinctions between them".

For the purposes of this research and bearing in mind that differing definitions will affect the statistics available, the word '*conference*' will be taken to refer to: "A meeting for consultation, exchange of information or discussion, especially one with a formal agenda" (Collins English Dictionary 1991). This reasonably loose definition will allow *'conference'* to be considered as having the same meaning as what is referred to in other parts of the world as a '*convention*' or a '*congress*'.

This thesis is concerned in particular with association conferences and therefore a definition of what is meant by this term now follows. Associations can be loose affiliations of people interested in a similar hobby, or can be much more organised, as is the case with professional associations which can be involved in regulating their

profession. For the purposes of this research "Association" is defined as "an organised and structured group of people who have similar interests or businesses" (McCabe *et al* 2000, p 43).

1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis will be divided in broad terms into two major parts. Initially there will be a literature review, and then research methodology, findings and discussions will follow.

Breaking this down into more detail, Chapter One has provided an introduction to the justification for and objectives of the research, and has defined the terms and concepts that will be referred to throughout. Chapter Two, "The Conference Market" delineates the context for this study and provides an introduction to the economic importance of conferences and the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) market generally, both internationally and from a UK domestic standpoint, examining in particular the demand-side characteristics of the conference sector. It will also discuss the current trends both domestically and internationally that are impacting on this industry. The segments of the MICE market are examined, and since this thesis takes the situation in the conference sector as its focus, this sector is examined fully. There follows a discussion of the component parts of the conference sector, and since this research will concentrate on the association conference sector, this is discussed in detail.

Chapter Three moves on to examine consumer behaviour, both on a general level and more specifically in tourism. The main thrust of this chapter is the creation of the conceptual framework for the UK association conference attendance decision-making process and the resulting hypothesised behavioural model. For clarity, this chapter will be divided into two main sections. Section One will address the initial research question (to what extent can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context?) and these existing models of the leisure tourism decision-making process will be examined, with a view to identifying the different

stages of the various models which can be utilised in the hypothesised model proposed in this thesis. Section Two of the same chapter will then seek to examine and create a foundation for two of the other research questions identified (can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend, and can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making?) by considering which factors are important in the specific context of a conference attendance decision. These will be identified initially by reviewing the literature on conferences, especially on convention site selection and conference attendance. Six components will be identified as being important in the conference attendance decision-making process and these components will be incorporated into the decision-making model which is proposed at the end of Chapter Three.

Chapter Four covers the issues raised by the research methods used in the empirical testing of the hypothesised model. Questions of where this research is placed on the research paradigm as well as what qualitative and quantitative methods are appropriate to this research problem are addressed. The creation of the final research instrument is discussed at length, along with salient points such as the reliability and validity of the research instrument and the sample obtained. The design of the attribute scales in particular is considered in depth.

Chapter Five reports on the research findings, beginning with a discussion on the data obtained, with particular reference to its suitability for parametric testing. The need for inferential statistics in order to test various hypotheses will be addressed and tests such as the Mann-Whitney U Test, Spearman's *rho* and the Kruskal-Wallis H Test are discussed. The data from the attribute scales will be subjected to factor analysis in order to assess and confirm the proposed model and the results are presented in this chapter, along with a discussion on how the results of the empirical testing can be used to improve the hypothesised model.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, forms the conclusion to this thesis, and discusses not only the research findings, and how they contribute to knowledge in this area, but also gives thought to any limitations that can be identified in this research and any areas where further research would be beneficial.

CHAPTER TWO - THE CONFERENCE MARKET

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the context for this study and will examine the issues surrounding research in the conference market, both in the UK and internationally. In order to explain the rationale behind researching the MICE industry it will underline the economic importance of the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions) industry worldwide and in the UK and will also draw attention to areas where research is currently lacking.

This chapter will then consider the current trends in the MICE industry including the increase in competition in the industry, the boom in Asia-Pacific MICE tourism and the international ramifications of events such as the September 11th attacks and international epidemics such as SARS on the MICE industry.

The constituent parts of the MICE industry will then be examined, with a short discussion on the individual characteristics of each segment of this sector. Following this wide-ranging discussion, the chapter will then focus more on the conference industry itself, including analysing the different types of conferences. These are identified as corporate, government and association conferences. This chapter will conclude by defining the parameters for this research as the decision-making process undertaken by UK association conference delegates. Specifying the context in this chapter will then allow the literature review to move forward and draw parallels between consumer behaviour in tourism generally and consumer behaviour in the specific context of UK association conferences.

2.1 Reasons for undertaking MICE Research

Research into MICE tourism, as in other areas of tourism, is of great practical value, particularly in terms of planning, development and marketing. To demonstrate this usefulness it is helpful to examine the existing research into the MICE industry,

much of which has focussed on its economic importance. However, as a corollary to this, it is also important to point out that the MICE sector has not yet been the subject of a great deal of research and this too will be discussed. The justification for carrying out this research into MICE events will rest on two main foundations – the economic importance of the sector, and identification of a significant gap in the literature with regard to the demand side of conference tourism.

2.1.1 Economic Importance of MICE

Business tourism, where the trip is not undertaken for leisure purposes, is a major segment of the tourism market and is vitally important to the economies of many countries worldwide. At present, Europe is the number one destination for business travellers, with 62% of all business trips being taken in a European destination. The Asia-Pacific region has also seen steady growth, especially in the past ten years (ICCA 2005).

International business travel to the USA has declined slightly in the past few years, but in 2004, nearly one in five (18%) U.S. adults (38.3 million) travelled for business on a trip that was at least 50 miles or more, one-way, away from home (ICCA 2005). The Travel Industry Association of America estimates that U.S. households generated 210.5 million person-trips for business purposes in 2003 (ICCA 2005). These figures show the importance of the business travel market to the US economy. In Australia, business travel is equally significant. Business events generate annual expenditure of A$17.36 billion, and create 214,000 Australian jobs. More than 316,000 business events were held across Australia in 2003, involving 22.8 million participants (NBES 2005). These figures are all the more remarkable when placed alongside the statistics for the whole Asia-Pacific region. Australia accounts for around 22% of all the meetings and conventions held in the Asia-Pacific region (McCabe et al 2000) and therefore the number of business events that take place annually in Asia Pacific can be calculated as being in the region of 1.5 million.

Closer to home, the business travel sector is of vital importance to the UK economy. Over the last ten years business visits to Britain have grown by 53% and now

represent 30% of total inbound tourism and the conference and incentive travel segments in particular are predicted to grow at a faster rate than any other tourism sector (MIA 2005). Research into business tourism has shown that conferences were worth an estimated £7.7 billion to venues in the UK in 2003 (BACD 2004). This figure represents only direct expenditure at the venues and does not take into account the indirect expenditure generated by each conference. Once this indirect expenditure is added the true scale of the business travel sector, and the conference segment in particular, becomes clear.

It is estimated that 1.46 million conferences and meetings took place at UK venues during 2002 (BCVS 2004). The sheer number of events is enough to draw attention to this sector of the tourism industry and research has shown that 71% of all venues in the UK expect a further increase in their conference business. This seems to suggest that the business travel market will be important for some time to come.

Most authors writing on the business tourism sector and for that matter, most businesses and government bodies, are in agreement that conferences and exhibitions can bring a lot of extra business to a town or city and that business visitors in general are high spending and are therefore to be desired. Kim *et al* (2003) suggest several reasons why MICE events impact on the local area:

- the number of delegates for one convention is large;
- the number of days stayed in a city or country can be longer than pleasure travellers with other purposes;
- international convention delegates are high spenders;
- delegates who participate in conventions and exhibitions also tend to join in pre- or post-tours (for pleasure); and
- industries affected by conventions and exhibitions are various and interrelated. Thus, since international conventions have great economic impact on the hosting city or country, many countries or cities make great efforts in promoting the convention industry.

It can therefore be argued that MICE events are important to local, regional and national economies and it follows that it is important to be able to measure the extent of these economic impacts. This is an area which has been researched in some depth.

Input-output models to measure the economic impact of conferences and conventions have been developed by authors such as *inter alia* Grado *et al* (1998) and Kim *et al* (2003). The former claimed that "for every dollar spent on this activity, there are three dollars of economic impact within the region" (Grado *et al* 1998, p 27). Clearly these results cannot be generalised to every setting, but such results seem to indicate that those attending from outside the region contribute greatly to the local economy, which serves to confirm what is accepted as a given – that conference travel creates additional wealth and is a lucrative market, much sought after and competed for by rival conference destinations throughout the world. Being able to put a figure on how much money a conference brings in is important on several levels, including attracting funding from local and national government, and obtaining permission to build or expand conference facilities and also underlines the practical value of research in this area.

Further research has been carried out into how the economic benefits of MICE tourism in gateway tourist destinations are distributed to other regions (Mistilis and Dwyer 1999). This highlighted a problem faced by many countries – MICE visitors are more concentrated in certain, usually urban, areas and the economic benefits gleaned from these high spending visitors are not trickling down to all areas of the country. The uneven distribution of income generated by MICE events is one area where further research would be very useful.

The trend towards families travelling with convention participants was the subject of an economic impact study by Rutherford & Kreck (1994). They outline the social side of conferences as being well suited to family holidays and also point out that delegates use the tax deductibility of the business travel section of their convention trip as a way to cut costs and allow the whole family to travel. The main thrust of their argument is the linkage between tourism activities and convention attendance.

Of all those attending conventions who were asked during their research, "over 80% participated in tourism activities simultaneously with the convention" (Rutherford & Kreck 1994, p 57). Many also enjoyed pre- and post-convention tours. This shows the enormous impact that convention visitors can have on the tourism industry and raises an important issue – people attending MICE events are still tourists, even though the purpose of trip is not leisure, but rather business. This tends to suggest that in certain circumstances, conference attendees (and their families) may exhibit similar consumer behaviour to leisure tourists. This point will receive further emphasis in the next chapter.

Although the economic benefits of the MICE sector seem to be clear, there can be a downside to the development of large-scale convention centres, as highlighted by Judd (2003) who points out that convention centres are not always perceived by locals to be "public infrastructure", in that the target audience of these centres comes predominantly from out of town. This can cause resentment as often these centres are built using public money which comes of course from the tax payer. Additionally, there is a tendency for cities to view large convention centres as "must-have" accessories, which can lead cities to develop convention centres to attract conventions, rather than developing them to service their existing convention industry (Judd 2003).

Nonetheless, research has shown that the MICE sector is a high value-added industry. As well as the above-mentioned economic benefits, there are many other social and cultural benefits such as enhancing the image of the venue, country or city and residents' quality of life. Additionally, the MICE industry does not create much pollution compared to electrical, chemical or other manufacturing industries. It can be argued that studies such as those referred to, and others, are vital in demonstrating that the outcome of money spent on conference and exhibition facilities and promotion can be quantified and it is possible to see in economic terms the positive effects of conferences and conventions. The clear economic importance of the MICE market is ample justification for the research that has been carried out so far, and serves to emphasise the need for further research into conference tourism.

2.1.2 Research Gaps

Aside from its economic impacts, the MICE industry has not been researched in much depth in recent years. "Despite the widespread recognition of its ability to bring important economic and social benefits to communities, the business tourism market is poorly documented and under-researched" (Davidson 1998, p.174). Almost every text in this subject will make mention of what is variously known as "limited research" (Abbey & Link 1994 p 275), "virtually non-existent" research (Witt *et al* 1995, p 559) "a dearth of reliable intelligence" (Davidson 1994, p 377) and "a largely neglected area of tourism research" (Oppermann 1996a, p 11).

The reasons for this lack of current research are of course many and varied, but the most often quoted factors (*inter alia* Smith 1990, Davidson 1994, Carlsen 1996, Seekings 1996, Muqbil 1997, Rogers 1998 and Dwyer & Mistilis 1999) are the difficulties of constructing and reconciling definitions within the conference industry and the lack of statistical data available. The latter may be a result of the former, but may also be attributable to competitive business practices, whereby private enterprises are unwilling to divulge information on turnover and profit and on the scale of their business. Additionally, as pointed out by Kim *et al* (2003), specific statistics on the conference industry are limited as it is difficult to disaggregate industries affected by the conference industry because it is linked with a variety of other industries. It is also reasonable to comment that much of the work that has been done to date has primarily aimed to describe the phenomenon of MICE events, rather than to debate and link MICE tourism to established theory.

One final point with reference to the lack of research in this area is that the majority of the research that has been carried out has not focussed on the individual delegate, but has rather been directed at the level of the meeting planners, and conference organisers, or even at a national or international level. The research that has been carried out in the business tourism and MICE sectors has also focused predominantly on the supply side, in areas such as economic impacts and convention destination competitiveness. It appears that the conference market is being defined primarily

from the supply-side and that there is a real gap in the literature concerning the individual conference delegates and their needs and wants, which offers an opportunity to advance knowledge in the area of conference and business tourism.

It can be supposed that the success of marketing any given product or service depends to a greater to lesser extent on full knowledge and understanding of the needs and wants of the purchaser. This is certainly part of the rationale behind the copious amounts of market research that are carried out on a daily basis by industry and as Middleton (2001, p. 19) states: "In terms of customers, marketing is concerned with understanding the needs and desires of existing and prospective customers, i.e. why they buy". In the specific case of conference and business tourism however, this market research is at a much less developed stage than other sectors of the tourist industry. As has been explained, there has been some research into the supply side of the business tourism industry – feasibility of developing new facilities, and economic impacts of conferences amongst others. Additionally, a certain amount of research has been carried out into meeting planners and their site selection criteria, and this area will be discussed further in the next chapter. However, research has not as yet focussed to any great extent on the individual conference delegate, who after all creates the demand for the MICE product. A deeper understanding of the characteristics of delegates attending conferences would be of practical value, particularly to conference organisers and convention destination marketing bodies, as analysis of these characteristics would provide much-needed information on the delegates who have chosen to attend and more specifically why they chose to attend. This information could include details on the socio-demographic profile of delegates, conference trip profiles and the association membership and conference attendance profiles of delegates. Studying this will provide useful information for conference organisers and also address Research Objective A which aimed to examine those delegate characteristics about which little is currently known and that may be of interest to practitioners in the conference industry and to structure these characteristics into meaningful groupings in order to create a classification system that can be used as a basis for any future research.

It is feasible that examination of the socio-demographic characteristics of conference delegates may reveal interesting demand-side issues. In particular, the gender of delegates attending conferences may reflect what may be termed "gender professions", such as nursing, which is predominantly female and this may have implications for the marketing, administration and organisation of certain conferences. There may be links between socio-demographic traits such as age and gender, and financial constraints to attending conferences, occasioned by questions of relative salaries, and level of responsibilities in the home and the workplace. This is an area where knowledge is currently sparse and therefore this research will investigate this further.

The characteristics of the trip profile may also be of interest, in that propensity to add on a short holiday to a conference may be related to other trip or membership characteristics. It might be the case that delegates who are travelling alone are less likely to want to spend extra time away from home and therefore would be less likely to add on any holidays to a conference. Equally, it is feasible that the majority of delegates are travelling with their partners or families and would therefore be more likely to want to add on a holiday to the conference. Again, these are issues about which very little is currently known, and this research will investigate them in depth.

Finally, the membership and attendance characteristics of delegates may throw up further interesting revelations. It may be that there are relationships between length of membership and attendance patterns, or perhaps there are differences between members and non-members of associations in terms of their priorities for attending a conference. It may be the case that members are more likely to want to attend association conferences for example in order to meet up with old friends, or perhaps to maintain their involvement in the association. These points would be of interest to conference organisers and associations, and again these issues have not been covered in depth in the existing research, and will therefore be dealt with by this study.

The above discussion relates primarily to Research Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4, regarding examining the differences between different groupings on these types of

variables and hypotheses designed to test for significant between-groups differences on these variables will be detailed in Chapter Four – Research Methodology.

It has been demonstrated in the preceding discussion that there are two main justifications for researching MICE tourism. The clear economic importance of the MICE sector provides a rationale in itself for further research into conferences and business tourism. Additionally, a specific gap in the literature pertaining to the demand-side characteristics of the MICE market has been identified, and therefore results of research designed to fill that gap will be interesting both on an academic and a practical level.

2.2 International Trends in the MICE Industry

Before focussing on the specific nature of this research, it is interesting and useful to consider some of the recent trends in the industry, both internationally and domestically, in order to understand the global nature of this sector.

2.2.1 Increased Competition

One of the most important current issues in the MICE sector is the growing competition between destinations. The situation is most acute in the Asia-Pacific region, where much of the research that has been completed has been based, but the basic tenets of competition hold true for most destinations worldwide including the United Kingdom.

MICE industry research is somewhat thin on the ground as discussed above, and this does make it difficult to measure the true scale of the MICE industry, but most experts agree that it is of vital importance to the economies in many parts of the world (*inter alia* Carlsen 1996, Muqbil 1997, McCabe & Weeks 1999). The sheer proliferation of venues bears witness to this fact and naturally as more destinations and venues make themselves known, competition will increase. Several studies have been carried out to research the relative competitiveness of various Asia-Pacific destinations, where the situation is most acute. For example, Qu *et al* (2000)

compared the comparative competitiveness of Hong Kong with that of Singapore with regard to attracting conferences. The conclusion that emerges from this paper is that Hong Kong is perceived as less competitive than Singapore and must "overcome its weaknesses and develop competitive advantages to maintain itself as an ideal international conference destination in Southeast Asia" (Qu *et al* 2000 p 643). This advice is not just pertinent to Hong Kong, but is also valuable for every destination – competitive advantage over one's rivals is vital in an industry where very little differentiates the destinations involved.

Go & Govers (1999) carried out a wider study and drew conclusions as to the relative competitiveness of eleven Asian conference destinations. The strengths and weaknesses of each destination and the practical implications of this information are noted, which must have proven very useful for the destinations reviewed. This study shows that Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo emerge as market leaders. This finding ties in with other studies (*inter alia* Lew & Chang 1999, Qu *et al* 2000) which show both Singapore and Hong Kong as key players in the Asian MICE market, and also with available statistics on the size of the Asia-Pacific market which confirm the economic importance of these cities. The main weakness brought to light is price. Price is defined in this study as "the perceived ability of a city to price conferences and meetings competitively with regard to delegates out of pocket expenses, hotel accommodation expenses, food & beverage costs [...] and sight seeing expenses" (Go & Govers 1999, p 42). This issue of conference cost can be one of great importance to those attending a conference and this issue of cost will be covered in greater detail in the next chapter.

In short, the increase in competition between MICE destinations is most acute in the Asia-Pacific region, where the focus is on intra-regional events, and this will be discussed in more detail in the next section. However, the main issues that arise due to competition are relevant to all destinations. The keys to success in this competitive and very price sensitive market seem to be getting the price right and maintaining a competitive advantage.

2.2.2 Asia-Pacific Boom

One of the most obvious trends is the current boom in the Asia-Pacific region. This does not just apply to tourism, but also to most sectors of the economy. It is fair to say that despite an economic crisis in the region in the late 1990's, this is still the fastest growing part of the global economy. The Asia-Pacific region includes some of the heavyweights in world tourism, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Australia, as well as relative newcomers like the Philippines, Malaysia and China. South Korea too is becoming a more important conference destination (Kim *et al* 2003). The convention market in the Asia–Pacific region has increased by 124% during the period of 1980–1996 (Kim *et al* 2003). According to Muqbil (1997), between ten and twenty thousand MICE events took place annually in the Asia-Pacific region in the mid 1990's, involving up to 14 million participants and the number has been growing since. The latest figures show that Australia alone held 316,000 business events in 2003 (NBES 2005). These figures are testament to the prowess of these Asia-Pacific countries in attracting conference, trade show and exhibition attendance. This is clearly where the particular strength of the Far East countries lies. Huge exhibition centres such as the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Centre make this region one of the best equipped in the world and ensure their place as world leaders. It is important to clarify at this point that the majority of the business in the Asia-Pacific region is intra-regional business – large numbers of events are held in this area by companies and associations located in this geographical area that attract delegates also located in this area. There are far fewer international events than regional events, which highlights the fact that although certain destinations appear to be market leaders, when taken in a global context, they are far smaller players than might at first be thought. However, the amount of investment that has been made in this market is definitely persuasive evidence for the health and strength of the international MICE market, as it is certain that funding for such large-scale projects is unlikely to be made available without buoyant levels of market confidence, both in this region and globally. Recent events may have dented confidence, but this issue will be discussed in more depth in the next section.

In fact, the sheer availability of space in the Asia-Pacific region is leading to what Muqbil (1997, p54) described as "a glut of C & E space". This in his opinion will cause increased competition, both for domestic and intra-regional events and for international events. Further issues for this region highlighted by Muqbil (1997) include a lack of training, inadequate industry co-operation and government support and major infrastructure shortcomings, particularly with respect to telecommunications and power supplies.

The latter point is of course of less relevance to Australia, which has a more established infrastructure. Australia has developed its conference capacity significantly, including dedicated convention centres in Adelaide, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane and according to Carlsen (1996 p 52) "there has been a proliferation of convention and meeting venues in the five star hotel properties, extending to four and three star resorts in Australia". As a measure of how seriously this industry is taken, the Commonwealth Department of Tourism released a "National Strategy for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions" in 1995, which sought to capitalise on the increased international attention generated by the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. In addition, 2001 was declared as the year of meetings in Australia (Carlsen 1996).

Dwyer and Mistilis (1999) present an analysis of the opportunities and challenges facing the MICE industry in Australia. Five key challenges are addressed:

- Developing further co-operation among MICE industry stakeholders
- Gaining more government support
- Developing appropriate public and private infrastructure
- Improving service standards and training
- Boosting MICE numbers through effective marketing efforts

They point out that these challenges face not just Australia but also other competitor destinations too and interestingly these points are similar to those raised by Muqbil (1997) mentioned above (particularly lack of training, industry co-operation and

government support). They conclude that the future growth of the MICE industry in Australia "will depend in large measure on its ability to meet these challenges better than its competitors" (Dwyer and Mistilis 1999, p 97).

Lew & Chang feel that "despite the 1997-1998 economic problems in Asia, tourism and travel will continue to increase globally and especially within the Asia-Pacific region. This means more meetings for everyone" Lew & Chang (1999, p 34). This positive take on the situation is slightly tempered by the report's conclusion that "regional competition will make Singapore less dominant in the Asia-Pacific region while its enhanced convention and exhibition facilities will make Singapore more competitive with European and North American destinations" (Lew & Chang 1999, p 34). However, not all authors are so positive - Go & Govers (1999) highlight the fact that, in their opinion, there is stagnating growth in the total numbers of international meetings held worldwide and so competition is increasing. This is in marked contrast to Lew & Chang's more upbeat assessment that there will be "more meetings for everyone" (Lew & Chang 1999, p 34).

In summary, the Asia-Pacific economies are still expanding, and the MICE market is expanding too. Several authors have discussed issues affecting destinations in this area, particularly issues of infrastructure and training, and the importance of the MICE industry has been underlined in Australia in particular by government efforts to raise the profile of this industry. However, recent events have been dominating both the headlines and the global economy.

2.2.3 Global Security Threats and Other International Issues

The events of September 11th 2001 are too well known to require repetition here, as are some of the other acts of terrorism carried out on an international scale, such as the bomb in Bali in 2002 and the Madrid railway bombing in 2004. These events had major ramifications throughout the world, and may have changed the way international travel is viewed for ever.

It is estimated that the US airline industry lost between $1 billion and $2 billion during the first week after the September 11th tragedy. During the first three months or so after the attacks, hotel bookings in the USA declined by some 20–50% as individuals and groups cancelled vacation plans, and firms cancelled or postponed conventions, corporate meetings, seminars, and trade shows. This resulted in a loss of at least two billion dollars across the USA within the first month after the tragedy (Goodrich 2002).

America is currently in the process of introducing new regulations for those entering the country – different visa regulations and the introduction of biometric passports/identity cards. These are all designed to protect the American public, but are having a detrimental effect on the number of visitors travelling to the States. Corporate America is particularly sensitive to the risks involved in international travel, with companies such as Merck, Boeing and Merrill Lynch introducing restrictions on their top executives flying on the same flights (Goodrich 2002)

Events in Bali were no less shocking for inhabitants of the island and the wider Asia-Pacific area, and had equally devastating economic impacts as tourists, especially from Australia, simply stayed away. This was particularly shocking for the tourism industry as tourists were the prime targets of this attack, unlike the September 11th attacks which clearly targeted corporate America. The bombing in Madrid, which targeted the railway system, exacerbated fears of travelling amongst commuters and tourists alike.

One important positive development has been the anecdotal increase in domestic tourism, not just in the United States, but more broadly, as tourists see the merits of staying near to home, and not taking any risks by flying. This will be beneficial to the tourism industry which has suffered greatly from these events

Other issues which can have a devastating effect on the MICE and tourism industries include epidemics of contagious diseases. The prime example of this is the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic in South East Asia . Nearer to home

however, the foot and mouth epidemic in Britain in 2001 also impacted severely on tourism, both internationally and domestically. It is estimated that as a result of the SARS epidemic up to three million people in the tourism industry lost their jobs in the most severely affected jurisdictions of China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Vietnam and that the outbreak cost these four economies over $20 billion in lost GDP. Tourism arrivals also fell by 70% or more across the rest of Asia, even in countries that were largely or totally disease-free. (McKercher & Chon 2004). In their analysis, McKercher and Chon contest that over-reaction to the actual threat posed by this disease led to these devastating impacts on the economies of this region and suggest that research should be carried out as a matter of urgency into national recovery strategies. The SARS epidemic was of particular relevance to the MICE industry as the area that it struck relies heavily on the convention and exhibition market. However, the signs are that since the epidemic was limited in scale and location and is now comprehensively over, the tourism market is recovering (McKercher & Chon 2004).

It is still very early to state with confidence the impacts that these events are having. It takes time to research these issues and work in this area is still ongoing in tourism and other disciplines. With regard to the MICE industry, it does seem likely that the downturn in international travel will impact most severely on the corporate market, which may already be relying more and more on videoconferencing techniques. A similar picture may be developing in the international association conference market, but the domestic or intra-regional association market is less affected by security threats and terrorism worries as the distances involved in travelling to these events are much less. No market sector is immune to the impacts of these global events, but the domestic conference and exhibition market seems to be the least likely to be affected by international terrorism.

In conclusion, it seems that international terrorism and global security will always impact heavily on this industry, as will any epidemics, but it seems likely that the domestic tourism and conference markets will suffer less than the international markets.

2.3 Current Trends in the UK MICE industry

This research will focus on the domestic market in the United Kingdom and will consider the demographic and other characteristics of UK association conference delegates, and how potential association conference delegates decide whether or not to attend an association conference. In order to better understand the association conference market and its delegates it is interesting and useful to examine the volume and value of this sector in the UK.

It has been argued above that the international problems of terrorism and security are having a much greater impact on the international scene than on the domestic scene, and the figures for conferences and conventions in the UK seem to bear this out, although the UK remains a popular destination for international conferences. The following facts and figures compiled by VisitScotland in 2003, but relating to the United Kingdom as a whole, illustrate the importance of the MICE market to the UK.

- The UK is amongst the top conference destinations in the world. ICCA statistics place the UK 3rd for international association meetings – hosting 151 or 5% of those held around the world.
- According to ICCA statistics, the UK is the top European destination for international corporate meetings, followed by France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.
- MIA's UK Conference Market Study found that Scotland was the fifth top region in the UK for holding corporate meetings – hosting 35% of those held in the UK in 2002. Edinburgh and Glasgow were the 4th and 5th top hosting cities for UK corporate meetings.
- There is a continuing trend to shorter lead times, while important factors in choosing a destination include location, price, previous experience and access.
- There is no evidence yet that new technologies such as videoconferencing will reduce the number of meetings and conferences.

- Security has become an increasingly important issue for meetings organisers and destinations, given recent world events.

(Source: VisitScotland 2003).

Further research has also been carried out by the MICE research unit at Bournemouth University which uncovered several interesting findings. The research related to trends in five different environments that affect the UK conference market – these were the business environment, the social environment, the technological environment, and the political and legal environment – and also identified issues and difficulties that face the UK conference industry. Reference to this research helps to form a greater understanding of the conference and meetings industry in the UK, which is the basis of this thesis.

With regard to the business environment, the research found that:

> "the key trends in the business environment that are likely to impact upon the UK conference market are improving facilities in conference venues, more competition due to an increase in the number of venues, and competitive prices from other destinations. The success and growth of the UK, the European, and the wider global economy is fuelling increased business in the conference industry, and as a consequence is stimulating the development of more venues and new locations." (Ladkin 2002).

It is estimated that there are approximately 5,640 conference venues in the UK (BCMTS 2000), and if there are more to be developed, then the UK will be even more able to compete against other destinations.

Social trends that were identified as impacting on the conference and meetings industry included the fact that the continued growth in international travel will facilitate conference attendance and also the fact that increased working from home means that as employees are isolated there is a need to meet and network (Ladkin

2002). This theme of networking is one that will be explored in much greater depth as this thesis progresses.

Changes and trends in the technological environment that are forecast to affect the conference industry include the increased use of IT and the increased availability of IT facilities at conference venues, the use of webcasts, teleconferencing and video conferencing and the widespread use of e-commerce distribution channels. Clearly some of these trends are being observed in the leisure industry too, but they are of particular relevance where business tourism is concerned.

The political and legal changes identified by the MICE Tourism Research Unit as those which would impact on the conference and meetings industry include changes in VAT on accommodation – this currently contributes towards making the UK relatively more expensive for international conferences - along with the strong pound and the fact that the UK is not in the Euro-zone. Other issues that are stressed include the fact that delegate safety is also of increasing concern for conference organisers and venues (Ladkin 2002). This point will be reiterated in the next chapter, as it may impact upon attendance decisions.

This research also identified areas where the UK conference and meetings industry may encounter problems in the future, including in the area of human resources (low rates of pay and lack of specific training in the conference industry), in terms of quality (both of facilities and service), in terms of cost (value for money for delegates and organisers and also assistance with investment in facilities) and with relation to the marketing and selling of conferences in the UK, both domestically and internationally.

The research concluded that the future of the UK conference and meetings industry is clearly dependent on a range of external influences. These influences are not unique to the conference and meetings industry, but affect many tourism businesses and services. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, the conference and meetings industry will have to adapt to change and respond to external influences for

survival (Ladkin 2002). This is not dissimilar to the conclusions reached by those authors writing on the international situation, as mentioned in the previous section.

Despite the setbacks occasioned by the foot and mouth epidemic and the ever present threat of international terrorism, and despite the obstacles that the industry faces in a competitive market place, the UK MICE industry remains buoyant. It seems that the UK is well-placed to continue to be an important conference destination, particularly for association conferences and meetings. This underlines the importance and relevance of this study, as it will contribute to knowledge in the area of the UK MICE industry.

2.4 The MICE Sector

As has already been mentioned, the MICE market is wider than just conferences. It includes meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. Each one of these will be examined and additionally there will be a short discussion on videoconferences which arguably form a new market segment within the MICE industry.

2.4.1 Meetings

The number of international meetings and conventions has risen dramatically during the past decades as has been highlighted already in previous sections. Meetings can be international or domestic and can be large-scale or small-scale. The term "meeting" is probably the least specific of all the terms understood by the acronym MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) as it can refer to almost any gathering of people for the purposes of discussing some matter of interest to the participants.

In some cases, conventions or conferences can be considered to be meetings, whilst in other cases, a meeting can be a very small scale event involving only a few people within a company. According to Abbey and Link (1994, p 273) "75% of all corporate meetings has fewer than 100 people in attendance". This indicates that

most meetings are smaller events, whilst many conferences, especially international ones, can have more than 1000 delegates. Davidson (1998) points out that the different categories of the MICE market often merge into one another, with a conference taking place which has an exhibition running alongside it, or a meeting in an exotic location, attendance at which may be considered to be a reward, making it incentive travel.

Since the definitions of "meeting" are at best diverse and at worst vague, this study will now move on to the more clearly defined sectors of the MICE market.

2.4.2 The Incentive Travel Market

Incentive travel has been defined as "a type of pleasure travel that has been financed for business reasons" (Mill & Morrison 1985, p115) and also as "offering the reward of a visit to a highly desirable destination in return for meeting clearly defined and attainable objectives within a fixed programme period" (Witt & Gammon 1994 p 19). A more conceptual definition is that offered by the Society of Travel Executives: "a concept whereby company employees, distributors and sales teams are motivated to achieve uncommon business goals by the prospect of an extraordinary travel experience as a reward for attaining the goals" (quoted in O'Brien 1997, p B-18). It can be considered as an important element of the conference market, since although the travel is not always primarily for business purposes, a great deal of incentive travel includes a conference or business meeting.

The incentive market has not been studied in great depth as an individual market segment. This may be in part attributable to the fact that it is hard to differentiate between those travelling on business trips and those travelling on incentive trips, since both are paid for by businesses and a proportion of incentive trips include an element of business, such as a meeting or tour of company offices. In addition, for research into some aspects of the conference industry, for example destination image, it is arguably less important to differentiate incentive travellers from any other conference travellers.

O'Brien (1997) wrote in detail on the characteristics of the incentive market. Although the study is based around the UK, it gives an excellent insight into the incentive travel market in general. It may be slightly out of date, but he does highlight certain important points as shown in Figure 2.1.

Factors influencing the choice of destination for incentive travel are thought to include budget and cost, uniqueness of the destination, availability of suitable facilities, climate and sightseeing and cultural attractions. These are similar to some of the factors that will be considered in relation to the association conference attendance decision, to be discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

Figure 2.1 – Characteristics of the incentive trip

Characteristics of the incentive trip
Over 50% of all incentive trips involve a conference or meeting, and over 40% of all incentive trips involve a site, factory or business visit.
Most incentive travel programmes are planned up to 12 months in advance and most are jointly organised by the company itself and an external agency
In most cases, the winner's spouse or partner is permitted to travel with him/her, usually at the company's expense
The attraction of the incentive travel market to destinations is the relatively high spend of incentive visitors from the US and other long haul destinations
Europe, and particularly the UK is an important reward destination for company achievers
American incentive travel to Europe is heavily biased towards the large international tourist destinations – London, Edinburgh, Paris, Amsterdam etc
Short haul incentive travel within Europe is a relatively new development and is greatly shaped by economic circumstances
European incentives are more often based around leisure, sport and group activities than around visiting tourist destinations
European companies use incentive travel as a reward for performance, but attempt to extract greater value from each trip, by keeping costs down and by including an element of business such as a meeting in each trip
European incentive groups tend to be smaller (40 or 50 as opposed to 100 to 120 for US groups)

(Source: adapted from O'Brien 1997)

O'Brien (1997) considers that the trends and developments shaping the market include the economic environment, which will determine the success of companies and in turn their ability to afford incentive travel. He also suggests that the Channel Tunnel has stimulated new forms of intra-European incentive travel and has already created the one-day incentive between the UK, Belgium and France. Finally, he considers that cruising is now offering economic benefits as well as the opportunity to co-ordinate easily the incentive event. However as it becomes more available to the mass market, its kudos as an incentive reward will begin to ebb away. The study concludes that although the market is becoming more price-sensitive and there is increasing competition from other countries, the future for the incentive travel market to the UK and Ireland is looks to be assured.

2.4.3 Exhibitions

Exhibitions, which include trade fairs or trade shows, can be defined as "presentations of products or services to an invited audience with the object of inducing a sale or informing the visitor" (Davidson 1998, p 194). They often take place during conferences or conventions especially where the conference has a large number of delegates or where a professional association is organising the conference (for example, many medical and scientific conferences have exhibitions organised by pharmaceutical companies as part of the programme). Exhibitions are important in the tourism sector as they stimulate travellers with two different purposes. In the first place, the exhibitors themselves require transport and accommodation and spend money whilst in the destination, and additionally the visitors coming to the exhibition or trade show are a second source of revenue, as they too require transport and sometimes accommodation. Considering that some larger exhibitions have hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of visitors, it is easy to see the economic importance of these events.

An exhibition, or trade fair, allows the seller to come face to face with the buyer, often in surroundings where business is expected to be done. The product or service itself may be tested or sampled. It may be an annual event where sellers and buyers

come together specifically to discuss new contracts and business, or it may be part of a conference where sellers are looking for new contacts. According to Poorani (1996) the primary objectives of hospitality-related trade shows exhibitors are sales-related, and there is no reason to suppose that this is not the case in other sectors of the economy too.

Exhibitions often take place in vast exhibition centres. The largest in the UK include the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham and ExCel in London, but these are dwarfed by the size of the facilities available elsewhere in the world. Hanover in Germany boasts the largest exhibition centre in Europe, but the exhibition centres recently constructed in the Asia-Pacific region are the giants in this respect. Hong Kong and Singapore both lead the way in huge exhibition and conference centres, and developments in Japan and China mean that this part of the world reigns supreme in its ability to play host to mega-events. Given the fact that as discussed earlier, both exhibitors and visitors contribute to the local economy, it is clear that these huge-scale venues and the mega-events that they are capable of holding are massive players in the economies of these countries

As has been discussed, the divisions between the different segments of the MICE industry are rather blurred, and often one event can incorporate a large meeting which could be defined as a conference, an exhibition running in tandem with the meeting, and several delegates attending through an incentive programme at their place of work. Therefore, before going any further in this research it is important to stress that this study will focus on conferences and so the conference sector will now be examined in more detail.

2.5 Types of Conference

Historically, the conference market has been divided into either two or three sections (association, corporate and government), but recent technological innovations have allowed the consideration of a fourth sector, videoconferencing. However, it is clear that there is discord amongst those authors who have written on the subject with

regard to how to classify the market segments of the conference industry. Several authors divide the market into three segments – association, corporate and government - (for example McCabe et al 2000, Shallcross 1998). Others prefer to split the market evenly between two segments, defined by Abbey and Link (1994) as "association-type and corporate-type" (*inter alia* Smith 1990, Clark *et al* 1996, Weirich 1992). Shone (1998) also concurs with a division of the market into two segments – association and corporate – but "with the proviso that not all organisations or all conference activities will necessarily conveniently fit these respective categories". Rutherford (1990) segments the entire MICE market into only two sections - association conventions and trade shows and expositions, a rather isolated position in comparison with the other authors who prefer to consider incentives and exhibitions separately.

In his work on the British Conference Market Trends Survey, Shallcross (1998) illustrates clearly his interpretation of the differences between association, corporate and government conferences – see Figure 2.2. In this he highlights clear differences between the three market segments and identifies the salient points about each type of conference.

None of these authors have included videoconferencing as a separate part of the conference market, as they have referred to it as part of the corporate market. However, as will be discussed, it has enough distinguishing characteristics to allow it to be considered as a separate component of the conference market.

2.5.1 Corporate

McCabe *et al* (2000) consider business communication to be the primary reason for a convention or meeting within the corporate sector. However, meetings can be held to communicate a number of different things. It is generally accepted that within the corporate sector, meetings are identified as board meetings, training meetings, sales meetings and conferences and new product launches (*inter alia* Smith 1990, Cotterell 1994, Seekings 1996, Shone 1998 and McCabe *et al* 2000).

Most definitions of corporate business, as opposed to association meetings, stress the importance of the profit element. For example, Weirich (1992) defines corporate business as coming from a corporation that is a profit oriented business. This means that the company holding the meeting or conference is usually paying for everything, including attendance by delegates, which is frequently compulsory. This highlights one main issue, which is that the company must make a profit. McCabe *et al* (2000, p. 56) state that "a company seeks the maximum return on its investment and the delegates who attend the meeting seek relevant practical information which is effectively presented". This return on investment need not be direct financial gain, but rather may refer to increased motivation amongst those staff attending, resulting in higher productivity and yield.

Corporate meetings and conferences are generally smaller than association conferences, although as Abbey and Link (1994) point out, they hold meetings of all sizes. They identify that an estimated 75% of all corporate meetings are smaller than 100 delegates. McCabe *et al* (2000) also consider that corporate meetings have a tendency to be small. They hold that the majority of corporate meetings have an average of 15-50 delegates.

There is little consensus as to whether association or corporate meetings are more profitable to the conference industry. Smith (1990) suggests that 90% of all meetings held are corporate meetings, which tend to be smaller but are less price sensitive than the larger association meetings. Since little research has been done in this area it is impossible to draw conclusions as to the relative profitability of each segment. However, it is clear that both are vital to the conference industry.

2.5.2 Government

Governmental and inter-governmental bodies meet frequently and can be a major source of revenue and prestige for conference destinations. These meetings can be high profile international summits or training meetings for civil service departments, or anything in between.

Figure 2.2 – Main Types of Conference Users

MAIN TYPES OF CONFERENCE USERS (BCMTS)			
	Association	**Corporate**	**Government**
Duration:	LONG: Association conferences tend to be longer than average for both residential and non-residential conferences.	SHORT: Corporate conferences tend to be shorter than the average duration for both residential and no-residential conferences.	SHORT: Non-residential government conferences were the shortest, on average, of the three sectors in 1997. Residential conferences have, on average, been getting slightly longer.
Size (delegate numbers)	LARGE: Association conferences have traditionally generated high delegate volumes. A significantly higher proportion of association conferences have more than 200 delegates than in any other sector. Association conferences are generally responsible for the very largest conferences reported to the BCMTS.	SMALL: 78% of residential conferences and 68% of non-residential conferences reported in 1997 (up to September) were for 50 delegates or less. Year on year comparisons suggest that average delegate numbers at corporate conferences are increasing gradually.	SMALL: The majority of reported government conferences have been for 50 delegates or less. Average delegate numbers do not vary greatly between residential and non-residential conferences as much as other sectors.
Starting Day	Residential conferences have consistently favoured Monday and Friday as the starting day. Non-residential conferences are spread evenly throughout the week, with a slight drop on Friday.	Residential conferences concentrate heavily on Monday and Tuesday starts, while non-residential conferences are distributed fairly evenly through the week, slightly favouring Tuesday and Wednesday.	Residential conferences marginally favour Monday starts. The proportion of residential conferences starting on Friday (i.e. work through weekend) has been increasing recently.

Source: Shallcross (1998)

One major distinction of the government segment is the question of accountability – where the public purse is being opened, there will always be the question of public scrutiny. This means that this market is highly price sensitive (McCabe *et al* 2000).

Additionally, meetings are often destination-led, meaning for example, that various departments in the Scotland Office will meet in a convenient central location. Some authors include the government section under "associations" (Shone 1998 and Abbey and Link 1994), whilst others make no mention of it at all (Seekings 1996, Weirich 1992, Rutherford 1990). However, as shown Figure 2.2, this segment has enough defining characteristics to allow it to be considered as an independent market segment.

2.5.3 Videoconferencing

Although it is not treated as a separate issue by most authors, technology is moving at such a speed that it is now viable to consider videoconferencing as a new type of conference. New technologies, especially in the communications market, have had and continue to have profound effects on the conference and meetings industry and as such, it is important not to leave this vital market segment out. However, it is also important to point out that videoconferences are closely tied with the preceding conference types and often form part of a more traditional conference.

Many authors have written on the benefits of videoconferencing (*inter alia* O'Connor 1994, Seekings 1996, Finn *et al* 1997, Briggs 1998, Shone 1998, and Shallcross 1998) and the general consensus seems to be as follows (Seekings 1996):

- There are savings in time and money (once the system has been bought or hired)
- It allows speedier responses – decisions can be made at once
- Meetings are easier to arrange – it takes little time to set up a teleconference, there is no need to find a venue and no travel is necessary
- It allows for more effective use of people (no time wasted travelling etc.)

- It increases personal productivity
- It helps avoid the stress and fatigue of travelling

While it is clearly open to all market segments to use video conferencing facilities, it is generally recognised that the corporate market is currently the leader in the use of this technology particularly thanks to its convenience and relatively low costs, once the system is in place. Nevertheless, the above advantages, although considerable, do lack a certain something, variously described as "clinching power" (Briggs 1998, p D-20), and "the cut and thrust of heated argument" (O'Connor 1994, p 27). This basically refers to a face-to-face meeting, making contacts and "chatting informally over drinks at the bar" (Seekings 1996, p16). These issues will form an important part of this study and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Videoconferencing was originally developed in the 1960's (Shallcross 1998) but at that time it was not all that well received – costs were high and the technology available was limited. Videoconferencing had been hailed as sounding the death knell for the conference industry, but for the reasons given above, it soon became clear that in its 1960's form it was really no threat to the conference industry. Even relatively recently, Smith (1990 p 74) considered it "no replacement for the old fashioned idea of getting together with colleagues". This thesis will go on in subsequent sections to investigate such perceived benefits as part of the research into the conference attendance decision-making process which form the basis of this thesis.

It is however important to consider the pace of technological change over the past decade or so. Much has been written on the importance of this subject to the conference market (*inter alia* Seekings 1996, Shallcross 1998, O'Connor 1994 and Shone 1998) with discussions on whether new technology is actually only a means of doing what is already being done better and faster or whether technology is now allowing things not previously thought possible to be introduced. This impacts on videoconferencing in that the previous systems were slower, less reliable and prohibitively expensive, whereas now some companies have sleek efficient systems

on every desktop. The general conclusion amongst those authors writing on the subject is that technology in the case of videoconferencing appears to fit both models – it has improved videoconferencing equipment from its original state and it has also allowed us to use satellites, broadband, mobile phones and the Internet, things not previously thought possible.

Videoconferencing is only one part of a wider technical process known as teleconferencing. The definitions in this area are many, but cover three main areas as illustrated by Seekings (1996) – audio conferencing (conference telephone calls where communication is possible between several different locations), videoconferencing (where people at two or more different locations can communicate via telephone and video link) and business television (where live or pre-recorded material can be broadcast to audiences at any number of locations using satellite links). The possibilities for conferences are obvious – conference calls between a corporate group in one location and a contributor in another, videoconferencing where delegates can get involved in discussions and seminars with participants in another location and business television where a key note speaker who is not able to attend the conference can broadcast his presentation and still be available for questions afterwards via satellite link.

It seems that most of the literature on the subject concludes that teleconferencing is a useful adjunct to the meetings and conference business but is still no substitute for what might be termed the real thing, especially in the case of association conferences.

2.5.4 Associations

This research will focus on association conferences and therefore, this segment will now be considered in detail, from definitions to identifying the distinguishing characteristics of association conferences which make them a suitable subject for this study.

Various definitions of "*association*" appear in the literature on the subject. Rutherford (1990, p 9) uses Webster's Dictionary, stating that an association is "an organisation of persons with a common interest". Most people are familiar with the term association, and many even belong to one or more. Examples would be the Institute of Directors, Rotary International, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Trades Unions Congress (TUC). According to Astroff and Abbey (1995) writing on the situation in the US: "many hoteliers use the acronym SMERF – social, mutual, educational, religious and fraternal" to define this sector. McCabe *et al* (2000, p. 55) describe association meetings as being of a practical or technical nature and as being related to individual trade associations, professional societies or academic institutions and they further define an association as "an organised and structured group of people who have similar interests or businesses" (McCabe *et al* 2000, p 43) – the definition used in this research.

Associations, especially international associations, tend to hold large-scale conferences. In addition, they are usually held annually or biannually (McCabe *et al* 2000). For this reason, association conferences often last more than one day, and because of their size and scale are highly sought after amongst conference venues and destinations.

Associations are an increasingly important market for business tourism destinations. In the UK, the number, value and budget of association meetings has overtaken corporate meetings. A greater number of associations are predicted to host member events, but budget and accessibility will be increasingly important factors in decision making (VisitScotland 2003). Both these factors will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

The VisitScotland research also showed that the medical, scientific, technology and industrial sectors account for the highest share of association meetings. Association meetings tend to last between 2 to 3 days. The "shoulder" months of May, June and September and October are the most popular time for meetings. Conference centres and hotels are the most popular venues. Exhibitions are increasingly a part of

meetings, showing that all segments of the MICE industry play a role in the UK economy. Research by the Meetings Industry Association found that there was an increase of around 5% in the number of association events held in the UK in 2002, as well as a slight growth in the number of corporate meetings. Organisers expected to hold a similar level of meetings in 2003 (all from VisitScotland 2003).

Another key factor in the association market is the fact that by and large, association members have to pay to be members and have to pay to attend events organised by the association. This means that associations really have to lure their members to attend events such as the annual conference. The location has to be attractive, the cost within reason and the social programme and accompanying persons programmes must be worth paying for. In other words, the association market is much more price sensitive than other markets (Shone 1998). According to Shone (1998), this means that the association market has a greater propensity to choose venues such as educational establishments and municipal centres, and that its price sensitivity may determine location more significantly that is the case with the business market.

In the context of this research, perhaps the most important aspect of the association market is the fact that, for the most part, attendance is discretionary on the part of the attendee. This contrasts markedly with the corporate sector, where attendance is often compulsory. It is this discretionary element, described by Oppermann and Chon (1997, p 179) as "freedom of choice" on the part of the association conference attendee which makes it possible to consider the decision-making process undertaken by conference delegates when they choose to attend an association conference.

Given the issues of discretionary attendance and freedom of choice, it is suggested in this thesis that the consumer behaviour displayed by delegates attending an association conference will show significant similarities to the consumer behaviour displayed by leisure tourists when deciding to take a holiday. As a result models of leisure tourist decision-making might feasibly be adapted in order to represent accurately the decision to attend an association conference. Therefore, this thesis will concentrate on the association conference sector of the conference market and a

study of association conference delegates in the UK and their attendance decision-making process will form the basis of this research.

2.6 Conclusions

This chapter has considered the economic impact of conferences and meetings internationally and domestically in the United Kingdom in order to understand more fully the MICE sector and to provide some rationale as to why it is important to study this area. Current trends have also been analysed, particularly the rise in global competition and the boom in the Asia-Pacific market. More worryingly, the ramifications of international terrorism and epidemics have also been covered.

It has been shown that the MICE industry is composed of four sections which are meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions and the basis for this research is the conference market. Meetings have proved difficult to define as the term is used to cover a vast array of events, small, medium and large. Incentive travel is more straightforward to define, as it usually involves some aspect of reward from companies for work undertaken by their employees. Exhibitions can be held by themselves, or in tandem with a meeting or conference and although they range in size and scope, are usually concerned with the business of selling products or services to visitors to the show. This leaves only conferences, and in order to clarify the foundation for this research further, this chapter has identified the different types of conferences that take place such as association and corporate conferences. Their distinguishing characteristics were also examined. New technologies were equally considered – videoconferencing has been identified as a real option to conventional conferences, but one perhaps more suited to corporate conferences rather than association conferences.

This research will focus on association conferences in the UK. There are many reasons for believing that the association conference market is a discrete entity and that association conferences should represent a distinct segment of the conference market. The corporate segment in total will not form part of this research. The main

reason for this is that the aim of this research is to consider reasons for deciding to attend a conference, and in the case of corporate conferences, attendance can often be mandatory and the decision-making process is bypassed by a direct order to attend. As discussed earlier, certain types of conference and business travel are undertaken for very good and obvious reasons, usually to attend an important meeting or exhibition. This would strip any decision-making process down to its bare essentials – questions such as is the trip necessary for business reasons, and can we afford it? If the answers are yes, then the trip will most likely take place.

However, there are areas of the conference industry where the above abridged decision process does not apply, and one particular area is in the association conference sector. Association conferences, where the attendees are travelling for their own purposes, and often paying for them with their own money, or having to justify an expenses claim, constitute a distinct segment of the overall conference industry and as such will be treated individually. Since it can be argued that delegates attending association conferences are much more likely to be doing so by choice, there is much more scope for examining the process that they undertook when they chose to attend and therefore the association section of the conference industry in the UK will be the focus of this research.

This research will now go on to examine whether and how this distinct section of the tourism market fits with the existing models of tourism decision making as elaborated upon in the leisure tourism and tourism consumer behaviour literature. Where there are differences specific to conferences, it will review the literature in order to establish a conceptual framework for the attendance decision and propose a hypothetical model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process. This process will form the basis of Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE – CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN TOURISM

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter began with a broad perspective of the situation in the conference market, both in the UK and internationally. It concluded by focussing on the context for this research, namely that the research would concentrate on the decision-making process of delegates considering attending an association conference in the UK. The intention of this research is to address the four main research questions outlined in the introduction to this thesis - namely to what extent can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context, how can the characteristics of association conference attendance best be defined, can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend and finally, can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making. As a result, it is intended to put forward a conceptual framework for the association conference attendance decision in a model of decision-making adapted to the association conference context.

Initially, this chapter will consider the various aspects of the decision-making process, both in a general consumer context and then more specifically in the leisure tourism context. This will provide the foundation for the model of the conference attendance decision to be proposed. Once the basis for the leisure tourism decision has been identified, this chapter will then identify which aspects of this process are applicable to conference tourism. Following this, the chapter will address the issue of whether and how existing models of leisure tourism decision-making can be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context.

Once the decision has been made regarding the use of decision-making models in the conference context, the conceptual framework for the conference attendance decision will be established and the factors that a delegate considers when deciding whether

or not to attend an association conference will be identified. This will begin to address Research Objective 5, by identifying underlying dimensions among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend to attend.

A synthesis of these results will allow the proposal of a hypothesised model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process, which will be empirically tested during the fieldwork stage of this study.

SECTION ONE

3.1 General Models of Consumer Decision-Making

"A decision is an outcome of a mental process whereby one action is chosen from a set of available alternatives" (Moutinho 1987, p 27). This description of a decision as a mental process rather than the result of a snap, instinctive judgement is what lies behind the plethora of decision-making models that exist and which aim to make the mental machinery involved in deciding what to buy more readily understandable.

Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) define the purpose behind consumer behaviour models as an attempt to give a simplified version of the relationships of the various factors that influence consumer behaviour. They go on to say that the intention behind the development of such models was to try to control behaviour patterns (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). This rather optimistic notion does not appear to have been successful, but the models themselves are a popular way of understanding why people buy and by extension trying to predict what people will buy.

According to Gilbert (1991, p 93), models of behaviour have proved useful as "a means of organising disparate knowledge of social action into a somewhat arbitrary yet plausible process of intervening psychological, social, economic and behavioural variables".

The main approach to the study of consumer behaviour is known as the information processing approach (Horton 1984), which suggests the notion of an involved and complex process taken by a consumer in pursuit of his final aim – a purchase. However, not all purchase decisions are complex and as Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) point out, not all consumer decision-making needs that same degree of information searching and processing. This will be discussed in a later section.

The major theories of consumer behaviour (known as the "grand models") were put forward by Nicosia in 1966, Engel, Kollat and Blackwell in 1968 and by Howard and Sheth in 1969. Each theory will be considered on its own merits shortly, along with an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, but taken as a group, these theories do share some important characteristics, neatly summed up by Gilbert (1991, p 93):

1 They all exhibit consumer behaviour as a decision process – this is integral to the models
2 They all provide a comprehensive model focussing mainly on the behaviour of the individual consumer
3 They share the belief that behaviour is rational and hence can, in principle, be explained
4 They view buying behaviour as purposive with the consumer as an active information seeker, both of information stored internally and of information available in the external environment – thus the search and evaluation of information is a key component of decision making
5 They believe that consumers limit the amount of information taken in, and move over time from general notions to more specific criteria and preferences for alternatives
6 All the grand models include a notion of feedback, that is to say that outcomes from purchases will affect future purchases.

The major theories of consumer buying behaviour have prevailed for over thirty years now, and although their limitations are well known and will be addressed shortly, they remain the starting point for any investigation into consumer decision-

making, both generally and in the tourism field. Indeed, most models in leisure tourism owe their origins to these "grand models".

Figure 3.1 illustrates the similarities (and differences where these exist) between the three grand models. There is a clear pattern repeated through the three models of a process involving some kind of motivation or stimulus to act, a search for information, an evaluation of alternatives, a decision to purchase (or not) and some discussion of post-purchase behaviour. The individual details of each model will be discussed in the next section.

3.1.1 The Nicosia Model

One of the earliest models of the decision-making process undertaken by the consumer was proposed by Nicosia in 1966. This model is concerned with buying a new product. As well as putting forward a review of the state of play within consumer behaviour research at the time, Nicosia formulated one of the first models to concentrate actively on the process involved in making a decision rather than on the actual act of purchase (Nicosia 1966).

The nature of his model was also a new development. He used as the basis for his model a computer flow chart technique. The model depicts a message (e.g. an advert) flowing from its source in the direction of the eventual decision outcome of the consumer (Baker 1991). This highlights two important aspects – firstly, the Nicosia model was the first to include what he refers to as the firm and its message, and secondly, the form of the model emphasises the circularity of the relationships involved (Horton 1984). This sets the Nicosia model apart from any that had gone before because rather than flowing in only one direction, the model takes into account the processes that happens before and after the purchase decision is made. The choice of where to start studying the process is quite arbitrary (Horton 1984).

Figure 3.1 – The "Grand Models" of Consumer Decision-Making

Model	*Motivation*	*Information Search*	*Evaluation of Alternatives*	*Purchase*	*Post Purchase*
Nicosia (1966)	Field 1 The firm's attempts to communicate with the customer/predisposition of a consumer to act in a certain way	———	Field 2 Evaluation process influenced by attitudes	Field 3 Purchase	Field 4 Post-purchase feedback
EKB (1968)	Problem Recognition Felt need within the consumer or consumer becomes aware of need following stimulus (e.g. advert)	Information Search If the information is not within the individual's own memory, there will be a search of external sources	Evaluation of Main Options Formation of beliefs about the product, a shift in attitude towards the act of purchase leading to intention to act consistently with attitude	Purchase	Post-purchase If there is satisfaction then the likely outcome is repurchase. If there is dissonance and/or dissatisfaction, there is less chance of repurchase
		CAN BE SIMULTANEOUS			
Howard-Sheth (1969)	Inputs Significative stimuli – price and availability Symbolic stimuli – adverts and brochures Social stimuli – opinions of reference groups	Perceptual Constructs Attention – being receptive to information on a product (once the need for the product is recognised) Overt Search – active process of seeking information	Learning Constructs Motives, attitudes and comprehension of the brand determine purchase intentions, and allow differentiation between alternative brands	Outputs Purchase (including intention, attitude, brand comprehension and attention)	Learning Constructs Satisfaction (if experienced) which will inform future decision-making behaviour

The four fields that Nicosia introduced in his model are very complex, but a simplified explanation will follow. Field One represents the firm's attempts to communicate with the consumer and the predisposition of the consumer to act in a certain way. Field Two involves the consumer in a search evaluation process influenced by his or her attitudes. Field Three reflects the actual purchase, and post-purchase feedback is Field Four (adapted from Nicosia 1966 and Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). In these fields can be seen the five-stage process already mentioned that dominates the grand models: motivation→ information search → evaluation of alternatives → purchase decision → post purchase behaviour. Although the information search stage is not identified specifically, it can be considered to take place in tandem with the search evaluation process.

The model put forward by Nicosia (1966) is not immediately applicable to either the leisure tourism or association conference context, as it specifically deals with the purchase of a new product. However, the stages identified by Nicosia do chime with the other models to be discussed and it will be demonstrated that his model and those that come after are indeed relevant to tourism purchases.

There are criticisms of the approach adopted by Nicosia and these centre on three main areas. In the first place, it has been argued that this model has received little empirical testing (*inter alia* Horton 1984, Foxall 1990 and Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). Secondly, some of the variables have not been satisfactorily defined. Horton (1984) highlights issues with Nicosia's definition of attitude and motivation. Finally, and this is a criticism levelled at many of the models of consumer behaviour, the Nicosia model assumes that all buying behaviour is highly rational. However, the question as to whether buyers are rational or not in their decision-making is a moot point. This issue will be further discussed in a later section. In conclusion, the Nicosia model has its problems, but it was ground-breaking in its time and remains one of the milestones in the study of consumer behaviour.

3.1.2 The EKB Model

Engel, Kollat and Blackwell devised another early model of consumer decision making which has come to be considered one of the aforementioned "grand models" (Engel, Kollat and Blackwell 1968). Their model, usually referred to as the EKB model, has been revised in several editions by the original authors with other collaborators, notably Miniard in 1986, but still remains generally true to its original form.

For Engel, Kollat and Blackwell, the study of consumer behaviour rests on three vital premises:

1 The consumer is sovereign
2 Consumer motivation and behaviour can be understood through research
3 Consumer motivation and behaviour can be influenced (but not manipulated) through persuasive activity that takes the consumer seriously (Engel *et al* 1986)

This serves to highlight their justification for creating a model of consumer decisions – although the consumer makes the final decision, "persuasive activity" or marketing and advertising can sway that decision, and so understanding exactly where to direct that persuasive activity is vital to marketing.

Engel *et al* were the first to introduce the idea that not only is a consumer decision the result of a process as advocated by Nicosia (1966), but that this process can take several forms, characterised by Engel *et al* as Extensive Problem Solving (EPS), Limited Problem Solving (LPS) and Routine Problem Solving (RPS). These are further explained as follows: EPS is the most demanding in terms of expenditure of time and energy and is therefore confined to major purchases. LPS on the other hand refers to a process where some use is made of information, and active reasoning about the choice is undertaken, but the degree of searching for information and evaluating alternative options is less than for extensive problem solving. Most

consumer decisions fall into the category of RPS, whereby little effort is put into what is generally a repurchase of a tried and tested product or brand. With regard to tourism, occasionally a tourist purchase can be routinized, for example where someone books the same two weeks at the same hotel every year, but generally decisions made about holidays and travel take more time and effort and can be described as either LPS, or more usually EPS. Conference attendance could fit in with any of these three possibilities. If an employee is informed that he has to attend a corporate conference, then he will expend little energy considering whether to attend or not. This could then be described almost as a routine purchase, especially if the employee attends many such events. LPS could be descriptive of the process undertaken by a potential conference delegate who attends an association conference every year, whilst EPS is more likely to be representative of the decision-making process undertaken by most potential delegates when weighing up the pros and cons of attending an association conference.

The EKB model of extensive problem solving clearly fits in with the observed pattern as already discussed: motivation → information search → evaluation of alternatives → purchase decision → post purchase behaviour.

A little more detail on each section will help to clarify how the model works. Problem recognition begins when the individual senses a difference between his perceived ideal state of affairs and his current situation (Engel *et al* 1986). It may be that the individual feels a need within himself, or it may be that some other sources make him aware of a need (perhaps an advertisement or discussions with friends and family). In a conference context, this stage may be represented by receiving an association mail-out advising of a forthcoming conference, or perhaps seeing a call for papers. In any case, the recognition of a need and the desire to fulfil this is stage one – motivation.

Following on from this the individual then begins to search, within his own memory initially, for information on how to fulfil this need. If the information is not yet known to the individual, then the search for information will proceed to the external

environment – adverts, brochures and advice from others all form part of this process. Of course, Engel *et al* wrote before the age of the Internet, but electronic forms of communication and information certainly form part of the external environment now, and this is certainly a common information resource for both leisure and business tourists as well as other consumers.

Once the search for information has borne fruit in the shape of a selection of viable alternatives, the consumer will undertake an evaluation of the main options. In practice, as pointed out by Engel *et al* (1986), the search for information and the evaluation of alternatives generally takes place simultaneously. "Usually when alternatives are presented, there is a formation or change of *beliefs* about the product, followed by a shift in *attitude* towards the act of purchasing that alternative. All other things being equal, this leads to an *intention* to act consistently with attitude and finally to purchase" (Engel *et al* 1986, p 31).

Under the section considering information search and the evaluation of alternatives, the EKB model also investigates the idea of information processing – gauging how people actually process the information around them and how the consumer moves from "exposure" to information sources to actually paying "attention" and retaining the information provided. It seems clear that the consumer will pay more attention to those marketing messages where the product is relevant to them. This underlines the importance of targeting market segments very specifically, as is the case in the association conference context as this is usually a very specifically targeted market – perhaps association members only, or members of certain institutes only.

The penultimate stage in the EKB model refers to the decision to purchase (or not), but the model does not stop there. Post-purchase behaviour is the final area to be examined. If the buyer is happy with the purchase and feels that he has made the right decision, the outcome will be "satisfaction" (Engel *et al* 1968). The most likely result of this outcome will be a repurchase. However, if the buyer feels afterwards that the purchase was not suitable and experiences what Horton (1984) refers to as "dissonance" (an uncomfortable feeling that a wrong decision was made), then the

outcome will be dissatisfaction (Engel *et al* 1968). This can raise doubts as to the possibility of re-purchase, and may result in customer complaints and returns and refunds. Naturally the manufacturer or producer will wish to avoid dissatisfaction and will take steps to reassure the buyer that his decision was the correct one. In the association conference context, it is possible that a satisfactory outcome will lead to a repurchase, but since a conference is multi-faceted, there are likely to be many different levels of satisfaction or otherwise. This model does not deal in any depth with decisions as complex as buying a holiday or attending a conference, and this may be regarded as a weakness of this model.

Engel *et al* (1986) felt that there were three main advantages to using models in the study of consumer behaviour. Firstly, explanations for consumer behaviour are provided in the models, secondly a frame of reference is provided for research and thirdly a model discloses the kinds of information needed to understand the consumer's decision-making process and provides a basis for marketing action.

Criticisms of their model include the perennial question of how to predict the behaviour of a consumer who is not acting rationally by using models based on the consumer as a rational decision-maker, as is the case with the EKB model, and the fact that the model has not been subjected to vigorous empirical testing. Engel *et al* (1968 and 1986) can certainly counter this latter criticism, stating as they do that the primary purpose behind the creation of their model was pedagogical (Engel and Blackwell 1982). They stress the importance of teaching consumer behaviour in what are after all a set of textbooks in the field of marketing. Whether it is reasonable to expect a model designed to aid students in understanding some of the thought processes of a consumer to stand up to thorough testing in an academic or commercial context is up for debate. What is certain though is that the EKB model has been largely successful in terms of staying power – it appears in many general textbooks on consumer behaviour and is almost always referred to in any work on the subject.

3.1.3 The Howard –Sheth Model

The final so-called "grand model" to be considered in this section is the theory of buyer behaviour postulated in 1969 by Howard and Sheth. Like the EKB model, this theory has been slightly modified over time, but still appears in more or less its original form in many textbooks and articles on consumer behaviour.

Foxall (1990, p 10) described it as "a sophisticated integration of the various social, psychological and marketing influences on consumer choice into a coherent sequence of information processing". The Howard-Sheth theory of buyer behaviour is considered a seminal work by Horton who wrote in 1984 that not only was the model historically important as one of the first, but it was also developed with empirical research and testing in mind, unlike others of its time. Horton (1984) further describes it as the best comprehensive description of buyer behaviour when the buyer's full decision-making processes are aroused.

The Howard–Sheth theory of buyer behaviour rests on five main components: inputs, perceptual constructs, learning constructs, outputs and exogenous variables (Howard and Sheth 1969). These do not a first glance seem to bear any similarities to the 5-stage process described by the other two models (the Nicosia and EKB models already discussed). However, a closer inspection shows that the logic behind their five components and their contents are indeed similar to the other two models.

"Inputs" are described in terms of a stimulus display which has three sections – significative stimuli, which refers to the qualities of the product itself such as price and availability; symbolic stimuli, which represent the information available on the product, such as adverts and brochures; and social stimuli – the opinions of family and friends and other reference groups which are taken into consideration by the buyer. For the most part, consumer decisions are based on symbolic and social stimuli (Horton 1984), and nowhere is this more evident than in the field of tourism where most of the qualities of the product, i.e. a holiday, cannot be tested before purchase and thus greater reliance must be place upon marketing and advertising and

on the views and experiences of friends and family. These inputs refer to a stimulus to act, or in other words the motivation behind the potential purchase. In the association conference context, the significative stimuli may refer to the cost of the conference, and perhaps the location and dates, whilst the symbolic stimuli would probably refer to information disseminated by the association, such as conference programmes or perhaps the association website (again, Howard and Sheth wrote before the Internet revolution). If the consumer decisions are indeed based on the symbolic and social stimuli, then in the conference context, decisions would be based on factors such as cost and location, as well as the views, opinions and other commitments of family. These are points that will recur throughout this literature review.

The next component in the Howard-Sheth model is termed "perceptual constructs" and explains the way in which the buyer considers all the information at his disposal and from this selects the information upon which the choice process will be based (Howard and Sheth 1969). Two main precepts are put forward – "attention" and "overt search". Attention is a passive state and refers to the way in which a buyer becomes more receptive to information on a product when a need for this product has been recognised by the buyer. The overt search is an active process and is the counterpoint to simply paying attention to information that comes one's way. The buyer will actually go out of his way to seek information and canvass opinions on a product. There are two further constructs within this section. Stimulus ambiguity is straightforward and refers to a stimulus that the buyer does not understand correctly in full or in part. Perceptual bias is a more hazy area, and covers the way in which a buyer will distort information received in order to make it fit in with his existing beliefs. In 1977, Howard himself accepted that perceptual bias was a very general concept, and replaced it with a more specific set of constructs, but did not alter the general working of the model (Howard 1977). Although it is not called "information search", this component clearly refers to the same element in the decision-making process that the other authors call information search. There is nothing in the existing literature to suggest that potential association conference delegates would behave significantly differently to other purchasers in this respect.

The third component of the Howard-Sheth theory of buyer behaviour is "learning constructs". In the process of learning, the consumer's motives, attitudes and comprehension of the brand determine the degree of confidence he is willing to place in a product, his purchase intentions and the actual purchase behaviour (if it occurs) (Foxall 1990). With regard to motives, Howard and Sheth argued that motives themselves provide no explicit guides to how the buyer may satisfy these motives (Howard and Sheth 1969). However, motives do influence behaviour and so are worthy of inclusion in the model. Before a buyer is able to satisfy his motives, a two stage process is required. Brand comprehension, where the buyer is able to identify a brand, must take place and choice criteria must also be set down – this refers to the specific criteria needed to evaluate whether or not one specific brand will satisfy the buyer's motives. Once these two steps have been taken, the next step is formation of attitude. Attitude is defined as "the extent to which the buyer expects the brand to yield satisfaction of his particular need" (Howard 1989, p. 43), which is a noticeably narrower definition than in other areas of consumer behaviour. Howard and Sheth (1969) further suggest that attitude gives rise to intention rather than to actual purchase. This intention to buy is also influenced by confidence, which recognises that two buyers can have exactly the same attitude towards a brand and yet not be equally confident or certain that the satisfaction expected from the purchase will actually occur (Horton 1984). The final learning construct is satisfaction which occurs after purchase and is the result of each buyer's experience of the brand purchase. With the exception of the final learning construct, satisfaction, all of these issues refer to the same kind of thought process that is referred to in the other models as an evaluation of alternatives. Much of the discussion under the heading of learning constructs is noticeably less relevant in the association conference context, since brand choice and brand comprehension are not in themselves factors in a conference attendance decision. The issue of satisfaction is however more relevant, but since a conference is the sum of a number of separate parts, all of which may result in satisfaction or dissatisfaction, satisfaction in an association conference context can be said to be a more detailed concept than has been recognised here.

Component number four is outputs. As expected this does include the actual purchase. However, it goes much further than the simple act of purchase in that it tries in part to understand those aspects of their theory which are hypothetical before a purchase is made, but which are observable after a purchase, by simply questioning buyers. Understanding attitudes and intentions before a purchase is made will help advertisers and marketing professionals to comprehend what makes the consumer buy the product. Other aspects include brand comprehension and attention. This component is much more detailed than its equivalents in the other models, but does basically refer to the act of purchase.

Post-purchase behaviour is not represented by a component in itself, but it is referred to under learning constructs, where satisfaction (or otherwise) with the purchase is considered to inform future decision-making.

Finally, the Howard-Sheth theory of buyer behaviour considers not only those variables which are endogenous to the buyer, but also the exogenous ones. However, given that these factors such as race, religion, sex, class and income amongst others are highly individual to each buyer, they do not require specific mention in a comprehensive theory, even though they do markedly affect buyer behaviour. These factors do have a bearing on an association conference attendance decision, but here too they are very specific to the individual.

It can be concluded therefore that although at first glance it seems unlikely, the Howard-Sheth model does fit in conceptually with the five-stage model already identified as being representative of the purchase decision-making process – motivation → information search → evaluation of alternatives → purchase decision → post purchase behaviour.

The Howard-Sheth model has, unlike the other grand models, been the subject of extensive empirical testing. According to Horton (1984), four main criticisms appear: most studies only addressed a limited portion of the theory, support for theory has been largely based on two-variable relationships even though the theory

generally requires more complex tests, no specific aspects of the theory received consistent support and the proportion of the total variance of the data explained by the theory is generally low.

Further criticisms levelled specifically at the Howard-Sheth model rest on the fact that much of the model is based on learning theory, but that the relationship between learning theory and the constructs in the model are not explicit. Additionally, much of the knowledge in the field of learning theory has been acquired through tests on animal behaviour and it would seem questionable to transfer animal behaviour results to human buying behaviour.

In summary though, the Howard-Sheth theory of buyer behaviour does not explain all buyer behaviour, but is a comprehensive theory which has been subject to empirical testing and is recognised as a major contribution to the consumer behaviour literature (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999).

3.1.4 Limitations of General Models of Consumer Decision-Making

Although much has been made of the fact that models which intend to be comprehensive depicters of consumer behaviour are prone to criticisms and limitations, it is still true to say that they have contributed greatly to our understanding on why people buy and what processes are undertaken by consumers when a decision is being made. When it comes to considering the models that are used within tourism to try to understand the travel decision-making process, a knowledge and understanding of the grand models of consumer behaviour is indispensable, and for that reason alone the study of these models is justified.

Nevertheless, the problems associated with the aforementioned models are significant and require analysis. The major strands of criticism levelled at all the major models rest upon three main premises – they assume that consumers behave rationally, they don't take into account collective decision-making at a family or organisational level and they lack independent corroboration. With regard to the

latter, only the Howard-Sheth model has been the subject of empirical research and as discussed, the results were not a resounding acclamation of the model. However it is only fair to re-emphasise the point made by Engel *et al* that their model was intended for teaching purposes and was not intended to stand up to rigorous testing. It could be argued though that if the model did not stand up to external testing perhaps it is not the best teaching method.

The question of collective decision-making was considered by Engel *et al* to be an important one and partly in response to this criticism, they included a section on organisational behaviour in their 1986 version (Engel *et al* 1986). Neither the Nicosia model nor the Howard-Sheth model actively considers this aspect. This is perhaps surprising, although the relevance of collective decision-making, especially by a family group, may appear more and more relevant as this study moves on to look at tourism decision-making.

The main criticism though is certainly the belief in the consumer as a rational individual. This point has been raised by numerous authors (*inter alia* Foxall 1990, Horton 1984, Swarbrooke and Horner 1999, O'Shaughnessy 1987 and Moutinho 1987) and is certainly worthy of consideration. In the words of Foxall (1990, p 8) "the major comprehensive theories of consumer behaviour invest consumers with extensive capacities to receive and handle considerable quantities of information and to engage in means-end processing involving comparison and evaluation of alternative brands in relation to the consumer's purposes and aims". This certainly suggests that the major theorists assume a great deal of rationality on the part of the consumer. O'Shaughnessy (1987) looks to economic theory to assess rationality, pointing out that on the grounds that chosen behaviour is voluntary behaviour and all voluntary behaviour is assumed to be carried out to maximise satisfaction, many economists hold the view that all chosen behaviour is rational. That may be true, but what is less certain is whether all aspects of a decision-making process involve the same degree of rationality – take the case of a routine repurchase of a tin of beans versus the occasional purchase of an expensive car. How much rational thought is involved in picking up the same supermarket items week after week? Horton (1984)

even suggests that the mere fact of writing discussions on human behaviour down can give the impression that human behaviour is more organised that it actually is. The act of observing behaviour can change the way we view the behaviour – this is almost into the realms of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle.

It is certainly true that these grand models of consumer buying behaviour have had a marked influence on some of the models of tourism decision-making and as this will be studied in the next section, the merits and demerits of models will remain under scrutiny.

3.2 Consumer Behaviour in Tourism

Although the grand models provided a benchmark for the study of consumer behaviour, much more research has been carried out in the area and models of the consumer purchasing decision have been significantly refined since those early days. However, it would not be fruitful to delve any more deeply into the decision-making process involved in purchasing specific goods, since much of what is purchased in the tourism field are in fact services. Back in the early 1970's, the consumer decision-making tree branched out considerably and it is now time to follow the branch that has led to the modern purchase decision models used in tourism today.

It is reasonable to question why tourism needs its own set of decision-making models, but the answer is clear – the crucial difference that has led to the vast gamut of research carried out in tourism consumer behaviour is the fact that marketing services is entirely different from marketing products. Middleton (2001, p 41) defined goods and services as follows: "Goods are products purchased through an exchange transaction conferring ownership of a physical item that may be used or consumed at the owner's choice of time and place. Services are products purchased through an exchange transaction that does not confer ownership, but permits access to, and use of a service, usually at a specified time and in a specified place". This definition makes it clear that a different approach is required to market services generally, and tourist services particularly, in the most effective way possible, and in

order to do this it is vital to understand those characteristics which are representative of services.

Kotler (1984) and Middleton (2001) amongst others consider the issues surrounding marketing services as opposed to goods, and Middleton does go on to consider some further characteristics unique to travel and tourism services which will be discussed shortly. Other authors, for example Mill and Morrison (1998) and Swarbrooke and Horner (1999), consider the matter from a purely tourism point of view. In either case, there are several main characteristics of service marketing that distinguish it from product marketing, namely intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and lack of ownership, to which can be added in a tourism context seasonality, perishability and interdependence.

"Intangibility" refers to the fact that a service cannot be seen, touched or tried out before consumption. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) point to the advent of virtual reality as a possible means of tackling this particular issue, but this is an option for the future, and does not yet have much of a role to play in service marketing.

Additionally, the production and consumption of the service is simultaneous (Middleton 2001). This is what is meant by "inseparability". This impacts particularly on staff delivering a service as they are viewed by the consumer as inseparable from the service itself.

"Heterogeneity" basically means variability and rests on the principle that humans are individuals and so the service that they produce will not be the same each time. Additionally, consumers (being human too) will not receive the service in the same frame of mind each time. This is a problem for service marketers because it means that they cannot guarantee that a service will always be up to the same standard and a problem for consumers because they do not know until consumption of the service what standard it will come up to. Middleton (2001) highlights the fact that for some service industries (e.g. the fast food industry) the levels of training and quality controls mean that the service should almost always be of the same standard, and that

heterogeneity is merely an academic point. However, in the case of a highly involved purchase like a holiday, heterogeneity may be a much more thorny issue.

The "lack of ownership" factor, which is a result of the intangibility of services, means that at the end of the transaction, the consumer leaves with no visible ownership of anything – in fact as Mill and Morrison (1998) point out, the visitor's travel experiences exist only in memory after the trip is over. Some products come with warranties or guarantees. Tourism products and services do not.

The three final items under review are specific to tourism, and imply that tourism is a unique type of service - "seasonality" means that demand for tourist services fluctuates according to the seasons of the year. "Perishability" refers to the fact that an airline seat or hotel bedroom is fixed in time and space – if the seat or room is not sold on any given day then the potential revenue from the seat or room is gone for ever and cannot be replaced. Finally "interdependence" illustrates the fact that although one organisation may be responsible for marketing a destination, the success of tourism in the destination relies on not just this organisation but on the myriad of other services available – "the tourism service chain is dependent on the efforts of all the other organisations providing components of the trip" (Mill and Morrison 1998, p 306).

One further issue of importance in tourism marketing is a point that applies not only to service marketing, but also to marketing goods. The difference between "convenience" goods and "shopping" goods is often quoted when looking at consumer behaviour (*inter alia* Swarbrooke and Horner 1999) – a convenience good is generally low priced, bought frequently and is usually a manufactured good, such as a tin of baked beans. A shopping good is more expensive, and bought less frequently and involves the consumer in a greater degree of decision-making – examples would be a new car or new furniture. However, the notion of convenience versus shopping applies equally in the service area. Convenience services would be those provided by post offices and banks amongst others. Shopping services would include holidays. Consumers are generally more involved in purchasing shopping

goods and services, which as pointed out by Swarbrooke and Horner (1999), generally satisfy higher order needs in Maslow's hierarchy and also involve the consumer in what Engel *et al* (1986) refer to as extensive problem solving.

All of the characteristics of leisure tourism which give rise to differences in consumer behaviour between consumers of a product and consumers of a service are to a greater or lesser extent relevant to a purchase in a conference context. A conference is intangible, and cannot be tested beforehand. A conference reflects inseparability, in that the production of the service and consumption of the service take place at the same time. Heterogeneity is applicable in a conference context, because the service provided by the venue, the caterers, the conference organisers and the transport providers amongst others will vary over time, and will be received by each delegate differently according to their frame of mind at the time. Conferences are also subject to perishability in that revenue from a conference place not sold can never be recovered. Finally, seasonality can be an issue in a conference context as the timing of conferences can be restricted by the availability of delegates. However, seasonality is much less of a problem in the conference industry than it is generally in the tourist industry.

From this brief outline of the differences between the characteristics of products and services, and the knock-on effect that this has on the marketing of services, it is clear that travel and tourism marketing is unique and that when considering the purchase of tourism products and services, models unique to travel and tourism are as a result also necessary. The next section will consider in detail the work that has been carried out so far in this well-researched area.

3.3 Decision-Making Models in Tourism

There are several models which have been developed in tourism in order to try to explain how travellers make their destination choices. The earliest models were those put forward by Wahab, Crampon and Rothfield in 1976 and by Schmoll in 1977. Following on from this early work were authors who are still widely quoted

today – Mathieson and Wall (1982), Van Raaij and Francken (1984) and Moutinho (1987). Much has been written on these models, both by their authors and by later writers, and there is a general consensus that each model adds something to the previous one. Although each has its limitations, the existence of these conceptual frameworks has helped to elucidate the tourist's decision making process. An analysis of these models will help to provide an answer to one of the research questions of this study - can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context".

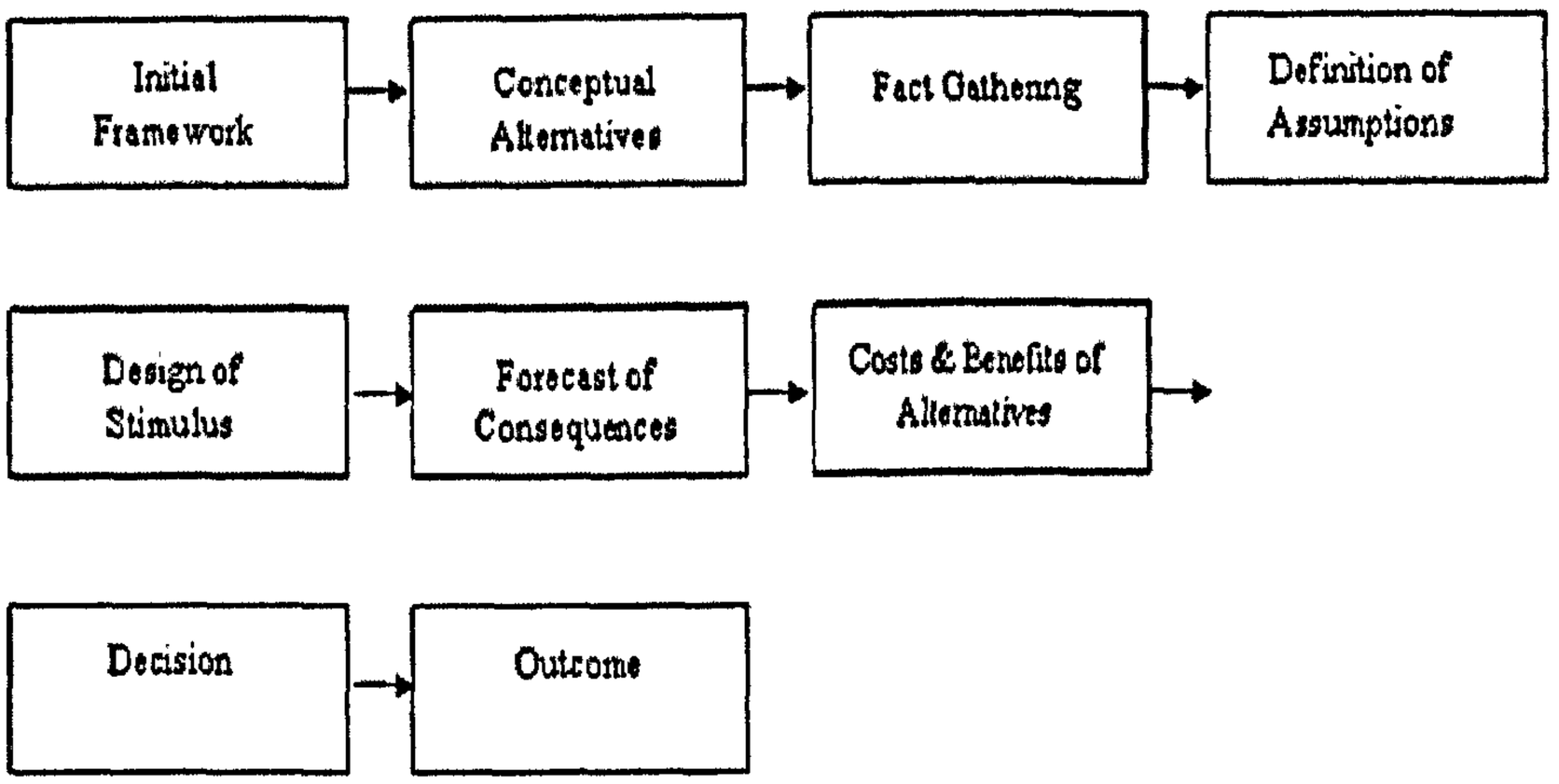
Each model will be considered in more detail in the following pages along with some points regarding their various merits and demerits. However, one point is immediately clear - each of these models is depicting the purchase of a tourism product or service, but in each can be identified the main elements of the decision-making process represented by the grand models of motivation → information search → evaluation of alternatives → purchase decision → post purchase behaviour.

3.3.1 Wahab *et al* (1976)

This model, or linear process, was proposed in 1976 by Wahab, Crampon and Rothfield in their book entitled "Tourism Marketing". It represented one of the first attempts to transfer the ideas and theories of consumer behaviourists such as Howard and Sheth to the field of tourism. Looking back from today's perspective, it is easy to criticise this model for its rigidity and for the fact that trends in tourism have changed to such as extent that this model no longer accurately reflects the decision-making process involved in all holiday decisions. However, some of the principles of this model do still hold true today, and have clearly influenced the work of tourism researchers. In addition, the basic five-stage process visible in the grand models is clearly visible here too. Wahab *et al* saw the tourist buying decision as a linear process travelling from beginning to end and their vision lacks the complexity

of some models that are to be discussed in this section. Their process runs through the stages illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: The Wahab *et al* Model of Consumer Behaviour in Tourism



(Source: Wahab *et al* 1976)

The initial stimulus refers to the needs and wants of a tourist with regard to going on holiday, coupled with the marketing messages received by the tourist from destination advertising. This can be seen as similar to the motivational aspects of both the grand models and the other tourist decision-making models.

This prompts the tourist to consider what they might want from a holiday and what their priorities are. This is represented by the conceptual framework. Once a holiday is a realistic proposition, various factors have to be taken into account, under the heading of fact gathering. This includes the costs involved in the holiday, rejection factors (reasons to rule out certain destinations entirely, such as war or health risks) and satisfaction and dissatisfaction elements – basically the pros and cons of various destination options (Wahab *et al* 1976).

Once the tourist has these facts at his disposal, Wahab *et al* suggest that the next stage is definition of assumptions. This slightly hazy terminology actually refers to the tourist trying to check out whether the facts that he has amassed are actually accurate. This may take the form of canvassing the opinions of friends and family, or possibly taking advice from travel intermediaries or may reflect the fact that the tourist has to make certain deductions about a destination based on the facts he has.

The conceptual framework, fact gathering and definition of assumptions are mentioned separately in this model, but they are all conceptually linked with the idea of information seeking and as such can be taken together to be illustrative of the information search aspect of the models.

Next comes the design of alternatives (similar to the stage known in other models as the evaluation of alternatives). This refers to making a shortlist of those destinations under consideration by the tourist. As this point the seller of the destination or package must take into account the social, ecological, financial and image impact of the decision (Wahab *et al* 1976). This involvement of the seller is the stage called forecast of consequence. The tourist himself will next contemplate those destinations in his shortlist and undertake a form of cost-benefit analysis in order to ascertain which option will provide best value. This cost-benefit analysis according to Wahab *et al* (1976) may be almost unconscious and almost instantaneous or studied and thought over but they argue that it will take place in all tourist buying decisions. The result will be a ranking of alternatives, with the best choice at the top of the list. This choice will almost certainly be the final decision, which is the penultimate stage in the process.

The final stage in the buying process is termed the outcome, with a choice of two possibilities – satisfaction or dissatisfaction. No further comments are made with regard to what happens given the final outcome – will satisfaction lead to repurchase? Will dissatisfaction mean that the destination will be rejected in future, or are there levels of dissatisfaction? Although Wahab *et al* do not cover this issue further in their 1976 work many other authors have addressed these issues since then, as will be seen. In this sense, the decision-making process is linear and does not have any feedback loops, meaning that aspects of the decision-making process according to this model will not inform future decision-making.

One aspect of this model which seems to be unique is the emphasis placed on the role of the seller of the tourism product. For every stage of the tourist buying decision process, Wahab *et al* highlight issues of importance for the seller. An

example is the stage entitled "fact-gathering". While the tourist is rejecting destinations and getting their priorities straight the seller, according to Wahab *et al*, should be gathering facts too, on their client profile, on their strengths and weaknesses and on market research. Wahab *et al* (1976) believe that the seller must accompany the buyer through the buying process and adapt their marketing efforts to that end.

This idea has not been carried forward into other models of tourist decision-making where the role of the seller is more implicit. As many models claim to have been created in order to help professionals in a practical way, this change of tack by later authors from the explicit to the implicit may be considered to be slightly less helpful by practitioners.

Wahab *et al* do stress that the decision-making process may be more spontaneous than their model reflects (Gilbert 1991), and so there is scope for this model to be expanded to account for more spontaneous decisions. However, it is fair to say that changes in the tourist industry mean that the Wahab *et al* model of 1976 is not the best way to reflect today's tourist decision-making process. These changes include the trend towards last-minute bookings and holidays where the destination is irrelevant and only price is the dominant factor (as highlighted by Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). Additionally, the lack of any study into how satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the outcome affects future decision-making makes this model conceptually incomplete. However, the importance of this model was in the development of knowledge and understanding in the field of consumer behaviour in tourism.

3.3.2 Schmoll 1977

Along with Wahab *et al* (1976), one of the earliest authors to attempt to transfer the theories of the grand models to the tourism arena was Schmoll. Writing in 1977, he proposed a model of the travel decision process. He was at pains to point out that the creation of a model was of real practical value and he justified his model as follows:

> "The purpose of all marketing action is to influence customer behaviour is a specific desired way. To do so, a knowledge of the factors that influence behaviour is essential. A model helps to obtain a better, more systematic understanding of these factors" (Schmoll 1977, p 74).

An additional point that he made was that a model increases the probability that all relevant variables are actually considered and – if needed - are included in the decision process (Schmoll 1977)

He intended his model to be put to use in four distinct ways – to find out where marketing can be used to influence the decision process, to find out which factors have a bearing on the decision process, to identify areas in the process where research is still needed and finally to assist in the development of relevant market segments. He does stress that his model is neither predictive nor analytical – it cannot predict tourist behaviour, neither can it analyse specific details such as which factors weigh more heavily than others in the decision process. This caveat may be applied to all the decision-making models under review in this section.

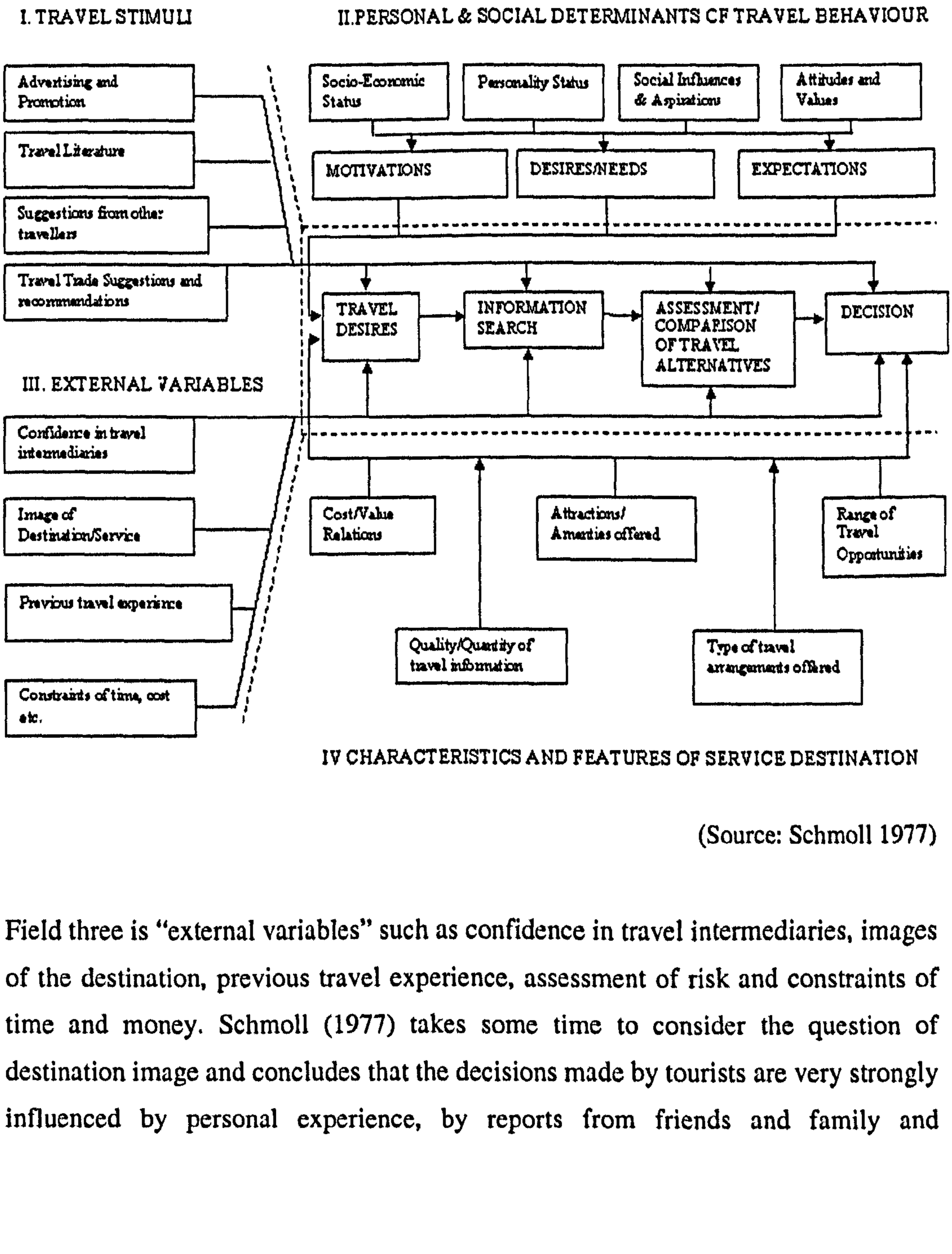
The Schmoll model is composed of four fields as illustrated in Figure 3.3 – travel stimuli, personal and social determinants of travel behaviour, external variables and characteristics and features of the service/destination. These all affect the decision process.

"Travel stimuli" includes advertising, travel publications, suggestions from friends and relatives and recommendations made by travel intermediaries after the traveller has initiated enquiries.

"Personal and social determinants of travel behaviour" refers to personality, socio-economic factors, attitudes and values which together determine customer goals. These factors contribute to motivation to travel, travel needs and desires and expectations of travel.

Travel stimuli, and personal and social determinant of behaviour combine to cover the motivational aspect of the decision-making process both in terms of the stimuli (or marketing messages) received by the tourist and in terms of the awakening of a need within the tourist.

Figure 3.3 Schmoll's Model of the Travel Decision Process



(Source: Schmoll 1977)

Field three is "external variables" such as confidence in travel intermediaries, images of the destination, previous travel experience, assessment of risk and constraints of time and money. Schmoll (1977) takes some time to consider the question of destination image and concludes that the decisions made by tourists are very strongly influenced by personal experience, by reports from friends and family and

information gained from advertising. These three influences form together to create the destination image held by the traveller.
The final field is "characteristics of the destination/service", such as the costs of travelling there, what attractions are on offer, the quantity and quality of information available and the type of travel arrangements that are offered.

Both the external variables and the characteristics of the destination or service can be taken together to represent information seeking and evaluation of alternatives. The decision is the final stage in this process as can be seen, and there is no scope in this model to consider what happens after the decision has been taken.

Schmoll (1977) saw these four fields as jointly influencing the travel decision process which he describes in his model as travel desires, information search, assessment/comparison of travel alternatives and decision. This is broadly in line with the established five stage process, but without reference to post-purchase behaviour. Therefore, he concludes that the decision reached by the traveller is on the basis of individual personal characteristics which are influenced by travel stimuli, and external variables, and is subject to the external constraints mentioned.

Probably the most valid criticism of the model is the fact that it is not as clearly expressed as some of those that were to follow on from his work, such as Mathieson and Wall (1982) and Van Raaij and Francken (1984) amongst others. However, this is almost certainly a function of the fact that it was proposed a relatively long time ago and marketing and consumer behaviour theory has moved on considerably since then.

In its basic form, the model outlines a decision process based on four principles – travel desires, information search, assessment/comparison of travel alternatives and decision. However, Schmoll (1977) also describes the decision process as being composed of felt need, information gathering and deliberation, decision and travel preparations. It is unclear which of these two slightly different decision processes he favoured, but certainly his model is still widely cited in the literature pertaining to

consumer behaviour in tourism and so the process highlighted in his model has come to be more widely recognised as his contribution to the tourism decision-making literature.

Gilbert (1991, p 95) criticises aspects of the model, pointing out that "there is no feedback loop and no input for attitude and values – it is difficult to regard the model as dynamic", but in his defence, Schmoll does in fact include attitudes and values under the heading of personal and social determinants of travel and behaviour, and thus Gilbert's criticism seems unfounded. However, it certainly can be argued, especially taking into consideration the models that have been developed since Schmoll, that this model does ignore some of the most important aspects of the travel decision process, including the questions of post-purchase dissonance and dis/satisfaction. In fact, Schmoll (1977) does not even consider the matter of what happens during the holiday and thereafter. This is certainly a weakness in this model.

However, the model, although heavily based on the grand models of consumer behaviour (especially the Howard-Sheth Model) makes the transition to tourism clearly. Gilbert (1991) states that Schmoll highlights many of the attributes of tourism decision-making which do influence tourism demand, and also that Schmoll was instrumental in introducing the importance of destination image and the role that it plays in the demand process. Furthermore, Hudson (1999) concludes that Schmoll's is the only model that pays attention to constraints and their impact on the decision-making process although they are mentioned in passing in the work of several of the authors under discussion here.

In conclusion, the Schmoll model was an important step in developing the subject of consumer behaviour in tourism, but it has now been superseded by more up-to-date alternatives.

3.3.3 Mathieson and Wall (1982)

Mathieson and Wall writing in 1982 were primarily concerned with the tourism planning process, and they felt that a better understanding of the issues involved in planning for tourism could be gained by achieving a deeper understanding of the factors which govern the traveller's decision-making process. Put simply, if it is known what causes tourists to select a specific destination, planning decisions can be made based on this. This can be done in four ways – through marketing, (by directing tourist decisions towards or away from specific destinations), through identifying which factors impact most heavily on tourist decisions, through identifying areas in need of research in order to inform planning decisions and through determining criteria by which target markets and market segments can be identified (Mathieson and Wall 1982).

Mathieson and Wall identified the main reasons for creating a model of tourist decision-making as firstly an aid for tourism planners and secondly because tourism has enough distinguishing characteristics to make general models of consumer choice unsuitable for use in travel and tourism. These characteristics, already discussed in a previous section, include perishability, intangibility and heterogeneity amongst others. They felt that the existing models relied on the "economic man" approach – this assumes rational decisions based on perfect knowledge. A behavioural approach was in their opinion what was needed, since tourists act on limited information and generally seek a satisfactory, rather than optimal experience (Mathieson and Wall 1982).

The Mathieson and Wall behavioural decision-making framework for travel and tourism has five phases neatly echoing the predominantly five-stage models already discussed:

1 Felt need or travel desire

2 Information collection and evaluation

3 Travel decisions

4 Travel preparations and experiences

5 Travel satisfaction evaluation

In the first phase, a desire to travel asserts itself, and the reasons for and against travelling are assessed. At this point, the decision may be not to travel at all. Once the decision to undertake travel has been taken, the next issue is destination choice. This corresponds to phase two of the framework, where information is gathered from all available sources, including travel agents, brochures and advertisements as well as from friends and family. This information is then evaluated, giving thought to the time and money available, alternative destinations, domestic pressures and so on. Finally, a destination is selected, along with other issues such as mode of transport, type of accommodation and activities to be undertaken, and the travel decision is taken. Under the fourth heading of travel preparations and travel experiences, the authors include both pre-holiday tasks such as making bookings and buying clothing and equipment and the holiday itself – the travel experience. Last, but not least, the model considers travel satisfaction evaluation, which takes place during and after the trip, where the travel experience is rated and the result of this will inform subsequent travel decisions.

Although their stages do not correspond exactly with the grand models, they do seem to be heavily influenced by them. The concept particularly of travel preparations and experiences as part of the model shows that consideration has been given to how the tourist plans for a holiday, not just before taking the decision to travel, but also before the trip takes place – shopping for the holiday and planning how to spend the time at the destination for example. This is comparable with the attitude and learning aspects of the Howard-Sheth model in particular.

Within the framework of the decision-making process are included four major elements, which have a bearing on all aspects of the decision-making process. These are tourist profile, travel awareness, trip features and destination resources and characteristics.

The tourist profile is split into socio-economic and behavioural characteristics, the former referring to mostly demographic issues such as age and income and the latter referring to motivations, attitudes, needs and wants (Mathieson and Wall 1982).

Travel awareness concerns the fact that even once a potential tourist has decided to travel, their travel decision will be limited by the amount of information they have or can attain on any given destination, gleaned from adverts and brochures and from the experiences of friends and family. This information all adds up to image that the potential tourist has of each destination. This image is further moulded by the tourist profile as explained above. The image that a potential tourist has of a destination is vitally important in the decision whether or not to travel there – where quality and service are similar, destination image may be the decisive factor in choice between travel opportunities (Mathieson and Wall 1982).

Under the heading of trip features, two separate, but linked, areas are covered. Firstly, there are what the authors refer to as "generation point" characteristics, meaning domestic and work-related issues such as choosing a holiday for the whole family, or taking a holiday on certain dates due to work commitments. These are variously described in other models to be discussed later as situational constraints or intervening issues (*cf* Um and Crompton 1990, Woodside and Lysonski 1989, Oppermann 1995b). Also included are the features of the holiday itself – destination, duration, perceived risk or uncertainty at the destination and confidence in the arrangements that have been made.

Finally, destination resources and characteristics refers mainly to those things that make a certain destination stand out as the best choice for any individual tourist such as types of attractions available, the quality of service on offer, the accessibility of the destination and any barriers or constraints to travel to that destination such as visas or other paperwork. It can clearly be seen that the factors under each heading are inter-related and have a bearing on the decision taken by each individual as to which destination will best suit their particular array of needs and wants.

Thus Mathieson and Wall (1982) present their take on the decision-making process behind traveller destination choice. It certainly highlights many of the issues that are involved in making a travel decision, such as information gathering and evaluating alternatives, and making a decision within the constraints specific to each individual, and the fact that each travel experience will inform the next travel decision. This model is also conceptually clear and comprehensible.

However, many criticisms have been levelled at the Mathieson and Wall model, mostly revolving around the linear nature of the model and the fact that no distinctions are made about which factors weigh heavier than others when decisions are being made (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). Additionally, as pointed out by Swarbrooke and Horner (1999), the model too is quite out of date since it takes no account of modern tourist behaviour such as last minute deals, all inclusive holidays and Internet purchases. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) also criticise the Mathieson and Wall model (along with the other major models of tourism decision-making) on the grounds that the models view tourists as rational and homogenous. Certainly the issue of whether tourists (and other consumers) are acting rationally when they make decisions is a perennial one, but to criticise the Mathieson and Wall model for viewing tourists as homogenous seems a little unfair as Mathieson and Wall go to some length to illustrate those characteristics which make every tourist decision individual.

This does, though, lead on to a further problem with the concept of modelling – stressing at length that every tourist decision is individual seems to hint, albeit obliquely, that it is impossible to predict how any given tourist will make his destination choice. This is not what marketers want to hear, and following on from the stated aim of Mathieson and Wall (1982) of helping the planning process, is probably not what tourism planners want to hear either! The model is descriptive, but it is not clear whether it can be used in predicting how tourists will make their decisions.

Further criticism from Gilbert (1991) refers to the fact that the Mathieson and Wall model is based on the "grand models" of consumer behaviour. This in itself is not a problem, but as Gilbert points out: "the Mathieson and Wall model does not reflect the depth of insight of these models" (Gilbert 1991, p 99). He further highlights that "it omits important aspects of perception, memory, personality and information processing which are the basis of the traditional models" (Gilbert 1991, p 99). He concludes that the Mathieson and Wall model "is based on a geographer's product-based perspective rather than that of a consumer behaviourist" (Gilbert 1991, p 99). This is in stark contrast to the assertion of Mathieson and Wall (1982) that they intended to use "a behavioural approach".

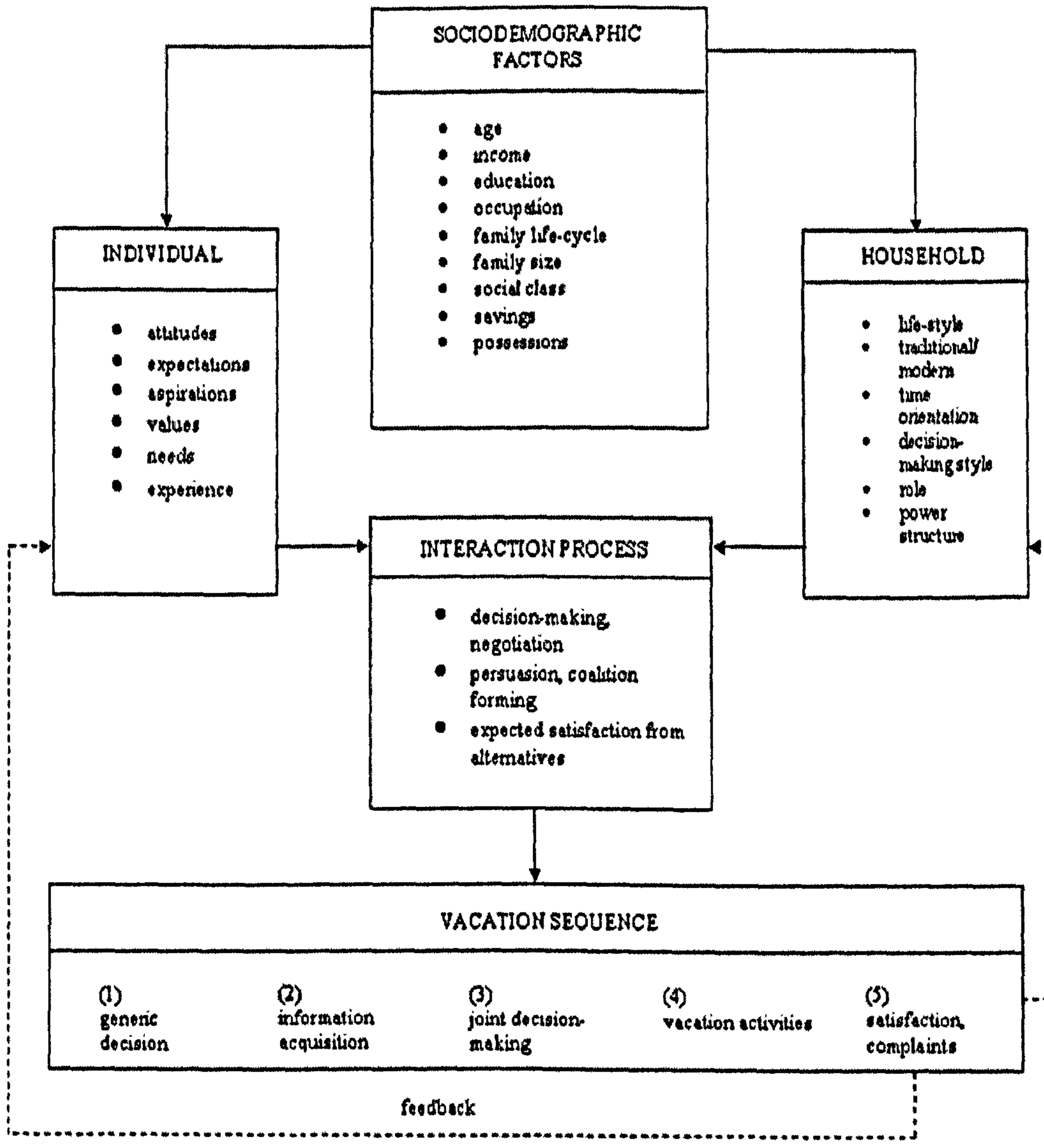
In summary, the Mathieson and Wall model of 1982 has been widely used to describe the tourist's decision-making process and seems to do this clearly and simply. However, when considered from a more in-depth point of view, it can be argued that there are some omissions such as perception and memory, and also suffers from the inevitable problem of being out of date. Clearly, this is not just an issue for this model, but for all the models in this section.

3.3.4 Van Raaij and Francken (1984)

These two authors proposed in 1984 what they called their "Vacation Sequence", which was a five stage process of holiday decision-making with a particular emphasis on family or joint decision-making. This is the first model to consider joint decision-making explicitly. They began with the generic decision of whether or not to travel. This immediately differentiates this model from those others under review as it does not go into any detail at all about problem recognition or what might prompt a potential tourist to take this decision in the first place. However, once the decision to go on holiday has been taken, the next four steps are broadly in line with other models mentioned (*cf* Schmoll 1977 and Mathieson and Wall 1982 for example).

The second stage of the vacation sequence is information acquisition. Van Raaij and Francken place great importance on this stage, explaining that information may sensitize people favourably to the idea of having a vacation, it may persuade a household or reluctant partner to take a particular vacation, it may assist choices and heighten appreciation of the vacation destination, or it may be used to rationalise, justify or legitimize the vacation decision (Van Raaij and Francken 1984). They also point out that after purchase or after the actual holiday, the information acquired may be of use in reducing cognitive dissonance.

Figure 3.5 Factors Determining the Vacation Sequence (Van Raaij & Francken 1984)



(Source: Van Raaij & Francken 1984)

Stage three is termed joint decision-making. They argue that vacation decisions are often syncratic (joint) and therefore the issue of decision-making should include joint activities, perhaps between husband and wife, or perhaps involving the whole family. The decision reached will depend upon both the individual and household factors identified in the model, and on the interaction process between family members. In fact, the question of family decision-making constitutes a field of research in its own right, which although interesting is too detailed to be studied in this short review. This aspect has not been covered by the preceding models, but can arguably be considered to be part of the general evaluation of alternatives section since it probably involves families or households comparing differing destinations and attempting to address each member's own needs. It may also be applicable to the conference context as a decision to attend a conference may impact on the rest of the family, perhaps in terms of the delegate using up holiday time to attend, or spending time attending a conference that could be spent with the family.

The actual holiday is stage four of this model or sequence, and stage five therefore takes place after the holiday. It looks at the issue of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the holiday, and any complaints that are made during or after the holiday. The holiday may be better or worse that expected, and Van Raaij and Francken introduce the concept of equity cognition, which is recognising that the purchase may be seen to be fair, where all elements are satisfactory, or unfair, where there is not value for money, or where serious complaints have arisen. Since satisfaction or dissatisfaction have a profound effect on future decision-making behaviour, this element is very important in a decision-making model.

Although it is a very simple model, it is clear and easy to understand. It may miss out important elements of motivation and behavioural issues, but it is certainly of practical use to marketers who want to understand the decision process a little better.

3.3.5 Moutinho (1987)

Moutinho's work is one of the more recent attempts to model the decision-making process of tourists. However, it is still over fifteen years old, and as such is no longer at the cutting edge in its field. Nevertheless, it remains widely cited in tourism literature, and merits closer examination.

The first and most obvious characteristic of the 1987 Moutinho model (see Figure 3.6) is that instead of following the by now traditional form of five sections (motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, decision and post-decision process – c.f. Mathieson and Wall (1982) or Wahab *et al* (1976)), he chooses to divide his model into three parts. These are classified as the pre-decision and decision process, the post-purchase evaluation and future decision-making.

At a glance it is clear that Moutinho is taking a different tack from most of the previous authors. The most obvious example of this is the fact that the first four of the traditional sections mentioned above are subsumed into the first part of the Moutinho model. This includes not only everything that takes place before the decision itself, but also presumably the holiday experience too, although this is not actually mentioned in the model.

However, a closer examination of the model does show that the concepts behind the traditional five stages are present here too.

Part One of the Moutinho model is entitled "pre-decision and decision process" and is by far the most complex part of the model. It includes three fields and three subfields.

Field One is the "preference structure" - the tourist's preference for a particular destination is based on a set of factors including internalised environmental influences such as cultural norms and values, family and reference groups, financial

status and social class, as well as personality, lifestyle, perceived role set, learning and motives (Moutinho 1987).

This section places much more emphasis on the complexity of each individual and the role that this complexity plays in any decision than the other models that are being reviewed here, although Schmoll (1977) does include a category for personal and social determinants of behaviour, and van Raaij and Francken (1984) do stress the part played by the rest of the family in any decision.

The preference structure also deals with the fact that intention to purchase is based on confidence in the product and may be affected by inhibiting factors such as anxiety and uncertainty. Finally, the attitudes of the potential tourist will have a bearing on his decision and therefore this is included within the preference structure.

Moutinho includes the travel stimulus in Part One of his model. This can be identified as being similar to the motivational element of the other models currently under review. He notes that information received is not used by the consumer in its raw form, but rather is processed into usable material, thus Subfield A is stimulus filtration.

Following on from this, Subfield B is attention and learning – attention indicating sensitivity to the information provided and therefore a learned change in behaviour towards a possible purchase.

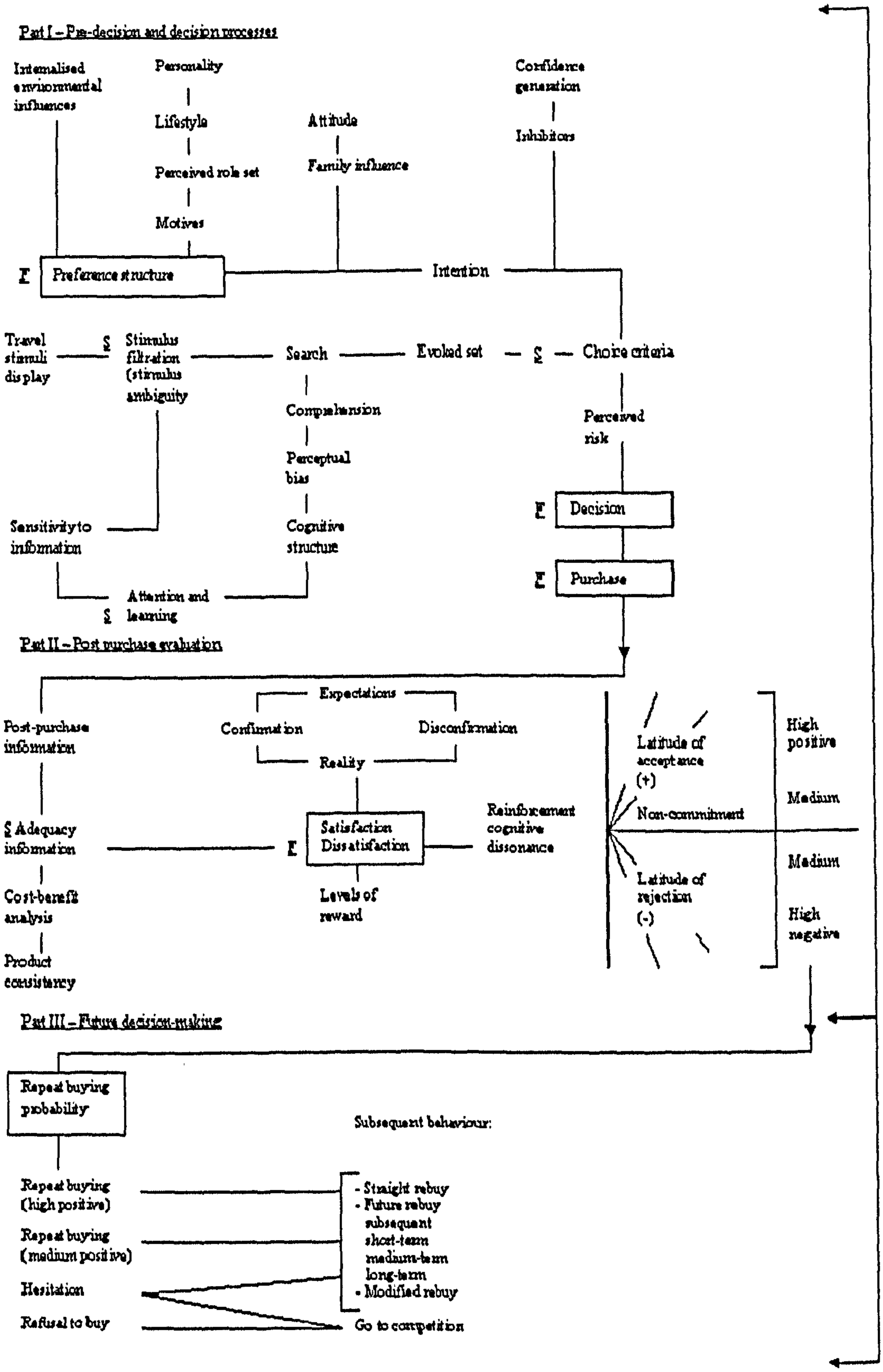
This leads on to comprehension of the stimulus and further information search, and finally to Subfield C, choice criteria. Each tourist has individual choice criteria – "the criteria that tourists employ in evaluating destinations or tourist services that constitute their evoked sets are usually expressed in terms of attributes that they feel are important to them" (Moutinho 1987, p 41). This represents the same process as that described by other authors as information search and evaluation of alternatives (cf Schmoll 1977 or Mathieson and Wall 1982).

Although it has a complex structure, Moutinho's model does address the issues of motivation, information search and evaluation of alternatives. However, each of these issues is dealt with in much more detail in this model, and aspects of the decision-making process which are absent from the other models such as attention and learning can be seen here. In summary, the motivation, information search and evaluation of alternatives stages are all included in Part One of the Moutinho model.

Field Two in Part One is the decision. Moutinho (1987) describes the decision process as a series of conflicts, meaning that the decision may be based on any number of issues including perceived image, information from the destination, prior experience, information from travel intermediaries or social interaction and will be the result of a merging of these issues. The decision process is based on the tourist's beliefs and images. This stage is clearly the same as that described by all other authors of leisure tourism decision-making models.

Field Three in Part One is the act of purchase and no further comment is made on this field by the author. As mentioned earlier it is not clear whether the actual holiday experience is to be imagined as part of this field or part of the next.

Figure 3.6 Moutinho's Vacation Tourist Behaviour Model (1987)



The model moves straight on to the post-purchase evaluation, but whether this is assumed to take place before or during the holiday experience, or indeed following on from it, is not elaborated upon. Therefore, Part One of this model includes all the activities and thought processes that are covered in the first four stages of the other models (*cf* Wahab *et al* (1976), Schmoll (1977) etc.). These stages are motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives and purchase.

The final stage identified by the previously described models is post-purchase behaviour. Moutinho includes this too, but discusses this stage in much greater detail than any of the other authors. He divides his post-purchase behaviour into two main parts – Part Two is post-purchase evaluation and Part Three is Future Decision-Making.

According to Hudson (1999, p 24) who paraphrases Moutinho, Part Two has three major purposes: to add to the tourist's store of experiences, to provide a check on the market-related decisions and to provide feedback to serve as a basis for adjusting future purchase behaviour.

Subfield D in Part Two is adequacy evaluation. Moutinho considers that each attribute of the tourist product has an ideal point and that when evaluating adequacy, the tourist uses a kind of cost-benefit analysis in order to find a mental equilibrium between the price paid and the product experienced. This equilibrium is termed product consistency (Moutinho 1987).

Field Four in Part Two covers satisfaction and dissatisfaction arising from a tourism purchase, with the attendant dimensions of expectations and reality and how these match up. This field also includes cognitive dissonance. Moutinho (1987) felt that this satisfaction/dissatisfaction element was important in determining whether the tourist would make a similar purchase, and he expressed this in terms of zones or "latitudes" of acceptance of, rejection of and non-committal to the product purchased. Naturally, the results emerging from Part Two are vital in shaping future

travel behaviour of the tourist, and this leads on as a matter of course to Part Three of the model, which looks at future decision-making.

Part Three considers repeat buying probability, and the subsequent purchase behaviours to be expected. Examples would be high probability of a straight rebuy in the short to medium term, or perhaps at the other extreme, hesitation of whether to rebuy, leading to a modified rebuy or even a refusal to rebuy, and defection to the competition (Moutinho 1987).

This concludes this brief general description of the Moutinho model and its complexity is clear. As with all models, there are pros and cons to this one. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) feel that the model is remarkable in two respects. Firstly, it recognises that there are three distinctively different stages in the decision process and that the last of these stages would feed back to the first through a loop in the system. Secondly, they point out that it explicitly notes that purchase decisions are the result of three behaviour concepts – motivation, cognition and learning (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999). This last suggestion may be slightly unfair to Moutinho, as his model clearly includes personality, attitude and lifestyle too, but the point is well made, and reinforced by Gilbert (1991, p 101): "The model is more comprehensive in its coverage than many of the other options offered".

However, Gilbert (1991) does suggest that certain arguments could be levelled at Moutinho's concept, particularly the fact that the subsequent behaviour section of Part Three is already incorporated in Part Two of the model, within the attitude outcome field of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, where reinforcement to rebuy may have already taken place (Gilbert 1991). This would in fact render Part Three obsolete.

Another criticism of the Moutinho model arises from the very complexity of the model. Although it is clearly of benefit to be able to isolate almost every possible issue that impacts upon buying behaviour, there is a danger that the level of complexity reached will mean that no definitive outcome can be achieved by using

the model. If it is purely for academic purposes, following the desire to understand and include all the issues and finding one final answer to all questions, then the model works well towards reaching this goal. However, the purpose of a model in the real world is surely to allow marketers and planners to gain a better understanding of how tourists actually reach their decisions, and layers of relatively impenetrable academic language can only hinder this aim. Given that every tourist decision is unique to each tourist and is based on a combination of motivation, attitude, lifestyle, personality etc. then it may be simply confusing the issue to try to include every possible characteristic and dimension of a purchase decision into one model. There is certainly an argument from a purely practical point of view that simplifying decision models to make them more accessible to practitioners of marketing and planning would be helpful. "A model is a replica of the phenomenon that it is intended to designate [...] and is also a framework for analysis, predicting the way that a system would work under specified conditions" (Moutinho 1987 p 39). This clearly argues that a model should be of practical use. Moutinho also states the aims as "an attempt to contribute to a global analysis of tourist behaviour and, as a practical outcome, to marketing decisions". However, the practical value of his work remains in question.

3.3.6 Decision-Making Strategies

The general models of the consumer decision-making process attempt to clarify the different stages involved in the purchase of a consumer good, and the tourism models have extended these principles to the purchase of tourism goods and services, but there is a further aspect to decision-making that is worthy of discussion and that is the strategy used by the consumer to make their decision – "how" a decision is made, rather than "what" the consumer finally decides. Information processing research has identified a number of decision-making strategies, or heuristics. A heuristic in this context is a basic rule of thumb for making a decision. An important distinction between different decision strategies is the extent to which they are compensatory (Bettman *et al* 1998). Compensatory strategies require consumers to make a trade-off between differing values on the multiple attributes of the product or good under

consideration (Stevenson and Naylor 1990). As such, compensatory decision strategies require extensive information processing, as substantial detail is gathered in order to analyse these trade-offs. For example, where the cost of a product is high, other positive attributes may outweigh the high cost. Non-compensatory strategies on the other hand do not involve trading attributes off against each other – rather, they focus on whether an attribute of a product meets a pre-determined cut off point (Stevenson and Naylor 1990). Continuing the example of a high cost product – if the cost is too high, then the product will be rejected in a non-compensatory framework. Non-compensatory strategies may be further subdivided, into conjunctive rules, disjunctive rules, lexicographic rules, satisficing rules and affect referral rules (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000). These will be discussed in more detail below.

According to Laroche *et al* (2003), when the number of alternative brands is large, consumers tend to use non-compensatory heuristics to eliminate unacceptable brands, followed by a compensatory heuristic to evaluate a smaller set of brands. This suggests that decision strategies vary from consumer to consumer and also that the heuristics used by an individual will vary from decision to decision. Lye *et al* (2005) concur, stating that the consumer decision process may involve multiple decisions within a single decision process. Consumers may conduct one or more screening decisions, which Lye *et al* (2005, p. 221) term "decision waves", to eliminate unsuitable alternatives prior to gathering information or comparing options. Additionally, according to Moutinho (1987, p 32) consumers carry out choice processes in two different ways – "either the consumer has a set of rules or heuristics, which are already stored in memory, and these rules are called forth when needed, or the consumer develops the heuristic at the time of choice."

One issue that has a bearing on the heuristic chosen is the level of involvement of the consumer in the purchase decision. Involvement as a concept in consumer behaviour was originally conceived in relation to how consumers responded to advertising (McWilliam 1997). It now appears to refer more broadly to the personal relevance or importance of a decision to the consumer and is defined by McWilliam (1997, p. 60) as "the level of motivation given to a stimulus, situation or decision task". The

conditions which stimulate involvement are generally linked with the perceived risk associated with the purchase, be it financial risk, physical risk, psycho-social risk or time-generated risk. The concept of risk will be discussed further in the section below on the information search, but broadly speaking, the higher the levels of perceived risk, the higher the level of involvement with the purchase and the more detailed the information search will be. A detailed information search suggests more likelihood of a compensatory heuristic being selected.

Additionally, the decision strategy chosen may reflect the type of purchase itself. Engel *et al* (1968) identified three different types of purchase decision as routine problem solving (RPS), limited problem solving (LPS), and extensive problem solving (EPS), reflecting the expenditure of time and money that a consumer invests in the decision. It is reasonable to assume that purchases involving LPS or EPS will be more likely to involve a compensatory strategy as the amount of effort spent getting information on the product allows for a greater consideration of the attributes of that product.

According to Swarbrooke and Horner (2000, p 71), "the behaviour of consumers when they are purchasing tourism products and services demonstrates a high involvement in the process and high levels of commitment because of the nature of tourism purchases". This suggests that tourism purchases are high involvement and subsequently that compensatory decision strategies are likely to be used. However, in tourism purchases, as with other high involvement purchases, it may be the case that initial, non-compensatory, strategies are used to reduce the number of available alternatives to a more manageable number.

In a tourism context, Moutinho (1987) suggests that both the compensatory and the non-compensatory strategies mentioned earlier may all be relevant. The conjunctive rule is defined as where options (e.g. vacation destinations) are eliminated from further consideration where they are perceived to have certain unacceptable features. Minimum acceptable levels exist for each attribute and each alternative is considered in relation to these cut off points. An alternative that falls below the cut off point on

one or more attribute is eliminated. A second strategy may be used to make a final choice (Moutinho 1987). The disjunctive rule is where options are chosen on the grounds that they are believed to possess a single overwhelming advantage in terms of the features being considered. This is the simplest of all rules (Moutinho 1987). The lexicographic rule is where on occasions, people may screen options by priorities – i.e. the first vacation destination to demonstrate an advantage on a subset of key attributes, considered in order of importance, will be the one chosen. Alternatives are compared on the one most important attribute, and if one alternative is noticeably better, it is selected with no further evaluation. If two or more are judged about equal, they are compared on the second most important attribute and so on (Moutinho 1987). The elimination by aspects rule is similar to the conjunctive rule, where attributes are evaluated against minimum cut off points, but like the lexicographic rule, the evaluation starts with the most important attribute (Moutinho 1987). Satisficing is where the first adequate option is selected, without assessing any alternatives or seeking any further information (Bettman *et al* 1998). This is generally rarely used in tourism purchases, with the exception of tourists who buy last minute cheap deals and have little interest in the actual destination or any other aspects of the holiday but instead may pick the first adequate option, based purely on price alone.

Similar to other consumers, the potential tourist may adopt one or more of these non-compensatory decision rules, or may opt for a compensatory heuristic. For example, the conjunctive rule may be used to eliminate several available alternatives from consideration, perhaps on cost grounds, and so this will leave a more manageable number of alternatives for further consideration. The choice of which of the remaining alternatives to choose may be made on a more compensatory basis, weighing up the pros and cons of each option (Moutinho 1987). This reflects the high involvement of the tourist with the purchase.

In a conference context, the decision to attend a conference may require different strategies depending on the level of involvement of the potential delegate and the amount of effort that is put into the information search stage of the process.

Compensatory strategies are arguably more likely in the association conference context than in the corporate conference context, where attendance is mandatory. However, where an association member attends the annual conference every year, and only has to check on the location and arrange accommodation, this suggests that a non-compensatory heuristic may be used – although the delegate is highly involved with the purchase, the decision to attend is fairly routine, and attendance at the conference is highly desired and so it is likely that the potential delegate will use the disjunctive rule – attendance at the conference is perceived to have an overwhelming advantage over staying at home or doing something else with the time. Where certain factors come into play, for example where budgets are tight, a non-compensatory strategy such as the conjunctive rule seems more likely, for example if the cost is higher than the minimum cut off point according to the potential delegate's budget, then attendance may be ruled out. Nevertheless, where the potential delegate has to decide whether or not to attend based on a number of factors, a compensatory strategy is more likely, with a weighing up of the pros and cons of attending, and considering the alternatives to attending. The potentially compensatory nature of the attendance decision at an association conference arguably gives rise to a more complex decision and further strengthens the case for examining the decision-making process undertaken by a potential association conference delegate when deciding whether or not to attend a UK association conference.

3.3.7 Some remarks on the tourist decision-making models

Research into the decision-making process undertaken by tourists has been ongoing for many years and as new models are proposed, further knowledge on this process is gained. However, it is interesting to note that research interests are somewhat cyclical in nature, and there have not been many papers in recent years on the behavioural aspects of the overall tourist decision-making process. Instead, individual elements of the process have received further scrutiny, such as the role of internet and other sources in the information search phase, or identifying elements in the choice set models of destination choice.

Model	*Motivation*	*Information Search*	*Evaluation of Alternatives*	*Purchase*	*Post-purchase*
Wahab et al (1976)	Initial Stimulus Needs and wants of the potential tourist Marketing Messages received	Conceptual Framework What the tourist wants from his holiday Fact Gathering Rejection factors Satisfaction/dissatisfaction elements Definition of Assumptions Checking facts amassed	Design of Alternatives Shortlist of Destinations under consideration Cost-benefit analysis Ranking of alternatives	Final Decision	Outcome Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction ———————
Schmoll (1977)	Travel Stimuli Personal and Social Determinants of Behaviour	External Variables Destination image Assessment of risk Constraints of time and money	Comparison of Travel Alternatives Characteristics of the destination Costs of travel Facilities available	Decision	
Mathieson & Wall (1982)	Felt need or travel desire	Information Collection and Evaluation Collecting information from adverts and brochures Alternative destinations considered		Travel Preparations and Experiences	Travel Satisfaction Awareness Will inform future travel decisions
Van Raaij & Francken (1984)	To travel or not to travel	Information Acquisition and Joint Decision-Making Gathering information Persuading partner or household to travel		Holiday	Post Travel Equity cognition Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction
Moutinho (1987)	**PART ONE** Field 1 – Preference Structure Personality, lifestyle, motives, and learning Subfield A – Travel Stimulus Stimulus Filtration – processing information into usable form Attention & Learning – attention to information provided leading to a learned change in behaviour towards a possible travel purchase Choice Criteria – expressed in terms of attributes important in the decision process.			Field 2 Decision Field 3 Act of purchase	**PART TWO** Post purchase evaluation Adequacy evaluation Field 4 Satisfaction/dissatisfaction **PART THREE** Future Decision-Making Field 5 Repeat buying probability

Figure 3.7 – Some of the well known models of tourist decision-making behaviour

In addition, there has been criticism of the fact that most of the models of the tourist decision-making process have been based on the grand models which were created with the purchase of a product in mind. Since tourism usually involves a service, it can be argued that a behavioural model based on the decision to buy a product is not entirely relevant. Indeed, Sirakaya and Woodside (2004) suggest viewing the ubiquitous use of the traditional consumer decision processes and their derivatives with a degree of questioning since there is a lack of empirical testing of these models.

A further difficulty in creating a model of the tourist decision-making process centres on the fact that demand for tourism is constantly evolving. When many of these models were created, there was no Internet and little in the way of last minute deals. As technology develops and new products and new distribution channels emerge, the existing models can seem out of date. However, the author would argue that this does not mean that the basic concepts behind the decision-making process (motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase behaviour) are thus rendered invalid, and therefore it is important to consider these basic concepts in some detail in order to assess how they might fit in any proposed model of the conference attendance decision-making process.

In fact, given that the prevailing opinion is that behavioural models are difficult to keep up to date and fraught with difficulties, questions may arise as to why this research is attempting to create a model of the conference attendance decision-making process in the first place. In response, it is argued that since little in the way of a conceptual framework for the conference attendance decision-making process exists, this research intends to provide a theoretical basis for further understanding how a conference delegates reaches his decision to attend an association conference in the UK. Once a conceptual framework for the decision-making process has been established, future research can examine in more detail individual aspects of the process, and keep the process up to date with developments in the field as the conference market evolves. This is in line with the established precedent in leisure tourism, where relatively simple frameworks and models were initially established

to aid understanding of the leisure tourism decision-making process, and then these were used as a basis to work from in order to understand individual aspects of the process more clearly.

Therefore, this chapter will now go on to examine in detail three of the five stages outlined so far in this review – motivation, information search and evaluation of alternatives – and will consider how each of these stages could be applied to the conference industry in order to propose a model of the conference attendance decision-making process. The remaining two stages are the act of purchase and post-purchase behaviour. The act of purchase does not need any further clarification since it is not in itself an involved process, but is the culmination of the first three stages of the decision-making process. Post-purchase behaviour will arguably take a similar form in the leisure tourism context and the conference context, in that it will inform future decision-making, although post-purchase behaviour may differ dependent on the decision heuristic adopted by the consumer, and therefore does not in itself require any further study.

3.4 Motivation in Tourism

The study of tourism motivation has been derived from a range of disciplinary areas which has led to a diversity of approach (Gilbert 1991). In 1981, Dann outlined seven perspectives on tourist motivations:

1 Travel as a response to what is lacking, yet desired (tourists wish to experience phenomena which are different from those available in their usual surroundings)

2 Destination pull in response to motivational push (clarifying the difference between the motivations of individuals themselves in their desires to take a holiday and the attractions of each destination once the decision to travel has been taken)

3 Motivation as fantasy (the suggestion that tourists may travel in order to fulfil desires which may not be acceptable at home)

4 Motivation as classical purpose (looking at the purpose of the trip as the motivator, such as a visit to friends and family or travel to study)

5 Motivational typologies (this aspect considered behavioural typologies in relation to travel motivation)

6 Motivation and tourist experiences (this area of research has concentrated on tourist experiences and the effect that they have on future motivation)

7 Motivation as auto-definition and meaning (this suggests that the way in which tourists define their situations will provide a greater understanding of tourist motivation than by simply observing them.

(Adapted from Dann 1981 and Gilbert 1991)

Dann (1981) felt that the above were seven different approaches to studying travel motivations, and that this demonstrates "a definitional fuzziness". This serves to highlight the confusions and contradictions involved in studying travel motivations. However, several other authors have attempted to simplify this difficult psychological area of motivation, in order to progress research in the field of consumer behaviour in tourism.

One of the earlier works on the subject of what motivates people to travel was Crompton. Writing in 1979, he isolated nine motives – escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression (engaging in childlike behaviour), enhancement of kinship relationships, facilitation of social interaction (meeting new people), novelty and education. The first seven are socio-psychological and the latter two are cultural (Crompton 1979). He felt that his study showed that "people went on holiday to satisfy a variety of different motives" and that "the attributes which might attract them to a specific destination differed" (Crompton 1979, p 423). He has since researched much more deeply into this issue as will be seen in a later section.

In 1983, Beard and Ragheb proposed a model which they entitled the Leisure Motivation Scale, which categorises travel motivations into four types,

concentrating on the intellectual component (activities such as learning and exploring), the social component (need for friendship and the esteem of others), the competent-mastery component (where leisure activities are used to achieve and compete) and the stimulus avoidance component (a desire to escape and seek solitude and rest) (Beard and Ragheb 1983). Further research on this theory was carried out by Ryan and Glendon (1998), who confirmed the "usefulness" of the Leisure Motivation Scale in tourism by replicating the results of Beard and Ragheb's original study.

A different set of four categories are those put forward by McIntosh and Goeldner (1990). Their ideas covered physical motivators, cultural motivators, interpersonal motivators and status and prestige motivators. Although their categories differ from Beach and Ragheb, they still cover the same basic needs – the need to escape, the need to impress others, the need to achieve as much as possible. These ideas from travel motivations are clearly linked with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The theory put forward by Abraham Maslow originally in 1943 and incorporated into his book "Motivation and Personality" (1954) is probably the best known theory of motivation. It isolated five different sets of needs, or conditions within the individual which bring about needs. His first category is entitled "basic needs" and includes physiological drives such as hunger and thirst. He quotes the idea of homeostasis, which is the body's automatic efforts to maintain a constant, normal state in the blood stream, and he stresses that if all the individual's needs are unsatisfied, the body will only seek to fulfil these basic physiological needs – a starving man does not care about how people in society view him. He needs only to be fed.

Once the basis needs have been satisfied, other higher needs will emerge. Next in Maslow's hierarchy comes "safety needs". In our western society, the individual's safety needs – shelter from extreme temperatures and wild animals and safety from life-threatening situations – are generally met, and so safety needs tend not to be

active motivators for us. It is worth remembering, however, that this is not the case in other parts of the world.

If the individual's basic and safety needs have been met, then Maslow postulates that the next set of needs to emerge will be the need for love, affection and belongingness. Wanting to be loved and to feel the security of belonging to a family unit or wider society has long been a preoccupation of man, and Maslow even goes as far as to say that "the thwarting of these needs is the most commonly found core in cases of maladjustment and more severe psychopathology" (Maslow 1954).

Following on from the affective need for love and belongingness is the more complex issue of the need for self-esteem and the esteem of others. Maslow considered that people have a need for "a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves, for self respect, self-esteem and the esteem of others" (Maslow 1954). In his opinion, it is only the satisfaction of the esteem needs that will bring about self confidence, self worth and a feeling of being both useful and necessary in the world. It is clear to see simply by observing society around us that there is more than a grain of truth in this assertion.

Finally, Maslow claims that even when all the preceding needs have been met, it may be expected that some new need will appear, perhaps in the form of restlessness with one's current situation, or simply further ambition. As Maslow himself puts it: "What a man **can** be he **must** be" (Maslow 1954). This state of affairs is termed "self-actualization" and it represents the final section of his hierarchy of needs.

Returning to the issue of travel motivations, previous research into the area of travel motivations had resulted in even simpler categories – in 1977, Dann proposed anomie and ego-enhancement as prime tourist motives. "Anomie" represents the desire to transcend the feeling of isolation inherent in everyday life and get away from it all. "Ego-enhancement" on the other hand derives from the need for recognition which is obtained through the status given to travel (Dann 1977). This definition of basic travel motivation is strengthened by the work of Iso-Ahola in

1982, who suggested that seeking and escaping are the basic motivations of leisure behaviour (Iso-Ahola 1982).

In a move away from the theoretical and psychological approach, Middleton (2001) considers that there are six practical motivations for travel and tourism, which he names as follows:

1 Business and work related motives, such as business trips and conferences

2 Physical/Physiological motives, for example to take part in sport, to improve health or just for rest and relaxation

3 Cultural/Psychological and personal motives, which encompass a wide range of activities such as visiting museums or festivals, taking part in arts and crafts, or travelling to experience cultural or natural heritage.

4 Social/Interpersonal and Ethnic motives, including visiting friends and relatives, attending weddings or funerals or travelling to trace one's roots

5 Entertainment/Amusement/Pleasure/Pastimes – these motives include watching sport and other events, visiting theme parks and spending time on leisure shopping

6 Religious motives, such as pilgrimages and retreats.

(Adapted from Middleton 2001)

These motivations, along with many of the others mentioned, do correspond reasonably closely with the hierarchy of needs as proposed by Maslow (1954), but his is not the only basis for trying to understand motivations. In addition to basing ideas on Maslow's hierarchy, attempts have been made to understand buyers' motivations by classifying them according to attitude types. Possibly the best known classification of attitude types is VALS (Values and Lifestyles), which originally segmented the US market into eight different categories according to personal identities and values. This can be applied equally to general marketing and tourism marketing. A British version has been developed by Synergy Consulting,

which is less detailed and divides the population into only three types – sustenance driven, outer-directed and inner-directed. Those who are sustenance driven have attitudes to purchasing based on their financial fears and their need for security. The outer-directed are those who have few financial worries and who choose their purchase based on their perceived desire for a high quality of life. Finally, the inner-directed are those in the population who choose their purchases and make their travel decisions based on their desire for self-reliance, and self-expression (Middleton 2001).

A further interesting study on travel motivations was carried out by Plog in 1977. His ideas were different from most of the aforementioned authors, as he worked on the basis that motivations differ according to personality type. He isolated two categories of personality – "allocentrics" who are variety-seeking, adventurous and confident and "psychocentrics" who are self-inhibited, nervous and non-adventuresome people. Allocentrics tend to like under-developed areas and travel independently, whilst psychocentrics enjoy a more familiar atmosphere, and prefer family destinations.

Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) also consider the matter of travel motivations but they divide the subject into two categories – motivators and determinants. Motivators refer to what prompts the individual to travel and determinants are those factors which determine whether or not the individual is in a position to take a holiday.

They feel that "the main factors that determine an individual tourist's motivations are probably personality, lifestyle, past experience, past life (nostalgia), perceptions and image (how they wish to be viewed by other people) (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999 p. 55). The inclusion of the word "probably" highlights the tenuous nature of definitions of motivations. In addition, as they point out, motivations change for each individual over time according to circumstance (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999).

One further aspect of confusion is trying to define what motivates people to travel when anyone can be influenced by more than one motivator at any given time. In fact, most holidays should be seen as a compromise between the multiple motivators at work on the individual concerned. Even further difficulties arise when people travel in a group and there is conflict between the motivators of each member of the group.

Another behavioural issue that complicates our understanding of travel motivations is the fact that travellers do not always make their true motivations clear. In some cases the individual may not even be aware of a subconscious motive, and in others it may not be socially acceptable to declare true motivations. Finally, true motivations may actually be contradicted by actions, which lead to them being suppressed in order to avoid criticism from others (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999).

Although Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) consider determinants to be a separate issue from motivators, an understanding of both is required in any attempt to make a clearer picture of what motivates people to travel. Determinants may be personal to or external to the tourist. Personal factors include circumstances, knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and experiences, whilst those factors which are external to the tourist include the views of friends and family, the marketing activities of the travel industry, the influence of the media and national and global social, political, economic and technological issues. Factors such as personality and lifestyle influence the relative importance of either personal or external determinants (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999).

Of course, there is one aspect of motivation which has not yet been considered, and that is what is described as "the flip side of motivation" (Haukeland 1990) and that is non-travellers. It is of course important to understand why people travel, but it is still of interest to understand why some people choose not to travel at all. Haukeland (1990) found that the main reason for not travelling was the social conditions of the people being studied – lack of finance and opportunity. The

question of whether a holiday should be considered a social right was also addressed, but no definite conclusions were reached.

To return to the issue at the heart of this section, the idea of defining exact travel motivations, for whatever form of travel, may represent the ideal goal, but the path to this is fraught with difficulties. The categories of travel motivations as suggested by Middleton (2001), Beard and Ragheb (1983) and McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) amongst others represent useful theories on travel motivations. However, since they all consider the same set of variables – the need for rest and escape, the desire to better oneself, the need to learn new skills and the desire to experience other cultures and environments amongst others – this is not of immediate use to marketers in terms of coming up with different sets of categories for segmenting people. In addition, they are rather subjective, and according to Gilbert (1991), they are not based on any scientific evidence.

Clearly this does not mean that identifying travel motivations is of no interest, but spending a great deal of time researching the issue only to come up with ever decreasing circles of terminology make this area more suited to the academic world. Additionally, the categories in most of the above studies are very broad and individual decisions are much more complex than these groupings might initially suggest. In fact, as Middleton points out : "Broad groupings serve to point out the wide divergence of what motivates people, but do not indicate why particular individuals have such motivations, nor the reasons why their travel decisions are made" (Middleton 2001, p. 75). He goes on to suggest that it is necessary "to de-construct the purchasing decision into its component parts [in order to] make it possible to model the process involved" (Middleton 2001, p.75).

3.4.1 Motivations in the conference industry

With regard to motivation in a conference context, Oppermann and Chon (1997, p184) consider the matter of travel motivations from the point of view of business travellers, and state that "as in any other consumer decision-making process, the

potential tourist first has to recognize the need to travel." They consider the specific case of association conference attendees, and conclude that "the participation decision-making process in association convention travel is very similar to the general tourism destination selection process. Several "push" and "pull" factors are involved as well as barriers to attending and intervening opportunities, for example in the form of other conferences" (Oppermann and Chon 1997, p185). The variables that they feel influence motivation to attend an association conference include personal/business factors, the association and conference involved, the location of the event and any intervening opportunities (Oppermann and Chon 1997).

With regard to business travel, only Middleton (2001) and Mill and Morrison (1998) and Oppermann and Chon (1997) even give it a mention as a possible motivation for travel, as most other authors have considered the situation with regard to leisure travel only. The reasons for the almost total lack of research into the motivations of conference attendees may lie in the fact that business travel is often considered a discrete entity in its own right, and that the individual components of business travel are not often disaggregated. Mill and Morrison (1998) split this market segment into regular business travel, business travel related to meeting, conventions and congresses and incentive travel. If one considers business travel as a whole, it would seem an unrewarding waste of time to study motivations, as the general point of business travel is to travel where the business takes you as and when required, with little freedom of choice in the matter. However, when the sub-section of business travel that is association conferences is taken into account it becomes clear that there are as many motivations for attending or not as there are for any other tourist travel decisions, especially when one considers that the attendee is usually funding their attendance at an association conference themselves, or having to justify their attendance to their employer and that they have a limited amount of leisure time at their disposal. It does not seem feasible to try to make business travel, or conference attendance fit in with any specific motivation theory since as mentioned there are as many reasons for attending a conference as there are for taking any tourist trip. However, that said, the amount of work that has been done in this area seems

negligible, especially when the huge amounts of money involved in the conference and convention market are taken in account – in 2003 some 210.5 million person trips were generated for business purposes in the United States alone (ICCA 20005) with seven out of ten Americans belonging to one or more association (Mill and Morrison 1998).

The review of the literature on the conference market will highlight some reasons for attending conferences (to hear particular speakers, or meet like-minded people for example) but little research has been done on the question of what motivates the potential conference delegate to attend. In the case of association conferences, the stimulus to consider attendance is usually hearing about a conference through association mailings, or advertising, or perhaps by word of mouth, but this will be dealt with in the next section.

In conclusion to this section, the motivations for attending an association conference may well be very different to the motivations for taking a leisure trip, but it can be argued that a motivational stage should be included in the conference attendance context just as it is in the leisure tourism context, therefore this research proposes that the association conference attendance decision-making process should have a motivation stage.

3.5 Information Search in Tourism

In a competitive marketplace, consumer awareness, selection and choice of tourism and hospitality products depends on the information available to and used by the tourist (Fodness and Murray 1997). According to Assael (1987), information can be treated as one of the most or even the most important factor influencing and determining consumer behaviour. These comments illustrate the importance of the information search aspect of the purchase decision-making process.

Engel *et al* (1985) defined information search as the motivated acquisition of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition of information from the environment.

Moutinho (1987) defined information search as an expressed need to consult various sources prior to making a purchase decision and this is particularly important in the tourism industry. Since tourists are high involvement customers and tourism products are often expensive and bought sight unseen, even greater importance is attached to the search for information on the product.

There is a wide body of research on the consumer information search in general, but in the field of tourism, the existing research can be divided into three main streams – the psychological/motivational approach, considering the individual and his beliefs, attitudes and involvement in the purchase, the economics approach which involves cost-benefit analysis of the worth of the information search and the information processing approach which focuses on memory and cognitive processing theory (Gursoy and McCleary 2004). Of these, the psychological approach is the most commonly taken. Gursoy and McCleary (2004) have attempted to integrate these three streams of research into one model of the information search process, and they conclude that although many variables influence search behaviour, most are mediated by two factors – familiarity and expertise with the destination. However, their work is theoretical in nature and has not been empirically tested.

The issue of why the search for information is important can be addressed with reference to the specific nature of the tourism purchase. There is always an element of risk in any purchase, but a high expense purchase like a holiday involves more risk to the tourist than a routine consumer purchase. Risk can take many forms, categorised by Maser and Weiermaier (1998) as functional risk, psychological risk, social risk, financial risk and physical risk. The main aim of the information search process in the purchase of a tourism product is risk reduction and uncertainty avoidance. Money and Crotts (2003) postulate that culture is an important factor in uncertainty avoidance, suggesting that tourists from cultures characterised by high levels of uncertainty avoidance (such as Japan) use information sources such as travel agents, whilst those tourists from cultures with less tendency to avoid uncertainty (for example Germany) rely more on word-of-mouth or mass media

related information. This information will be useful for practitioners who will be able to target their markets more accurately

Mansfeld (1992) postulates a two-stage information search process whereby initially the individual gathers enough information to ascertain whether destinations they find attractive are within their constraint limits (usually constraints of time and money). Once the destinations that are outwith these constraint limits have been removed from the equation, the information search will focus on evaluating alternatives on a "place utility" basis rather than on a constraint basis. This suggests a compensatory heuristic is being used.

In their review of the tourism information search literature, Fodness and Murray (1997) identify three major factors – motives, determinants and sources. The individual's motive for undertaking an information search during the travel planning stage is to enhance the quality of the trip (McIntosh and Goeldner 1990), but also as discussed to reduce the risks associated with the purchase. Determinants of the search identified by Snepenger *et al* (1990) are the composition of the party travelling, the presence of friends and family at the destination, past experience and the degree of novelty associated with the destination. This suggests that under different circumstances, individuals will conduct different searches.

The final category identified by Fodness and Murray (1997) is the type of information source used. This can be divided into two – the internal search and the external search. The internal search refers to the individual's own experience and memory and is the initial type of information search undertaken. If the contents of the individual's memory are not sufficient to make a decision, then the search will move to sources external to the individual. According to Mill and Morrison (1985), external sources of information can be either commercial or non-commercial (sometimes referred to as social). This distinction is illustrated in Figure 3.8.

Commercial sources of information usually refers to advertisements, brochures, travel guides and travel intermediaries. Non-commercial sources are generally

family and friends and other reference groups. Money and Crotts (2003) take this distinction further, identifying four or possibly five categories of external search sources: personal (word of mouth), market-dominated (print and electronic adverts), neutral (third-party sources such as travel agents) and experiential sources (direct contact with retailers). To these four may be added the internet, which may be considered to form part of several of these categories but also has sufficient unique defining characteristics for it to be considered as a category in its own right. Money and Crotts (2003) conclude that different customers in various situations carry out different types of information search, and this suggests that there is no 'one size fits all' type of approach to defining the information search process.

Figure 3.8: Classification of Tourism Information Sources

Source of Information	Type of information: Impersonal	Type of information: Personal
Commercial	Brochures Guide Books Local Tourist Offices State Travel Guides	Auto Clubs Travel Agents
Non-commercial	Magazines Newspapers	Friends or relatives Highway welcome centres Personal Experiences

(Source: Fodness and Murray 1997)

Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) have constructed a theoretical framework for the information search process, which includes five primary needs constructs. They identify functional needs such as product knowledge and uncertainty, hedonic needs, innovation needs such as variety and novelty seeking, aesthetic needs and sign needs. This research highlights the fact that not all information searches will result in a purchase and that in fact in some cases, there is no intention to purchase when the information search is carried out. The conclusions that can be drawn from this research are broadly in agreement with the conclusions from other research which

are that different individuals will conduct different information searches according to their needs, and that the information search may not even result in a purchase.

In terms of the practical steps undertaken by a potential tourist when seeking information, Fodness and Murray (1997) revealed evidence for three patterns of information search which can clearly be seen to be conceptually linked to the grand model of Engel *et al* (1968). The three types of information search are routine, limited and extensive search.

A routine search is quick and uses a minimum of resources. A limited search can be limited in terms of the time taken to search or the resources available to the individual searching. Finally, an extensive search requires most time and resources and is particularly associated with holidays involving small children or long distances. This is probably because these types of trips involve the greatest degree of risk, which has already been identified as one of the major reasons for carrying out an information search in the first place.

There are many research articles on the information search process undertaken by potential tourists, but all seem to converge on the issue of whether it is possible to make any decisive statements about how any given individual will carry out their information search. The consensus is that different individuals will carry out different information searches depending on the time and resources available to them, depending on who is travelling and whether they perceive the purchase to be high risk or not, depending on whether they come from a culture of uncertainty avoidance or not and depending on a variety of other factors as yet not fully identified.

However, in terms of understanding the information search process in general, researchers are now much further forward and this knowledge can be transmitted to destination marketing professionals who will be able to target their marketing activities more successfully.

3.5.1 Information Search in the Conference Industry

As has already been explained, the author is not aware of any empirical research on the specific nature of the information search carried out by potential conference delegates. As a result, some suggestions can be put forward, but until the empirical research has been carried out, these remain in the realms of speculation.

It has been suggested that there are three main ways in which the interest of a potential delegate may be awakened and it may be that the information search that is carried out may differ according to how the potential delegate hears about the conference in the first place. If the potential attendee is a member of the association holding the conference, they will almost certainly receive some sort of mailing from the association. This is a selling tool for the association and therefore it is reasonable to assume that the association will have put their mailing together carefully and will have tried to anticipate all the information that the member might need in order to make his decision. The mailing will almost certainly contain the time and date of the conference, the cost and location of the conference (including a glowing description of the venues, accommodation and facilities to be used) and an in-depth description of the conference programme. Special emphasis will be placed on key note speakers as well as the social programme. On receipt of this mailing, the delegate will arguably have no need to search for further information in order to be able to make his decision.

If the potential delegate hears about the conference through word of mouth, or by seeing an advert for the conference, then some kind of search for information is more likely to take place. It is possible that the delegate will contact individual sources - perhaps contacting the local tourist board or destination marketing organisation to try to find out about the destination, perhaps contacting the conference organiser to find out more about the venue, facilities and accommodation, and perhaps contacting the association to find out more about the conference programme. However, in this day and age it is more likely that enquiries about a conference will be directed to the association website which will almost

certainly contain all the information that members of the association would receive in a mailing, and this one point of contact will contain the majority of the information required to make a decision.

It is possible that the decision heuristic used will have a bearing on the type of information search that is carried out by potential conference delegates, in that the compensatory decision-making framework is associated with a more detailed information search process, allowing the potential delegate to consider a variety of factors in relation to their attendance decision, and to compensate for the perceived negative features of attendance with the more positive features.

As has been discussed, the above remains speculative, as there are few literature sources specific to the conference attendance decision-making process and none which specifically address the information search aspect of the process. However, the above descriptions certainly fit in with observations and personal experience of conference attendance and therefore this research proposes that in the conference context, an information search stage should be included.

3.6 Evaluation of Alternatives in Tourism

It is important to be aware that the models discussed previously have attempted to describe the decision-making framework involved in buying a holiday. They took as their starting point the motivations behind taking a holiday, and modelled the entire process including information search and evaluation of alternatives, the purchase decision and holiday itself and post-purchase issues of cognitive dissonance, and (dis)satisfaction, along with future travel behaviour. These models are usually referred to by the generic name of behavioural tourist decision models.

However, a substantial body of literature exists which homes in on one aspect of this decision process, the evaluation of alternatives and how tourists choose the actual destination that they will visit. Much work has been done in this area, notably by Crompton (1979), Um and Crompton (1990), Woodside and Sherrell (1977) and

Woodside and Lysonski (1989). More recently, Moscardo *et al* (1995) have considered the question of destination choice by studying its relationship to holiday activities. More will be written on these studies later.

Many of the models rely on a concept known variously as choice sets or opportunity sets. Nicosia (1966) and Howard and Sheth (1969) were amongst the forerunners in this area, although naturally their work was centred upon the purchase of consumer goods. As with the grand models of consumer behaviour, techniques and ideas from general consumer behaviour theory moved into tourism theory, with Woodside and Sherrell (1977) amongst the first to adapt the concept of choice sets for tourism.

Put simply, when a tourist decides to travel, there are a large number of destinations which may potentially be the best choice. This large number is reduced as information on certain destinations becomes available, and finally after narrowing down the choice to only a few competing destinations, the tourist will make his decision and select his final destination. It is the question of how this large number of possibilities is whittled down to the final selection that is at the crux of this issue. These models take as their starting point the fact that there are two phases in the destination choice process – the generic decision of whether or not to travel and then the choice of destination itself (Van Raaij and Francken 1984)

Initially, the original number of destinations that a potential tourist has at his disposal was known as the *awareness set.* This terminology came from the field of consumer goods purchasing, where a finite and usually relatively small number of brands of any given product are available. However, as Woodside and Sherrell (1977) pointed out in 1977, the number of destinations in this set in a tourism context is potentially infinite and therefore is of little value. They decided to divide the awareness set into two sections – *awareness-available* and *awareness-unavailable.* Awareness-available referred to those travel destinations which the travellers believes that he or she has the ability to visit within some time period, whilst awareness-unavailable were those that the traveller did not have the ability to visit within some time period (Woodside and Sherrell 1977). This cut down on the

infinite number of possibilities in the awareness set and meant that their set included only those destinations that the tourist might actually contemplate.

However, the terminology was further amended, with Woodside and Lysonski (1989) terming the awareness-available set the *initial consideration set* and defining it as those destinations which a traveller is considering as possible destinations within some time period. Um and Crompton (1990) preferred to call this set the *early evoked set*, but by 1992, Crompton too was referring to it as the *initial consideration set*. Terminology notwithstanding, this set describes the initial destinations that a tourist has in mind once the generic decision of whether or not to go on holiday has been answered in the affirmative.

This initial consideration set must be narrowed down to a manageable number of alternatives for the tourist to consider. This has traditionally been known as the *evoked set*, although latterly is has been termed *late evoked set* and *late consideration set* (Um and Crompton 1990 and Crompton 1992 respectively) and simply *consideration set* (Woodside and Lysonski 1989). In any case, it represents those destinations that the tourist is genuinely interested in. It often consists of only three or four alternatives (Woodside and Sherrell 1977 and Woodside and Lysonski 1989).

This means that once this late consideration or evoked set has been formed, certain alternatives that were present in the initial consideration set must have been jettisoned. In 1975, Narayana and Markin introduced two concepts for identifying these rejects. The first set were true rejects known as the *inept set*, which were destinations rejected from purchase consideration because they are perceived negatively, either through unpleasant personal experience or from negative feedback from external sources (Narayana and Markin 1975). The second set was known as the *inert set* – destinations that the individual is aware of, but towards which they are disinterested (Narayana and Markin 1975).

Further work indicates that the inert set can be split into a *foggy set* and a *hold set.* The foggy set has destinations about which the individual has insufficient information to form a positive or negative impression and the hold set has destinations to which the individual is indifferent, despite having enough information on them to make a decision (Church, Laroche and Rosenblatt 1985).

Setting aside those destinations in the inert and inept sets, the tourist is left with his late consideration set. Crompton (1992) further divides the late consideration set into the *inaction set* – those about which no further information is sought and the *action set* – those destinations in which a tourist is sufficiently interested to make an effort to seek information actively from travel intermediaries (Crompton 1992). In addition, he mentions that there will be destinations within the action set that interest the tourist sufficiently to make him contact travel agents or destination representatives and allow himself to be engaged in personal interaction in order to be personally convinced (Crompton 1992). This is the *interaction set* and it is from the competing destinations in this set that the final destination will almost certainly be chosen. Destinations on which further information is sought, but without any personal interaction are said to be in the *quiet set* (Crompton 1992).

It has been concluded by Crompton that the above sets are exhaustive and mutually exclusive, but he also argues that the definitions assigned to them by difference researchers have not been consistent:

"Standardized operationalization is a pre-requisite to maximising the contribution of choice sets to managerial effectiveness, to facilitating development of a cumulative body of knowledge in relation to choice sets and to furthering understanding of their role in the tourist's overall decision process" (Crompton 1992, p 427).

It is also worth remembering that the choice set structure is dynamic, changing both the size of the sets and their contents over time. This may have a bearing on their usefulness from a marketing point of view, as individuals will change their personal views on destinations continually. However, the concept of choice sets has helped

to clarify how tourists choose their final destination by explaining the narrowing process – destinations know that in order to be amongst the final contenders they have to make it into Crompton's action set or better still the interaction set where they or their representatives have the possibility of engaging the potential tourist personally.

Two destination choice models that include the concept of choice sets have been proposed by Woodside and Lysonski (1989) and by Um and Crompton (1990). In addition, the work of Moscardo *et al* (1994) is relevant to this discussion.

3.6.1 Destination choice models

In 1989, Woodside and Lysonski proposed their "General Model of Traveller Destination Choice" which was based on the assumption that consumer perceptions and preferences should be the basis for tourism marketing and consumer policy (Woodside & Lysonski 1989).

According to Um and Crompton (1990 p 433) however, who published their paper on Attitude Determinants in Tourist Destination Choice, "potential travellers generally have limited knowledge about the attributes of a destination they have not previously visited. Therefore, the image and attitude dimensions of a place as a travel destination are likely to be critical elements in the destination choice process". They decided to approach the issues from the attitude side.

In the Um and Crompton study, attitudes were considered to be either perceived inhibitors or facilitators. Inhibitors are considered to be not congruent with the traveller's motives, while facilitators are those beliefs about a destination's attributes which help to satisfy a potential traveller's specific motives (Um and Crompton 1990). A slightly clearer definition would be that inhibitors put a traveller off a certain destination while facilitators make a destination a better match to suit the traveller's requirements. This concept was expanded upon by Um and Crompton in 1992, when they found that facilitators were more important in the early stage of

creating a late evoked or consideration set, whilst inhibitors played a greater role as the final destination choice drew near. This reflects the decision heuristic dynamics as discussed in that in a compensatory decision rule, the potential traveller is more willing to allow the positive aspects of a purchase or decision to outweigh the perceived negative aspects, or inhibitors. With a non-compensatory strategy it is likely that inhibitors are more likely to cause a certain destination to be ruled out of any further consideration. Um and Crompton established that situational constraints (such as time and money) and attitudes were important to destination choice defining as they did that attitude made the difference to whether an issue was felt to be a inhibitor or a facilitator (Um and Crompton 1990 and 1992).

Yet another model of the destination choice process was put forward by Moscardo *et al* 1995). This model suggests that the critical link between motives and destinations may be found in an understanding of activities (Moscardo *et al* 1995). "Activities" is understood to be representative of all that a traveller may do in a destination, including opportunities for socialising and visiting the surrounding area, and does not purely refer to active pursuits such as sport. Moscardo *et al* do not present their model as descriptive of the entire destination selection process, preferring to refer the reader to previous works by Woodside and Lysonski (1989) and Um and Crompton (1990). However, they do intend their research to show how motives can be connected to destinations through activities (Moscardo *et al* 1995). The point of this is of course to understand better the links between the traveller's motives and the final destination that they choose, and Moscardo *et al* explain the link as follows: "Motives can be seen as providing travellers with expectations for activities and destinations are seen as offering activities. Activities are seen as key attributes of destinations" (Moscardo *et al* 1995, p 112). They further argue that activities have been somewhat neglected in the research in this area and they suggest that their studies will allow existing destination choice models to be more destination specific and will bring travel motives more clearly into the choice process by including activities as attributes of destinations (Moscardo *et al* 1995). This importance of the activities or opportunities available at a destination seems likely to influence not just a leisure tourist's decision to visit a certain location, but may also reflect the

importance of social aspects and opportunities for conference attendees too. This will be discussed again in a later section.

Um and Crompton (1990) created a "Model of the Pleasure Travel Destination Choice Process", which consists of five sets of processes and three different concepts – external inputs, cognitive constructs and internal inputs. The cognitive constructs are the different choice sets in the destination choice process and these are influenced by both internal and external inputs. The main concepts behind each of the three models are illustrated in Figure 3.9:

In many ways as will be seen, the Um and Crompton, the Woodside and Lysonski and the Moscardo *et al* models may be seen to be synoptic, meaning that for the greater part, they are in agreement over the processes involved in the destination choice process.

In the Woodside and Lysonski model, marketing variables are basically the four P's of marketing – product, price, place and promotion, while traveller variables include issues unique to each individual tourist, such as previous destination experience, life cycle, income, age, lifestyle and value system. Um and Crompton describe their first process as the "formation of selective beliefs about the destination attributes of destinations in the awareness set". These beliefs are formed by external inputs, or stimuli display. This is the sum of social interactions and marketing communications to which a potential traveller is exposed (Um and Crompton 1990, p 39). The external inputs concept is similar to the marketing variables in the Woodside and Lysonski model. The marketing variable as described by Moscardo *et al* is self-explanatory, given its similarity to the marketing variables of Woodside and Lysonski (1989) and the external inputs of Um and Crompton (1990). It represents information gleaned from various sources including travel intermediaries and destination representatives, and also from word of mouth from family and friends. The fact that all three models stress the importance of communication from external sources such as adverts and promotional material serves only to emphasise the key nature of this type of marketing effort.

Figure 3.9 - Concepts of Destination Choice Models

STAGE	*Woodside and Lysonski (1989)*	*Um and Crompton (1990)*	*Moscardo et al (1995)*
1	Marketing Variables	Formation of subjective beliefs about the destination attributes in the awareness set	Marketing Variables/External Inputs
2	Traveller Variables	A decision to undertake a pleasure trip which includes consideration of situational constraints	Traveller /Socio-Psychological Variables
3	Traveller Destination Preferences *(Made up of Destination Awareness Affective Associations)*	Evolution of an evoked set from the awareness set of destinations	Images of Destinations *(Activities as attributes)*
4	Intentions to Visit Situational Variables	Formation of subjective beliefs about the destination attributes of each alternative in the evoked set *(following external information search)*	
5	Choice	Selection of specific travel destination	Destination Choice *(Match between perceived activities offered and preferred activities)*
6			Destinations *(bundle of activities offered)*

The second group of variables identified with Moscardo *et al* ties in with the traveller variables of Woodside and Lysonski (1989) and the internal inputs of Um and Crompton (1990). Moscardo *et al* name it "traveller/socio-psychological variables", and take it to mean prior experience, lifestyle, income, available time etc. Moscardo *et al* also specifically mention motives in this category, suggesting that they are heavily linked with the other personal characteristics in this category. It is interesting to note that situational constraints are not a separate item in their own right in this model, but that they are included in this section, in broad agreement

with their placing in the Um and Crompton 1990 model, but in contrast to the Woodside and Lysonski model of 1989.

For Um and Crompton, who take the awareness set as a conscious starting point, the individual will then begin to consider their situational constraints (i.e. available time and money) and once they have decided to take a holiday they will begin to narrow down their options, moulded by internal inputs (personal characteristics, motives, values and attitudes). This process, although similar to the concept highlighted by Woodside and Lysonski under the heading of traveller variables, includes the idea of situational constraints, not mentioned by Woodside and Lysonski until shortly before the final destination choice has been made.

As mentioned earlier, Woodside and Lysonski chose the terms consideration set, inert set, unavailable-aware set and inept set. Of these, the most interesting in marketing terms is the consideration set, meaning those destinations which the consumer is aware of and would mention if asked where they were considering travelling to (Woodside and Lysonski 1989). These different sets come under the heading of destination awareness in the model.

The third process mentioned by Um and Crompton is the evolution of an evoked set from the awareness set of destinations. This evoked set will almost certainly contain the destination that is the final holiday choice. Their fourth process once again uses external inputs and mirrors the first process – it is the formation of subjective beliefs about the destination attributes of each alternative in the evoked set.

The next variable isolated in the Woodside and Lysonski model is named affective associations. These are specific feelings, both positive and negative, which are linked with a specific destination being considered in the mind of the traveller (Woodside and Lysonski 1989). It is likely that a potential traveller will eventually select a destination for which he has positive affective associations. At this stage (when associations are made between affective concepts and specific destinations) the positioning of destinations in the mind of the consumer can be determined. This

product positioning is of vital importance to those marketing a destination as it helps to indicate how it should be marketed to the consumer. This is clearly conceptually linked to the fourth process in the Um and Crompton model, which is the formation of subjective beliefs about the destination attributes of each alternative in the evoked set following external inputs. Moscardo *et al* point out quite specifically that activities and benefits may be the most important attributes contributing to image and therefore influencing destination choice and therefore they place destination image at the centre of their model.

The actual destination choice according to Moscardo *et al* is made by matching the destination which offers the largest amount of the activities preferred by the traveller of those destinations that are under consideration. It is important to point out the role that perception plays here – the traveller may perceive that a destination offers the best combination of the activities and benefits that he prefers, but as the product is bought sight unseen, his opinion may not be entirely accurate.

In the Woodside and Lysonski model, traveller variables, destination awareness and affective associations combine to form the traveller destination preferences – those destinations which are in competition to be selected as the final destination. This may otherwise be known as the late evoked or late consideration set, and moves straight on to intention to visit – defined as "the traveller's perceived likelihood of visiting a specific destination within a specific time period" (Woodside and Lysonski 1989, p. 9). The fifth process in the Um and Crompton model sees a specific destination being chosen and the final destination decision being taken.

It is at this point that Woodside and Lysonski bring in situational variables – budget restrictions, time available and the like. Once these final limitations have been accounted for, the final choice is made. As has been mentioned, Um and Crompton introduce the idea of situational constraints earlier in their model, suggesting that questions of available time and money are not left until the end of the process but rather inform decision-making from the outset. Moscardo *et al* do not specifically

identify any situational constraints, but they do include the questions of available time and income under their traveller/socio-psychological variables.

One issue that is tackled by Moscardo *et al* is the inclusion of category five – destinations themselves. They offer a bundle of activities and benefits to the traveller and this is what the traveller will find when he arrives. This point is not included in either of the other two destination choice models under review in this section. Although this issue is not covered in depth in any of the destination choice models, the question of the feedback loop, and whether satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction will inform future decision-making has been considered by the behavioural models discussed previously. Since it is argued that satisfaction with the purchase is an important factor in future re-purchases, it is important for the traveller to find what he is expecting at the final destination, and the inclusion of the destinations in this model shows that the issue of disconfirmation of expectations is important in decision-making.

The authors admit that the Woodside and Lysonski model is a simple model, but they consider it to be a useful description of traveller awareness, preferences and choice of competing destinations (Woodside and Lysonski 1989). It is certainly useful for marketers to be aware that those destinations that are in the long term memory and are subsequently transferred to the current or working memory (or consideration set) are much more likely to be considered and possibly selected as the final destination. This underlines the importance of keeping a destination or product at the front of people's minds with regular reminders of its attractiveness for a holiday.

Um and Crompton (1990) have created a destination choice process which looks quite different from the Woodside and Lysonski model in terms of layout and terminology, but which agrees for the most part on the nature of the destination choice process. Um and Crompton (1990 and 1992) argue that travel destination choice depends upon attitude to each alternative, and that this attitude has what might be termed the casting vote when destinations are being selected or rejected.

This emphasis on the part played by attitude is what really differentiates the work of Um and Crompton from that of Woodside and Lysonski.

The relationship between the five categories in the Moscardo *et al* model can be taken as linear, progressing from beginning to end – images of destinations in the mind of the potential traveller are formed from both marketing variables and from the traveller/socio/psychological variables and it is based on these images that the traveller will choose his final destination. He will travel there and on arrival will find out how the actual activities and benefits offered by the destination match up to his expectations based on his image of that destination.

However, there are various inter-connections that can be made within the model. For example there may well be a mismatch between what the travellers perceives to be the activities available at a destination and what that destination actually offers in reality. This may allow destinations themselves to alter their marketing strategy in order to promote themselves more accurately and to the right market segment. This in turn would mean that a new and more accurate set of images would be formed in the minds of potential travellers and may lead to the destination being selected by more people, and may ensure that expectations are matched by reality – a satisfied customer has a much higher potential for repeat visiting after all.

The Moscardo *et al* model is a simple one, by their own admission, but does emphasise the role played by activities in the destination choice process, which was their stated aim based on the results of the fieldwork that they carried out. It certainly encourages marketers to consider how their destination is positioned in the minds of the consumer and how they can alter their marketing strategy accordingly, and does this in an arguably more accessible way than that offered by either Woodside & Lysonski (1989) or Um and Crompton (1990).

This brief review of the best-known destination choice models has highlighted the differences between those models which are intended to describe the entire purchase decision-making process and those which concentrate on the specific aspect of how an individual destination is finally chosen from the multitude on offer. This review

of the destination choice models has been useful to the purpose of this thesis, as it has allowed certain important variables in the leisure decision-making process to be highlighted, such as situational constraints (time available or budgetary constraints) and destination image which can therefore be considered for inclusion amongst the factors that the conference delegate considers when making the decision whether or not to attend an association conference.

3.6.2 Evaluation of alternatives in the conference industry

With regard to the conference sector, the destination choice type of model is not particularly relevant in itself since it is usually the case that the conference attendee does not choose the location. Much has been written on the question of how meeting planners select sites to hold their conferences and the issues raised during the selection of a conference site can often be of as much relevance to the delegates attending the conference as to the meeting planners organising the conference. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later section (see 3.7.1). However, as mentioned above, the destination choice models have raised issues relevant to the conference attendance decision and therefore this review was useful

When considering the conference attendance process, evaluating alternatives may be taken to refer not to deciding which of many conferences to attend, in a similar vein to the way the tourists decide which of many destinations to attend (although this may be the case on occasion), but rather to decide whether or not to attend the conference based on a variety of factors. These may include the "pull" factors of a conference such as an attractive location, or an interesting conference topic, but may also include "push" factors such as getting away from the office for a while. In addition, the question of situational constraints such as having the time and money to attend the conference come into play, and also the issue of intervening issues such as a date clash with a family holiday have to be taken into account. These factors are at the heart of this research and this chapter will move on to examine them in greater detail shortly. In addition, the findings from an empirical investigation into these factors will be discussed in Chapter Five.

At present, the issue at stake is whether it is valid or not to include an evaluating alternatives stage in the conference attendance decision-making process. This research argues that although the composition of this stage, like the previous stages, differs from that of the leisure tourism decision, the potential delegate does work through a stage of evaluating the alternatives to attending the conference such as the opportunity cost of attending, and other opportunities available to the delegate instead of attending, and therefore, the model of association conference attendance being proposed will include an evaluation of alternatives stage.

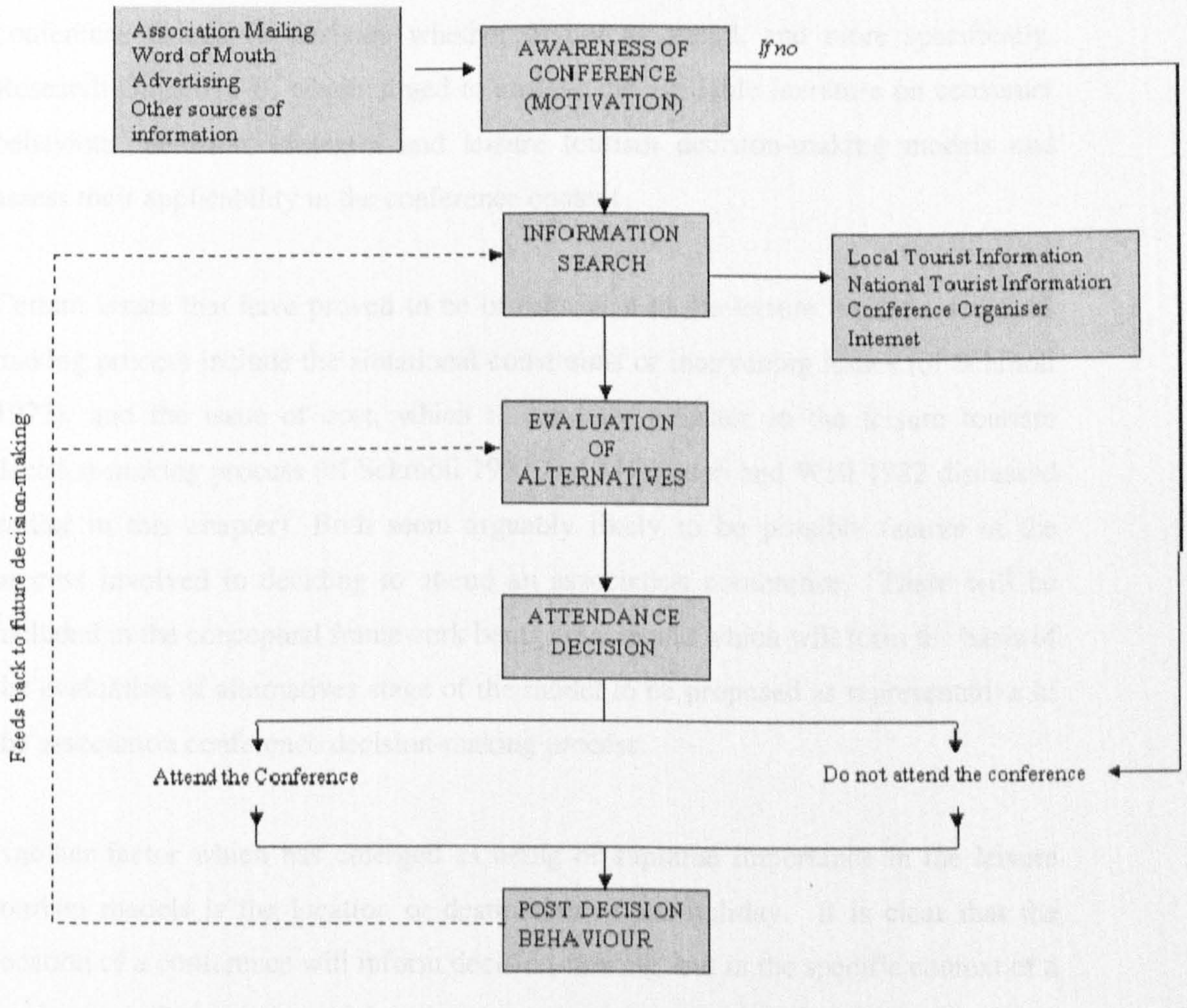
3.6.3 – Towards a Model of the UK Association Conference Attendance Decision-Making Process

This can now be addressed following analysis of the existing models of leisure tourism decision-making and examination of the different stages of these models in an association conference context.

The individual components of the first three stages (motivation, information search and evaluation of alternatives) may differ dependent on the context of the purchase/decision to attend, but the final two stages (decision and post purchase behaviour) will remain relatively constant regardless of the actual purchase made. The model includes a feedback loop, from post-purchase/decision behaviour, which highlights the fact that this will inform future decision, and therefore it is further argued that this strengthens the case for this model, as it is not purely linear in nature, an argument that was levelled at some of the earlier models of leisure tourism decision-making. Therefore, it is argued that the five-stage model which has emerged from the detailed analysis of decision-making in a leisure tourism context can potentially be said to be representative of the decision-making process in an association conference context and one of the research questions identified at the beginning of this study has been initially addressed – it can be argued that the existing models of leisure tourism decision-making can potentially be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context. However, further work on this concept is still required.

Using the Mathieson and Wall (1982) model as a basis to work from, because of its conceptual clarity, this research now proposes a model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process (Figure 3.10). The evaluation of alternatives stage of the model will be examined in much greater detail in Section Two, in order to inform the other research questions under investigation in this chapter - can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend and can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into any potential model of conference attendance decision making.

Figure 3.10 Initial Model of the UK Association Conference Attendance Decision-Making Process



SECTION TWO

3.7 – Evaluation of Alternatives

The preceding discussion has focussed on the decision-making process in leisure tourism, and has identified a five stage process which it has been argued can be applied to association conference attendance decision-making. Within the evaluation of alternatives stage of that process, certain factors or components are beginning to emerge which will form part of the conceptual framework for the association conference decision-making process. This section will therefore concentrate on addressing the third research question - can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend, and more specifically, Research Objective B, which aimed to analyse the available literature on consumer behaviour, decision strategies and leisure tourism decision-making models and assess their applicability in the conference context

Certain issues that have proved to be of relevance to the leisure tourist's decision-making process include the situational constraints or intervening issues (cf Schmoll 1977), and the issue of cost, which is certainly a factor in the leisure tourism decision-making process (cf Schmoll 1997 and Mathieson and Wall 1982 discussed earlier in this chapter). Both seem arguably likely to be possible factors in the process involved in deciding to attend an association conference. These will be included in the conceptual framework being created and which will form the basis of the evaluation of alternatives stage of the model to be proposed as representative of the association conference decision-making process.

Another factor which has emerged as being of supreme importance in the leisure tourism models is the location or destination of the holiday. It is clear that the location of a conference will inform decision-making, but in the specific context of a conference, the question of location must be approached differently. The main difference is that the potential delegate does not choose the location of the

conference – this decision is removed from the delegate and instead is taken by the meeting planners. Therefore, the conference delegate is not choosing which of many destinations to visit, but rather whether or not to go to the conference destination to attend the conference. However, it can be suggested that many of the destination characteristics that the meetings planners take into account when selecting a conference site are of interest and importance to the conference delegate too, as part of their attendance decision, and therefore the conference site selection process undertaken by the meeting planners merits consideration.

3.7.1 Conference Site Selection

According to Crouch & Ritchie (1998, p 52) "the choice of destination can make or break the convention". Montgomery & Strick (1995, p 109) feel that "regardless of the type of meeting, convention or exposition, the site is a critical factor in the success and failure of the event"

Most articles on site selection consider the situation for association conferences. This may reflect the fact that corporate meeting planners have less leeway in deciding on a meeting location – in fact many corporate meetings are held on or near company premises and this curtails the site selection process. Bonn, Brand & Ohlin (1994) consider both market segments, breaking down the association market into heavy half (four or more meetings per year) and light half (less than four meetings per year) association meeting planners and looking at the differences that arise when planning a corporate conference. Their general conclusions are that "differences exist between corporate and association meeting planners with respect to (1) the attributes most valued, (2) the destinations which they felt best provided those attributes and (3) the number of meetings planned each year" (Bonn, Brand & Ohlin 1994, p 81).

In terms of research already undertaken around the issue of association conference site selection, most falls into the category of investigating how potential sites get on the short list of destinations being considered by any given association. Crouch &

Ritchie (1998) analysed the available literature on site selection and identified several important research issues, including:

- What factors influence the choice of convention site?
- How important are each of the site selection factors and how are trade-offs made between factors?
- Who participates in the site selection decision?
- What is the relative influence of each participant?
- Is the site selection process a function of certain association characteristics?
- What are the dynamics of convention site selection by time and across destinations, associations and other stakeholders?

With regard to the question of which factors influence the site decision, Crouch & Ritchie (1998) identify accessibility, local support, extra-conference opportunities, accommodation facilities, meeting facilities, information, site environment and other criteria as being the major factors. Each of these major factors includes a number of components, or attributes of the main factors – see Figure 3.11.

It can immediately be seen from this list that cost and location are both important parts of the site selection decision. Cost is represented by the cost of transport and accommodation, and location by the accessibility of the destination and the opportunities for sightseeing in the surrounding area. This strengthens the case for their inclusion in any framework for the conference attendance decision of potential attendees, since they are issues that affect not just the meeting planners, but also the individual delegates. Other issues that seem pertinent at the level of the individual delegate include the social aspects of entertainment and recreation, and also the professional opportunities available. These will be discussed further in this chapter.

Figure 3.11 – Factors influencing conference site selection

Accessibility	*Cost of transportation* *Time of travel to the site* *Frequency of connections to the site* *Convenience of connections to the site* *Barriers such as visas etc*
Local Support	*Assistance offered from local chapter of the association involved* *CVB support offered* *Subsidies from the site*
Extra-Conf. Opportunities	*Entertainment* *Shopping* *Sightseeing* *Recreation* *Professional opportunities – making local business deals or visiting local clients*
Accommodation Facilities	*Capacity of rooms available* *Cost of suitable accommodation on site* *Service standards* *Security of the site* *Availability of rooms on dates required*
Site Environment	*Climate* *Setting* *Infrastructure* *Hospitality*
Meeting Facilities	*Capacity of meeting rooms* *Layout of meeting rooms* *Cost of the meeting space required* *Ambience of the site* *Service standards* *Security of the site* *Availability of meeting space on dates required*
Information	*Experience of the site – has it performed satisfactorily in the past?* *Reputation of the site amongst other meeting planners* *Marketing effectiveness of destination marketing*
Other Criteria	*Risks of strikes, natural disasters, boycotts etc* *Profitability of holding the convention at the site for the association* *Association promotion – would the site add credibility to the association and build membership?* *Novelty – the extent to which the site would be a novel location for the association convention*

(Adapted from Crouch & Ritchie 1999)

Crouch and La Louviere (2003) addressed the issue of conference site selection in an Australian context with the following conclusions:

- Proximity of convention participants to conference sites was highly significant, indicating that the desirability of a site declines as the proportion of conference attendees who need to fly further to get to the conference increases
- Accommodation connected to a convention facility is highly desired by associations, while off-site accommodation is not desired
- Entertainment, shopping, sightseeing and recreation were important attributes in the selection process, but weather, and assistance from the local convention bureau were not important
- Site attractiveness declines as cost increases, although very low costs suggest poor or unattractive facilities
- In terms of the venue, quality of exhibition and breakout space, and quality of food were perceived to be important, but availability of AV facilities and dining facilities were less important

This research clearly shows the factors that they propose to be important in the site selection process along with some indications of the effects of individual variables on the site selection decision. These factors include location (accessibility and attractiveness) and social factors (entertainment and recreation) which are arguably relevant to the decision process of individual delegates, as well as other factors of more importance to the meeting planners.

Further research on association conference site selection has been undertaken by Clark & McCleary (1995) and Clark *et al* (1996) who both write on the subject of the association market and attempt to identify those responsible within associations for the site selection decision.

Their findings suggest that purchasing decisions are often made collaboratively by a group of people, referred to as a "buying center" (Clark *et al* 1996). In fact

according to Clark & McCleary (1995), no association in their study had only one person completely responsible for convention site selection. Clark & McCleary (1995) also identified that the concept of evoked sets applies to the buying process for major annual association meetings – meaning that it was the norm to look at several sites every year. Finally, three main types of association conference "buys" were identified - new buys where the association had not bought (arranged) a convention before, modified rebuys, where the association is looking for a city that offers something new, but will still look for a similar product, perhaps sticking with the same hotel chain in a new location and straight rebuys, where the association automatically books a particular location at a set interval (e.g. Washington every three years).

This is very useful for conference destinations as it helps them target the right individuals within an association with their marketing literature when it comes to trying to attract this lucrative market. In particular, it shows that marketing only to meeting planners may not be the most effective way to ensure that your destination is chosen. It also identifies important issues of risk aversion, and relates back to the decision heuristics discussed previously. However, it does not add to knowledge of the factors examined by meeting planners in their site selection decision that could be important to delegates in their attendance decision, and so will not be examined any further in this research.

Oppermann (1996a) isolates five main factors in the association meeting planners' decision making process, namely "service", "cost", "image", "location" and "facilities", and draws the conclusion that although "image" was only one amongst five important factors, "many of the other variables usually contribute to the overall image of a destination as a conference city" (Oppermann 1996a, p 16). This would suggest that image is by far the most important of his factors. His five factors are similar in content to those identified by Crouch and Ritchie (1998), but he places more emphasis on the image of the destination than they do, as they stress instead the practical facilities available at the destination. The Oppermann (1996a) research again stresses the importance of cost and location in the conference context and

therefore it is likely that these two factors may play a part in the individual delegates' decision-making process.

All of the studies discussed above agree that the conference location is a vital part of the success of the conference. The aim of meeting planners is to attract delegates to attend the conference, and therefore they must bear in mind the needs and wants of the delegates when choosing a site for the conference. Once the site has been selected, the main issue is to attract delegates to attend, and as far as the location of the conference is concerned, a major issue is the image of the conference destination held by the potential delegates.

3.7.2 Convention Destination Image

One of the most important components of marketing strategy is product positioning – creating the appropriate image of the product in the minds of the consumers in the target market (Echtner & Ritchie 1993). According to Guthrie and Gale (1999 p 555) in a tourism context "Images are more important than tangible resources, because perceptions rather than reality are what motivates consumers to act or not to act".

There is a substantial body of research on destination image in the wider tourism context, but very little work has been done so far on the issue of convention destination image. Perhaps the most recent and comprehensive review was that undertaken by Pike (2002) who studied 142 papers on destination image from 1973 to 2000, in order to produce a synthesis of key characteristics of destination image. In his review, Pike (2002) only found four papers that took destination image at convention destinations as their theme.

Go and Zhang (1997) consider the question of convention destination image from the perspective of meeting planners, and conclude that destination image is an important part of the meeting planner's site selection decision. Go and Zhang (1997) isolate two different components of convention destination image which they categorise as

"industry components" (choice of venues, price, site attractiveness and accessibility amongst others) and the city's "general environment". Although this study was undertaken from the point of view of meeting planners, it strengthens the argument that cost and location can be considered as important to the individual delegate in terms of deciding whether or not to attend an association conference.

Oppermann looked at the convention destination images of 30 North American destinations and compares their relative strengths and weaknesses in three papers dating from 1996 (a & b) and 1998. The image of each destination is gauged by responses given by association meeting planners. Oppermann considers all his papers to be on the subject of destination image yet there is no clear differentiation between site selection factors such as price and service and destination image – for him, the convention destination image seems to be a function of those very same factors.

The factors that seem to influence the formation of convention destination image seem to be in part at least similar to the factors involved in conference site selection, including the attractiveness and accessibility of the location and costs at the location as well as previous experience of the destination and the facilities and service quality at the destination.

3.7.3 Conference Attendance

Having considered which factors in the leisure tourism decision-making models may be applicable to the conference decision-making process, several factors have emerged which it is argued are representative of at least part of the association conference decision. These are cost, location and social aspects. It now remains to consider those elements which are purely related to conferences, and do not appear in the literature on the leisure tourism decision-making process. In order to do this, the literature on conference attendance will now be examined.

The area of forecasting international conference attendance has been studied by Witt *et al* (1995) and although there are many forecasting studies in the tourism field, they feel that conference tourism is "virtually ignored" (Witt *et al* 1995, p 559). The theories take as their basis an econometric study prepared by Var *et al* (1985) entitled "Conference Tourism Modelling", but include an international dimension not present in the older research.

Var *et al* (1985) presented an approach to identifying the determinants of convention attendance, using regression analysis on data obtained from four major convention sites in the USA. They concluded that "accessibility and attractiveness constitute by far the most important element in conference venue decisions" (Var *et al* 1985, p 197). As locational aspects, these elements will form part of the conceptual framework being created. Other aspects that were considered for inclusion in this research included the utility of attending the meeting, and the particular programme on offer. However, the authors decided to leave out these considerations on the grounds that although these factors may cause interpersonal variations in the meetings attended, these effects will be averaged out, and so they decided on one single "site factor". They also note that date clashes with other conferences may account for differences in attendance patterns at different conferences. They conclude that the combined effects of emissiveness (individual differences in choice behaviour), attractiveness and accessibility give rise to a particular level of attendance at each conference. This study does present a suggestion for forecasting conference attendance, but the omission of so many factors important in the attendance decision does reflect the gaps in this research. However, two important areas were identified – the utility of attending the meeting and the programme on offer. These areas seem too important in the conference attendance decision to discard and so will be included in the conceptual framework being proposed here.

Ten years on, Witt *et al* (1995) present an econometric model that explains tourism demand for an international conference using as a base an organisation/association that holds annual conferences. Their conceptual framework of reasons for attending conferences is much wider than that of Var *et al* (1985), as it includes obtaining

information, hearing speakers, presenting papers, networking, personal safety and participating in recreational activities as well as budget constraints including travel costs and conference fees. They justify including budgetary constraints as follows:

> "The decision-making process is usually similar, however, even if the member's company/academic institution pays rather than the member. It is still generally the potential participant who decides whether or not to attend the conference, working within his/her allocated budget constraints." (Var *et al* 1995 p.560)

This underlines the importance of including a cost element in the conceptual framework, an element that has already been considered for inclusion following its prominence in the leisure tourism decision process.

Witt *et al* (1995) also include the characteristics of and the activities offered at the conference location, and the individual's utility of attending the conference, both of which featured in the study by Var *et al* (1985). This provides further evidence for the importance of including a locational element in the framework being constructed, and also illustrates the importance of including purely conference-based elements in this framework.

They also highlight the importance of participating in recreational activities. This has not been identified by others in the field as forming an important part of the conference attendance decision, but is mentioned in the leisure tourism context – the work of Moscardo *et al* (1995) showed that what they term "activities" – the sum total of all that is available at a destination, including social opportunities – play a vital role in the decision-making process undertaken by leisure tourists. There seem to be no clear reasons why the social aspects and opportunities offered by a conference should not be taken into consideration by a potential delegate when he is deciding whether or not to attend, and therefore there is a clear argument for including activity and social aspects of a conference in the conceptual framework being devised.

One of the prime conclusions reached by Witt *et al* is that "it does appear that the intrinsic characteristics of a conference city/country and a particular conference theme do not usually have a major impact on the proportion of association members attending the annual conference; it is only when the destination is particularly 'interesting' or 'exotic' that conference attendance is likely to be stimulated" (Witt *et al* 1995, p 568). This is of interest when considered along with the issue of convention destination image, as discussed previously and once again stresses the importance of location in the conference attendance decision.

Their model proved to yield good empirical results, and they consider that the econometric model proposed fits our understanding of the factors influencing attendance at the conference they researched. They also consider that the methodology has more general application than just the conference that they studied. Particular areas that they highlight include hearing speakers/presenting papers, networking, participating in recreational activities, costs, the utility of attending the conference, and the characteristics of the conference location. This strengthens the case for including the above in any proposed conceptual framework for the association conference decision-making process.

3.7.3.1 Oppermann & Chon (1997)

Certainly some of the variables that Witt *et al* (1995) considered to be of importance to conference attendance are repeated in other work on the conference attendance decision-making process, particularly the work of Oppermann (1995b) and Oppermann and Chon (1995 and 1997) who have written papers on the Convention Participation Decision-Making Process. This looks at the question of what process is undertaken by potential conference attendees in deciding whether or not to go to a conference and represents really the only framework for understanding the association conference attendance decision that is currently available in the literature.

In the only study of its kind, Oppermann & Chon (1997) undertook research into what they termed the Conference Participation Decision-Making Process.

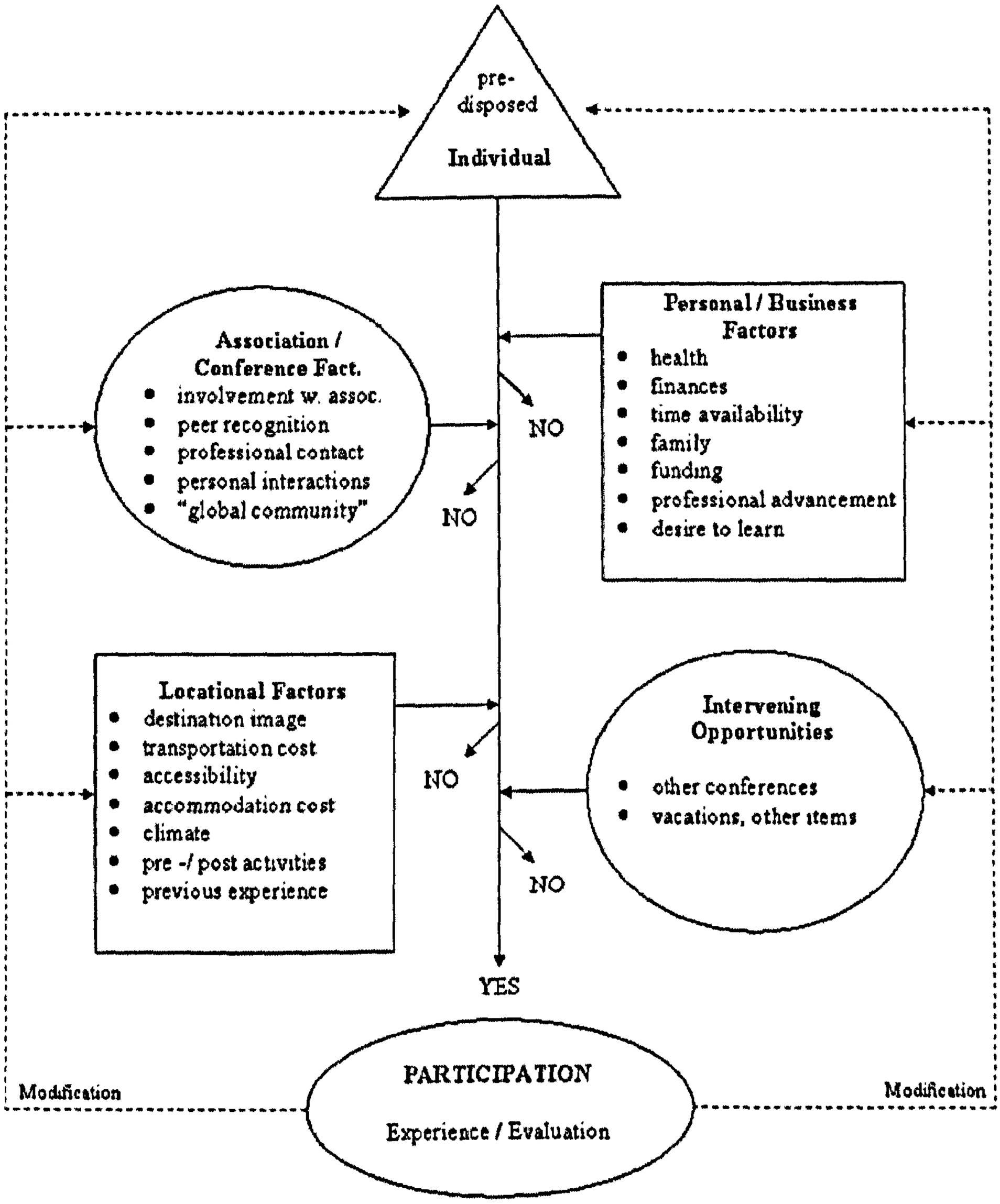
> "As in any other consumer decision-making process, the potential tourist first has to recognize the need to travel. This is followed by a transgression through information search, evaluation of alternatives, product choice, outcome and post-evaluation" (Oppermann and Chon 1997, p 184).

Although Oppermann and Chon (1997) describe their process in six stages, it is reasonable to consider product choice and outcome as forming part of the same overall stage, as is the case in the leisure tourism decision-making models. Their research provides a solid precedent for proposing a five stage model, as has been described previously in this research, as representative of the decision-making process in a conference context. However, they did not go as far as to create a behavioural model of their process.

Oppermann & Chon's (1997) research certainly strengthens the case for transposing the models of the leisure tourism decision process into the association conference arena, but does not provide enough evidence on its own that this transposition is justified. Further investigation into applying the leisure tourism models to conference attendance is required. A pictorial representation of their process is given in Figure 3.12.

Oppermann and Chon (1997) describe the idea of "freedom of choice" on the part of the association conference attendee, contrasting this with the compulsory attendance at many business meetings and conferences. The authors compare the above process with that undertaken by the association conference attendee, isolating several "push" and "pull" factors, such as location and nature of the conference, as well as barriers to attendance and intervening opportunities, such as other conferences taking place at the same time. This process highlights four categories that influence the decision of whether or not to attend an association conference. They are personal/business factors, association/conference factors, location factors and intervening opportunities.

Figure 3.12 Oppermann & Chon's Conference Participation Decision-Making Process



(Source: Oppermann & Chon 1997)

Personal/business factors include financial status, family obligations, available time and the health of the person considering travelling. Health is specifically mentioned as this is not a holiday that is being considered, but rather a series of meetings and lectures that may be more tiring than a holiday. The timing of a conference is also mentioned, as schedule overlaps and conflicts are the second most important reason

for not attending a convention (Oppermann 1995). This seems to represent the issues that have been previously discussed under the headings of cost and of situational constraints.

Intervening opportunities is identified as a separate issue by Oppermann and Chon (1997). This may refer to other conferences that are taking place, perhaps in a more attractive location, or with better speakers, or may be other ways of spending the time that are in competition with the conference, such as a family holiday, or spending time at home doing DIY. Oppermann and Chon point out that not only must conferences compete against each other for attendees, but must also compete against other products such as leisure holidays. In summary, intervening opportunities are anything that might get in the way of the conference attendance.

Association/Conference factors relate to the involvement of the individual with the association concerned. Some people are members of several associations and organisations and must rank their preferences in order if they are to decide which if any conference to attend. Additionally, some conferences have more prestigious speakers than others and this will influence the decision of whether or not to attend. Other factors which may influence the potential attendee include personal interaction with other like-minded people, keeping up with changes in their field and learning new skills (Oppermann and Chon 1997). These factors seem to represent an area of the decision-making process which may be termed personal and/or professional development.

Location factors have a bearing on the decision of whether or not to attend a conference in several different ways. For example, a potential attendee may consider more favourably a conference that is taking place near his home – it will save on costs and travelling time. Conferences that take place in more accessible areas, such as city centres or near airports, are also likely to attract more people. The climate of the conference location may also be important, if it is an international event. Finally, according to Oppermann and Chon (1997), the image of the location chosen by the conference organisers may be vital in determining attendance levels (*cf* Witt *et al*

1995 who state that only if a destination was perceived to be particularly exotic will this stimulate attendance at a conference).

This is perhaps the only representation of the conference participation decision-making process that currently exists, and as Oppermann and Chon (1997, p 188) themselves admit, "A comprehensive analysis of all factors and their relative influence is still lacking". However, their research does not constitute a behavioural model of the association conference decision-making process, and it is the construction of such a model that is part of the aims of this study. The factors outlined by Oppermann & Chon (1997), as well as certain others that have arisen during this section of the literature review will be incorporated in the behavioural model to be proposed.

Although Oppermann and Chon (1997) do identify only 4 factors (personal/business factors, intervening issues, association/conference factors and location factors) it seems from the other literature sources both in the conference field and more generally in the tourism literature, that a more detailed conceptual framework can be proposed, which includes the six factors which have been identified in this chapter. These are cost, location, social aspects, networking, personal and professional development and intervening opportunities/situational constraints. It can therefore be assumed that any theoretical framework designed to reflect the conference attendance decision-making process should include these factors in order to represent an accurate illustration of the conference attendance decision-making process. Therefore, it is proposed that the potential delegate considers six factors when deciding whether or not to attend a UK association conference. This will be tested in the fieldwork stage of the research, to be discussed further in Chapters Four and Five.

3.8 An attribute-based model of the conference attendance decision-making process

As has been mentioned on numerous occasions throughout this thesis, there are few examples of research into the conference attendance decision-making process. Much of the work in this area has been done by Oppermann (1995) and Oppermann and Chon (1997), but as they themselves admit, a comprehensive analysis of all factors and their relative influence is still lacking.

In an attempt to remedy this situation, this research will propose and empirically test the factors that are involved in the conference attendance decision-making process and will try to amalgamate these factors into an overall model of the conference attendance decision-making process.

The review of the decision–making models in the tourism industry in this chapter has highlighted a predisposition towards a five stage decision-making process involving motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase behaviour. It has been argued that not all of these stages can be immediately applied to the conference industry, but this theoretical framework will apply the concepts behind each of these stages to the conference attendance decision.

With reference to the motivation or stimulus to act stage, in the context of an association conference, it can be suggested that the stimulus to act normally follows finding out that a conference is taking place. This can be through association mailing, or by seeing advertisements, or perhaps through word of mouth.

The following stage is information search, which may be more limited in the context of a conference than would be the case for a holiday purchase, since conference organisers usually include information on the destination, the venue, the conference topic, the social programme and accommodation available nearby. This makes it easier for the potential delegate to source all the information that he needs to make his decision. However, delegates may well seek further information on the

destination, perhaps from the conference organiser, or tourist information or from the internet.

The evaluation of alternatives stage is in the conference context slightly different from the holiday context, since the question is not usually which of many destinations to choose from, but rather whether the delegate will choose to attend or not. In some cases the decision may be which of two or more competing conferences to attend. However, it is argued that the potential delegate will evaluate various conference-related factors in order to make their decision and it is how these factors are evaluated that is of most interest and so the proposed model will have an evaluation of alternatives stage.

It seems reasonable to suggest that in a conference context, the information search and evaluation of alternatives stages may take place either consecutively or concurrently, as argued by Mathieson and Wall (1982), van Raaij and Francken (1984) and Moutinho (1987) in the leisure tourist decision-making context.

The decision to attend or not to attend the conference arguably occupies the same position as the purchase decision in other models, and so this leaves the question of post-purchase (or post-conference) behaviour. As in the tourist decision-making models, post-purchase behaviour (following attendance at a conference) can be said to feed back to the various stages of the conference attendance decision-making process – if a delegate is unhappy with any aspects of his attendance at a conference, this will almost certainly impact on his future decision-making, and in this respect there is no reason to suggest that a conference delegate would behave any differently from any other purchaser of a service.

In addition, six factors have emerged from the review of the literature both on the conference industry and more generally from the literature on leisure tourism decision-making which would appear to be significant in the decision to attend an association conference in the UK. These were identified as cost, location, social

opportunities, networking opportunities, personal/professional development and intervening issues.

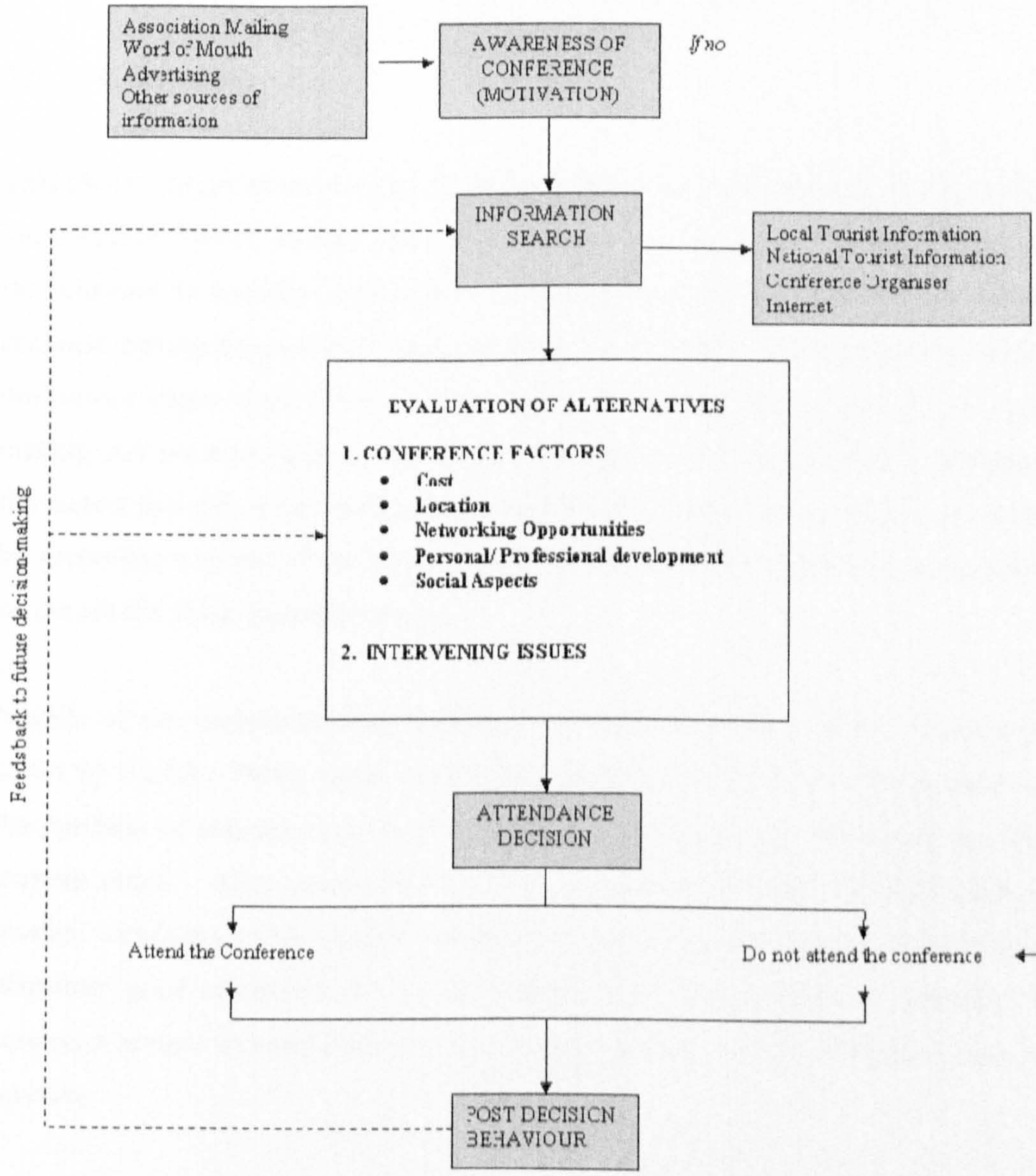
It is during the evaluation of alternatives stage that it is suggested that the potential delegate would consider these six factors proposed when making their decision. The first five conference factors, cost, location, social aspects, networking and personal and professional development are those factors taken into consideration when deciding to attend the conference or not. This stage would also include the situational constraints of time and money, and whether there were any other opportunities that could prevent the delegate from being able to attend, such as a date clash with a family holiday. The decision heuristic is important here, in that the involvement of the delegate in the decision may have a bearing on their attendance. If the delegate is deeply involved in the association, or really wants to hear a particular speaker, then a compensatory decision-making framework may be in evidence – for example, a high conference cost may be compensated for by the lure of hearing that speaker. In a non-compensatory framework, the delegate may well rule out attendance based on evaluation of only one factor. Delegates may consider certain of these factors (perhaps cost and/or location) before undertaking the information search – if the conference is beyond their budget, or the location not easily accessible, then it may be that no further information search or consideration of factors is undertaken and the potential delegate may rule out attendance on these grounds.

In conclusion therefore, the following model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process is proposed, and will be tested in the fieldwork associated with this research (see Figure 3.13). The model is loosely based on the Mathieson and Wall (1982) decision-making framework in travel and tourism, as this is clearly set out and simple to understand.

Although the Mathieson and Wall (1982) model has been criticised along with the other behavioural models of tourist decision-making, it sets out a clear framework which can be adapted to the concept of decision-making in the conference context. The proposed model also incorporates a feedback loop, from post-decision behaviour

back to the information search and evaluation of alternatives stages, which ensures that this model is not purely linear in nature.

Figure 3.13 Hypothesised Model of the UK Association Conference Attendance Decision-Making Process



The evaluation of alternatives stage of the model is highlighted in white for the purposes of clarity – this is the stage of the model that will be empirically tested during the fieldwork stage of the research, to be elaborated upon in the following

chapters. This has been expanded upon since the model was initially put forward in this chapter, to include the components of the attendance decision that have emerged from the literature review as being most pertinent. These are divided into conference factors (cost, location, social aspects, networking and personal/professional development) and intervening issues. This is in line with the arguments put forward previously in this section for their inclusion in the conference attendance decision.

3.9 Conclusions

This chapter began by examining the broad issues of consumer behaviour, examining the so-called "grand models" of consumer behaviour, before narrowing its focus to the situation in tourism. There was a discussion of the literature on the tourist decision-making process, and a more in depth examination of the issues surrounding the various stages of the process, along with some consideration of how the decision-making process could apply to the conference market. The chapter then investigated the factors that play a part in the conference attendance decision, and then concluded by proposing a model of the conference attendance decision-making process based on the results of the literature review.

Models of the decision-making process were initiated in the consumer behaviour sector by Nicosia (1966), Engel *et al* (1968) and Howard and Sheth (1969) albeit for the purchase of consumer goods, and their principles were soon transferred into the tourism arena. After giving due thought to the characteristics of marketing in tourism which render the models intended for the process involved in purchasing a consumer good unsuitable for use in tourism where the purchase is generally a service, a review was undertaken of the decision-making models currently in use in tourism.

Works by Wahab *et al* (1976), Schmoll (1977), Mathieson and Wall (1982), Van Raaij and Francken (1984) and Moutinho (1987) were reviewed. Conclusions that can be drawn from these models differ slightly according to the model concerned, but some generalisations can be made. Models can be used to understand the process

of making a decision and to ensure that all the relevant elements are taken into consideration, but it appears that the elements involved in the decision process (including motivations) can be many and varied and will be unique to each individual. This makes the models descriptive of the processes involved, but means that they cannot be predictive. An individual's decision cannot be forecast simply by using the models available. This may in fact never be possible simply by using a model, but this does not mean that they have no uses. Amongst other things, models allow the creation of a clearly illustrated conceptual framework for the decision-making process which can be used to help marketers target their audience during the right phases of the process in order for their messages to be heard most clearly.

The decision-making process was revealed to be a predominantly five-stage process, of motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, decision and post-decision behaviour. This paved the way for a detailed examination of the first three stages of the process, the decision and post-decision behaviour being arguably similar regardless of the actual nature of the purchase.

Additionally the question of the decision strategies or decision heuristics used by the potential traveller was addressed. Compensatory heuristics suggest that the perceived negative features of a product or destination may be outweighed by its perceived positive attributes. Non-compensatory strategies include the conjunctive, disjunctive, lexicographic and satisficing rules – with a non-compensatory rule, negative attributes of a product or destination mean that choice being ruled out of further consideration. Arguably, in the conference context, both compensatory and non-compensatory strategies can be used and the choice of decision strategy may depend on factors such as whether the potential delegate is a member of the association or whether they have attended the conference before in the past. However, it seems likely that a compensatory heuristic is more likely for an involved and potentially extensive decision such as whether or not to attend an association conference.

It can be seen from the brief review of the literature on the subject of travel motivations that a lot of work has already been done. Much research has already gone into the sphere of motivations in general and travel motivations specifically, by Crompton (1977), Dann (1981), Pearce (1993), Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) and Middleton (2000) amongst others. The conclusions seem to be that motivations are many and varied and are unique to each individual. Maslow's hierarchy of needs seems to be a good basis to work from, but on its own it is not sufficient to understand the motivation process. In addition, motives can change for each individual over time and this makes them very hard to pin down. It is certainly feasible to isolate possible travel motivations for any given individual, but it becomes nigh on impossible to define exactly which motivations will be at work on the individual at any given time. Motivations in the conference industry were then examined, with the conclusion that little in the way of hard evidence for what motivates delegates to attend conferences exists currently. However, it seems clear that in the conference context, there will be an element of motivation which should be included in any models of this process.

Moving on to the information search aspect of the process, several different types of information search can be seen, including internal and external searches from commercial and non-commercial sources and limited and extensive information searches. This information search process seems to be different in the conference industry and generally more limited than in the leisure tourism context, but the conclusion to this section again suggests that little research is available on this topic. However, it is argued that although the content and nature of the information search may differ for the potential conference delegate as opposed to the leisure tourist, the information search stage is a valid part of the conference attendance decision and should be included in any proposed model.

With regard to the evaluation of alternatives, in a tourism context, this refers to the stage of the process where the individual actually chooses the destination for their holiday. Models have been developed for this destination selection process. The best known were created by Woodside and Lysonski in 1989 and by Um and

Crompton in 1990, and more recent work has been done by Moscardo *et al* in 1995. Using the idea of choice sets, the first two models are generally in agreement over the process involved in choosing a destination, and make it clear to marketing professionals exactly what mental process is involved in selecting a final destination from an almost infinite number of possibilities. The Moscardo *et al* model homes in on the idea that activities available at the destination have the casting vote over which destination is finally chosen. Destination choice models themselves are not entirely relevant to the conference industry where the delegate is not usually deciding which of many conferences to attend, but rather whether or not to attend the conference at all. However, the usefulness of examining this area lies in the fact that it has brought to light important aspects of the decision-making process that will be relevant to the creation of a model of the conference attendance decision-making process.

In summary, the conference delegate may not evaluate the same type of alternatives as the leisure tourist, but it seems reasonable to conclude that part of the conference attendance decision includes some evaluating of the competing alternatives to attending the conference such as family holidays, or going to work. Therefore, this study proposes the inclusion of an evaluation of alternatives stage in the model of conference attendance decision-making.

Taken with the inclusion of decision and post-decision behaviour stages, this research proposes that a five stage process is an accurate reflection of the decision-making process undertaken by a potential conference delegate when deciding whether or not to attend a UK association conference. Therefore, this research argues that the five stage models identified in the leisure tourism decision-making context can potentially be representative of decision-making in an association conference context. This has addressed Research Objective B, regarding analysing the available literature on consumer behaviour, decision strategies and leisure tourism decision-making models and assessing their applicability in the conference context

This allowed the literature review to move on to the final section of this chapter, which brought together some of the aspects of the leisure tourism decision-making process which may be applicable to the decision to attend an association conference (such as cost, location, the social aspects of the trip and intervening issues) and those aspects peculiar to the conference industry such as the networking opportunities available at the conference and the possibilities for personal and professional development. These are all to be considered as part of the evaluation of alternatives stage of the decision process. Therefore, this study proposes that the potential association conference delegate considers six factors when deciding whether or not to attend a UK association conference.

Drawing a conclusion to this chapter, it is interesting to note that although the theme of this research, conference attendance decision-making, has not been researched in great depth, it is possible to synthesise the various strands of research in order to suggest a theoretical framework for conference attendance decision-making. Costs involved in attending a conference, the location of the conference and the image of the conference destination, and the networking opportunities of a conference have already revealed themselves to be important issues in conference research, from the point of view not just of delegates, but of meeting planners too. Other issues such as the personal/business factors suggested by Oppermann and Chon (1997) and their intervening opportunities factor also contribute to the theoretical framework that is beginning to crystallise. Finally, the importance of including the social aspects of a conference was highlighted by Var *et al* (1985). This framework can be conceptualised as being a function of a number of different factors which have been identified as important throughout the literature on conference industry research. These factors are cost, location, social aspects, networking, personal and professional development and intervening opportunities.

The five-stage process that has been used in many of the models of leisure tourism decision-making, combined with the six factors that have arisen from the literature review to provide the conceptual framework for the conference attendance decision can be combined to form a hypothesised model of the association conference

attendance decision-making process, as illustrated in Figure 3.13. This thesis will now go on to consider how this proposed model can be empirically tested and will begin in the next chapter by setting out the hypotheses to be tested as well as considering questions of research methodology and the reliability and validity of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Review of research aims and objectives

The aims of this research were primarily four-fold - to examine the extent to which existing models of leisure tourism decision-making can be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context, to define the characteristics of association conference delegates, to identify underlying dimensions among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend and finally, to make a judgement on the extent to which any such dimensions can usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making. These four aims formed the research questions outlined in the Introduction.

The following were the main research objectives (RO) that were addressed in this study along with hypotheses devised to test these objectives (where appropriate). As discussed in Chapter One, not all objectives had hypotheses connected to them. For clarity, those research objectives without measurable hypotheses have been labelled with letters (A, B, C etc.) whilst those research objectives which can be measured statistically have been labelled with numbers (1, 2, 3 etc.). The hypotheses relating to these numerical research objectives are also outlined. Further discussions on the research methods used will follow during this chapter and full results from the data analysis will be given in Chapter Five.

Research Objective A

To examine those delegate characteristics about which little is currently known and that may be of interest to practitioners in the conference industry and to structure these characteristics into meaningful groupings in order to create a classification system that can be used as a basis for any future research.

This RO was discussed in Chapter Two where it was argued that previous research has not focussed on the actual conference delegates, but rather has been on the level of the conference venue, or organiser, or even on a domestic and international economic level (see Chapter Two). In order to assess the characteristics of UK association conference delegates, it was decided to gather as much information as possible. Facts and figures were gathered on association conference delegates such as their age range, their gender, and the geographical spread of delegates. In order to investigate these characteristics on an organised basis, they were divided into membership & attendance characteristics, socio-demographic characteristics and marketing characteristics. Further investigations were carried out to examine more details about delegates under each heading - whether most attendees are members of the association hosting the conference, and how many times they had attended the conference before, what their age group, gender and financial considerations were and whether they were travelling alone or accompanied and whether they are adding on any short holidays to the conference. The likelihood of delegates attending the association conference again in the future was determined.

Research Objective B

To analyse the available literature on consumer behaviour, decision strategies and leisure tourism decision-making models and assess their applicability in the conference context.

This RO was addressed during the literature review section of Chapter Three and it was argued by this research that the existing models of leisure tourism decision-making could potentially be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context. A hypothesised model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process has been proposed (See Figure 3.13) and certain stages of this model were empirically tested. The model consists of five stages – motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, decision and post-decision behaviour. The latter two sections of the model were not tested during this research, therefore they remain supposition. The motivation, information search and evaluation of alternatives stages were examined during the

fieldwork stage. Examination of the first two stages (motivation and information search) was not of a detailed nature, and although results will be reported in Chapter Five, these stages will require further testing in future research. Examination of the evaluation of alternatives stage will be discussed shortly.

Research Objective C

To give consideration to the decision strategies and rules that may be in operation in the association conference attendance decision-making process.

This RO will be addressed during Chapter Five – Research Findings and Discussion

Research Objective D

To propose a model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process taking into account any changes occasioned by the results of the data analysis.

This RO will be addressed during Chapter Five - Research Findings and Discussion

Research Objective E

To re-visit the literature on conference attendance in the light of the results of the data analysis in order to assess to what extent the conference factors identified are in line with any previous findings.

This RO will be addressed during Chapter Five - Research Findings and Discussion

Research Objective 1

To test for hypothesised similarities and differences on the variables based on the membership and attendance characteristics.

This group of characteristics included whether the delegate was a member of the association holding the conference or not. It was suggested that most delegates will be members of the association, and therefore that membership of the association and

involvement with association will be important in their decision-making process. It can be surmised that delegates who have been members for the longest would have attended the most conferences, and therefore Hypothesis 1.1 was proposed:

Hypothesis 1.1

H_0 *= There will be **no** significant difference in number of times attended based on whether the delegate is a member of the association holding the conference or not.*

$H_{1.1}$ *= There will be a significant difference in number of times attended based on whether the delegate is a member of the association holding the conference or not.*

Additionally it can be theorised that if members of the association have attended conferences held by this association in the past, then variables such as meeting old friends and being involved in the association will be rated more importantly by members than by non-members. Therefore, the following hypotheses were suggested:

Hypothesis 1.2

H_0 *= Association members **do not** rate "meeting old friends" significantly higher in importance' than non-members*

$H_{1.2}$ *= Association members rate "meeting old friends" significantly higher in importance than non-members*

Hypothesis 1.3

H_0 *= Association members **do not** rate "being involved in the association" significantly higher in importance' than non-members*

$H_{1.3}$ *= Association members rate "being involved in the association" significantly higher in importance than non-members*

Research Objective 2

To test for hypothesised similarities and differences on the variables based on the age characteristics of the delegates.

In order to investigate any potential differences between delegates on age grounds, certain relationship tests were undertaken. Differences in the responses given by delegates to the financially-related importance variables may be detectable on age grounds. Financial issues seem to be a relevant point of origin for detecting between-groups differences on grounds of age. In this instance, this is because certain age groups can be suggestive of certain lifestyles – for example, 25 – 44 is an age group where delegates may be constrained by lower income, and responsibilities such as mortgages and young families. Therefore, the following hypotheses were suggested:

Hypothesis 2.1

***H_0** = The younger age group (25 – 44) **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

***$H_{2.1}$** = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

Hypothesis 2.2

***H_0** = The younger age group (25 – 44) **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

***$H_{2.2}$**= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

Hypothesis 2.3

***H_0** = The younger age group (25 – 44) **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

***$H_{2.3}$** = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups*

Hypothesis 2.4

***H_0** = The younger age group (25 – 44) **do not** rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

***$H_{2.4}$** = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups*

Hypothesis 2.5

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.5}$ *= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups*

Research Objective 3

To test for hypothesised similarities and differences on the variables based on the gender characteristics of the delegates.

Differences in gender may impact upon the responses given by delegates to questions regarding financial issues, mainly because of accepted differences in income levels between men and women, and because of accepted stereotypes of women remaining under the "glass ceiling", meaning that fewer women get promoted into the higher levels of their chosen profession. These gender differences may be reflected by female delegates ranking cost variables more importantly than male delegates, and also by more female delegates being financed to attend the conferences than male delegates. Therefore, the following hypotheses were suggested:

Hypothesis 3.1

H_0 *= Women* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.1}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.2

H_0 *= Women* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.2}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.3

H_0 *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.3}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.4

H_0 *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.4}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.5

H_0 *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.5}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Research Objective 4

To test for hypothesised similarities and differences on the variables based on the demand and trip profile characteristics of the delegates.

This was taken to refer to those aspects of conference attendance that would be of most interest to those marketing and selling association conferences, both the associations themselves, and the destination marketing bodies responsible for the conference location. These characteristics included how delegates heard about the conference in the first place, whether they sought further information before making their decision, whether they were travelling alone, or accompanied and finally how likely are they to attend the conference again in the future. In terms of what was expected from this section, it was proposed that those delegates who were travelling

alone would be much less likely to want to add on a short holiday to their conference, and so Hypothesis 4.1 was advanced:

Hypothesis 4.1

H_0 *= Delegates travelling alone are **not** significantly less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference than delegates travelling accompanied.*

$H_{4.1}$ *= Delegates travelling alone are significantly less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference than delegates travelling accompanied.*

Research Objective 5

To identify the number and characteristics of the factors underpinning the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate.

The literature review identified six possible factors that seemed to form the evaluation of alternatives section of the proposed model. In order to establish whether the data fits with the hypothesised model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process, the accuracy of these factors was addressed during the fieldwork stage of this research and the following hypothesis was tested:

Hypothesis 5.1

H_0 *= Six factors **do not** underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate*

$H_{5.1}$ *= Six factors underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate*

Having discussed the research objectives outlined the hypotheses to be tested during the data analysis stage of this research, it is now useful to return to the basics of research by considering methods and methodology.

4.2 What is meant by methodology?

Methodology and epistemology are sometimes confused. They both derive originally from Greek – episteme meant knowledge, and methodology referred to a rational way or journey undertaken in pursuit of some specified goal. They can be differentiated as follows: epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge, and methodology is focussed on the specific methods that we can use to try to understand our world better (Trochim 2004). Methodology refers to the standardized procedures according to which research is carried out and evaluated. "Awareness of, and careful adherence to, these ground rules thus characterises sophisticated methodology" (Dann *et al* 1988, p 4). They go on to suggest that the actual physical techniques of investigation (such as interviewing and surveying) are the methods of research, which are subject to the rigours of methodology.

According to Dann *et al* (1988), methodology can be located on a continuum with respect to conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, data gathering and data analysis. These, taken as a whole, form the research process. Methodology includes both ontology, defined by Jennings (2001, p.34) as "the nature of reality" and "the nature of the knowable" and epistemology, which she defines as "the relationship between the researcher and the subjects/objects" (Jennings 2001, p. 34). It is important to point out at this juncture that methodology represents more than just the research methods used – it also takes into account the researcher's basic standpoint on certain issues, which will always colour the methods that they choose – this is the so-called research paradigm.

4.3 The research paradigm

A paradigm has been described variously as "the progress of scientific discoveries in practice, rather than how they are subsequently reconstructed within textbooks and academic journals" (Easterby-Smith *et al* 1991, p.23), and "a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection

with a disciplined enquiry" (Guba 1990, p 17). In short, the research paradigm is the overlying view of how the world works that is held by the researcher.

There are several different approaches to researching and making scientific discoveries in the social sciences, and some represent a dichotomy. Others can better be described as forming a continuum. The following illustration (Figure 4.1) shows a selection of these different potential research dimensions, some of which exhibit the characteristics of a dichotomy and others which are clearly two opposing ends of a continuum.

Some of the distinctions are clearer than others. The difference between primary and secondary research refers to the researcher gathering their own data and being first to use it (primary) and to the researcher using data previously collected and being the second user (secondary). Experimental research uses specific experiments to test a particular hypothesis – non-experimental research may rely on observation.

Figure 4.1 Research Dimensions

Theoretical/Applied
Deduction/Induction
Empirical/Non-Empirical
Positivist/Interpretive
Experimental/Non-Experimental
Primary/Secondary Research
Qualitative/Quantitative

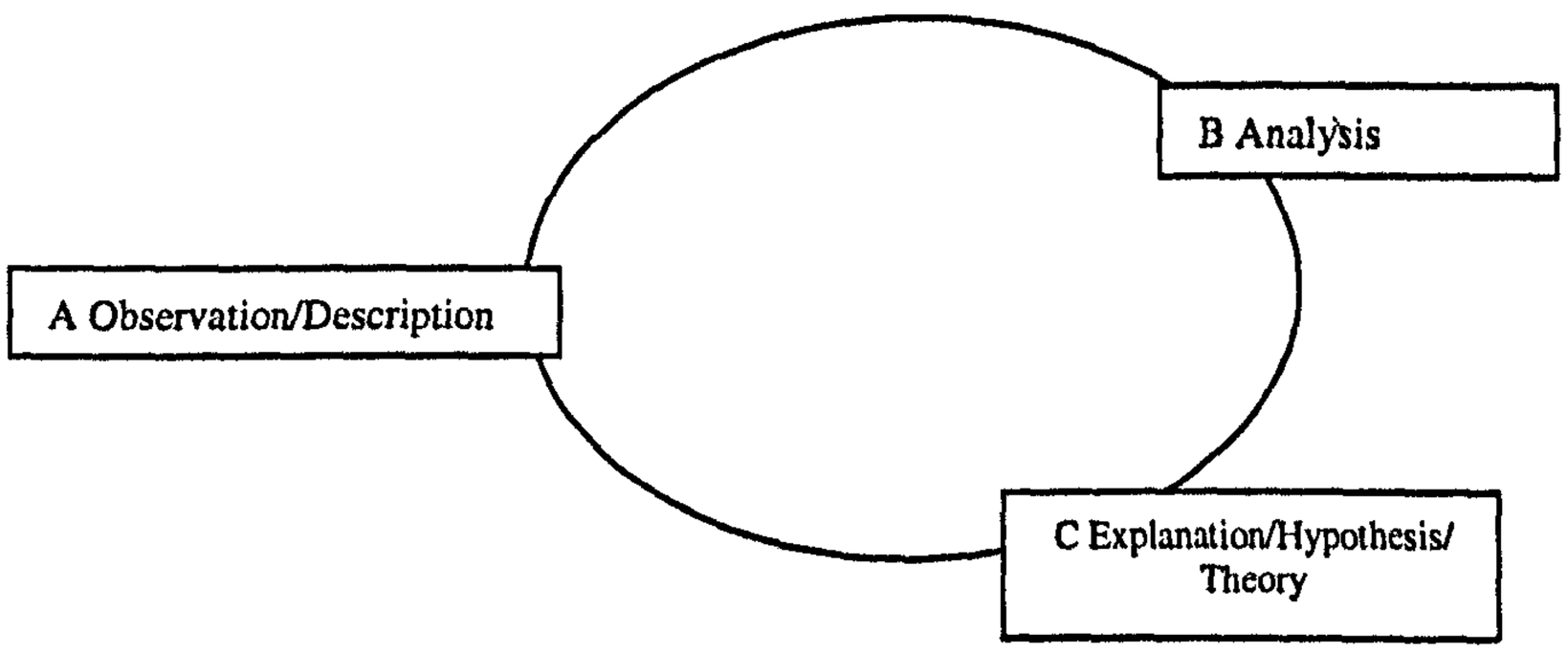
(Adapted from Veal 1997, p. 28)

The deduction-induction divide refers mainly to the starting point of the research. Deductive research tends to start from a wider topic, from which ideas and eventually hypotheses are refined. Data is collected with the aim of confirming or disproving the hypotheses. The opposite is the case for induction, which starts out with specific measurements or observations and looks for patterns in these, which then form possible hypotheses to be explored. The upshot of this type of research is the formulation of conclusions, or theories based on the original findings. They seem

to be poles apart, yet as Trochim (2004) points out, most social research involves both inductive and deductive reasoning at some time.

In fact the process can be described as circular in nature (Veal 1997) as shown in Figure 4.2, where the process may be inductive and begin at point A (observation), move through point B (analysis) and finish at point C (explanation and theory), or may be deductive and start at point C (hypothesis), then move through point B (analysis) and finish with point A (description of what has been found). In either case, the main thrust of his argument is that the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning is one of direction, and many research projects may involve working backwards and forwards on this circle.

Figure 4.2 Cyclical nature of research



Source: Veal (1997)

Another of the above distinctions seems at first to be clear cut. Quantitative research primarily requires large numbers of subjects, and frequently uses statistical methods of analysis. Qualitative methods on the other hand often utilise a small number of respondents (or cases) and their responses are examined in minute detail with regard to their content. However, as Veal (1997 p. 35) points out:

> "It is widely accepted that the two approaches complement each other. It is even possible that the two approaches are moving closer together as computers are now used to analyse qualitative data"

This is just one example of where previously polarized approaches are coming together. The main dichotomy in the research paradigm is the debate between the positivist approach and the interpretive approach. "Positivism" refers to a research framework where the researcher sees people as phenomena to be studied from the outside, with behaviour to be explained on the basis of facts and observations gathered by researchers using theories and models developed by the researcher (Veal 1997). This tradition originated with researchers studying the natural sciences, where the subject of the research is usually passive, and often behaves according to predetermined "rules", as is the case in physics or chemistry. However, in the social sciences, it has long been argued that there is a "new" paradigm, reflected in the view that "the world and reality are not objective and exterior, but are socially constructed and given meaning by people" (Easterby-Smith *et al* 1991 p. 24). This paradigm is known as phenomenology or the interpretive approach, and refers to the suggestion that the act of observation changes what is being observed. The interpretive approach usually prefers qualitative methods such as case study and participant observation, whilst the positivist approach favours the quantitative methods of large scale surveys and number-crunching although in practice the distinction is rarely so stark.

Trochim (2004) suggests that the world has moved towards an era of post-positivism which he considers to be a wholesale rejection of the central tenets of positivism. He cites one of the most common forms of post-positivism – critical realism – and states that the post-positivist critical realist believes that there is a reality independent of our thinking about it, that all observations are fallible and that all theory is revisable.

There has certainly been a change in the direction of social science research in recent years to take into account the new paradigm. According to Veal (1997, p. 31) the term "positivist" has become one of opprobrium, yet he still refers to the positivist approach as "dominant". He also states that despite calls for an end to the positivist approach, there is a "substantial body of methodologically heterogeneous non-American leisure research" (Veal 1997, p. 32). Yet one point worth bearing in mind is that the positivist-interpretive debate is rarely a case of arguing from one

standpoint or the other without common ground. In fact, most researchers will probably find themselves somewhere in the middle.

It is clear that not all research fits neatly into one category or the other and that there are advantages and disadvantages to both methods. In fact much research in the area of tourism takes a mixed methods approach, beginning with a qualitative method – perhaps focus groups or case studies – which may then be followed by a larger-scale study using a quantitative method such as a questionnaire. In the final analysis, the standpoint of the researcher and requirements of the research will to a certain extent dictate the methods used and a discussion of the deeper philosophical differences involved is better left to the philosophers. Some of the fundamental differences between these approaches are illustrated in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Differences between Positivist and Phenomenological Paradigms

	Positivist Paradigm	***Phenomenological paradigm***
Basic Beliefs:	The world is external and objective Observer is independent Science is value-free	The world is socially constructed and subjective Observer is part of what observed Science is driven by human interests
Researcher Should:	focus on facts	focus on meanings
	look for causality and fundamental laws	try to understand what is happening
	reduce phenomena to simplest elements	look at the totality of each situation
	formulate hypotheses and then test them	develop ideas through induction from data
Preferred Methods Include:	operationalising concepts so that they can be measured	using multiple methods to establish different view of phenomena
	Taking large samples	small samples investigated in depth or over time

(Adapted from Easterby-Smith *et al* 1991, p. 27)

4.3.1 Epistemological standpoint of this research

This research, as is the case for all research, was informed from the outset by the researcher's view of how the world works and the assumptions that underpin the research. It has been argued that all observation is fallible and has error, and that all theory is revisable (Trochim 2004) and this argument is usually advanced by critical realists. Proponents of critical realism argue that since measurement is fallible, multiple measures and observations are vital. This research is grounded in the principles of critical realism, and was designed in such a way as to attempt to minimise the fallibility of the measures used by introducing a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods as a form of triangulation. The researcher also believes that the research process is cyclical in nature and as such this research will use a mixture of inductive and deductive reasoning.

Jennings (2001) advocates considering three issues in order to clarify the paradigm that is informing a piece of research – the ontological basis, the epistemological basis and the methodological basis of the research. In this instance, the researcher would address these issues as follows:

Ontology – the researcher believes that there is a reality that can be studied, and that this reality is independent of our thinking about it.

Epistemology – this research is based on the assumption that people construct their view of the world based on their own experiences and these experiences can be shared. In order to achieve maximum objectivity in measuring these experiences, multiple methods should be used.

Methodology – this research will use a mix of research methods in order to triangulate and validate the results. These methods will include qualitative interviews as well as quantitative statistical analysis of data from a questionnaire.

4.4 Qualitative Research

It was decided, as stated in the research aims, that the characteristics of delegates at UK association conferences would be defined, a conceptual framework of the attendance decision-making process would be created and a hypothesised model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process would be proposed and then empirically tested. In order to fulfil these aims, the most appropriate research methods had to be engaged. Qualitative interviews offered the opportunity to verify the findings of the literature review, whilst a questionnaire offered the best way of acquiring the relevant data to analyse, and therefore these methods were proposed as the way forward.

4.4.1 Short Interviews

Since it is argued that all theory is fallible, and that the best way to minimise errors is to use multiple research methods, a way of triangulating and validating the key concepts which had arisen from the literature review was sought. In the light of the post-positivist, critical realism underpinning this research, the decision was made to carry out short structured interviews with experts in the conference industry in Scotland in order to gain further insight into the UK association conference industry as discussed previously. A sample transcript of one of these interviews is included as Appendix One. The researcher carried out the interviews and remained objective throughout. Each interviewee was asked the same questions in the same order to avoid the introduction of bias from the interviewee. The interviews provided support for the conceptual framework that had been developed and also added important detail to some of the broad concepts identified as playing an important role in the association conference decision-making process. In this way, these short interviews represented a form of triangulation identified by Jennings (2001) as methodological triangulation, where researchers use different methods to gather data relevant to a study. This study also exhibits data triangulation, defined as "where researchers draw on various sources of data in the research process" (Jennings 2001, p 151)

In addition, the decision had been taken to use Likert-type scaling techniques, and it is useful for the item statements/attributes to be worded in such a way as to elicit a

strong positive or negative response (Clark *et al* 1998). The researcher could come up with all the items in the item pool by himself, but it is advisable to collect statements on a topic from people holding a range of views from favourable to unfavourable (Sommer & Sommer 2002). Also, experts in the field of study can be approached to put forward suggestions for the item pool (no input of their attitude to the subject is required and so this will not bias results from the survey as can happen when experts become judges for a Thurstone Scale). Once the item pool is complete, items can be edited for clarity and duplications and irrelevant statements can be discarded.

As mentioned, the interviews were not intended to form a representative sample of those who attend UK association conferences, and were not to be considered as a form of focus group. Instead, following a review of the literature in the field of conference decision-making and taking into account the many gaps in the literature in the realm of the conference attendance decision-making process, it was decided to approach a selection of experts in the conference industry in Scotland in order that they could add their considered opinions on why people attend UK association conferences to the pool of possible item statements. There is no reason to consider that the situation in Scotland is different from the rest of the UK, and so the results of the interviews should still be relevant to association conferences throughout the UK. It is important to point out that not only did all of the above have experience of organising or arranging UK association conferences, but that they have all been conference attendees and were therefore able to give a balanced view from both sides – organiser and delegate.

This "panel of experts" consisted of 6 interviewees - representatives from the Scottish Convention Bureau (VisitScotland), the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley Convention Bureau, the Edinburgh and Lothians Convention Bureau, and a selection of professional conference organisers. The interviews were carried out during Spring 2003.

The first question was an open-ended question asking for their opinions on what makes people want to attend an association conference. The open question was put first to avoid any bias in their responses. They were also questioned about their opinions on the importance of cost, location, social aspects, networking, and personal and professional development when someone is deciding whether or not to attend an association conference. These general areas had arisen out of the literature review and referred to both tourist decision making and international conference attendance, as well as in the UK, but it was important to check whether the interviewees felt that these areas were of importance in the UK association conference context.

They were also asked what might prevent someone from attending an association conference, and what things might put someone off attending an association conference. This was to investigate the idea of the intervening issues that might arise and cause a potential delegate to decide not to attend an association conference.

4.4.2 Analysis of interview data

Following each interview, the transcripts were typed up and then analysed using content analysis. It is important to point out at this juncture that the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewees was not analysed in any way, since it was their opinions on broad concepts that were being sought, rather than any deeper feelings on the subject of the interview.

Jennings (2001) describes four types of content analysis – summation, explanation, structuration and objective hermeneutics. In this instance, summation was used. This is where "the data being analysed are reduced into categories that integrate and generalise the major themes" (Jennings 2001, p 203). Each of the interview transcripts was coded and then the content of the interviewees' replies was analysed. In this way, the major points of agreement and contention with the key concepts under discussion were revealed. Once the contents of the interviews were analysed, the information contained within was used to refine the individual attributes of the key concepts identified from the literature review and additionally allowed a

judgement to be made on the applicability of these concepts which had been partly drawn from literature in an international, rather than domestic, context.

These short interviews were not intended to form a major part of the data collection process, but rather they were intended to throw up contributions to the questionnaire development, and in particular to the attribute scales designed to measure the accuracy of the hypothesised model, and in this they were highly successful. They were a form of triangulation and validation of the factors that had already arisen from the literature review. The responses given by the interviewees, both in open and closed questions showed support for the six factors that had been identified and further supported the use of this conceptual framework in the questionnaire design which will now be discussed.

4.5 General Questionnaire design issues

There are many areas of concern when designing a questionnaire. The questions must be designed in a way which makes them clear and easy to understand, and not susceptible to misunderstandings. It is also important that everyone who reads the questions understands the same things, so the questions must not be open to misinterpretation. This can be mitigated to some extent by careful protocol analysis and pilot testing. De Vaus (2002) outlines several areas where the researcher can go awry, including using jargon, including long or double-barrelled questions, using leading questions, double negatives or ambiguous phrases, including questions on subjects about which the respondent may not have the necessary knowledge, and asking questions which require the respondent to have an opinion on something by not leaving a non-response option. This latter point will be dealt with in more detail in the section on scaling.

The researcher must also choose between open and closed questions – closed questions are undoubtedly easier to code, and are generally quicker and easier for respondents. However, one of the main disadvantages of closed questions is that they do not allow for the respondent to give their opinion in their own words, and to

qualify their opinions. In the end, the choice of open, closed or a mixture of the two is down to the researcher – according to De Vaus (2002) there is no right or wrong approach. This study uses a questionnaire with both open and closed questions, and also employs scaling techniques which will now be considered in depth. Protocol analysis was carried out, both before the pilot study and, following changes occasioned by the pilot, before the final survey was administered.

4.5.1 Scales

This research aimed to analyse the reasons why a conference delegate decides to attend or not to attend an association conference. In order to examine why they made the decision to attend, it is important to consider their attitudes towards attendance.

Given that attitude has many dimensions, it seems clear that any method of measuring attitudes must be equally multi-dimensional. It is not enough to ask a single question, or even a series of questions to which the answer is Yes or No. This does not give the respondent any opportunity to indicate the strength of their feelings on a particular topic. What is required is a scale, a method of allowing people to agree or disagree with an item by degrees. Categories often follow a pattern such as "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neither Agree nor Disagree", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree", with the respondent being required to indicate their feelings by selecting one of the above categories in response to several item statements.

According to Moser & Kalton (1971), the basis of attitude measurement is that there are underlying dimensions along which individual attitudes can be ranged. Using one of the scaling methods available an individual can be scored along the attitude continuum and this score indicates his favourability (or otherwise) to the topic under review. Additionally, where the attitude of each respondent is not required, but rather where an overview of attitudes towards the attributes under study is being sought, a scale can be devised.

The word "scale" (which comes from the Latin "scala" meaning a flight of stairs) represents a series of ordered steps at fixed intervals used as a standard of measurement (Sommer & Sommer 2002). It cannot be stressed enough that a single item in no way represents an attitude – it will be contaminated by other influences, such as mood, or comprehension of the question. It follows therefore that several statements, or attributes carefully chosen to reflect the same underlying attitude, will do so collectively more effectively (Proctor 1993b).

Nevertheless, the whole issue of attitude measurement is fraught with difficulty. In the first place as already mentioned, attitudes are not visible to the naked eye – they have to be inferred from opinions, from answers to questions and to a certain extent from observing behaviour. This means that items on a scale must be chosen carefully to ensure that they are all related to the same underlying attitude. Additionally, it is very difficult to ensure that each respondent understands the same things from each of the items on a scale as the author intends them to.

Multiple attribute scales are widely used as the most efficient way of measuring attitudes, and some are relatively easy to construct and demand little effort from the respondent. Finally, they allow more sensitive and reliable measurement of attitude than any single item ever can (Moser & Kalton 1971 and Sommer & Sommer 2002). There are three main types of scales available to the researcher - Thurstone Scales, Guttman Scales and Likert Scales and each will now be considered with reference to their suitability to this particular research.

4.5.1.1 Thurstone Scales

The procedure for developing a Thurstone Scale is very long and involved and requires the input of a great number of people. Firstly, the researcher generates a very large pool of item statements about the topic under review. These statements are then given to "judges" who are usually experts in the subject, and of whom there are usually at least 100. The judges are asked to sort out the item statements into eleven categories which progress from unfavourable to favourable opinions on the

topic. After this has been done, the judges allocate each item statement to one of the eleven categories and the degree of agreement between the judges is measured. Those statements used in the final scale are those which display high inter-judge agreement and are placed at relatively equal-appearing intervals on the scale (Adapted from Clark *et al* 1998).

One major disadvantage of this type of scale is immediately obvious – it is very time-consuming and expensive, which puts it beyond the possibilities of this research project. Additionally, the need for a large number of judges means that the researcher is to a certain extent reliant on the goodwill of experts in the field who may or may not be willing to give up their time and expertise to assist the researcher.

A further criticism is levelled by Moser & Kalton (1971 p. 361), who suggest that using experts as judges introduces the danger that "the characteristics and attitudes of the people who judge items in the item pool may be very different from those respondents whose attitudes are to be scaled". Clearly this could invalidate the results of a Thurstone Scale.

The basis for the Thurstone Scale is that the intervals between the eleven categories appear to be equal. This would allow the construction of an interval scale, where the equal units of measurement make it possible not only to interpret the order of the scale scores, but also the distance between them (Moser & Kalton 1971). However, in practice it is not universally accepted that Thurstone Scales do produce equal intervals and in the words of De Vellis (1991 p. 62): "The practical problems associated with this method often outweigh its advantages". For the above reasons, the construction of a Thurstone Scale was ruled out of consideration.

4.5.1.2 Guttman Scales

A Guttman Scale is what is known as a cumulative scale. It assumes that an attitude can be measured as being a specific point on an attitude continuum which is represented by a set of statements ordered in terms of degrees of acceptability (Clark

et al 1998). This does imply that acceptance of one statement at any given point along the continuum means that the respondent must agree with all the statements that come before it and disagree with all those that come after it.

It follows therefore that the order of the statements in a Guttman Scale is crucial and must be formulated correctly. If even one respondent agrees with all the statements up to a point, then disagrees with the next statement, but subsequently agrees with any statements further up the scale, this will indicate that the scale order is invalid. This illustrates clearly the complexity involved in creating a perfect Guttman Scale, and with this method, only perfection will do.

A further difficulty lies in the fact that there is no guarantee that selected item statements will ever scale in the manner required for the creation of a Guttman Scale and so in order to create the perfect scale, the attitude being studied may have to be narrowed to such a point that the results of the scale are actually of little interest (Moser & Kalton 1971). A Guttman scale can be used to test for unidimensionality in a scale.

Of course Guttman Scales have their uses and seem particularly applicable where ordered behaviour patterns have been observed, which will help to guide the construction of the scale (Moser & Kalton 1971). However, this focus on unidimensionality in an area where it has already been established that a multi-dimensional approach is required, and the fact that the scale is difficult to construct and analyse mean that for the purposes of this research project, Guttman Scales were not used.

4.5.1.3 Likert Scales

Likert Scales were named after Rensis Likert who developed the idea in the 1930's. They present a list of statements on an issue to which the respondent indicates their level of agreement using categories (Sommer & Sommer 2002). The usual number of categories is five, although seven and three do appear. The idea of having an odd

number of categories is to allow the respondent some middle ground, usually "Neither Agree nor Disagree". Occasionally, where the respondent is required to decide which side of the fence he is on, an even number of categories can be used. Ryan and Garland (1999) argued for the use of a specific non-response option on Likert-type scales, and suggested that the provision of a non-response option (usually "No Opinion" or "Don't Know") was helpful in providing additional information and a sample with knowledge or opinions appropriate to the study. They also point out that a scale with no option to register lack of knowledge may lead to a number of respondents selecting the most neutral option, which would then cause bias when the scale was analysed.

In the view of Sanders & Pinhey (1983 p 287) a Likert Scale "is highly reliable when it comes to a rough ordering of respondents with regard to a particular attitude". This may not be glowing praise, but it is a point in its favour, with another one being that in comparison to other scaling procedures, Likert Scales are easier to construct and the results are more straightforward to interpret.

Oppenheim (1978) highlights the fact that in his experience, respondents prefer being able to specify the intensity of their agreement or disagreement with the item statements in the scale, and in turn this allows the researcher to give more precise information about the degree of agreement or disagreement respondents show.

Of course, there are disadvantages to using the Likert Scale, with the most obvious being the fact that the same total score may be obtained by a respondent in a variety of ways – many people can score 25 for example, but this total score may be made up of a completely different set of individual responses. As Oppenheim (1978) points out, it has been suggested that a respondent's total score has little meaning, and in fact that similar scores may have totally different meanings. However, the pattern of overall responses is still of great interest and makes the Likert Scale a useful tool in attitude analysis.

With due consideration to the disadvantages outlined above, and since the total score of the respondents in this survey will not be the most meaningful piece of

information gleaned by the survey, and in view of the fact that they are least expensive in terms of time and money, and still provide useful data, this research project used Likert- type scaling techniques to analyse opinions on conference attendance.

4.5.2 Likert Scales as interval-level data.

There is a debate within the field of research methodology as to whether the data produced by Likert-type scales can or should be treated as interval-level data. Although the suggestion that psychometric scales could be treated as providing interval-level data dates back to the 1940's (Ryan & Garland 1999), this procedure remains surrounded by controversy.

There are four categories of information that can be drawn from measurements as the following illustrates:

1 Nominal Scales - this is the crudest form of scale which classifies individuals into two or more groups, the members of which differ with respect to the characteristics being scaled, without there being any implication of gradation of distance between the groups.

2 Ordinal Scales - these rank individuals along the continuum of the characteristic being scaled, but don't necessarily carry any implication of distance between scale points.

3 Interval Scales - have equal units of measurement, thus making it possible to interpret not only the order of the scale scores, but also the distance between them.

4 Ratio Scales - have the properties of interval scales, along with a fixed zero point. Examples are weights and times.

Source: Adapted from Moser & Kalton (1971)

When assessing whether Likert-type scales can produce interval-level data, one of the main issues is whether each respondent views the differences between the intervals on a scale as being the same - does everyone who is responding to the questionnaire understand the difference between for example "strongly agree" and "agree"? This is touched upon by Clark *et al* (1998) when they ask whether a scale can assume equal intervals. They feel that the answer is generally "no". However, one of the strongest arguments in favour of considering scale data to be interval level lies in the widespread use in the social science and tourism literature of data from Likert-type scales in statistical tests designed for interval-level data, as discussed by *inter alia* Ryan & Garland (1999) O'Connor (2004) and Garson (2004). In fact O'Connor (2004) describes the data from Likert-type scales as "ordinal-treated-as-interval" level and suggests that this is commonplace in tourism research.

In her work of 2001, Pallant explains that SPSS treats scale data as continuous, thus appearing to imply acceptance of the data as interval level. Veal (1997) suggests that an advantage of Likert Scales is that the responses can be quantified. He also recommends a numbering of possible responses in order to make the difference between the points on the scale clear. This may help with the issue of whether the respondent perceives the intervals between the points on the scale to be equal, as it is this that lies at the crux of the matter. Field (2000) also stresses that the distances between points on an attitude scale should be equal for the data provided to be treated as interval-level and that this suggestion of equal intervals should be communicated as clearly as possible when designing the scale, with each option being labelled rather than just labelling an anchor point at each end of the scale.

There is a further suggestion that the number of points on the Likert scale will lend credence to the suggestion that the data is interval-level. Garson (2004) suggests that a scale should have at least five, and preferably seven points in order for the data to be treated as interval-level. O'Connor (2004) agrees, noting that seven points or higher seems to be best, but that the use of five point scales with interval-level statistical procedures is extremely common in tourism literature.

In conclusion, despite methodological and statistical difficulties the trend, particularly in tourism and social science, research seems to be towards treating data from Likert-type scales as interval-level data. This trend will be followed in this study as this will facilitate a comparison of the results of this study with other projects reported in the literature.

4.5.3 Creating a Likert Scale

Proctor (1993b) suggests the following procedure for creating and using a Likert Scale:

1. Statements of relevant opinion are gathered into the item pool and edited
2. Statements are administered to a study sample
3. Respondents reply on a three, five, or seven point scale
4. For each item, the item-whole correlation is calculated between the item and the sum of the remaining items. Items with excessively low correlations are eliminated from further analysis on the grounds that they must be failing to tap the attitude that is being measured by the other items. Reliability and validity checks are carried out
5. The adjusted item statements are then administered to the full survey sample
6. Scale scores for individuals are determined by summing the retained item scores (for this reason, Likert Scales are sometimes known as summated ratings scales). Further reliability and validity checks are carried out.

(Adapted from Proctor 1993b p. 122).

These guidelines were broadly followed during the construction of the scales for this research.

4.6 Operationalisation of research instrument

The research instrument (questionnaire) was created using a selection of open and closed questions and two attribute scales. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix Two. In order to ascertain which questions to ask and which item statements to include in the scales, a comprehensive literature review was carried out, followed by short interviews with conference professionals. The literature review and its results have been discussed already in Chapter Three, and the short interviews were documented earlier in this chapter.

4.6.1 The wording and content of questionnaire

The questionnaire included demographic questions, questions aimed at generating further information about delegates at UK association conferences and scales intended to generate data on why delegates chose to attend the conferences. Each section will be dealt with in turn. The demographic questions were as follows:

Q14 - Are you male or female?
Q15 - What is your age? (15-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+)
Q16 - What is your occupation?

The age ranges given were selected following guidelines from the World Tourism Organisation in their "Concepts, Definitions and Classifications for Tourism Statistics" (WTO 1995).

The questions which were intended to garner further data on the delegates themselves were as follows:

Q1 - Where have you travelled from to attend this conference (nearest town/city)?
Q2a - Are you a member of this association?
Q2b - If yes, how long have you been a member?
Q3 - How many times have you attended this conference in the past?
Q4 - Who is financing your attendance at this conference (employer/association/self/other/rather not reply)?
Q5 - Apart from the association membership fee, have you personally incurred any financial cost in attending this conference?

Q6 - How did you originally hear about this conference (association membership mailing/word of mouth/advertising/other)?

Q7a - Did you seek additional information on the conference destination before you decided to attend?

Q7b - If yes, which of the following did you find most useful (internet/local tourist information office/VisitScotland/ conference organiser/other)?

Q8 - Are you adding on a short holiday to the conference (yes, before the conference/yes, after the conference/no)?

Q9 - Are you travelling alone, with colleagues or with a partner or family (alone/with colleague/s/with partner/with partner and family)?

Q10 - Please state below your main reasons for attending this conference

Q13 - How likely are you to attend this conference in the future (extremely likely/quite likely/neither likely nor unlikely/quite unlikely/extremely unlikely)?

Several points are worth mentioning at this juncture. Respondents were asked to name the town or city that they travelled from to attend the conference so that the exact mileage could be calculated. If left to the respondents to gauge the distance travelled to attend, there would potentially be poor estimates of mileages which would contaminate the data. Mileages were calculated using the website of the Automobile Association (www.theaa.co.uk). The calculation of actual miles travelled allowed this question to provide ratio level data.

Respondents were asked whether they were members of the association or not as part of the attendance characterisation part of the study. This is also the reasoning behind questions 3-13 above.

In Q4, respondents were given the option "Rather not reply" as this could be considered a personal question. This option was selected by respondents both during the pilot study and during the full study, thus justifying its inclusion.

Q7a and 7b both attempt to characterise the pre-attendance information search process. This is of importance to the design of the final model of the conference attendance decision-making process.

Q10 was an open-ended question placed before the scale items in an attempt to persuade respondents to detail their own thoughts on why they attended the

conference, before they could be influenced by the items in the attribute scales. However, the results for this question were disappointing, with many non-responses and few interesting comments, and therefore analysis of data from this question was not undertaken in depth.

Q13 asked about the likelihood of the delegate attending the conference again in the future. This is of interest not only for characterising attendance patterns at UK association conferences, but also is of interest to the associations that are holding conferences.

The discussion above considered both the demographic questions and those questions which were intended to capture information about delegates at UK association conferences. The remaining questions in the questionnaire were Q11 and Q 12, which were both attribute scales.

Following the literature review, particularly of the work of Oppermann (1995b) and Oppermann and Chon (1995 and 1997) and short interviews, a selection of item statements were put forward for inclusion in the questionnaire.

A 5-point Likert-type scale was constructed, with the following responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. This is in line with the precedent set by Oppermann and Chon (1995) in their research on the convention participation decision process. The items on the scale corresponded with the components that had been identified from the literature review (cost, location, social aspects, networking, personal and professional development and intervening issues) and were expressed as statements to which the respondent could indicate their level of agreement and from which could then be gauged their attitudes towards association conference attendance.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the questionnaire was designed primarily to test only part of the model that is being proposed – the section on "Conference Factors" and the section on "Intervening Issues". These are the six broad factors that

were identified during the literature review and were supported by the results of the short interviews.

4.6.2 Pilot Study

The results of these interviews and the literature review allowed the creation of an initial survey instrument. This was to serve as a pilot study. The development and administering of the pilot study are vital to check how well the survey is understood by the respondents and to highlight any problems thrown up by administering the survey. Item statements to which the majority of respondents reply: "Neither Agree nor Disagree" should be rejected as they are not tapping a strong attitude (Moser & Kalton 1971). By the same token "the aim of the item statements is to spread respondents over the response categories, so no purpose is served by extreme items to which nearly all the population under survey will reply in the same way" (Moser & Kalton 1971 p 362).

This initial instrument was tested at the Travel and Tourism Research Association (Europe) Conference held at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow in September 2003. This association was chosen as a suitable location for the pilot study for several reasons – it was a genuine association conference being held at a convenient time and location, it was full of experts in tourism whose opinions on the research project would be very welcome and most pragmatically, they permitted the administering of the survey. Gaining permission to carry out surveys at association conferences became a recurring issue during this research.

The results of the pilot were disappointing, both in terms of numbers of completed responses (only 26 out of a possible 112, despite repeated prompting of delegates) and in the fact that the original attitude scale proposed proved to be unreliable following various reliability tests. Cronbach's alpha coefficient (to be discussed further under the "Reliability and Validity" section) was 0.5746 and would have required an unacceptable loss of items to bring it above 0.7 (a more acceptable level). However, even the use of this statistic is questionable, since a minimum of 30 cases

is preferred (Field 2000). As a result of the lack of reliability and poor response rate, the scale proposed was considered to be unreliable and was discarded. The open and other closed questions proved to be more successful, with little evidence of difficulty in understanding them, or confusion as to how to answer them. Minor amendments to the layout were made, including moving the demographic questions to the end of the questionnaire, as recommended by Orams and Page (2000).

It was decided to proceed by creating a new attribute scale but one which was based on the same general areas of cost, location, social aspects, networking, personal and professional development and intervening issues. This required recourse to the literature once more, widening the search for appropriate references to fields outwith the original areas studied (which included conference tourism and tourist decision-making) to the more general marketing and tourism literature. It was also decided to make the scales 7-point Likert-type importance scales, moving away from the attitude scale of the pilot study and allowing the respondent instead to indicate how important they felt particular attributes to be. 7-point scales were selected as there is evidence to suggest that treating data from Likert-type scales as interval level data is more acceptable with a 7-point rather than a 5-point scale (Garson 2004).

4.6.3 Designing the new attribute scales

It was further decided to break the item statements down into two scales – one scale for determinants of behaviour and one for goal-driven behaviour. Determinants referred to those issues which determine whether the potential delegate attends or does not attend, whilst goal-driven issues referred to those which motivated or drove the delegate to attend the conference. These are in essence similar to the idea of "push" and "pull" issues as suggested by Dann (1977).

The six factors that were highlighted in the literature review as being important components of the association conference attendance decision-making process are cost, location, social aspects, networking, personal and professional development and intervening opportunities. In order to gain an understanding of the accuracy and the

importance of these factors it is important to break them down into their constituent parts and construct the attribute scales using indicators of the importance dimensions being tested. The decisions as to where each actual attribute in the scales came from will now be discussed.

The determinant scale included the following attributes:

Cost of conference
Cost of accommodation
Cost of transport
Accessible location
Attractive location
No date clash with other conference
No date clash with holidays already booked
Healthy enough to travel
Available medical facilities
Available time off work
Fulfilling my job description
Attendance financed by employer
Interesting conference topic
Safe destination

The first five attributes were gleaned from the review of the literature on decision-making, both specific to conferences and more generally in tourism. These were also supported by the results of the short interviews carried out. One interviewee suggested that being financed by an employer would be an important part of the decision to attend, and the final attribute also came up during another of the interviews, where the interviewee stated that in his opinion, no-one would travel to attend a conference if they did not feel that their personal safety was assured at the destination. This is backed up by reference to personal safety in work by *inter alia* Var *et al* (1985), Moscardo *et al* (1996) and Qu *et al* (2000).

The issues of no date clashes with other conferences, or holidays already booked, and that of being healthy enough to travel, and having available medical facilities at the destination all arose following inspection of the model of the conference participation decision-making process put forward by Oppermann and Chon (1997). The question of health was also broached by Haukeland (1990) in his work on non-

travellers. It could be argued that the health aspects may be more relevant in a US context, where distances travelled to attend national conferences are greater and there is the issue of health insurance, which is less relevant in the UK thanks to the NHS. However, it was decided to keep these items in in order to assess their relevance.

Oppermann and Chon (1997) were also the source of three further attributes in this scale. Available time off work, fulfilling my job description and interesting conference topic were all included in their research. The idea of an interesting conference topic being important also arose during several of the interviews carried out as part of this research.

The second scale concerned goal-driven behaviour. This could be termed the "pull" items – those aspects of the conference that would actively encourage a delegate to attend the conference.

Again, many of these item statements were drawn from the literature on tourism decision-making and more specifically from the work by Oppermann and Chon (1997) on what they term the conference participation decision-making process.

Visiting the surrounding area
Making professional contacts
Professional advancement
Generating new business
Making new friends
Meeting old friends
Being involved in the association
Mixing with the "global community"
Learning about a new subject
Hearing new research in my field
Establishing a reputation amongst my peers
Getting out of the office
Combining the conference with a visit to friends and relatives
Spending time with like-minded people
Meeting up-and-coming professionals in my field

Items that arose from the interviews included making professional contacts, professional advancement and generating new business. This latter was suggested by

a conference organiser who, when she is attending conferences as a delegate, is still looking for ways to generate new business for herself as a conference organiser. This idea may be relevant to those in other fields of business too.

Making new friends was put forward by one interviewee as a reason for delegates to attend conferences and this is in step with a suggestion in the Oppermann and Chon 1995 paper. Additionally, meeting old friends was mentioned in interviews, by Oppermann and Chon (1995) and by Ryan and Glendon (1998). Those item statements which concerned primarily aspects of personal and professional development were in the main inspired by Oppermann and Chon (1995 and 1997). These include mixing with the global community, learning about a new subject, hearing new research in my field, establishing a reputation amongst my peers and meeting up-and-coming professionals in my field. These were all proven to be reliable attributes in their research and were also backed up by other research (e.g. Ryan and Glendon 1998 included learning about a new subject in their research) so were included in this study.

Moscardo *et al* (1996) included spending time with like-minded people in their study on the tourist's decision-making process and it can be reasonably assumed that in this respect, conference delegates are similar to other tourists in their desire to spend time with those of similar interests.

The locational aspects of visiting the surrounding area and combining the conference with a visit to friends or relatives both came under the heading of "pre and post activities" in the Oppermann and Chon study of 1995. They were split into the two item statements seen above following one of the interviews where it was noted that they can refer to two entirely different activities.

The following are the proposed factors, along with the attributes that belong in each factor.

Cost:	Cost of conference
	Cost of accommodation

Cost (cont): Cost of transport
Being financed by employer

Location: Visiting the surrounding area pre or post conference
Accessible conference location
Attractive conference location
Combining the conference with a visit to friends or relatives nearby
Personal safety and security seems assured at the destination
Getting out of the office for a few days

Networking: Making useful professional contacts
Using the opportunity to create more business for my company
Mixing with others in the "global community"

Social Aspects
Spending time with like-minded people
Making new friends at the conference
Meeting up with old friends at the conference

Professional/Personal Development
Opportunities for professional advancement
Being more involved with the association
Learning more about a new subject
Hearing the latest developments in my field
Establishing a reputation amongst my peers
Fulfilling job description
Meeting up-and-coming professionals in my field
Interesting conference topic

Intervening Opportunities
No date clash with other conferences or events that I would like to attend
No date clash with any holidays that I have booked
Being fit and healthy enough to travel
Getting time off work

These newly-created attribute scales and the original open and closed questions were combined to form the final questionnaire that was administered in this research. A copy of the amended questionnaire can be found in Appendix Three. Due to difficulties in finding associations to work with, it was decided not to test this questionnaire further in a pilot study. All the open and closed questions had already been tested in the initial pilot study and few changes were made to them. Careful protocol analysis was carried out with colleagues to check the scales for any items that were difficult to understand, confusing or misleading, but no problems were reported. The decision was made to continue with this research instrument

4.6.4 Time, location and method of questionnaire completion

As mentioned briefly above, getting permission to survey delegates at UK association conferences became a thorny issue, with permission refused on many occasions. Reasons for refusal included confidentiality, although all questionnaires were to be completed anonymously, lack of time (some associations felt that they wanted their delegates to spend all their time concentrating on the programme and not completing questionnaires) and administration difficulties such as when and where the completed questionnaires were to be returned to the researcher.

However, these problems were finally overcome and the survey was administered at six UK association conferences held in Britain during Spring and Summer 2004 – see Table 4.1 for full details.

A total of 1410 questionnaires were distributed. The initial estimate had been 1500, but numbers attending the conferences were never certain until each event had begun. A total of 220 usable questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 15.6%. This is perhaps lower than the ideal rate, but given the difficulties encountered it is an acceptable response, and suitable for the statistical tests that were required. These will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The questionnaires were to be completed independently by each individual, and three different approaches to returning the questionnaires were required in order to comply with the administrative procedures of the different associations involved. For the Royal College of Nursing and the British Medical Association, the respondents were asked to return their completed questionnaires to the registration desk and the researcher collected them at the end of the conference. The British & Irish Law Librarians Association, the Royal College of Radiologists and the Law Society of Scotland all requested that they be able to collect the completed questionnaires and inspect them before sending them on to the researcher. This was deemed acceptable, as it was of great interest to these associations to see how their delegates had replied. For the five associations mentioned, an address was also provided at the top of the

questionnaire and a few completed replies were received through the post. Finally, the Tourism Society requested reply-paid envelopes for all their delegates, as they intended to ask their members to complete the questionnaires outside the conference session times. This seemed to work well, as the Tourism Society had a far better response rate than the others (52.5%). This may of course be attributable to other factors such as an interest in the content of the questionnaire, rather than just the provision of a reply-paid envelope. The Law Society had by far the poorest response rate at only 4%.

Table 4.1 Conferences surveyed as part of this research

Name of Association	Conference Location	Conference Dates	Approx. No. Delegates	Responses & Response Rate
Law Society of Scotland	SECC, Glasgow	12th March 2004	600	25 (4%)
Royal College of Radiologists	Glasgow Caledonian	16th-17th June 2004	200	43 (21.5%)
Tourism Society	John Moores University, Liverpool	17th -18th June 2004	80	42 (52.5%)
British & Irish Law Librarians Association	EICC, Edinburgh	30th June 2004	100	18 (18%)
Royal College of Nursing	Glasgow Radisson SAS Hotel	2nd-4th July 2004	180	56 (31%)
British Medical Association	Glasgow Hilton Hotel	8th-9th July 2004	250	36 (14.5%)
Total			**1410**	**220 (15.6%)**

4.7 Sampling

When contemplating fieldwork, one particular avenue that requires thorough consideration is the area of sampling. It would be very unusual in a study of this size to be able to question every member of the population under study. Therefore, some sort of sample is required in order to allow the researcher to carry out the fieldwork. Many decisions are required in order to ensure that the sample chosen is acceptable. In the first place, as explained by Tull & Hawkins (1987 p369): "the population must be defined in terms of element, sampling unit, extent and time". By this they mean the total set of people that the sample is meant to represent, the basic unit containing

the element of the population to be sampled (usually an individual or a household, or perhaps a company), the geographical location of the population and the time at which the study is undertaken. Under this scheme, the population for this research was defined as follows:

Element:	All members of UK professional associations
Sampling unit:	Attending the surveyed conferences
Extent:	In the UK
Time:	During Spring/Summer 2004

A further decision which has to be made is whether to use probability or non-probability sampling methods. In essence, probability samples are those where everyone in the population is selected by chance and for which there is a known chance of each unit being selected (Tull & Hawkins 1987). On the other hand, non-probability sampling is where each unit of the population being studied does not have an equal chance of being included in the study.

It is generally agreed (*inter alia* De Vaus 2002, Tull & Hawkins 1987 and Jennings 2001) that probability sampling is the best way of obtaining samples that are representative of the population, and being representative is after all the usual purpose of taking a sample. In the words of De Vaus (2002 p. 69): "a fundamental goal of research is to be able to generalise – to say something reliably about a wider population on the basis of the findings in a particular study".

However, it is not always possible to use probability sampling, as for example where the population is widely dispersed, or when a sampling frame (a way of listing all the members of the population) is unavailable. Finn *et al* (2000) state boldly that the problem is that in many situations in tourism research a sampling frame cannot be established, and there is simple reliance on sampling sources. Arber (2001) agrees, explaining that many sociological research studies focus on very specific sub-groups of the population for whom sampling frames are unavailable. This was the case for this particular study, where a list of all delegates attending UK professional

association conferences was not available, and would be highly dispersed in any case. In addition, the practical difficulties evident in attempting a random selection from this population would be numerous, particularly the fact that permission would have had to be sought from a multitude of associations, all of whom hold their conferences at different times and in different locations, and all this before even getting the opportunity to approach the delegates. Given these practical difficulties, it seemed reasonable to adopt a non-probability approach.

There are several non-probability methods available to the researcher, including methods specific to certain types of research such as snowball sampling where personal references from each person sampled allow the researcher to find another person to sample. Quota sampling is another method, defined by De Vaus (2002 p.90) as being where "the researcher calculates a set number of participants for inclusion based on a pre-determined variable (e.g. age)". Purposive sampling is described as "where the sample is purposely chosen to be non-representative in order to achieve a specific objective" (Jennings 2001 p.139) and judgement sampling is where there is an attempt to draw a representative sample of the population using judgemental sampling procedures (Tull & Hawkins 1987 p.376). The final option is convenience sampling, also known as availability sampling. This is somewhat self-explanatory, in that it refers to a sample which is drawn from what is available to the researcher and is usually carried out at a time and place suitable to the researcher.

In the words of Arber (2001 p. 61), "purposive (or non-probability) sampling is best if the purpose is (a) exploration and theory development or (b) developing and testing survey research instruments". This study involved both of these aspects and so a non-probability approach was further justified. Additionally, she goes on to state that: "where the researcher's aim is to generate theory and a wider understanding of social processes or social actions, the representativeness of the sample is of less importance" (Arber 2001 p. 61). Further acceptance of this idea comes from De Vaus (2002 p. 90), who considers that:

> "On certain occasions, researchers may not be concerned with generalising from a sample to the population and in such cases the representativeness of the sample is less important. Instead they may be interested in developing scales. In such cases, we would simply try to get a wide variety of people in the sample without being too concerned about whether each type was represented in its correct proportions".

The method of non-probability sampling that was most appropriate to this study was convenience sampling. This was chosen primarily for pragmatic reasons of financial and cost limitations, but the literature is supportive of this method, at least under certain circumstances. Arber (2001) is practical enough to accept that although researchers usually seek a representative sample, they often have only sufficient resources to study a small number of people. Further, Clark *et al* (1998), although dissuading the researcher from using convenience samples in most situations, do note that:

> "Convenience sampling is most often used where research objectives are inherently qualitative in nature and focus upon the elaboration of theoretical concepts and issues in micro-social contexts".

These lent some authority to the idea of using a convenience sample for this type of exploratory research where the aim was to develop attribute scales that will contribute towards the proposal of a model of the conference attendance decision-making process.

It is certainly acknowledged to be the least reliable method, and the method which is least generalisable to the population as a whole. According to Tull & Hawkins (1987 p.376): "convenience samples contain unknown amounts of variance and systematic selection errors". Jennings (2001 p.139) too is cautious, stating that although convenience samples give quick results, they are the least desirable since they are neither "purposeful nor strategic". De Vaus (2002) is in agreement, noting that this

sampling method is the least likely to produce representative samples and must not claim to represent anything but the sample itself.

The difficulties and pitfalls of using convenience sampling must not be ignored or underestimated, but given the various practical difficulties already outlined as well as financial and time constraints, convenience sampling seemed to be the most effective way of researching this issue. "The researcher should recognise the constraints on interpretation which arise from their method of sampling and honestly and clearly note them for their readers" (Arber 2001 p. 63).

4.7.1 Sample obtained for this study

As discussed above, convenience sampling is the least acceptable of all the possible sampling methods. Unfortunately, for several reasons, other forms of non-probability sampling proved impossible for this research. First and foremost, there is to the researcher's knowledge, no sampling framework that would be relevant to this research. There is no list of all delegates who attended a UK association conference in any given year, nor is there one list of all association conferences held in the UK in any given year. There is also most emphatically no list of all those who may consider attending a UK association conference in any give year. This makes identifying the population extremely difficult and as a result it would be highly unlikely that any sample of the population could be identified with certainty.

Additionally, there were problems in getting permission to conduct the survey at some conferences and this limited the number of delegates that could be approached. This point has already been discussed in the section on time, location and method of questionnaire completion.

Finally, there are the perennial questions of time and money in a study of this nature – a lack of both curtailed the options open to the researcher.

In conclusion, although it is acknowledged that convenience sampling is not ideal, nonetheless this study focussed on a convenience sample of delegates attending UK association conferences held in Britain during Spring/Summer 2004.

4.7.2 Characteristics of this sample

The questionnaire included three demographic questions which allow discussion of the characteristics of the sample obtained. These were questions of gender, age and occupation.

The sample was composed of 36.1% men and 63.9% women. This is clearly a departure from the generally accepted approximate 50% - 50% in the general population. The unbalanced split in this survey can be explained in part by the fact that one of the conferences where the delegates were surveyed was the Royal College of Nursing, an association with a high percentage of female members. In fact 96% of the delegates at this conference were female. This may have introduced a certain bias in the gender distribution of the sample and it is important to check whether this gender imbalance represents a significant issue in the research.

Two variables were considered to be of particular importance to women – the categorical variable "who are you travelling with" and the importance variable "safe destination" – as they both have implications for personal safety. Significant differences between mixed male/female conferences and the predominantly female nursing conference did emerge on both variables. Only 17.9% of those attending the nursing conference were travelling alone, compared with a general figure of 57.5% over all the conferences surveyed. This seems to show that there may be some reluctance on the part of the female delegates at the nursing conference to travel alone, and this may arguably be based on security considerations. However, a Mann-Whitney U Test (shown in Table 4.2) on the variable SAFEDEST (Safe Destination) showed that there were no significant differences between men and women in terms of how they ranked this variable.

Table 4.2 Mann-Whitney U Test on Variable SAFEDEST with Gender as Grouping Variable

	Safe Destination
Mann-Whitney U	4211.500
Wilcoxon W	7061.500
Z	-1.903
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	.057

In any case, there is no particular reason to suppose that the fact that women feel differently to men with respect to some of the variables in the questionnaire has any significant potential for biasing the hypothesised model. The socio-demographic characteristics of the delegates have been identified as of interest in this research, and the between-groups tests that will be undertaken to define some of these characteristics take into account the different sizes of the groups being examined. Therefore, a higher number of women than men will not bias these results. Additionally, as already discussed there is no sampling framework of UK association conferences that this research could be compared against and therefore it cannot be stated with certainty that this sample does not represent UK association conference delegates.

Table 4.3 Demographic characteristics of sample obtained

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
15-24	2	.9	.9	.9
25-44	114	51.8	51.8	52.7
45-64	97	44.1	44.1	96.8
65 and over	7	3.2	3.2	100
Total	220	100	100	100

With regard to the age of the sample, 96.8% were between 15 and 64 – working age. This is no surprise as it is to be expected that those attending association conferences will to a certain extent be members of the working population. However, it is slightly surprising that only 3.2% of the sample obtained were retired. It had been thought that those with an interest in the association would still attend even if they were not working within the profession represented by the association. This has proven not to be the case and the overwhelming majority of delegates were still of

working age. Disregarding the very small number of responses from the 15-24 category, it is interesting to note that more delegates were in the younger age bracket (25-44) than the older bracket (45-64).

The final demographic question concerned occupation. Occupation could be guessed at by looking at the professions of the associations concerned – for example, there were 25 questionnaires completed at the Law Society of Scotland conference, of which 21 were completed by solicitors. There was a similar story at the Royal College of Nursing conference, where only 5 of the 56 who replied did not class themselves as a nurse of some kind.

Although it is interesting to note the occupations of those surveyed, and their age and gender breakdown, these variables do not provide a great deal of information in respect of the sample obtained. There is no available typology of association conference delegates to measure this sample against and therefore the make-up of this sample cannot be tested for its representativeness.

One further area that was examined with regard to the sample obtained was whether there were any discernible differences in the results obtained based on where the conferences were located. One conference was surveyed in Edinburgh, one in Liverpool and four in Glasgow. A range of conference locations gives arguably more generalisable results – had all the conferences been held in one location that would have implied that the results were only valid for that one location and could only be applied to conferences in that location.

There were two main importance variables where the location of the conference might conceivably have influenced the responses and they were VISIT (Visiting the surrounding area) and VFR (Visiting friends and relatives). Both were tested using the Kruskal Wallis H Test for between groups differences based on the location of the conferences surveyed. There were significant differences in the importance ratings on both variables based on conference location as shown in Table 4.4 below,

thus supporting the suggestion that the location of the conference had an impact on the responses given.

Table 4.4 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistic with Conference Location as grouping variable

	VISIT Visiting the Surrounding Area	VFR Visiting Friends and Relatives
Chi-Square (χ^2)	6.700	7.599
Degrees of Freedom (df)	2	2
Significance (p)	.035	.022

However, it can be argued that this does not impact significantly on the overall results of the study. Rather, it is to be expected that different conference locations will inevitably give rise to different responses as to the importance of visiting the surrounding area or visiting friends and relatives. Indeed, it can be argued that these responses are a function of the tastes and circumstances peculiar to each individual delegate, rather than being representative of any particular location although these responses may reflect differing perceptions of each destination. The conclusion to this is that although the aim of this study is to consider general attendance decision-making at association conferences, there will always be differences at the level of the individual and that this should be accepted as being the case in all types of behavioural research.

4.7.3 Representativeness of the sample obtained.

This is a complex issue and as discussed, there is no sampling framework against which to compare the results of this study and without extensive further research which would be beyond the scope of this work, there does not seem to be any way of creating such a sampling framework.

However, this does not mean that the results of this study are not of interest. On the contrary the study was undertaken on an exploratory basis, and has yielded valid and important information about the characteristics of delegates at a selection of UK association conferences and about the decision-making process undertaken by those

delegates who attended the conferences included in the survey. It has also addressed the research questions of the study – namely to what extent can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context, how can the characteristics of association conference attendance best be defined, can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend and finally, can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making. In addition, the results form a platform for further research in this area.

The research acknowledges that there are issues concerning the different locations that were surveyed and concerning the possible gender bias introduced by the predominantly female nursing conference, but argues that in the case of location, including results from more than one conference location strengthens the generalisability of the research, since the conclusions are not limited to the results obtained from only one location. Additionally, the question of gender bias occasioned by the nursing conference does not unduly influence the results obtained by this study as the study has found no reason to expect the decision-making process of women to be substantially different to that of men.

In line with the view expressed by Arber (2001, p. 61): "where the researcher's aim is to generate theory [...] the representativeness of the sample is less important", the results cannot be claimed to be generalisable to the conference industry as a whole, but they do contribute to knowledge about UK association conferences and their attendance patterns and they do provide support for the emerging model of the association conference attendance decision-making process.

4.8 Reliability

Reliability and validity are two of the most important aspects of any scale. They are the lynch pins that hold the scale together and without them, no particular claims can be made for the results drawn from administering the scale.

Reliability is dealt with and defined in a similar way by most authors writing on the subject of research in social sciences (*inter alia* Moser & Kalton 1971, Oppenheim 1982 Sanders & Pinhey 1983, De Vellis 1991, Proctor 1993a, Clark *et al* 1998 and Sommer & Sommer 2002). A scale is reliable to the extent to which repeated applications of the scale produce the same results (supposing the attitudes under study have not changed). In other words, reliability refers to consistency and replicability of results.

There are various ways of measuring reliability, but three of the main methods are the test-retest method, the alternate forms method and the split-half method. The test-retest method, as the name implies, involves testing a scale on a survey sample, analysing the results and then, after a suitable time period has elapsed, administering the same test scale to the same survey sample again. Once the results from the second test have been analysed, there should be a close match in the results from both tests which would indicate both the consistency and replicability of the scale. However, things are rarely so simple and this is certainly no exception. As pointed out by Moser & Kalton (1971), retesting the same people may introduce bias on a least two fronts: they may remember their answers from the first test and simply repeat them, or they may have been influenced by the first test to think more about the attitudes under investigation and this may cause them to change their answers and their underlying attitudes. Additionally, if there is a long time gap between administering the first and second test, the underlying attitude being measured may actually have changed in the interim. It is also possible that other factors such as mood or understanding of the questions may vary over the two test dates. In any of these cases, the test-retest method does not seem to give a credible account of reliability where it is used as the sole determinant and is cumbersome and resource intensive.

Another method of assessing reliability is the alternate forms method (sometimes known as the equivalent forms method). This is where two different scales on the same topic are constructed and administered to the same survey sample. If the scores from the two different scales are similar then the scales are judged reliable. Further

correlation work can be done on the two sets of results to indicate just how reliable they are. One obvious problem with this method of determining reliability is that as it involves the construction of two scales on the same topic, it requires twice the amount of work. Additionally, since it is usual to pick the best items from a selection to construct a scale, there may not be enough good items for two scales to be constructed that are of equal value in tapping an attitude.

Probably the most commonly used method of testing reliability based on correlations between two sets of scale scores is the so-called "split-half method". This method divides the results obtained from administering the scale to a survey sample into two sets of scores - usually the odd numbered item statements are taken as one half and the even numbered item statements are the other half. The scores for the two halves are then correlated. A highly reliable survey will produce a high correlation between the two halves. In layman's terms, if all the items on the scale are consistently measuring the same attitude there will be a high correlation, and by extension a high reliability factor. This is possibly the most accurate of the correlations based on two sets of scores.

One point worth bearing in mind is that the split half method gives a correlation equivalent to only half the number of item statements in the test. This needs to be corrected, and what is known as the "stepped-up" reliability is calculated (Moser & Kalton 1971 p 354). Stepped up reliability is given by the Spearman Brown formula which can easily be calculated by a software package such as SPSS.

Although the reliability of a scale can be calculated by the above methods which correlate the results of two sets of scores (either from administering two tests, or by splitting the results obtained from one test) there is another way of testing reliability which rests on the calculation of the internal consistency of the test. This can be used as a measure of the overall reliability of a scale, but can also indicate the reliability or otherwise of individual item statements and can be used to good effect when analysing the results obtained from a pilot study. The measure most often used to determine internal consistency is known as "Cronbach's alpha coefficient", which

is defined as "approximately the average of all the possible split-half correlations, which measures the consistency of all items globally and individually" (Proctor 1993a p 128). It is also defined, perhaps more technically, by DeVellis (1991 p. 26) as follows: "alpha is defined as the proportion of a scale's total variance that is attributable to a common source, presumably the true score of a latent variable underlying the items". For the purposes of attitude research, the latent variable is the underlying attitude that is being sought, so alpha can give an indication of just how much of the variance of the scale results is caused by the attitude being investigated. Fortunately, it is not usually necessary to work out all these possibilities longhand – it can generally be done as part of the reliability calculations included in the statistical software packages.

In terms of individual item statements, Cronbach's alpha coefficient can be used to calculate which items fail to correlate highly with the correlation obtained from the total of all the other items. These items can then be rejected as they clearly don't tally with the other item statements in the scale. They may be failing to tap the attitude under investigation, or perhaps they may fail to discriminate clearly between people with very high or very low total scores (Moser & Kalton 1971).

Reliability is vital, both in its own right and because without it there can be no validity of a scale. Oppenheim (1982 p. 41) explains the link between reliability and validity with a touch of humour: "We shall never be able to measure length accurately if we use an elastic tape measure". Where reliability is concerned with consistency and replicability, validity is more concerned with what is actually being measured. Sanders & Pinhey (1983 p. 77) define validity as "the correspondence between what a measuring device is supposed to measure and what it actually measures". Given the multi-layered definition of attitude, it is vitally important to pin down in the first place exactly what a scale is supposed to measure. Then, in order to ensure validity, it should be shown that the scale is measuring the attitude that it set out to. This of course is no mean feat and there are several different types of validity check depending on how deep the researcher wants to delve. The main thing to remember is that reliability and validity go hand in hand – a highly reliable

scale is a good indicator of validity. However, a reliable scale does not guarantee validity.

4.8.1 Reliability of this research

Of the three methods described above for measuring reliability, two can immediately be discounted as unsuitable for this research. The test-retest method requires that the sample that was surveyed be re-surveyed using the same questionnaire, after a period of time has elapsed. This is not practicable, since it was difficult to get permission to carry out the surveys the first time, and it is almost certain that if the survey was administered at the same conference next year, there would be different delegates present. Since the questionnaire was filled out anonymously, there is no way of tracing who completed it, and so this approach was not considered any further.

The alternate forms method can also be ruled out for this research. A great deal of time and effort was put into selecting those attributes which according to the literature and to those interviewed were important in the conference attendance decision-making process. Sufficient alternative attributes to create an entirely different scale were not found. Given restraints on time and resources, it was not considered necessary to construct alternative scales as there are other ways to assess the reliability of the attribute scales that appear in the questionnaire.

This leaves the methods based on correlations as suitable ways to assess the reliability of the study. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the two scales in the questionnaire – one measuring determinants of behaviour, the other measuring goal-driven behaviour. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for all the scale items in total. According to De Vaus (2002), alpha should be at least 0.7 before the scale can be said to be reliable. As can be seen from the table below, reliability of the total scales items sits at over 0.9 in this research which according to the 0.7 benchmark indicates a high degree of reliability:

Table 4.5 Reliability Coefficients for the attribute scale items

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Determinant Scale	*0.8925*
Motivational Scale	*0.9137*
Total Scale Items	**0.9201**

Since high reliability is extremely desirable, the two separate scales will from now on be considered as forming one composite scale. This puts the reliability coefficient at 0.9201 which is a good result. The two scales are measuring different aspects of the same overall concept, and therefore can be considered as forming two parts of one whole.

4.9 Validity

The basic level of validity is called "face validity" and refers to how the scale looks on the surface. No actual correlations of scale scores are carried out and the judgement of validity is made on the basis of whether the items look to be tapping the right attitude. This is very unscientific and is really not suitable as a sole method of determining validity.

Two other validity checks are "concurrent validity" and "predictive validity". Concurrent validity assesses how well the results obtained from a scale perform in comparison to other research being carried out simultaneously. Predictive validity is where the results of the scale are compared to other research carried out at some point in the future (Clark *et al* 1998). Neither is suitable for this research project, as there are no concurrent studies to the author's knowledge, and it is not possible to wait for the results of other research in the future before assessing the validity of this study.

"Content validity" is defined by Sanders & Pinhey (1983 p. 89) as "the notion that items on a scale actually represent the content of the behaviour that is being measured. Moser & Kalton (1971 p. 356) go further, explaining that "the items should contain the common thread of the attitude under study and also cover the full

range of the attitude". DeVellis (1991) recommends this approach when the content is well defined, but urges caution for use in attitude research, since it is difficult to know what is the full range of the attitude is.

The problem of validity becomes far more severe when there is no objective external criterion, such as when one is trying to measure attitudes and beliefs (Proctor 1993a). One possible avenue to consider is "construct validity" described by Proctor (ibid, p 127) as "a conceptually convincing solution"

Construct validity is based on the theoretical relationship of a variable (a score on some scale) to other variables. It is the extent to which a measure "behaves" the way that the construct it purports to measure should behave with regard to established measures (DeVellis 1991 p. 46). The researcher should explore the literature and theory on the subject under study and from this develop hypotheses. If these are borne out by the research findings, the study can be said to have construct validity.

To establish construct validity, two aspects must be considered - convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Trochim 2004). These are further explained as follows:

Convergent validity - *"measures of constructs that theoretically should be related to each other are in fact observed to be related"* (Trochim 2004)

Discriminant validity – *"measures of constructs that theoretically should not be related to one another are in fact observed to be not related to each other"* (Trochim 2004)

Trochim (2004) enumerates several possible objections to claims for construct validity in a piece of research including inadequate preoperational explication of constructs (failing to define the construct properly at the outset), mono-operation bias and mono-method bias, and interaction of different treatments (whether any effects found during a study were actually caused by the construct under review or were the result of other factors not considered by the study). He also cites confounding

constructs (defining constructs too narrowly) and what he terms as social threats to construct validity, such as hypothesis guessing, evaluation apprehension and researcher expectancies (where the researcher communicates the desired outcome of a study and this affects the responses given). It is argued that none of these objections can be sustained with regard to this study.

There are no absolute levels for correlations between variables for acceptance as evidence of construct validity (Trochim 2004). However, McDougall & Munro (1994) suggest that correlations on average over .57 indicate convergent validity and correlations on average below .22 are indicative of discriminant validity.

There is one final type of validity that is of particular relevance to this study – factorial validity. It is elaborated upon in depth by both De Vellis (1991) and by Comrey (1988), but in essence it refers to anticipated item groupings being identified before factoring. A factor analysis solution that is consistent with these groupings is evidence of factorial validity (De Vellis 1991). He further argues that in the context of scale development, the researcher should have a fairly clear idea of what factors might underlie the items or variables within a scale. "If factor analysis on a data set "discovers" the item grouping that was intended when the scale was created, there is strong confirmation of the initial hypothesis concerning how the items should relate to each other. In essence, factor analysis would have been used to confirm an expected factor structure rather than to determine a structure that was previously unknown" (De Vellis 1991 p107/108). This he considers as evidence of factorial validity,

It rapidly becomes clear that it is much easier to calculate reliability using statistical methods than it is to guarantee validity. The main stumbling block is that attitude, as already stated, cannot be directly observed and so must be inferred. This muddies the waters somewhat when it comes to making definitive statements about exactly what is being measured. The best policy would seem to be to strive for high reliability as this is at least a good indicator of validity. Then, in the words of Clark *et al* (1998 p.131) "Validity always comes down to a matter of judgement".

4.9.1 Validity of this research

This questionnaire can reasonably be said to have face validity. On the face of it, it does measure the importance of many different attributes in the conference attendance decision-making process. However, as explained above, this is not enough for the study to be considered valid.

With regard to concurrent and predictive validity, neither can be claimed by this research as there are, to the researcher's knowledge, no other completed or ongoing studies against which these results can be compared.

Construct validity however is more relevant to this research and both convergent and discriminant validity are displayed by the results of this research. Although the attributes were chosen to reflect the decision-making process as a whole, within the scales there are items which could reasonably be expected to correlate highly with each other as they represent different aspects of one construct, and those items which would not be expected to correlate as they reflect different constructs altogether.

An example of several attributes which would be expected to correlate highly is given below. Cost of accommodation (COSTACC), cost of transport (COSTTRAN) and cost of the conference (COSTCON) all refer to one basic factor or construct – cost. The results of the correlation analysis (Table 4.6) show that they do indeed correlate very highly, which is evidence of convergent validity. Both parametric and non-parametric tests were carried out, and both indicated high correlations. The parametric results (Pearson's Correlation) are given in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Correlations evidencing convergent validity

		COSTTRAN	COSTACC	COSTCON
Cost of Transport	Pearson's Correlation	1	**.842**	**.702**
Cost of Accommodation	Pearson's Correlation	**.842**	1	**.729**
Cost of Conference	Pearson's Correlation	**.702**	**.729**	1

Examples of other attributes which would not be expected to correlate highly are cost of conference (COSTCON), generating new business (NEWBUS) and no date clash

with holidays already booked (HOLDATE), as these are expected to relate to three different factors or constructs (Cost, Networking and Intervening Issues respectively). Again, both parametric and non-parametric tests produced similar results. Results for these correlations are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Correlations evidencing discriminant validity

		COSTCON	NEWBUS	HOLDATE
Cost of Conference	Pearson's Correlation	1	**.144**	**.208**
New Business	Pearson's Correlation	**.144**	1	**-.062**
No holiday date clash	Pearson's Correlation	**.208**	**-.062**	1

Both of these results taken together can be considered to be evidence of construct validity. The correlations between those variables expected to be related are well above the level of 0.57 as suggested by McDougall and Munro (1994), displaying therefore convergent validity. Those evidencing discriminant validity are well below their suggested level of 0.22. In total then, construct validity has been established.

In addition, there is the question of factorial validity. De Vellis (1991) defines this as anticipated item groupings being identified before factoring, and states that if factor analysis on a data set "discovers" the item grouping that was intended when the scale was created, there is strong confirmation of the initial hypothesis concerning how the items should relate to each other. In this study a six-factor solution was hypothesised at the beginning of the research and following principal components analysis (to be discussed in depth in Chapter Five) a six-factor solution emerged. This can be claimed to be evidence of factorial validity for this research.

In conclusion, the validity of this research rests upon the three foundations of validity discussed – face validity, construct validity and factorial validity – and upon the fact that the scale has been proved to be reliable using Cronbach's alpha co-efficient as a measure of overall reliability.

4.10 Conclusions

This chapter began with a review of the aims of this research, and a re-stating of the research questions and objectives. The hypotheses to be tested were also identified, along with discussion on how these hypotheses would help to answer the research questions. There was also a discussion on the meaning of methodology, and the research paradigm, and it was stated that this research is grounded in the domain of post-positivist critical realism.

Questions surrounding the theory of questionnaire design, and in particular designing scales were also raised, with the decision being reached that Likert-type scales would be constructed for this research. It was also argued that the data generated by these Likert-type scales could be considered to be interval-level.

The research process was described in full, including the short interviews carried out, the wording and content of the questionnaire, the operationalisation of the research instrument, the pilot study, changes occasioned by the results of the pilot study and the time, place and method of completion of the final survey.

Following a discussion of the theoretical issues concerning sampling, the sample obtained was noted, along with some of the interesting characteristics of the sample. The research used a convenience sampling method, with due regard to the limitations of this method, and the questions that this brings up regarding representativeness and generalisability.

Finally, the questions of reliability and validity were addressed. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for both the scales and for the total of all the scale items, and these results indicated a high level of reliability and a good chance of valid results. With regard to validity, the research claims validity on three levels - face validity, construct validity and factorial validity. Now that the theoretical issues of the research have been considered, the following chapter will be devoted to the research findings, and a discussion on the implication of these findings.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

In the Introduction to this thesis, four main research questions were identified. They were to what extent can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context, how can the characteristics of association conference attendance best be defined, can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend and finally, can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making.

Chapters Two and Three of this work concerned themselves with providing the context for this study and reporting on a thorough review of all the pertinent literature in the fields of conference and business tourism and also consumer behaviour, motivation and decision-making. It was concluded from this literature review that the existing models of leisure tourism decision-making could potentially be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context and a hypothesised model was proposed, to be empirically tested during the fieldwork stage of this study.

A description and justification of the research methods chosen for the fieldwork stage of this study, along with a theoretical discussion on some of the statistical methods that were put into practice during this research was the subject of Chapter Four, which also set out the hypotheses to be tested in this chapter.

Chapter Five will now deal with the findings from the fieldwork that was carried out in association with this study by testing the hypotheses put forward in Chapter Four. The first section will examine the data collected and assess its suitability for statistical testing. Following this, the data will be examined in general terms, and then more specifically in terms of the research objectives and hypotheses set out in

Chapter Four designed to define the characteristics of UK association conference delegates.

The chapter will then move on to examine the underlying dimensions among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend and will incorporate these attributes into a proposed model of UK association conference attendance decision-making. This will involve carrying out factor analysis on the data from the scales in the questionnaire and making any amendments required to the hypothesised model identified in Chapter Three.

The chapter will conclude with discussion of the three remaining research objectives, which involve considering the decision heuristics that might be in operation in the association conference context, proposing the final model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process, and re-examining the existing literature in the light of the findings from this study.

5.1 Initial Analysis of Data

220 usable questionnaires were returned, and the data from these questionnaires was analysed using SPSS Version 11. The first step taken after inputting the data was to screen and clean the data. This was done by producing frequencies for all variables and visually inspecting the data for unusual or unexpected values. This allowed for correction of any data-inputting errors, gave an initial indication of whether the data was normally distributed and flagged up any outliers in the data. No outliers were found, and any data-inputting errors were traced and immediately corrected. The data set was considered to be acceptable to proceed to statistical testing.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

In order to address the second research question of this study (how can the characteristics of UK association conference delegates best be defined?), it is the

intention of this research to use inferential statistics to examine the relationships between different groups of respondents on many of the variables included in the questionnaire. There are two main types of statistical tests that can be used in these circumstances – parametric and non-parametric statistics. In order to ascertain which type of statistical tests are appropriate for the data set, it is crucial to check whether the data meets the stringent assumptions for parametric testing, and if not what the non-parametric alternatives are.

5.2.1 Assumptions for parametric testing

According to Field (2000), there are four assumptions that have to be met before data can be considered to be suitable for parametric testing:

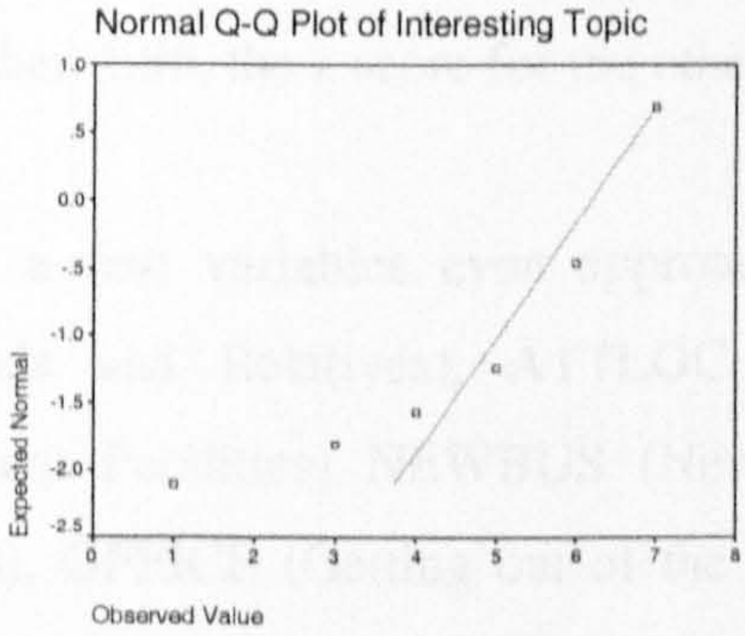
1 Normally Distributed Data
2 Homogeneity of Variance
3 Interval Level Data
4 Independence

Of these four assumptions, three can be dealt with swiftly. Homogeneity of variance assumes "that the variances should not change systematically throughout the data" (Field 2000, p. 38). This is of most relevance where several groups of subjects are being tested, and it requires that each of these groups should have the same variance. Individual tests that may be carried out do check for homogeneity of variance and so it is not normally necessary to do any initial tests for this. With regard to point four above – independence requires that "the behaviour of one participant does not influence the behaviour of another" (Field 2000, p 38). Since each questionnaire was filled out by one individual, there is no reason to consider that their responses were not independent of each other. Finally, the issue of Likert scales providing interval level data was discussed at length in the previous chapter, with the conclusion that the data provided by the Likert scales can be treated as interval-level data.

This leaves only the first of the above assumptions. For parametric testing to be appropriate, the data must be from a normally-distributed population. As Field (2000 p. 49) explains: "A deviation from normality tells us that we cannot use a parametric test, because the assumption of normality is not tenable".

It follows then, that calculations are required in order to ascertain whether the data has come from a normally-distributed population or not. Initially, the data can be examined by eye, for a rough guide as to which variables seem to have a normal distribution and which do not. Producing histograms with a normal curve superimposed on top of the results for each variable, or normal Q-Q plots will also give some indication as to how the data is distributed, as will inspection of the statistics for skewness and kurtosis. The following normal Q-Q plots and histograms are examples of importance variables in the data where normal distribution can immediately be discounted (Figure 5.1 Interesting Topic) and where a quick glance suggests that normality may be attained (Figure 5.2 Attractive Location). However, this can only be a guide, and further calculations must be made.

Figure 5.1 Variable TOPIC (Interesting Topic) clearly showing non-normal distribution



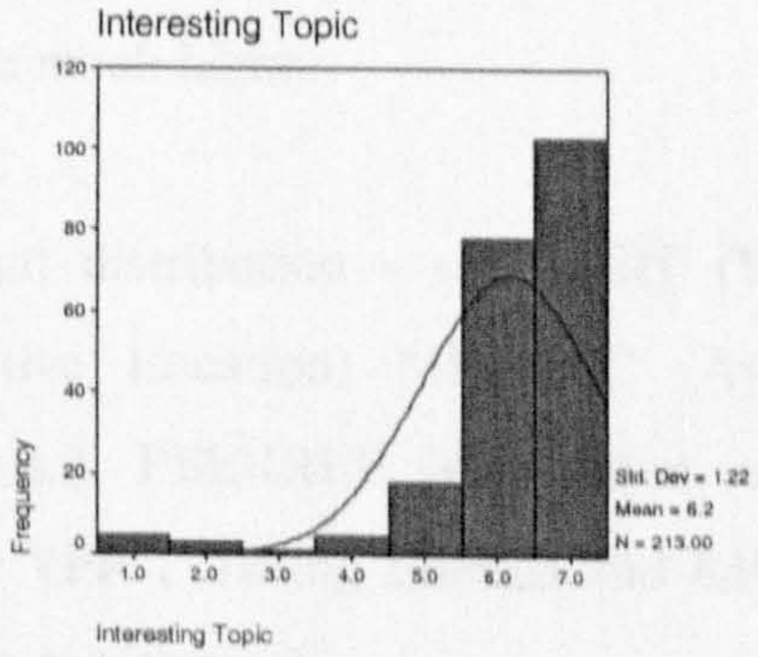
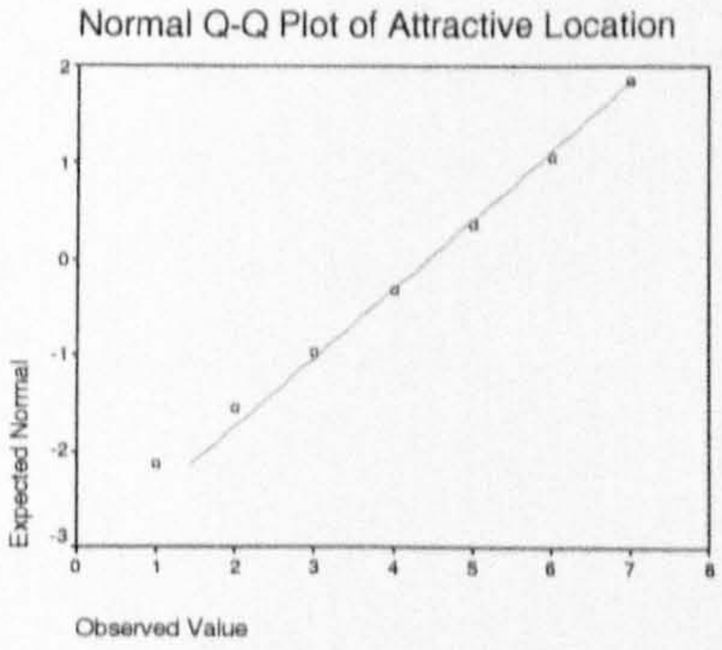
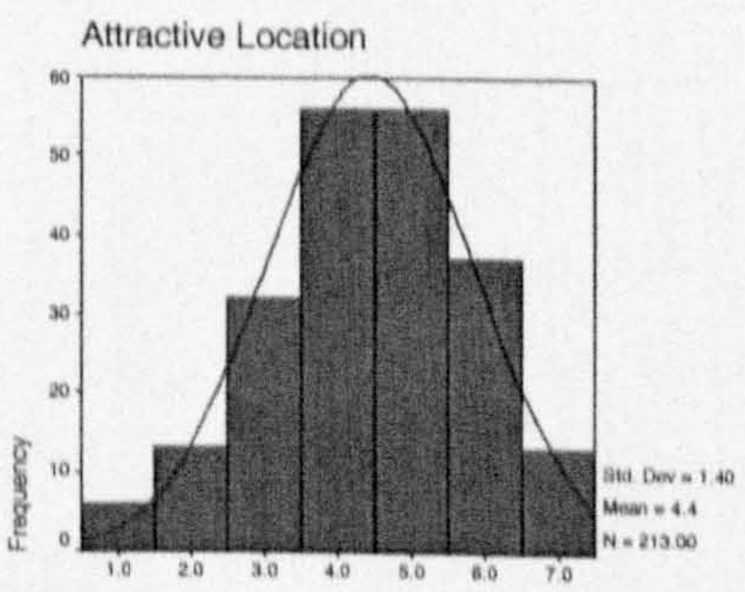


Figure 5.2 Variable ATTLOC (attractive location) showing the possibility of normal distribution





In addition to these checks, the results for skewness and kurtosis can be examined. However, the actual skewness and kurtosis figures themselves, although interesting, are not enough to gauge normality. In order to find a measure that can be compared across different variables, it is necessary to calculate a z score for skewness, and one for kurtosis. A z score corresponds closely to the standard deviation, but can be calculated for both skewness and kurtosis using the following formulae:

Figure 5.3 Formulae for calculating z scores for skewness and kurtosis

$$Z_{skewness} = \frac{S - 0}{SE_{skewness}} \qquad Z_{kurtosis} = \sqrt{\frac{K - 0}{SE_{kurtosis}}}$$

(Source: Field 2000)

Table 5.1 illustrates the z scores for each of the scale variables analysed. A z score of more than + or – 1.96 shows that the result is significantly different from chance (Clegg 1990) that is, that the distribution is not normal. In many cases, the z score is considerably higher than + or – 1.96, and this is clear evidence of abnormal distribution. Even in those cases where the z score for either skewness or kurtosis is less than 1.96, the z score for the other is often much higher.

Only a few variables even approach normal distribution - see VISIT (Visiting Friends and Relatives), ATTLOC (Attractive Location) MEDFAC (Available Medical Facilities) NEWBUS (New Business), PEERREP (Reputation amongst Peers), OFFICE (Getting out of the Office), VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) and TRAVEL (Distance travelled to attend the conference).

Table 5.1 Z scores for skewness and kurtosis of continuous variables

	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Z Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis	Z Kurtosis
COSTCON	-0.542	0.167	**-3.246**	0.081	0.333	**0.493**
COSTACC	-0.697	0.172	**-4.052**	0.184	0.343	**0.732**
COSTRAN	-0.479	0.17	**-2.818**	0.491	0.338	**1.205**
ACCLOC	-1.015	0.166	**-6.114**	0.748	0.331	**1.503**
ATTLOC	*-0.276*	*0.167*	***-1.653***	*0.275*	*0.332*	***0.910***
CONDATE	-0.809	0.169	**-4.787**	0.309	0.336	**0.959**
HOLDATE	-1.173	0.169	**-6.941**	0.782	0.336	**1.526**
HEALTH	-0.621	0.173	**-3.590**	0.445	0.344	**1.137**
MEDFAC	*0.182*	*0.176*	***1.034***	*0.757*	*0.351*	***1.469***
TIMEOFF	-0.878	0.169	**-5.195**	0.287	0.337	**0.923**
JOBDEC	-0.877	0.17	**-5.159**	0.197	0.338	**0.763**
FINANCE	-1.227	0.172	**-7.134**	0.785	0.343	**1.513**
TOPIC	-2.488	0.167	**-14.898**	7.254	0.332	**4.674**
SAFE	-0.738	0.138	**-5.348**	0.143	0.335	**0.653**
VISIT	*-0.101*	*0.169*	***-0.598***	*0.838*	*0.336*	***1.579***
PROFCON	-0.763	0.166	**-4.596**	0.045	0.33	**0.369**
PROFAD	-1.340	0.166	**-8.072**	1.729	0.33	**2.289**
NEWBUS	*0.013*	*0.173*	***0.075***	*0.708*	*0.344*	***1.435***
NEWFRIENDS	-0.481	0.168	**-2.863**	0.378	0.335	**1.062**
OLDFRIENDS	-0.790	0.169	**-4.675**	0.512	0.233	**1.482**
INVOLVE	-0.600	0.167	**-3.593**	0.233	0.332	**0.838**
GLOBAL	-0.748	0.167	**-4.479**	0.323	0.332	**0.986**
NEWSUB	-1.689	0.165	**-10.236**	3.929	0.329	**3.456**
RESEARCH	-1.436	0.167	**-8.599**	2.562	0.32	**2.830**
PEERREP	*-0.264*	*0.170*	***-1.553***	*0.447*	*0.338*	***1.150***
OFFICE	*-0.253*	*0.169*	***-1.497***	*0.666*	*0.336*	***1.408***
VFR	*0.328*	*0.172*	***1.907***	*0.7*	*0.341*	***1.433***
LIKEMIND	-1.178	0.166	**-7.096**	1.148	0.33	**1.865**
NEWPROF	-0.826	0.166	**-4.976**	0.142	0.331	**0.655**
TRAVEL	*0.185*	*0.164*	***1.128***	*1.062*	*0.327*	***1.802***
MEMLONG	0.607	0.202	**3.005**	0.424	0.401	**1.028**
TIMESATT	3.702	0.167	**22.168**	15.765	0.333	**6.881**

Since there are some variables which display fairly normal distribution with regard to their skewness and kurtosis, it is imperative that other tests are performed which will calculate statistics which show whether the assumption of normality has been violated or not. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test and the Shapiro-Wilks (S-W) test both produce results that should be non-significant (i.e. $p>0.05$) in order for the distribution of the data to be considered normal. A result where $p<0.05$ means that that the distribution is significantly different from normal. Missing cases have been excluded pairwise, which is reflected in the differing degrees of freedom for each

variable. Table 5.2 shows the K-S and S-W results for the scale variables under review.

Table 5.2 Normality testing for continuous variables:

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (a)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Membership Length	.137	144	.000	.922	144	.000
Times attended	.332	211	.000	.492	211	.000
Where have you travelled from?	.115	220	.000	.943	220	.000
Cost of Conference	.220	211	.000	.922	211	.000
Cost of Accommodation	.243	199	.000	.894	199	.000
Cost of Transport	.197	205	.000	.924	205	.000
Accessible Location	.222	214	.000	.875	214	.000
Attractive Location	.153	213	.000	.946	213	.000
No Conference Date Clash	.193	208	.000	.904	208	.000
No Holiday Date Clash	.220	208	.000	.837	208	.000
Healthy Enough to Travel	.162	198	.000	.903	198	.000
Available Medical Facilities	.178	190	.000	.912	190	.000
Time off Work	.199	207	.000	.856	207	.000
Job Description	.199	205	.000	.887	205	.000
Financed by Employer	.212	199	.000	.817	199	.000
Interesting Topic	.296	213	.000	.655	213	.000
Safe Destination	.166	209	.000	.904	209	.000
Visiting the surrounding area	.203	208	.000	.912	208	.000
Professional Contacts	.195	216	.000	.906	216	.000
Professional Advancement	.226	216	.000	.831	216	.000
New Business	.201	198	.000	.919	198	.000
New Friends	.199	209	.000	.920	209	.000
Old Friends	.193	208	.000	.901	208	.000
Involvement in the Association	.185	213	.000	.919	213	.000
Global Community	.197	213	.000	.902	213	.000
Learning About New Subjects	.255	217	.000	.795	217	.000
Learning About New Research	.246	213	.000	.826	213	.000
Peer Reputation	.190	205	.000	.935	205	.000
Getting Out of the Office	.214	208	.000	.921	208	.000
Visiting Friends/Relatives	.185	201	.000	.884	201	.000
Meeting Like-Minded People	.274	216	.000	.845	216	.000
Meeting New Professionals	.226	214	.000	.893	214	.000

a. Lillefors Significance Correction

It can immediately be seen that none of these variables could be considered to be normally distributed. This means that one of the prime assumptions for parametric testing (normal distribution) has been violated, and therefore the data is simply not suitable for parametric testing. A pattern of non-normal distribution was not unexpected. It can be the case that data produced as a result of research in the field of social science is not normally distributed, and therefore the fact that normal

distribution cannot be assumed does not lessen the results of the study (Pallant 2001). It merely requires different statistical tests – non-parametric instead of parametric testing. Non-parametric tests are less powerful than their parametric equivalents but still result in perfectly acceptable measurements of the relationships within the data.

5.2.2 Non-parametric testing

It is clear from checking the assumptions of parametric testing that the data to be analysed in this study will require non-parametric tests to be used. Non-parametric tests are sometimes called "assumption-free" tests (Field 2000), because they do not require the stringent assumptions of parametric tests. However, this is something of a misnomer, as there are conditions, or assumptions attached to non-parametric statistical tests, for example that they must use independent observations. This means that each case can only be counted once, and cannot appear in more than one category, or group according to Pallant (2001). Certain tests require additional assumptions to be met.

Non-parametric tests work by ranking the data, which allows the analysis to be carried out on the ranks instead of on the actual data. However, this does mean that a certain amount of information is lost, for example on the magnitude of difference between scores (Field 2000). Pallant (2001) also points out that non-parametric tests are less sensitive than their parametric equivalents, and may fail to detect differences that actually do exist – a Type II error.

Non-parametric tests are statistically less powerful than their parametric equivalents, but nonetheless allow a certain amount of testing of nominal and ordinal level data that would otherwise be unsuitable for statistical testing.

Four non-parametric tests that will be used to test the hypotheses in this research are the chi square test for independence, the Mann-Whitney U test, the Kruskal-Wallis H test and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation.

5.2.2.1 Chi Square Test for Independence

This test is used to assess whether two categorical variables are related, by comparing the frequency of cases found in the various categories of one variable with the different categories of another variable (Pallant 2001). It has the usual non-parametric assumptions of random samples and independent observations, but also requires that the lowest expected frequency in any cell should be 5 or more (or at least in 80% of cells). The Chi Square test works by taking each of the obtained values in the cells, and comparing it with the expected value (what would have been there if the null hypothesis were true) (Clegg 1990). The null hypothesis states that there is no association between the two variables, and therefore, if there is an association between the variables then the null hypothesis can be discarded. It is also important to be aware of the degrees of freedom, defined by Clegg (1990) as the number of values that need to be known before the remainder are fixed, as this has a bearing on accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis. The larger the chi square statistic, the more likely the association between the two variables, but to prove that there is a relationship between the two variables under test, SPSS gives a result for the Asymp. Sig (2 tailed). If this figure is 0.05 or smaller, the result is significant and there is a relationship between the two variables. There are also measures of the strength of the relationship – Phi is used with two by two tables, and is calculated by taking the chi square value and dividing it by the sample size then taking the square root of this value, whilst Cramer's V is a similar statistic but preferred where one of the categorical variables has more than two categories (Field 2000). If the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) is more that 0.05, there is no significant relationship.

5.2.2.2 Mann-Whitney U Test

This is the non-parametric equivalent of the independent t-test and is used to test the differences between two groups on an independent measure. According to Pallant (2001) it compares the medians of the two groups, converts the scores on the continuous variable to ranks across the two groups and then evaluates whether the

ranks for the two groups differ significantly. It requires independent observations and two variables, one categorical with two groups, and one continuous.

The null hypothesis states that there are no differences between the two groups, and if the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) figure is less than 0.05, then the null hypothesis can be rejected and a significant difference has been found. Where the figure is greater than 0.05, there are no significant differences and the null hypothesis is accepted. If the hypothesis predicts the direction of a relationship between two variables, then the one-tailed probability needs to be calculated. This is achieved by taking the two tailed value and dividing by two (Field 2000, p. 53). Therefore, for a significant result, in a one-tailed hypothesis the Asymp. Sig (1-tailed) figure should be less than 0.025

5.2.2.3 Kruskal-Wallis H Test

This test is the non-parametric equivalent of the one-way between groups analysis of variance and is used with one continuous variable and one categorical variable, with more than two independent groups. It is similar to the Mann-Whitney test, but allows comparison between more than two groups. It assumes independent observations, and also since it is a between-groups analysis it requires that different people must be in each group. One point that must be borne in mind is that the Kruskal-Wallis test does not make it clear between which groups the significant difference has been found. To test for this, a Mann-Whitney U test can be carried out on each combination of groups until the difference has been located.

Like the Mann-Whitney U test and the Chi-Square for independence, it is important to check the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) in order to ascertain whether the result is significant or not. If the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is less than 0.05, then the result is significant and a difference has been found between the groups. However, where the figure is greater than 0.05, there are no significant differences to be found.

5.2.2.4 Spearman's Rank Order Correlation

One further method of testing for relationships between continuous variables is to calculate the correlation coefficient (*r*). A correlation is defined by Field (2000, p.71) as: "a measure of the linear relationship between variables". There are a number of ways in which variables can be related – for example a low score on one variable may be associated with a low score on another. Or of course there may be no relationship at all. The value of *r* indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables and has a value from -1 to +1. A negative sign in front of the *r* value is indicative of a negative correlation between the two variables. Pallant (2001) explains that a negative correlation means that high scores on one variable are associated with low scores on another (and vice versa).

One of the most common measures for calculating correlation coefficients is Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. However, there are stringent assumptions attached to the use of the measure, primarily that it is only suited to normally-distributed data. Where the assumption of normality has been violated, a non-parametric alternative is Spearman's Rank Order Correlation, commonly known as Spearman's *rho* (Field 2000).

De Vaus (2002, p.289) explains the theory behind calculating Spearman's *rho* for two variables as follows:

> "Rank order correlation involves ranking all cases on both variables, and then treating the ranks as though they were values of interval-level variables. That is, the categories of the variable are converted from actual categories to ranks assumed to be meaningful and equidistant".

Spearman's rho can also be easily calculated by programs such as SPSS for much larger combinations of variables. For each combination of two variables, an *r* value is obtained. If *r* lies between 0 and 0.3, the relationship is considered to be small. If *r* is between 0.3 and 0.5, this indicates a medium relationship. Where *r* is greater than 0.5, this is indicative of a large relationship (Pallant 2001, p. 120).

Although the value of *r* indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables, it is important to recognise that causality cannot be inferred from this statistic. In order to make a little more sense of the data, it is possible to take the value of *r* and calculate how much variance the two variables share. Pallant (2001, p.120) explains:

> "To calculate the coefficient of determination, square the *r* value, and then convert this to the percentage of variance by multiplying it by 100."

In this way, if $r = 0.5$, the percentage of shared variance between the two variables is 25%. This is a considerable overlap, and may assist in clarifying the relationship between the variables. However, it is worth pointing out once more that this produces no evidence that one variable is a cause of the other.

5.3 Characteristics of UK Association Conference Delegates

As discussed in Chapter Four - Research Methodology, a number of questions were designed in order to gather information on the characteristics of UK association conference delegates. The aim of this was to address Research Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 by defining the characteristics of UK association conference delegates, information which up to now has been generally unavailable The discussion of these characteristics will be divided into three sections – membership & attendance characteristics, socio-demographic characteristics and demand characteristics. The hypotheses set out in Chapter Four are discussed in the relevant sections.

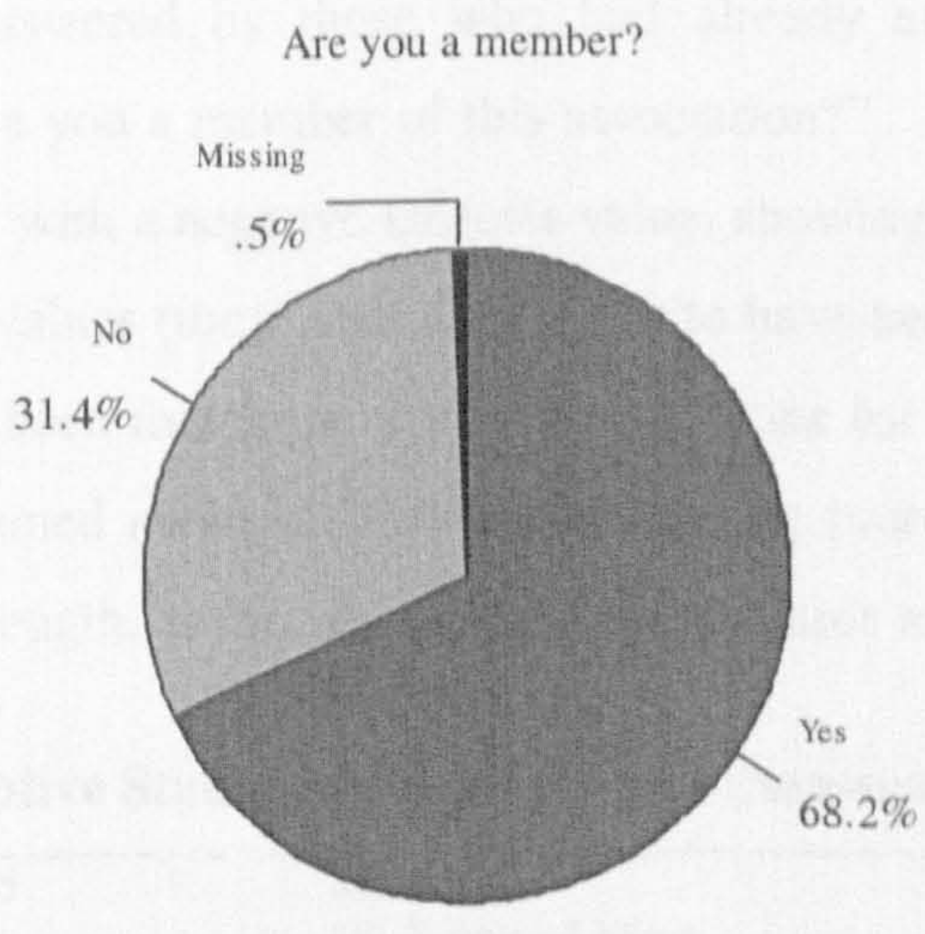
5.3.1 Membership and Attendance Characteristics of UK Association Conference Delegates

This section will initially discuss the membership characteristics of delegates then the attendance characteristics of delegates. There will then follow the results of relationship testing on these characteristics.

For the variable, "are you a member of the association?" it can be seen in Figure 5.4 that over 68% of those who attended the conferences surveyed were members of the

association. However, it is perhaps more interesting to note that over 31% (a sizeable minority) were not members of the association. It might be expected that members would have made up a larger percentage of delegates than non-members since it is often the case the association conferences are more heavily marketed toward the members of the association, but this may give food for thought to those trying to encourage higher attendance at association conferences, as it seems that a good proportion of those who attended were willing to do so without being members.

Figure 5.4 Pie Chart showing frequency for variable MEMBER



There were significant differences between the different associations regarding whether their delegates were members of the association[1] [χ^2 = 16.373, (df=5, n=219), p=.006]. Analysis of the crosstabs appears to show that delegates attending the Law Society of Scotland Conference and the British and Irish Law Librarians Association are significantly more likely to be members of the respective associations.

In fact, 92% of delegates attending the Law Society Conference and 94.4% of delegates attending the Law Librarians Conference were members of the association

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[1] The assumptions for the chi square for independence test have not been violated – in particular, there are no cells with an expected count of less than 5 in the first table, and 20% with an expected count of less than five in the second table. This is in alignment with the advice of Field (2000) who states that although it is preferable to have no cells with expected counts less than five, up to 20% with an expected count of less than five is acceptable. It can be assumed from this point onwards that all chi square tests meet this assumption unless otherwise stated.

holding the conference. This might be explained in part by the fact that both are professional associations who use their association conferences as platforms for continuing professional development, and that both associations require a certain level of attendance at these events over time in order to achieve the professional development standards set out by these associations.

For the variable "how long have you been a member?" the mean length of time that delegates had been members was 13.53 years, with a std. error of 0.884 years (see Table 5.3). The range of membership length went from 1 year to 48 years. This question was only answered by those who had already answered "yes" to the previous question "Are you a member of this association?". This variable was also positively skewed and with a negative kurtosis value, showing again that there was a tendency for extreme values (those attending either to have been members for only a short time or to have been members of their associations for a very long time). In this case, the 5% trimmed mean of 12.94 years may be more representative of the variable membership length, as this allows the extreme cases to be removed.

Table 5.3 Descriptive Statistics for continuous (non-scale) variables:

Where have you travelled from? (TRAVEL)	Mean 5% Trimmed Mean Range	213.03 miles 209.44 miles 1 - 540 miles
How long have you been a member? (MEMLONG)	Mean 5% Trimmed Mean Range	13.53 years 12.94 years 1 - 48 years
How many times have you attended this conference before? (TIMESATT)	Mean 5% Trimmed Mean Range	2.26 times 1.36 times 0 - 33 times

For the variable "where have you travelled from to attend this conference?" it can be seen in Table 5.3 that the delegates travelled various distances to attend. The mean distance travelled was 213.03 miles (with a std. error of 9.878). The range was 1 mile to 540 miles. This variable was positively skewed, with negative kurtosis. This refers to a clustering of scores at the low end, and a relatively flat distribution, with too many scores at the extremes. In this instance, this can be explained by a large

number of delegates travelling very short distances to attend, and a much smaller number of delegates travelling very long distances to attend.

Finally, the variable "how many times have you attended this conference in the past?" (TIMESATT) was analysed. Once again, it was shown to have a non-normal distribution (Table 5.3). In this instance however the pattern of distribution was slightly different from the previous two variables.

This variable had positive values for both skewness and kurtosis, indicating a cluster of scores at the low end, and a very high peak of scores around the 0 value, indicating that a high number of delegates had never attended this conference before. The range of times attended was from 0 times to 33 times, with a mean of 2.26 times (std. error of .358). This again shows that although there was a range of 33, there was a considerable clustering of scores near the lower end of the range. The vast majority of delegates (82%) had attended 3 or fewer times. Only approximately 5% of delegates had attended 10 or more times.

Following analysis of the gaps in knowledge during Chapter Two of the literature review, several points emerged as being of interest or of practical value to the association industry. Research Objective 1 aimed to test hypothesised similarities and differences on the variables based on the membership and attendance characteristics. It can be hypothesised that members of the association will have attended the conference many more times in the past than non-members of the association and further that non-members are unlikely to have attended the conference before in the past. Therefore Hypothesis 1.1 was proposed:

***$H1_0$** = There is no significant difference in number of times attended based on whether the delegate is a member of the association holding the conference or not.*
***$H1_{1.1}$** = There is a significant difference in number of times attended based on whether the delegate is a member of the association holding the conference or not.*

To examine the nature of the relationship between membership of the association and number of times attended, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed in order to test for

differences in how many times members had attended the association conference as opposed to non-members. The results showed significant differences in times attended, with membership of the association as a grouping variable – details are shown in Table 5.4. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and this hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 5.4 Mann Whitney U Test on Variable TIMESATT by MEMBER

	How many times have you attended this conference before?
Mann-Whitney U	2946.000
Wilcoxon W	5292.000
Z	-5.235
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	.000

Further investigations showed that on average, members had attended the conference 3.3 times before, whilst non-members had on average attended on 0.22 times before. In fact, over 85% of non-members had never attended this conference before, showing that there is no evidence for any culture of attending conferences repeatedly without being a member of the association.

It was also surmised that the variable "how many times have you attended this conference before?" (TIMESATT) would show positive correlations with other variables which were concerned with membership, such as "how long have you been a member of this association" (MEMLONG) and with certain importance variables already shown to be linked with membership, such as "being involved in the association" (INVOLVE). Correlation analysis showed that this was indeed the case, and also threw up a further significant correlation, with the importance variable "meeting old friends" (OLDFRIENDS).

Table 5.5 Correlations between TIMESATT and Importance Variables

		OLDFRIENDS *Meeting Old Friends*	**INVOLVE** *Being involved in the association*	**MEMLONG** *How long have you been a member?*
Spearman's Rho	Correlation Co-efficient	.353	.346	.613
	Sig (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	199	204	138

****Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed)**

The highest correlation coefficient was between times attended and membership length, showing that these two concepts are strongly linked. A correlation coefficient of more than 0.5 is defined by Pallant (2001) as large. It may seem to be stating the obvious that the longer one has been a member, the more times one will have attended the conference, but it is still of interest to note that this is a positive correlation and therefore the number of times a delegate has attended the conference before does not diminish as length of membership increases. This suggests that members continue to attend conferences run by their association. In fact, of those delegates who were attending the conference and who were members of the association, 49.4% had been members for more than 10 years.

The other correlations are weaker, but it is still of interest to note that the people or networking aspect of an association conference, already seen to be vital to the success of a conference, receives further emphasis from the correlations between how many times one has attended the conference, and the importance of meeting old friends and being involved in the association. These are positive correlations, and so it can be concluded that the more times one has attended the conference in the past (and by extension the longer one has been a member of the association) the more important meeting old friends and being involved in the association becomes in terms of deciding whether or not to attend the conference. This information will be useful for associations in deciding how to market their conferences to their members, as it can be seen that the notion of meeting old friends and being involved in the association are important to those who have been members for a while.

The conclusions that can be drawn from these findings are as follows. It can be argued that membership of the association is an important part of deciding to attend the association conference, although these events are often open to non-members, who simply pay a higher conference fee to attend. Tests have shown that the more times a delegate has attended the conference in the past, the more importance is placed upon meeting old friends and remaining involved in the association. Additionally, there is a strong correlation between the number of times a delegate has attended the conference in the past and how long they have been members of the

association, although interestingly there is no significant correlation between how long a delegate has been a member of the association, or how many times they have attended in the past, and their future likelihood of attendance. Future attendance will be discussed in a later section.

The results of the Mann Whitney U Test (Table 5.4) show that members of the association have attended the conference more times in the past than non-members, and therefore that the null hypothesis can be rejected and $\mathbf{II_{1.1}}$ can be confirmed

During the literature review, it was noted that there is little information available on the membership characteristics of association conference delegates, and in order to address this in part, it was proposed that whether or not a delegate was a member of the association holding the conference would affect their ratings of the importance variables in the questionnaire. It was further proposed that the importance variables meeting old friends and being involved in the association would be rated differently by association members compared with non-members. Therefore $\mathbf{II_{1.2}}$ and $\mathbf{II_{1.3}}$ were proposed.

H_0 = Association members do not rate "meeting old friends" significantly higher in importance' than non-members

$II_{1.2}$ = Association members rate "meeting old friends" significantly higher in importance than non-members

II_0 = Association members do not rate "being involved in the association" significantly higher in importance' than non-members

$II_{1.3}$ = Association members rate "being involved in the association" significantly higher in importance than non-members

A one-tailed Mann Whitney U Test found significant between groups difference with relation to the variable "meeting old friends" (Table 5.6) and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $\mathbf{II_{1.2}}$ can be accepted. This result shows that members of the association rated this variable much more importantly than was the case for

non-members. This is to be expected as there is little reason to expect involvement or loyalty to the association from non-members.

Table 5.6 Mann-Whitney U Test on Variable OLDFRIENDS by MEMBER

	Meeting Old Friends
Mann-Whitney U	3642.000
Wilcoxon W	5722.000
Z	-2.416
Asymp. Sig (1-tailed)	.008

Additionally, involvement in the association is a recurring theme amongst members of the association as it was also given by a number of delegates as their response to the open question "why did you attend this conference". A one-tailed Mann-Whitney U test was performed in order to assess the relationship between whether a delegate is a member of the association or not and how importantly they rated the importance variable "being involved in the association" with results as shown in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Mann-Whitney U Test on Variable INVOLVE by MEMBER

	Being Involved in the Association
Mann-Whitney U	2930.500
Wilcoxon W	5075.000
Z	-4.613
Asymp. Sig (1-tailed)	.000

A significant between groups difference was found with relation to the variable "being involved in the association" and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $\mathbf{H_{1.3}}$ can be accepted.

Examination of the mean ranks shown in Table 5.8 illustrates the differences between members and non members on these variables, with the higher mean rank on each variable being associated with association members.

Table 5.8 Mean Ranks on Variables OLDFRIENDS and INVOLVE

	Are you a member?	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Old Friends	Yes	143	110.53	15806.00
	No	64	89.41	5722.00
	Total	207		
Involvement in the Association	Yes	147	119.06	17502.50
	No	65	78.08	5075.50
	Total	212		

One further unexpected finding was that there was a significant between-groups difference on the importance variable "visiting the surrounding area" with whether a delegate is a member of the association or not as grouping variable as can be seen from Table 5.9

Table 5.9 Mann-Whitney U Test on Variable VISIT by MEMBER

	Visiting the Surrounding Area
Mann-Whitney U	3522.500
Wilcoxon W	13533.500
Z	-2.884
Asymp. Sig (1-tailed)	.002

A greater number of those who were not members of the association whose conference they were attending rated visiting the surrounding area more importantly when deciding to attend the conference. This could be due to the fact that arguably, location is more important for non-members, since members will probably be more likely to attend for other reasons, irrespective of location. Arguably, it may be the case that members of the association (who, it has already been shown, rate involvement in the association more importantly than non-members) consider the conference to be a time to meet up with colleagues and spend time attending all the events on the conference programme such as fringe meetings, and AGM's whilst non-members are less likely to want to be involved with other internal aspects of the

association such as AGMs, and perhaps would consider using the time allocated to association affairs during the conference programme to visit the surrounding area.

In conclusion to this section, a Mann-Whitney U test established a significant difference between association members and non-members in terms of how many times they had attended the conference in the past and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and Hypothesis 1.1 ($H_{1.1}$ = *There will be a significant difference in number of times attended based on whether the delegate is a member of the association holding the conference or not)* can be accepted. It can also be argued that since a Mann-Whitney U Test showed that association members do rate meeting old friends significantly more importantly than non-members, the null hypothesis can be rejected and Hypothesis 1.2 ($\mathbf{H_{1.2}}$ = Association members rate "meeting old friends" significantly higher in importance than non-members) can be accepted. Finally, since another Mann-Whitney U Test showed that association members do rate "being involved in the association" significantly more importantly than non-members, this null hypothesis can be rejected and Hypothesis 1.3 ($\mathbf{H_{1.3}}$ = Association members rate "being involved in the association" significantly higher in importance than non-members) can be accepted. Therefore Research Objective 1 has been addressed.

5.3.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Delegates

Variables that were considered to be representative of the socio-demographic characteristics of delegates were analysed in the next phase of analysis. These included age group, gender and variables referring to financing attendance at the conference.

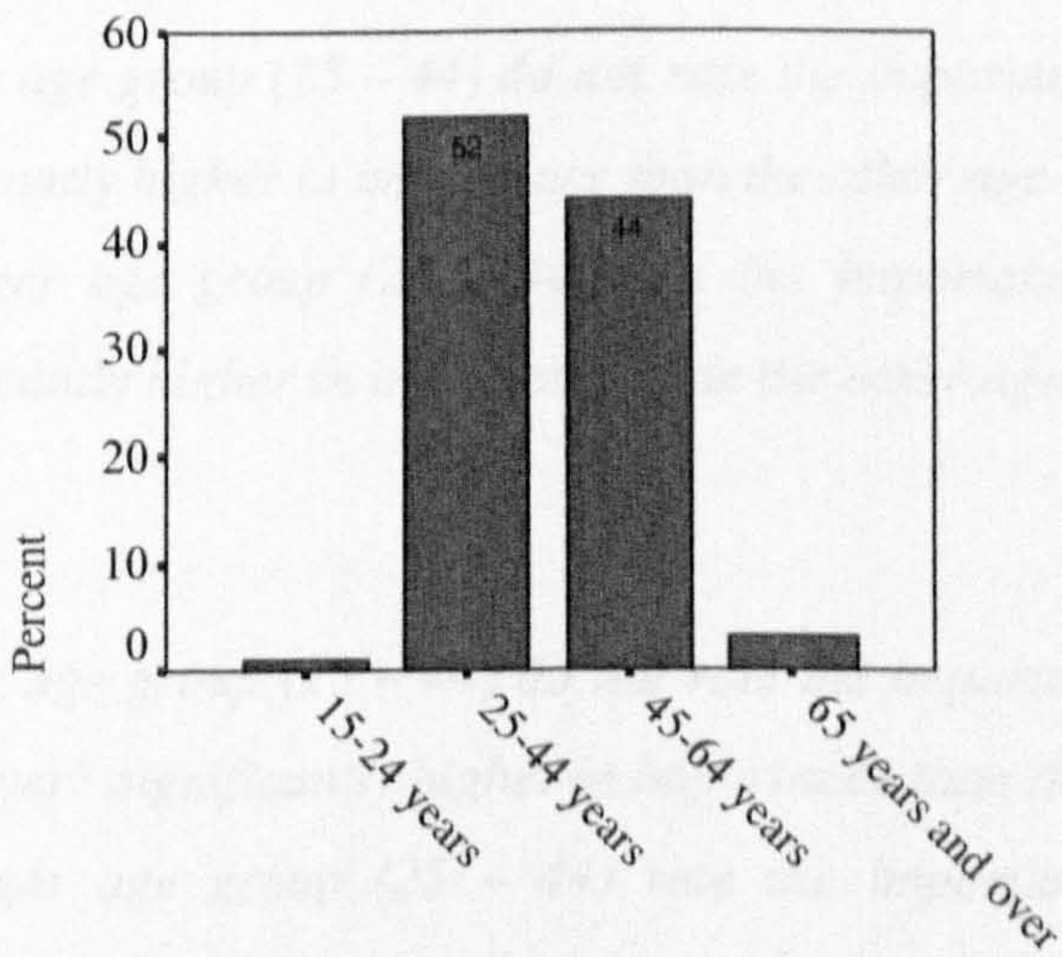
5.3.2.1 Age

Following the rationale for examining these characteristics that was outlined during the literature review (primarily that this information is not generally available yet is of great practical value to associations and conference organisers), Research Objective 2 aimed to test hypothesised similarities and differences on the variables

based on the age characteristics of the delegates. It was suggested financially-related variables would be a good starting point to check for between-groups difference with age as a grouping variable.

1% of the sample were aged 15 – 24 years, 51.8% of the sample were aged 25 -55 years, 44.1% were aged 45 – 64 years and 3.2% were aged 65 years and over (see Figure 5.5)

Figure 5.5 Bar chart showing age groups of delegates



It was surmised that financially-related variables would provide the most likely between-groups differences, since people have different financial responsibilities and different earning power at different times of their lives. Therefore Kruskal-Wallis H tests for these differences were run on the variables cost of conference, cost of accommodation, cost of transport, being financed by one's employer and getting time off work (there may be cost implications if attendees have to use holidays to attend a conference). The following hypotheses were tested, with results following individually for each:

Hypothesis 2.1

H*$_0$** *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not *rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.1}$ *= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

Hypothesis 2.2

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.2}$= *The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

Hypothesis 2.3

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.3}$ *= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups*

Hypothesis 2.4

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.4}$ *= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups*

Hypothesis 2.5

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.5}$ *= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups*

For each of these hypotheses, a one-tailed Kruskal-Wallis H Test was carried out to check for significant between-groups differences based on the age group of the respondents with results as follows:

Hypothesis 2.1

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.1}$ *= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

Table 5.10 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistic with Age as Grouping Variable

	Cost of Conference
Chi-Square	1.250
df	3
Asymp.Sig (1-tailed)	.370

Since p>0.025, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and $\mathbf{H_{2.1}}$ must be rejected.

Hypothesis 2.2

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.2}$= *The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

Table 5.11 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistic with Age as Grouping Variable

	Cost of Accommodation
Chi-Square	0.232
df	3
Asymp.Sig (1-tailed)	.486

Since p>0.025, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and $\mathbf{H_{2.2}}$ must be rejected.

Hypothesis 2.3

H_0 *= The younger age group (25 – 44)* ***do not*** *rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.*

$H_{2.3}$ *= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups*

Table 5.12 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistic with Age as Grouping Variable

	Cost of Transport
Chi-Square	4.662
df	3
Asymp.Sig (1-tailed)	.099

Since p>0.025, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and $\mathbf{H_{2.3}}$ must be rejected.

Hypothesis 2.4

H_0 = The younger age group (25 – 44) do not rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

$H_{2.4}$ = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups

Table 5.13 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistic with Age as Grouping Variable

	Being Financed by Employer
Chi-Square	17.173
df	3
Asymp.Sig (1-tailed)	.000

A significant between groups difference was found with relation to the variable "being financed by employer" (p<0.025) and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $\mathbf{H_{2.4}}$ can be accepted.

Hypothesis 2.5

H_0 = The younger age group (25 – 44) do not rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

$H_{2.5}$ = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups

Table 5.14 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistic with Age as Grouping Variable

	Getting Time off Work
Chi-Square	11.164
df	3
Asymp.Sig (1-tailed)	.005

A significant between groups difference was found with relation to the variable "being financed by employer" ($p<0.025$) and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $\mathbf{H_{2.5}}$ can be accepted.

Significant differences were only found in relation to two variables, "being financed by employer" and "getting time off work". In order to investigate this further, examination of the mean ranks was carried out. The highest mean rank, and therefore the age group which ranked being financed by their employer and getting time off work most importantly was the 25-44 age group. The mean ranks are illustrated in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15 Mean Ranks on Variables EMPFIN and TIMEOFF

	Age	N	Mean Rank
Being Financed by Employer	15-24	2	59.00
	24-44	109	113.51
	45-64	84	86.31
	65+	4	39.75
	Total	199	
Getting Time off Work	15-24	2	23.00
	24-44	109	113.06
	45-64	90	97.94
	65+	6	57.42
	Total	207	

This may be in part accounted for by those delegates who had retired and therefore had no employers to pay for them, but may also reflect differing pay scales, with those younger delegates not being able to pay for their own attendance, and attending only because the employer was financing them. In general, that age group tends to suggest young families, mortgages, loans and other financial pressures and it is quite reasonable to expect that age group to feel that being financed to attend a conference is a very important part of the decision-making process. On the other hand, perhaps they are still young enough to have no dependents and are keen to travel wherever and whenever they choose.

In order to investigate this area further, a breakdown of the frequencies of the categorical variable "who is paying for your attendance" (FINANCE) by each age group was produced. This showed that for the 25-44 age group, 70% were being financed by their employer and only 13% were financing themselves. For the next age group (45-64) only 65% were being financed by their employer whilst 25% were paying for themselves. Those who were past retirement age were predominantly financing themselves (57%). This shows support for the suggestion that age is an important differentiating factor when it comes to questions of a financial nature.

One further variable where the age of the delegate seemed to have an effect on the importance ranking was for "getting out of the office" (OFFICE), discovered during the between-groups testing. The Kruskal-Wallis test statistics are shown in Table 5.16, with the mean ranks illustrated in Table 5.17.

Table 5.16 Kruskal-Wallis Test Statistic with Age as Grouping Variable

	Getting Out of the Office
Chi-Square	23.715
df	3
Asymp.Sig (2-tailed)	.000

Table 5.17 Mean Ranks on Variable OFFICE

	Age	N	Mean Rank
Getting Out of the Office	15-24	2	78.75
	24-44	108	118.80
	45-64	92	94.15
	65+	6	14.50
	Total	208	

The 25-44 age-group rated getting out of the office more importantly in their decision to attend the conference than the other age groups. Perhaps financial pressures make other trips away less likely, and therefore the chance to get away from the office is to be grasped with both hands. Perhaps the younger age-group may be composed of more than its fair share of people who will grasp any opportunity to get out of work, or maybe they are just more willing to travel. This is

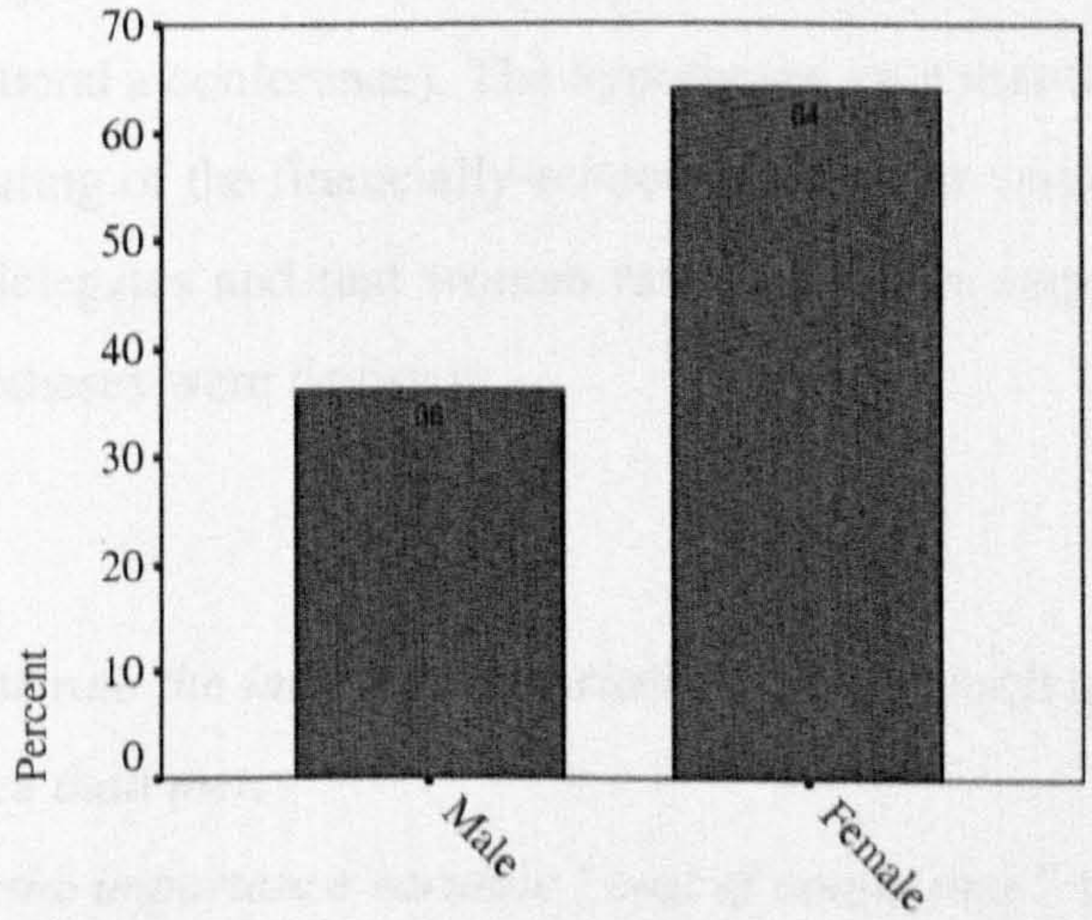
of course speculation, but it does seem to fit the observed data. This finding was unexpected, as it had been expected that getting out of the office would be a "pull" factor on the part of the conference venue, the importance of which would not vary depending on the age of the delegates.

With regard to the hypotheses being tested, $\mathbf{H_{2.1}}$, $\mathbf{H_{2.2}}$ and $\mathbf{H_{2.3}}$ have all been rejected and the relevant null hypotheses accepted. However, significant between groups differences were found with relation to the variables "being financed by employer" and "getting time off work", and therefore $\mathbf{H_{2.4}}$ and $\mathbf{H_{2.5}}$ can both be accepted and the relevant null hypotheses rejected. Therefore, Research Objective 2 has been met.

5.3.2.2 Gender

Moving on to consider the gender of delegates, the results for the variable "are you male or female?" were analysed.

Figure 5.6 Bar Chart Showing Percentage of Male v Female Delegates



The question of potential gender bias occasioned by the high percentage of females attending the Royal College of Nursing Conference has been discussed in Chapter Four with the conclusion that the risk of bias in the results is low. Gender of delegates may be one of the main characteristics of delegates that would be of interest, and analysis of this is in line with fulfilling the aims of this research. Research Objective 3 aimed to test hypothesised similarities and differences on the

variables based on the gender characteristics of the delegates. Again, financially-related variables would be a reasonable between-groups differentiator.

A Chi Square test for independence was run to establish whether there were any significant differences between men and women regarding the variable FINANCE which refers to who was paying for the delegate's attendance at the conference [χ^2= 13.704 (df=1, n=219), p=.008] Analysis of the crosstabs showed that many more women than men were being financed by their employer and many more men than women were paying for their attendance themselves. This does tend to suggest the usual workplace stereotypes, where women are paid less than men and were only able to attend by being financed by their employers. However, this is merely a suggestion and would require further investigation.

It might be supposed that financial issues would be particularly relevant since the pay gap between men and women is still an issue. The finance related variables were cost of conference, cost of transport, cost of accommodation, being financed by employer and getting time off work (there may be cost implications if attendees have to use holidays to attend a conference). The hypotheses state that there are significant differences in the rating of the financially-related importance variables dependent on the gender of the delegates and that women rate them more importantly than men. The following hypotheses were devised:

Hypothesis 3.1

***H*$_0$** *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men*

***H*$_{3.1}$** *= Women rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.2

***H*$_0$** *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.2}$ = Women rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men.

Hypothesis 3.3

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.3}$ = Women rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men.

Hypothesis 3.4

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.4}$ = Women rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men.

Hypothesis 3.5

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.5}$ = Women rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men.

In order to test these hypotheses, a one-tailed Mann-Whitney U Test was carried out on each, with results as follows:

Hypothesis 3.1

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.1}$ = Women rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men.

Table 5.18 Mann-Whitney U Test on Variable COSTCON by GENDER

	Cost of Conference
Mann-Whitney U	4291.500
Wilcoxon W	7294.500
Z	-2.018
Asymp.Sig. (1-tailed)	.044

Since p>0.025, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and $H_{3.1}$ must be rejected.

Hypothesis 3.2

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.2}$ = Women rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men.

Table 5.19 Mann-Whitney U Test on Variable COSTACC by GENDER

	Cost of Accommodation
Mann-Whitney U	3190.500
Wilcoxon W	5818.500
Z	-3.574
Asymp.Sig. (1-tailed)	.000

A significant between groups difference was found with relation to the variable "cost of accommodation" (p<0.025) and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $H_{3.2}$ can be accepted.

Hypothesis 3.3

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.3}$ = Women rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men.

Table 5.20 Mann-Whitney U Test on Variable COSTTRANS by GENDER

	Cost of Transport
Mann-Whitney U	3480.500
Wilcoxon W	6406.500
Z	-3.462
Asymp.Sig. (1-tailed)	.000

A significant between groups difference was found with relation to the variable "cost of transport" ($p<0.025$) and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $H_{3.3}$ can be accepted.

Hypothesis 3.4

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.4}$ = Women rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men.

Table 5.21 Mann Whitney U Test on Variable EMPFIN by GENDER

	Being Financed by employer
Mann-Whitney U	2749.000
Wilcoxon W	5234.000
Z	-4.634
Asymp. Sig (1-tailed)	.000

A significant between groups difference was found with relation to the variable "being financed by employer" ($p<0.025$) and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $H_{3.4}$ can be accepted.

Hypothesis 3.5

II_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men

$II_{3.5}$ = Women rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men.

Table 5.22 Mann Whitney U Test on Variables TIMEOFF by GENDER

	Getting Time off Work
Mann-Whitney U	3284.000
Wilcoxon W	5985.000
Z	-3.921
Asymp. Sig (1-tailed)	.000

A significant between groups difference was found with relation to the variable "getting time off work" ($p<0.025$) and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and $H_{3.5}$ can be accepted.

Therefore, significant differences were found between women and men on the importance ratings of four variables – "cost of accommodation", "cost of transport", "being financed by employer" and "getting time off work".

However, interestingly there were no significant differences when it came to the cost of the conference itself. This may be because the conference fee itself is fixed and there is little opportunity to save money (although some conferences offer a discount on the conference fee for booking early), whereas the accommodation and transport costs can be variable.

In order to discuss the findings of the hypothesis testing reported, an examination was carried out of the mean ranks of those variables where significant between groups differences were found. These tables show that there are some significant differences between men and women when it comes to the cost element of the decision-making process. This is in line with the findings of the chi square test reported above which found that there were significant differences between men and women when it came to how they were financing their attendance at the conference. Examination of the mean ranks (Table 5.23) illustrates that women placed more importance on the cost of accommodation, cost of transport, being financed by their employer and getting time off work than men, perhaps hinting at a gender divide when it comes to budgeting.

Table 5.23 Mean Ranks on Variables COSTACC, COSTTRANS, EMPFIN & TIMEOFF with Gender as a Grouping Variable

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Cost of Accommodation	Male	72	80.81	5818.50
	Female	126	110.18	13882.50
	Total	198		
Financed by Employer	Male	70	74.77	5234.00
	Female	128	113.02	14467.0
	Total	198		
Getting Time off Work	Male	73	81.99	5985.00
	Female	133	115.31	15336.00
	Total	206		

In conclusion, the results of the Mann-Whitney tests and examinations of the mean ranks show that four of the five hypotheses put forward at the beginning of this section ($H_{3.2}$ $H_{3.3}$ $H_{3.4}$ and $H_{3.5}$) can be accepted and the relevant null hypothesis rejected. Only one hypothesis ($H_{3.1}$) was rejected and null hypothesis accepted. Research Objective 3 has been addressed in this section.

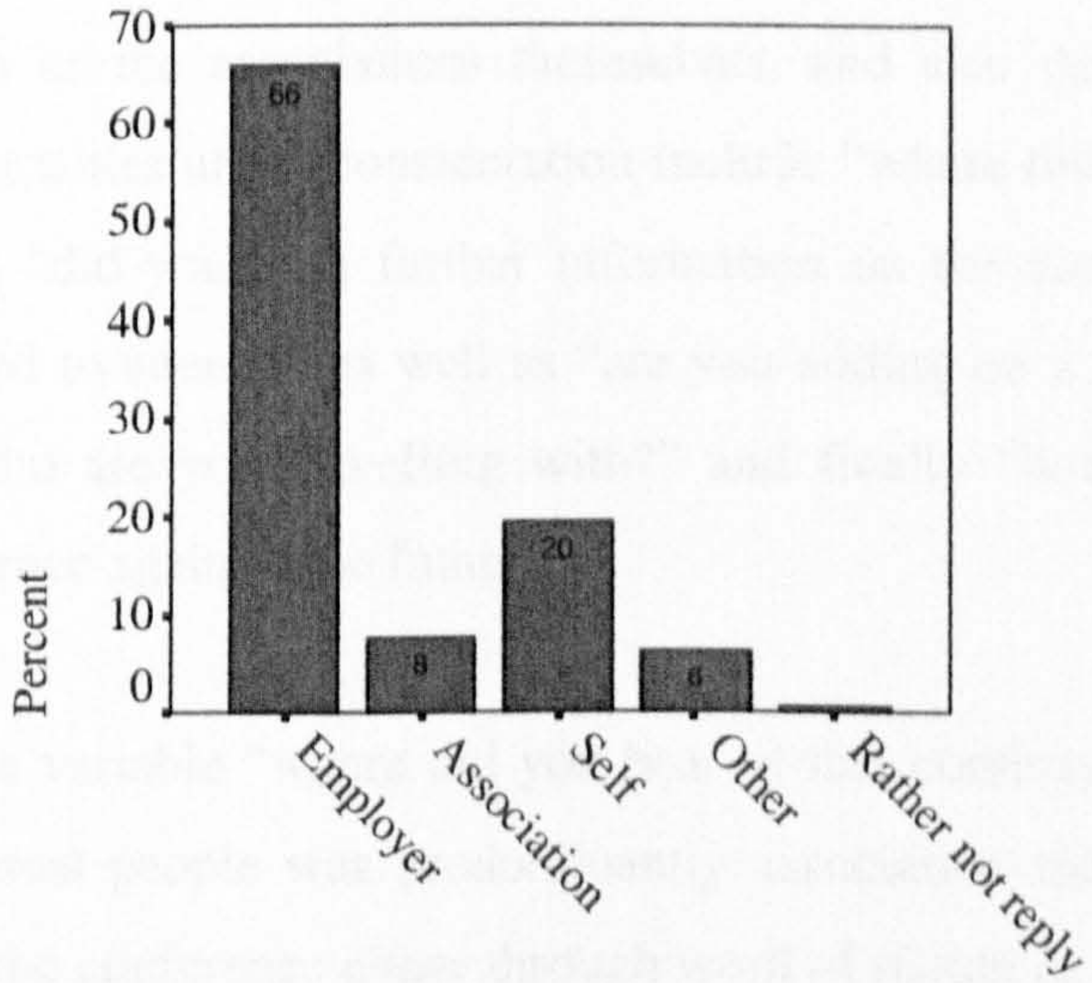
5.3.2.3 Financing Conference Attendance

The next variables to be examined related to financial issues. They were "who is paying for your attendance?" and "did you incur any personal expenditure in attending this conference?" A high percentage (65.9%) was being financed by their employer to attend the conference as shown in Figure 5.7

The question of finance is of course an important one, and even those who are being financed by someone else still have to justify their reasons for attending. Only 20% of the delegates were financing themselves, which may be a reflection of the type of conferences surveyed – they were mostly professional conferences, and so perhaps were more relevant to people's jobs than would have been the case had the

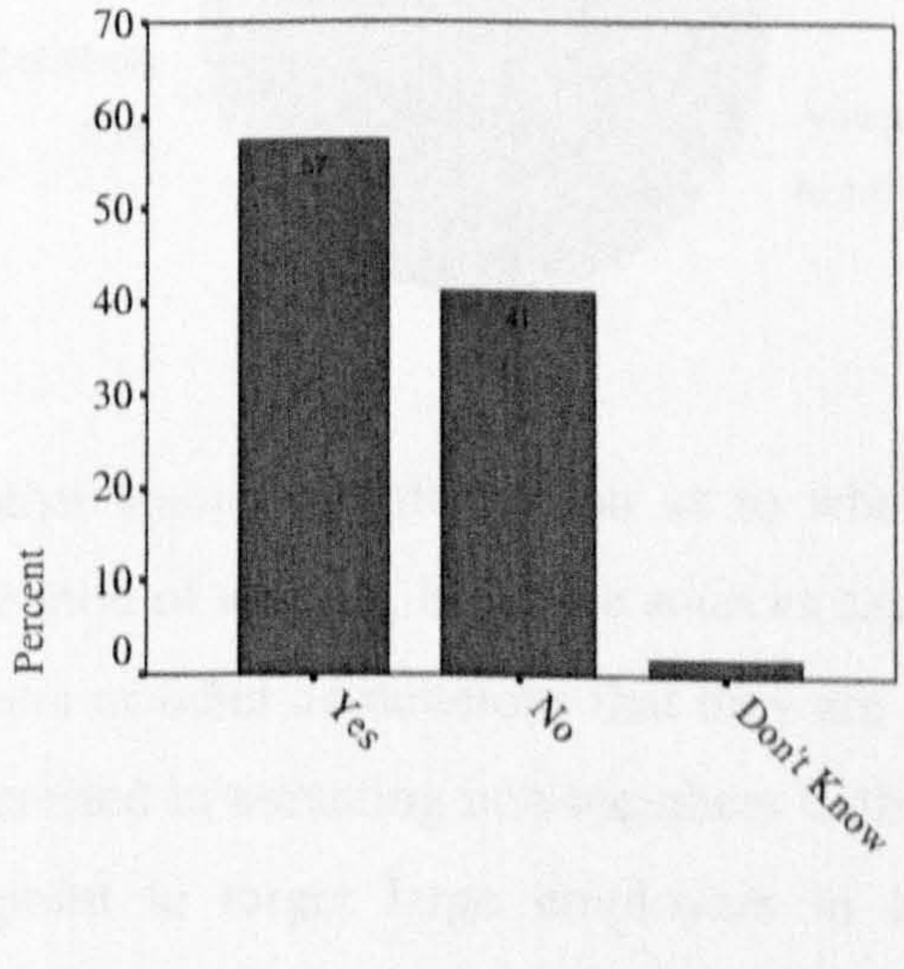
associations been of a more social or leisure type (e.g. birdwatchers or beekeepers). In this instance there were no statistically significant links between the association conference that delegates were attending and who paid for their attendance.

Figure 5.7 Bar Chart showing frequencies for variable FINANCE



However, even though a high number were being financed by their employers, 56.8% (see Figure 5.8) still incurred some personal financial cost (PERSFIN). This could reflect the fact that conference fees may have been paid, but other extras were being financed privately – nights out, some meals etc. It also includes those who were not being financed by their employer or for that matter by anyone else.

Figure 5.8 Bar Chart showing frequencies for variable PERSFIN

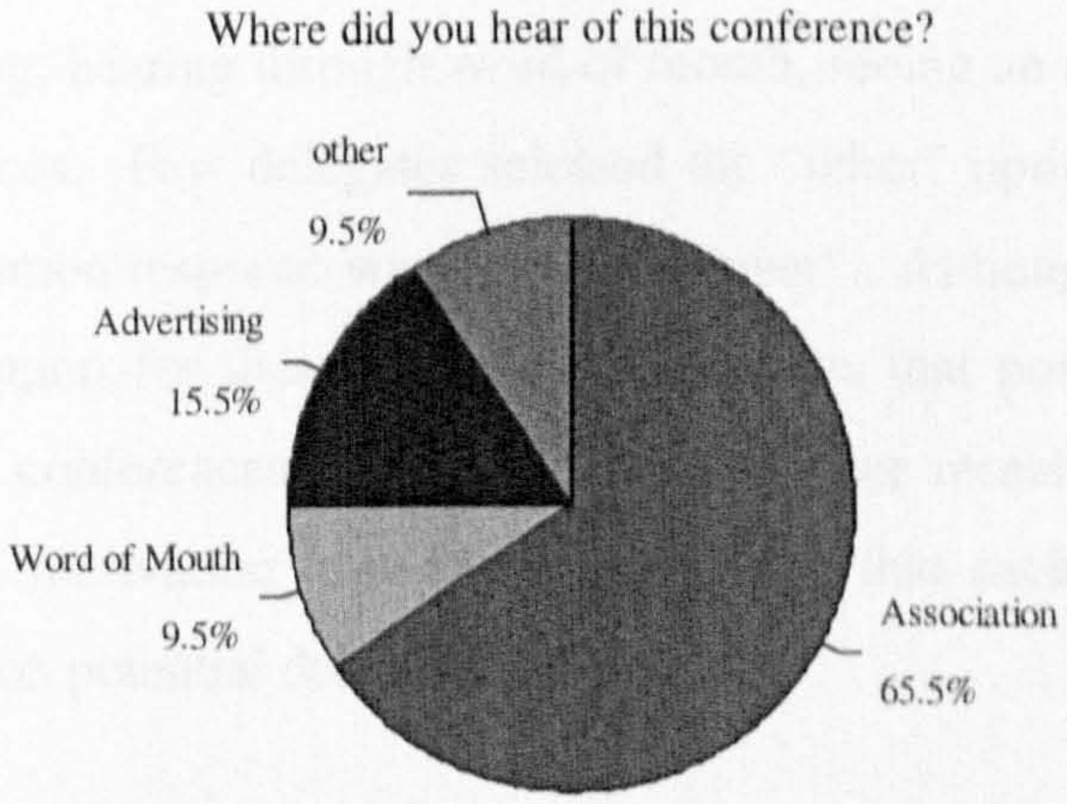


5.3.3 Demand and Trip Profile Characteristics of Delegates

The remaining variables will be considered under the heading demand and trip profile characteristics, since they generally represent demand-side variables. These are areas which are of particular interest to those bodies marketing association conferences, such as the associations themselves, and also destination marketing organisations. Variables under consideration include "where did you hear about the conference?" and "did you seek further information on the conference destination before you decided to attend?" as well as "are you adding on a short holiday to the conference?", "who are you travelling with?" and finally "how likely are you to attend this conference again in the future?"

With regard to the variable "where did you hear of this conference?", the source of information for most people was predominantly association mailings (65.6%), but 25% heard about the conference either through word of mouth or by advertising.

Figure 5.9 Pie Chart showing frequency for variable HEAR



Those who gave another source of information as to where they heard about the conference gave a selection of sources, but these sources can be broadly summarised as either their employers or other associations that they are members of. Therefore, if associations are interested in attracting non-members to their conferences, it might be a good starting point to target large employers in a field pertinent to the

association in order to attract more non-members of the association to attend. Targeting members of other related associations might be seen as unfair.

A Chi Square test for independence [χ^2=59.57, (df=3, n=219) p=.000] showed significant differences between those who were and those who were not members of the association whose conference they were attending with regard to how they heard about the conference. 85.7% of non-members heard about the conference through word-of-mouth. Perhaps associations who want to attract more delegates to their conferences could appeal to their members to spread the word amongst colleagues and friends, as this may to be how most non-members hear about association conferences. This avenue is important for attracting delegates to the conferences who are not members of the host association.

As well as being of interest to those marketing association conferences, the variable "*where did you hear about this conference*" is also related to the hypothesised model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process. The motivation stage of this process has been described in terms of receiving an association mailing, hearing through word of mouth, seeing an advert, and any other motivational sources. Few delegates selected the "other" option, and of those that did, the most common response was "from employer". Although the results for this variable show support for these being the main ways that potential delegates hear about association conferences in the first place, further research could carried out into the effect on motivation to attend a conference that each of these sources of information have on potential delegates.

The results for the variable "did you seek further information on the destination before you decided to attend?" proved problematic. The results showed that only 25.5% of respondents said "yes" and therefore 74.5% of respondents either did not seek further information or did not respond to this question. This means that the numbers of delegates who then went on to answer question 7a "if yes, which of the following sources of information did you use?" was very low. Additionally, some respondents who answered yes to Q7 did not specify where they went to seek their

information. Some results can be seen, for example, 26 delegates consulted the conference organiser before deciding to attend, with 12 delegates finding this "very useful", and 13 delegates finding it "useful". Additionally, 33 delegates consulted the internet: 22 found it "very useful" and 10 "useful". Only 4 delegates actually replied that the sources of information were "not useful". These results are useful for the section in the model on sources of further information but overall, the low numbers that replied to this question mean that although some general comments can be made about sources of information, statistical tests cannot be carried out with any certainty. It can be surmised that the number of delegates who require further information once they have heard about the conference is fairly low, but further research is required in order to clarify this. Therefore, although it has already been argued that the association conference attendance decision-making process does include an information search stage, further definitive statements about the contents of this stage cannot be made on the basis of the results of this study.

The following two variables exhibit a strong conceptual link – they deal with the conference trip profile, and more specifically whether the delegate is adding a short holiday to the conference or not (HOLIDAY) and whether the delegate is travelling accompanied or alone (ALONE). Research Objective 4 aimed to test hypothesised similarities and differences on the variables based on the demand and trip profile characteristics of the delegates and it was suggested that those delegates travelling alone would be much less likely to want to add on a short holiday before or after the conference. This will be of interest to associations organising conferences, and destination marketing bodies in terms of how much effort they should expend in trying to market add-on holidays to association conference delegates. Therefore Hypothesis 4.1 is as follows:

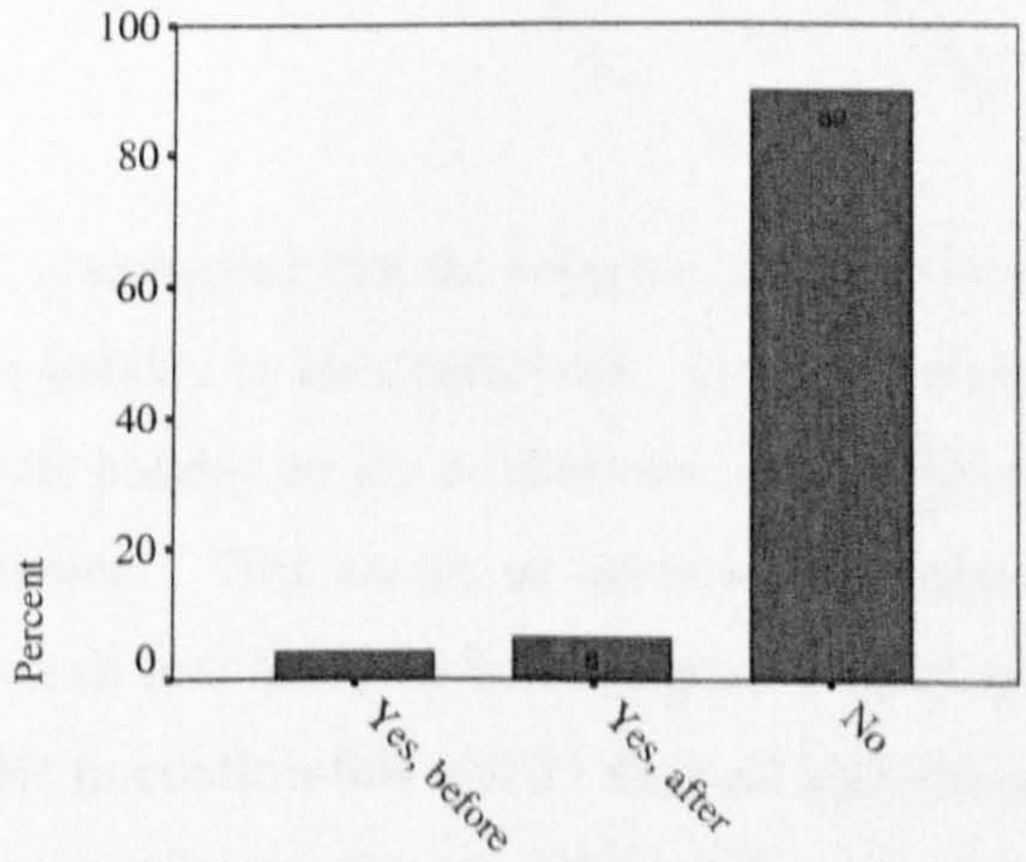
***H_0** = Delegates travelling alone are not significantly less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference than delegates travelling accompanied.*

***$H_{4.1}$** = Delegates travelling alone are significantly less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference than delegates travelling accompanied.*

A Chi-Square test for independence was carried out in order to test this hypothesis, but the assumptions for this test (that ideally no cells should have an expected count of less than 5) was not met. An attempt was made to collapse the groups and another Chi Square test was carried out, but again the assumptions for the test were not met and therefore other methods of analysis were used.

A conclusive 89.1% of delegates were not adding on any holidays to the conference, (Figure 5.10) and although this cannot be taken to be representative of every association conference in the UK, it seems clear that those who take a holiday before or after attending an association conference in the UK may well be very much in the minority. This may be helpful to destination marketing bodies that might be spending a disproportionate amount of time and money trying to market add-on holidays to delegates at UK association conferences.

Figure 5.10 Bar Chart showing frequencies for variable HOLIDAY

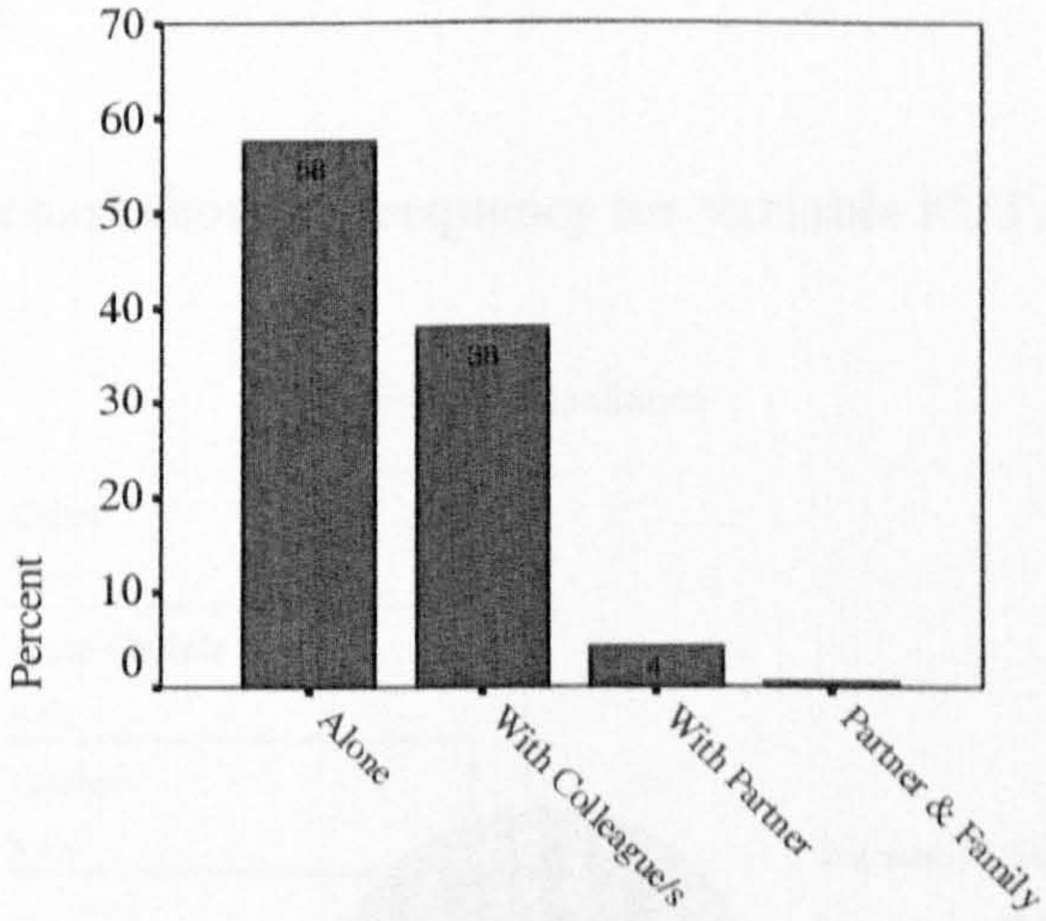


In addition, and in some ways to further strengthen the above argument, 57.3% of delegates were travelling alone – see Figure 5.11.

It may be reasonable to assume that those travelling alone are slightly less likely to want to extend their stay, as they may have left family and/or friends at home. Further, another 37.7% of delegates were travelling with colleagues, which suggests a business relationship, and much less likelihood of those delegates wanting to add

on a short holiday. In fact, only 4.5% of delegates were travelling with a partner/family. This may suggest that there is little need for any accompanying persons' events or facilities to be organised during UK association conferences. This may be an area where associations could perhaps save money from their conference budget.

Figure 5.11 Bar Chart showing frequencies for variable ALONE

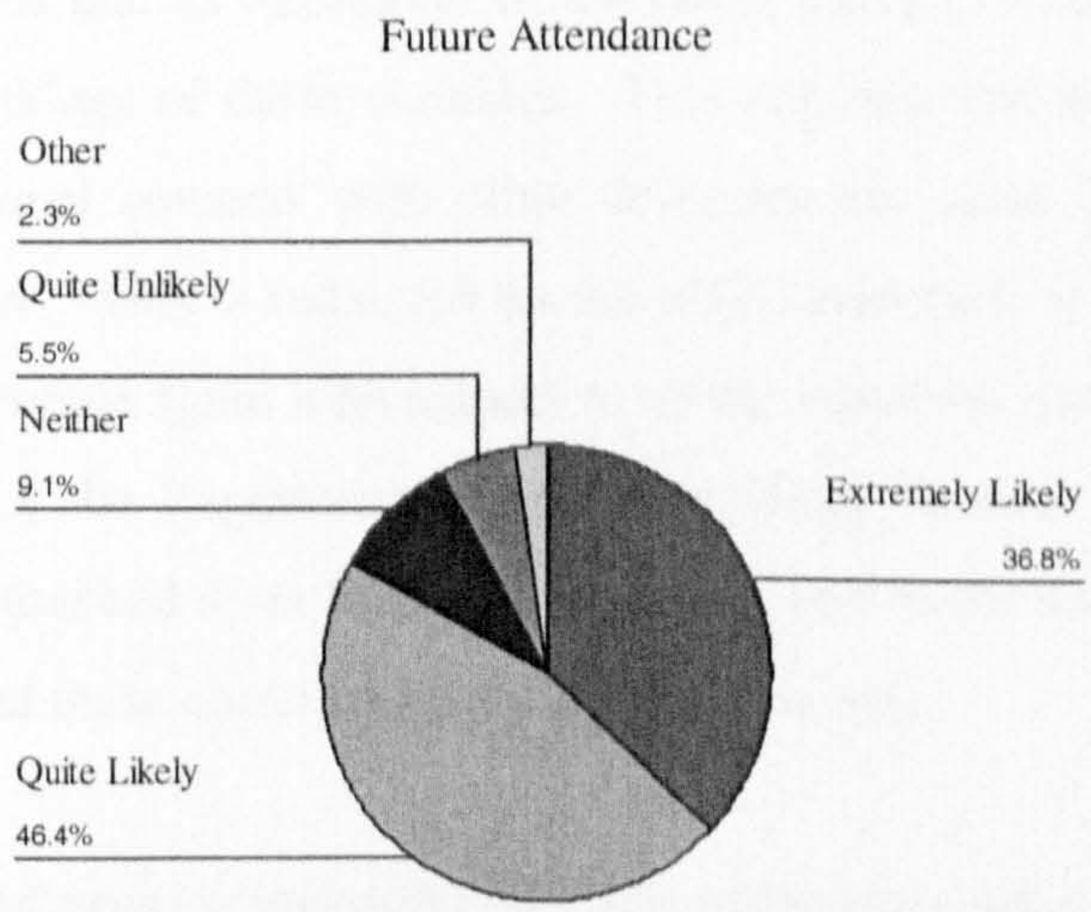


Of the 126 delegates who replied that they were travelling alone, 115 (91.3%) were not adding on a short holiday to the conference. Only 11 delegates travelling alone were adding on a short holiday to the conference – two before the conference and nine after the conference. This seems to support the suggestion that delegates travelling alone are much less likely to be adding on a short holiday. However, no statistical test was able to confirm this and so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected with certainty. $\mathbf{H_{4.1}}$ cannot be confirmed. Nonetheless, Research Objective 4 has been addressed.

The final variable to be considered in this section is "how likely are you to attend this conference in future? (FUTATT)" The results from this variable should be of particular interest to associations as it gives some measure of the likelihood of delegates attending again in the future, and this will as a result give the associations some inclination as to future attendance levels at their conferences.

In the questionnaire, the question was asked "how likely are you to attend this event in the future?" As shown in Figure 5.12, 36.8% thought it extremely likely, and 46.4% thought it quite likely. Only 6.4% of delegates thought it quite unlikely or extremely unlikely that they would attend the conference again. These results are positive for the associations that hosted the conferences surveyed, as it shows that by and large, the delegates will probably attend another one of their conferences. Since associations are generally keen to maximise attendance at their conferences, this is good news for them.

Figure 5.12 Pie chart showing frequency for variable FUTATT



It can be supposed that the likelihood of attending the event in future will be closely related with those importance variables which concern meeting up with people, such as "meeting old friends (OLDFRIENDS)", "mixing with the global community" (GLOBAL), "being involved in the association" (INVOLVE) and "making professional contacts" (PROFCON). This is reasonable to suppose because delegates with a high likelihood of attending again in the future presumably enjoyed the conference and might be pleased to get the opportunity to repeat the experience again and meet up with the other delegates.

However, a correlation analysis showed that "how likely are you to attend this event again in the future?" exhibits only moderate correlations with two of the above

variables, and relatively weak correlations with the other two, as illustrated in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24 Correlations between FUTATT and Importance Variables

			Involvement with the association	Mixing with the global community	Making Professional Contacts	Meeting old Friends
Spearman's Rho	Future Attendance	Correlation Coefficient	.470*	.351*	.261*	.309*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	210	210	213	205

*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

This result indicates that as likelihood of attending again in future increases, so do the importance rankings of these variables. This suggests that those delegates who made lasting personal contacts with other delegates are more likely to attend the conference in future. This is indicated by the high mean rank of "extremely likely" to attend this conference again with respect to all the variables noted above. This is a strong indication of the importance of the networking element of a conference, a theme that will be touched upon further in the section on factor analysis. However, it should be noted that these correlations are moderate at best.

It should be stressed again at this point that the conferences surveyed in this research were UK association conferences held in the UK, and it is to be expected that conferences with an international dimension would show different results all round, especially on the questions of travelling with family and adding on a short holiday before or after the conference. However, the results of this research should prove interesting both to destination marketing bodies and to association conference organisers. These findings have contributed to the overall research aims of this study, and in particular to the aim of understanding and defining the characteristics of the delegates attending UK association conferences.

5.3.4 Some Conclusions on the Characteristics of UK Association Conference Delegates

The characteristics of the delegates were divided into three types – membership & attendance characteristics, socio-demographic characteristics and marketing characteristics. This enabled information to be sought on each of these types of characteristics. As can be seen from the short summary of the hypotheses tested, not all hypotheses were confirmed. With regard to the membership and attendance characteristics of the delegates, results showed that members had attended the conference more times in the past than non-members, and rated meeting old friends and being involved in the association significantly higher in importance than non-members.

Results of the hypothesis testing also demonstrated that the younger age group (25 - 44) rated being financed by their employer and getting time off work significantly higher in importance than other age groups. However, no between–groups differences were found with relation to the cost of the conference, the cost of accommodation or the cost of transport.

The hypothesis testing also showed that women rated the cost of accommodation, the cost of transport, being financed by their employer and getting time off work significantly higher in importance than men, but that there were no gender-related differences in relation to the variable cost of conference.

Finally in this section, the results of the hypothesis testing illustrated that it was not possible to state conclusively that delegates travelling alone were significantly less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference than delegates travelling accompanied. However, examination of the data does suggest that this may be the case.

Therefore, Research Objective A, concerning defining some of the important characteristics of delegates attending UK association conferences and structuring

them into meaningful groupings in order to create a classification system that can be used as a basis for any future research has been addressed.

5.4 Testing the Model

Research Objective 5 aimed to identify the number and characteristics of the factors underpinning the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate. A model of the UK conference attendance decision-making process was proposed, and will now be examined in the light of the results of the fieldwork to see how well the proposed model fits with the evidence. The literature review suggested that the evaluation of alternatives stage consists of those factors that the potential delegate considers when deciding whether or not to attend an association conference. This will be tested during this part of the fieldwork, with a hypothesis presented as follows:

Hypothesis 5.1

H_0 *= Six factors **do not** underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate*

$H_{5.1}$ *= Six factors underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate*

The evaluation of alternatives section of the model is shown in Figure 5.13, to reinforce exactly what is being tested here.

Figure 5.13 Evaluation of Alternatives Section of the Hypothesised Model

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

1. CONFERENCE FACTORS

- **Cost**
- **Location**
- **Networking Opportunities**
- **Personal/ Professional development**
- **Social Aspects**

2. INTERVENING ISSUES

In order to analyse the data to test Hypothesis 5.1, factor analysis on the data set is proposed. There are strict criteria that must be adhered to in order for factor analysis to be justified.

5.4.1 Criteria for Using Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis is a data reduction technique. This means that it is used to reduce the number of variables to a more manageable level. It can be used as an end in itself or as an initial step towards other statistical analysis methods. There are several types of factorial analysis to be described shortly, but all attempt to find a pattern or underlying structure that may exist in a data set made up of a number of different, but related, variables. The existence of any pattern can be determined from an examination of the correlation matrix of the variables under study – the existence of clusters of variables which correlate highly with each other is suggestive of an underlying link. It is the uncovering of these links that is at the heart of factor analysis. In the words of Field (2000, p. 423): "By reducing a data set from a group of inter-related variables into a smaller set of uncorrelated factors, factor analysis achieves parsimony by explaining the maximum amount of common variance in an R-matrix using the smallest number of explanatory concepts". These explanatory concepts are what are termed "factors".

De Vellis (1991, p. 92) outlines what he considers to be the three main purposes of factor analysis:

1 To help determine how many latent variables underlie a set of items.
2 To provide a means of explaining variation among relatively many original variables using relatively few newly-created variables
3 To define the substantive content or meaning of the factors that account for the variation among a large set of items.

Factor analysis can be used as an exploratory technique, where the researcher attempts to make sense of the correlations that exist between the variables of his data

set. In addition, factor analysis allows the researcher to specify the factors that are hypothesised in advance in order to test the accuracy of the hypothesis. This is termed confirmatory factor analysis.

5.4.2 Assumptions for Factor Analysis

There are a number of assumptions that have to be tested for before factor analysis can be considered. These are generally agreed to concern sample size, the correlation matrix of the data set and the specific tests which exist in order to check whether factor analysis is appropriate (*inter alia* Pallant 2001).

The first of these aspects, sample size (or number of cases) requires no statistical analysis to take place. Pallant (2001) suggests that factors obtained from small data sets do not generalise as well as those derived from larger samples. This leads the researcher to consider the absolute size of their sample. Comrey (1973) considers a sample size of 100 to be poor, 200 to be fair, 300 to be good and 500 to be very good. He later revised this downwards, stating that in most cases of ordinary factor analysis that involve less than 40 items, 200 is an adequate number of cases (Comrey 1988). Tabachnick and Fidell (1996, p. 640) suggest that "it is comforting to have at least 300 cases for factor analysis", but at the same time, Stevens (1996) commented that as more research was being done, acceptable sample sizes were reducing.

Other ways of determining the sample size acceptable for factor analysis include the subject-to-variable ratio. This has also been revised downwards in recent years. In 1978, Nunnally was recommending 10 times as many subjects as variables (Nunnally 1978), but by 1987 Tinsley and Tinsley were suggesting between 5 and 10 subjects per variable. 1995 saw Bryant and Yarnold advocating a minimum subject-to-variable ratio of 5. Gorsuch considered that the subject-to-variable ratio was not the most important issue and advocated that there should be at least 200 cases, regardless of subject-to-variable ratio (Gorsuch 1974)

It is reasonable to question whether there is a definitive answer to the question of how big a sample is required for factor analysis to be appropriate. Field (2000) considered the outcome of research done in this area by Arrindell & Van Der Ende in 1985 who concluded that changes in the ratio of subject to variable made little difference to the stability of factor solutions, and by Guadagnoli and Velicer in1988 who argued that the most important point in determining reliable factor solutions was the absolute sample size and the absolute magnitude of factor loadings. Field (2000) agreed that the size of the sample itself is paramount.

Finally, work by McCallum *et al* (1999) showed that the minimum sample size is dependent on other aspects of the research design, in particular the communalities. With all communalities above 0.6, less than 100 subjects may be perfectly adequate. With communalities in the 0.5 range, samples between 100 and 200 can be good enough, provided that there are relatively few factors each with only a small number of indicator variables (McCallum *et al* 1999).

If the sample size is deemed to be acceptable by the researcher, they must then move on to consider the results of the correlation matrix, to see if this indicates the suitability of the data set for factor analysis. "If a matrix is favourable, it should include several sizeable correlations. If no correlations in excess of 0.3 are found, the use of factor analysis should be re-considered" (Tabachnick & Fidell 1996, p.641). Given that a scale is designed to have internal reliability and the items in the scale should be measuring the same concept, it is reasonable to expect the items in the scale to correlate with each other. In fact, if no correlations are found amongst the variables in the scale, the researcher should question their choice of items (De Vellis 1991).

It is therefore important to check the correlation matrix for correlations below 0.3. Too many of these low correlations will make factor analysis unsuitable. However, if there are only a few variables that do not correlate with any others, then they can be excluded before the analysis is run (Field 2000). On the other hand, variables which correlate very highly can also contaminate the data. The term for variables

which correlate perfectly with each other is "singularity" and this is a problem in factor analysis because it becomes impossible to determine the unique contribution to a factor of variables that are highly correlated (Field 2000). Variables which correlate very highly with each other cause multicollinearity, which in itself does not rule out factor analysis, since it is to be expected that variables will correlate. However, very high correlations of more than 0.9 (Field 2000) can be indicative of multicollinearity, and Field (2000) advises that where there is a correlation between two variables that is greater than 0.9, one of these factors should be removed before further analysis is undertaken. Additionally, the determinant of the correlation matrix gives an indication as to whether multicollinearity is present in the matrix. It should be greater than 0.00001 to rule out multicollinearity. Where the determinant statistic is smaller than this, the matrix should be examined for correlations in excess of 0.8, and consideration should be given to removing one of the pair of variables correlating highly (Field 2000).

If the sample size is acceptable and there are a good number of correlations greater than 0.3, then factor analysis remains appropriate. However, there are other tests which can be carried out in order to check the suitability of the data. The first of these is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, which is defined by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996, p.642) as "a ratio of the sum of squared correlations to the sum of squared correlations plus the sum of squared partial correlations". Values of 0.6 and above are required for a good factor analysis. SPSS calculates this statistic as part of the factor analysis program.

Another test that can be carried out is Bartlett's test of sphericity. It should be significant at the $P<0.05$ range for factor analysis to be carried out (Pallant 2001). It examines the correlation matrix in an attempt to ascertain whether the matrix resembles an identity matrix (where all the variables are entirely independent of each other). If this were the case, factor analysis would be inappropriate as there would be no underlying factors to find.

One final matrix that can be examined is the anti-image correlation matrix. This contains a measure of sampling adequacy for each variable along the diagonal, and the negatives of the partial correlation/covariances on the off-diagonal (Field 2000). The diagonals should all be more than 0.5 if the sample is adequate for a given pair of variables.

In conclusion, for factor analysis to be considered appropriate, the sample size should probably be at least 200 (although other sample sizes may be adequate), there should be few, if any, correlations below 0.3, and no correlations higher than 0.9 in order to avoid excessive multicollinearity, Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant at the $p<0.05$ level, the KMO statistic should be at least 0.6, the diagonals in the anti-image matrix should all be more than 0.5 and the determinant statistic should be greater than 0.00001.

5.4.3 Types of Factor Analysis

One of the most common types of analysis that is carried out under the banner of factor analysis is Principal Components Analysis (PCA). It is similar to other forms of factor analysis, and the terms are often used interchangeably (Pallant 2001). Commonly used forms of factor analysis include least squares, maximum likelihood, principal axis factoring, alpha factoring and image factoring. Both principal components and factor analysis attempt to produce a smaller number of combinations of the original variables in a way that accounts for most of the variability in the pattern of correlations (Pallant 2001). However, principal components and factor analysis diverge when it comes to the method of calculation. According to Field (2000, p. 433): "Factor analysis derives a mathematical model from which factors are estimated from the angles between the vectors, whereas PCA merely decomposes the original data into a set of linear variates". He further outlines the limitations of both approaches: "As such, factor analysis can only estimate the underlying factors and it relies on various assumptions for these estimates to be accurate. PCA is concerned only with establishing which linear components exist within the data and how a particular variable might contribute to that component".

One of the main differences between factor analysis and PCA is how each technique deals with the variance in the data set. In PCA, the original variables are transformed into a smaller set of linear combinations with all of the variance in the variables being used. In factor analysis however, factors are estimated mathematically using a model where only the shared variance is analysed (Pallant 2001).

From the above descriptions it may seem that factor analysis and PCA are fundamentally different and therefore will yield entirely different results. However, this is not in fact the case. Field (2000) reported on research that was carried out by Guadagnoli & Velicer in 1988 where the same data was subjected to PCA and factor analysis, and the results showed that the actual solutions generated by PCA differed little from those derived from factor analysis. Stevens (1996) is slightly more cautious, but still concludes that with 30 or more variables and communalities greater than 0.7 for all variables, different solutions are unlikely. He does suggest that with less than 20 variables and any communalities less than 0.4, differences can occur. Nevertheless, he expresses a final preference for PCA, which he considers to be a less complicated concept, and one which is "psychometrically sound".

Tabachnick and Fidell (1996, p. 664) also review both principal components and factor analysis techniques thoroughly, and come to the conclusion that the choice of whether to carry out PCA or another factor analysis technique can be determined by the research goals of the project:

> "If you are interested in a theoretical solution uncontaminated by unique and error variability, factor analysis is your choice. If on the other hand you want an empirical summary of the data set, PCA is the better choice"

One important characteristic of PCA is that it does not require normally-distributed data. In the social sciences, and in scale construction in particular, variables frequently diverge from normal distribution and therefore the fact the PCA accepts this makes it a popular choice. This is the case in this research, as has been displayed in the section at the beginning of this chapter on normality testing.

One final thought on the decision as to which technique to choose comes from Field (2000, p. 434) who states that "To non-statisticians, the concept of a principal component is identical to that of a factor and the differences arise largely in the calculation"

This seems to be an apt way of suggesting that for those researching in fields other than statistics, the actual technique chosen is of less relevance than the results obtained.

5.4.4 Factor Extraction

Once the type of analysis to be undertaken has been identified, the next decision to take is how many of the extracted factors to retain. PCA in particular will extract as many factors as there are variables, but most of the variance will be accounted for in the first few factors extracted, and therefore the variance explained by the remaining factors, and consequently their usefulness, becomes less and less. It follows therefore that a decision has to be taken on how many of the extracted factors should be retained for further inspection and analysis.

De Vellis (1991) outlines the basis for how many factors to retain by suggesting that this is dependent on how good a job a given number of factors does of explaining the total amount of variance. De Vaus (2002) states that the best factor analysis will have as few factors as necessary.

Two techniques that are commonly used for deciding how many extracted factors to retain rely on a statistic known as the eigenvalue. This is defined by De Vaus (2002, p. 188) as "a measure which indicates the amount of variance in the pool of original variables that the factor explains". It can be deduced therefore that a factor with a high eigenvalue will explain the most variance. The eigenvalue of a factor is obtained by squaring the correlations in the factor matrix (to obtain the proportion of explained variance for each variable) and then adding each of these squared figures together which produces the eigenvalue (De Vaus 2002).

The first of these popular techniques is know as Kaiser's eigenvalue rule (or the eigenvalue > 1 rule), devised by Kaiser in 1960. It examines the eigenvalue statistic for each factor, suggesting that only those factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 should be retained. The logic of this is expressed by De Vellis (1991, p. 97): "If the worst factor still explains more variance than one original item then one is achieving a degree of condensation". By extension therefore, if any factors are explaining less variance than any of the original items then the primary goal of factor analysis, namely data reduction, has not been achieved.

A further technique which also relies on the eigenvalue statistic is known as Cattell's scree plot. In 1966 Cattell came up with the idea of a visual solution to the question of how many extracted factors to retain (Cattell 1966) In his scree plot, each eigenvalue is plotted on a graph against the factor with which it is associated and the resulting graph gives a visual clue as to how the factors pan out. The resulting graph has a characteristic shape, defined by Field (2000) as a sharp descent followed by a tailing off. The graph was named a scree plot because it was reminiscent of scree littering the bottom of a mountainside. The majority of the scree towards the right of the graph represents those factors which are not worth retaining. Generally, a scree plot will have a break in the downward trend and Cattell argued that the cut-off point for retaining factors should be at the point of inflexion of this curve (Cattell 1966).

Although these techniques are popular, criticisms do exist. Kaiser's method has been accused of retaining too many factors in some situations (Pallant 2001), and Cattell's scree plot does not always produce an easy-to-interpret graph with one clearly discernible break, and is therefore quite subjective and difficult to interpret. (De Vellis 1991).

Nevertheless, the use of the eigenvalue in deciding how many extracted factors to retain remains widely accepted (*inter alia* De Vellis 1991, Tabachnick and Fiddell 1996, Field 2000, Pallant 2001, De Vaus 2002,). The question becomes one of whether to rely on one or both of the above-mentioned techniques in a particular piece of research.

Field (2000) suggests that Kaiser's guideline is accurate when the number of variables is less than 30 and the resulting communalities (after extraction) are all greater than 0.7. Kaiser's guideline is also accurate in his view when the sample size exceeds 250 and the average communality is at least 0.6. He concludes that if the assumptions regarding the number of variables and regarding the communality values have not been met, then providing that the sample size is over 200, the researcher is advised to use a scree plot (Field 2000).

Stevens (1996) also suggests that a sample of over 200 subjects is required for a scree plot to provide fairly reliable criteria for factor extraction. Gorsuch (1983) concurs, pointing out that the results of the scree test are more obvious (and more reliable) when the sample size is large, communalities are high and each factor has several variables with high loadings. Tabachnick and Fidell (1996, p. 673) agree with the findings of Gorsuch, but highlight the fact that even "under less than optimal conditions, the scree test is still usually accurate to within one or two factors".

Of course if there are only a few factors with high eigenvalues, then a scree plot with accuracy to within one or two factors may not in fact be accurate at all. In addition, there have been challenges to Kaiser's eigenvalue rule, notably Jolliffe (1986) who suggests that Kaiser's criterion is too strict, and factors with eigenvalues of more than 0.7 should also be reported. This could clearly make a big difference, especially where there are a large amount of variables in the original data set.

The seemingly conflicting advice given by different parties can cause confusion in the mind of the researcher and it is reassuring to read the words of De Vellis (1991, p. 99) who attempts to resolve the issue as follows:

> "Criteria for determining how many latent variables underlie a data set and thus how many factors to extract are clearly useful aids. However, much of the process is art. The meaning or interpretability of the resultant factors provides important clues about how many to retain".

This moves the analysis away from issues of pure statistics and towards the bigger picture – the fulfilment of two of the main aims of factor analysis as described at the beginning of this section - "to help determine how many latent variables underlie a set of items" and "to provide a means of explaining variation among relatively many original variables using relatively few newly-created variables" (De Vellis 1991, p. 92).

5.4.5 Factor Rotation

Once the decision has been made on how many factors are to be extracted and retained, the next important issue is how best to interpret and explain them. It can happen that the meaning of the factors is immediately apparent as soon as they are extracted, and in this serendipitous event, the researcher is required only to report and interpret the factors as they stand.

However, is it much more likely that the initial solution will be much less clear, with many variables loading on several factors, and some factors which have almost every variable loading on them (De Vaus 2002). Additionally, when PCA is carried out, it is often the case that almost all variables will have high loadings on the first factor and small loadings on practically every other factor. This creates a very fuzzy picture of what is actually going on, and procedure exists which allows for some clarification. This procedure is known as factor rotation.

Field (2000, p. 438) notes that: "a factor is a classification axis along which variables can be plotted, and a factor rotation effectively rotates these factor axes such that variables are loaded maximally to only one factor. After rotation, the loadings of the variables are maximised onto one factor and minimised on the remaining factors". It is worth pointing out at this juncture that rotation is used to improve the interpretability of the solution, but does not change the fundamental solution because all rotated solutions are mathematically equivalent to each other and to the original solution (Tabachnick and Fiddell 1996).

The goal of factor rotation is to find the clearest and easiest to interpret solution available. This is known as "simple structure" and was first elaborated upon by Thurstone in 1947. It is defined by De Vellis (1991) as where each of the original items loads on one and only one factor. Factor rotation using SPSS or other computer programs allows the researcher to rotate the items in many different ways until the nearest approximation to simple structure is arrived at.

There are two main methods of factor rotation – orthogonal rotation and oblique rotation. Put simply, orthogonal rotation keeps each factor independent of all the others, whilst oblique rotation allows the factors to correlate with each other. The choice of which rotation method to use is dependent upon the theoretical background to the scale being analysed and whether it is reasonable to assume that the factors extracted may be correlated. If there is theoretical evidence to suggest correlation, then an oblique rotation should be performed (Field 2000). The most readily available oblique rotation method is Direct Oblimin. If it is theoretically unlikely that the factors are correlated, then an orthogonal rotation is required. The most common orthogonal rotation method is known as Varimax (which maximises the variance of squared loadings).

According to Field (2000), where the theoretical background to the research does not clearly indicate whether the factors are correlated or not, it is advisable to run both types of rotation, and examine the results: "If oblique rotation demonstrates a negligible correlation between the extracted factors then it is reasonable to use an orthogonal solution. If the oblique solution reveals a correlated factor structure, then the orthogonal solution should be discarded" (Field 2000, p.439). Tabachnick & Fidell (1996, p. 674) concur: "If correlations exceed 0.32, then there is 10% or more overlap in variance, enough to warrant oblique rotation". By extension therefore, if correlations are less than 0.32, orthogonal rotation should be selected.

Another interesting point to note is made by Tabachnick & Fidell (1996, p.666) – "Different methods of rotation tend to give similar results if the pattern of correlations in the data is fairly clear. In other words, a stable solution tends to

appear regardless of the method of rotation used". This seems to give credence to the idea that various methods of rotation should be attempted – if a similar solution appears after each method of rotation, it is fair to say that the solution should be fairly stable, and more reliable.

The process of analysing the results of a rotated factor matrix is straightforward – those variables which load most highly onto each factor are reported, and a conceptual link between the variables on each factor is drawn. This provides the concept for (and usually the name of) the factor. However, the question of how big a loading should be interpreted and reported is slightly vexing. Stevens (1996) recommends interpreting only factor loadings with an absolute value of more that 0.4. De Vaus (2002) states that it is unusual to report variables with loadings below 0.3. Field (20010) considers that the significance of the factor loadings is dependent on sample size – for example with a sample of 100, a loading greater than 0.512 should be considered significant, whilst with a sample of 200, any loading greater than 0.364 should be reported as significant.

This seems to be another situation where the art in the process becomes apparent. Since the aim is simple structure, the following argument is advanced by De Vaus (2002) – a variable should only be included in the factor on which it loads most highly. Where a variable loads similarly on several factors, it is worth considering that it might be contaminating the analysis, and could be removed. This should allow a clearer picture to emerge with variables only appearing in the factor on which they load most highly.

The final result of factor rotation should be a clearer picture of those latent variables which underlie a given data set, and a straightforward explanation of the nature of each of these latent variables. This fulfils the final aim of factor analysis according to De Vellis (1991, p. 92): "to define the substantive content or meaning of the factors that account for the variation among a large set of items"

5.5 Results of Factor Analysis

The process and results of the factor analysis carried out during this research will now be presented and the implications of the findings for the proposed model discussed, with particular reference to the confirmatory nature of this factor analysis. The factor analysis was carried out on the 29 scale items that were included in the final survey instrument used in this research.

5.5.1 Mean Ratings of Scale Variables

Before moving on to the factor analysis, other information that can be gleaned from the scale data results is also interesting to examine, in particular the relative rating of the scale variables. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance that they attached to each scale variable when deciding whether or not to attend the conference. The scale had 7 points ranging from point 1 "extremely unimportant" to point 7 "extremely important", and also had a possible 0 rating for "no opinion".

It can be surmised that those variables which were consistently considered to be higher in importance than others will be those given most consideration when a potential delegate is deciding whether or not to attend a UK association conference. The results are displayed in Table 5.25, and clearly show that the variable "interesting topic" has the highest mean (6.16), indicating that it was consistently rated as being at least "very important" in the decision to attend the conference.

The next two variables in Table 5.25, "learning about new subjects" (mean of 5.65) and "learning about new research" (mean of 5.61) are also related to the topic or subject of the conference, and clearly show that the subject of a conference, and the opportunities to learn and develop one's knowledge are vital in the decision whether or not to attend a conference. This is useful information for conference organisers as it suggests that matters of learning and development and interest in the topic must be considered to be amongst the most important aspects in the decision to attend an association conference. Conversely, the variables "available medical facilities"

(mean of 3.25) and "visiting friends and relatives" (mean of 3.10) are consistently rated as an average of point 3 in the scale which represents "fairly unimportant". Again, this is useful information for conference organisers.

Table 5.25 Importance Ratings of Scale Items

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interesting Topic	213	1	7	6.16	1.223
Learning about New Subjects	217	1	7	5.65	1.253
Learning About New Research	213	1	7	5.61	1.315
Financed by Employer	199	1	7	5.38	1.733
No Holiday Date Clash	208	1	7	5.34	1.672
Professional Advancement	216	1	7	5.33	1.488
Accessible Location	214	1	7	5.23	1.473
Time Off Work	207	1	7	5.03	1.887
Safe Destination	209	1	7	4.98	1.589
No Conference Date Clash	208	1	7	4.96	1.525
Job Description	205	1	7	4.93	1.652
Meeting Like-Minded People	216	1	7	4.93	1.499
Professional Contacts	216	1	7	4.87	1.568
Cost of Conference	211	1	7	4.76	1.452
Meeting New Professionals	214	1	7	4.75	1.586
Healthy Enough to Travel	198	1	7	4.74	1.797
Global Community	213	1	7	4.65	1.502
Cost of Accommodation	199	1	7	4.63	1.715
Old Friends	208	1	7	4.59	1.480
Involvement in the Association	213	1	7	4.56	1.480
Cost of Transport	205	1	7	4.45	1.693
Attractive Location	213	1	7	4.44	1.405
New Friends	209	1	7	4.13	1.580
Peer Reputation	205	1	7	4.09	1.612
Getting Out of the Office	208	1	7	3.87	1.667
New Business	198	1	7	3.43	1.638
Visiting the Surrounding Area	208	1	7	3.43	1.632
Available Medical Facilities	190	1	7	3.25	1.674
Visiting Friends and Relatives	201	1	7	3.10	1.741

The fact that the variable "visiting the surrounding area" (mean of 3.43) came very low in the list of importance variables is of particular interest as it suggests confirmation of the finding earlier in this chapter that very few delegates are adding on a short holiday to the conference, and lends weight to the suggestion that trying to market add-on holidays to UK association conferences may not a worthwhile use of possibly scarce resources.

5.5.2 Assumptions for Factor Analysis

Having considered some of the results from the scale data, it is now time to move on to the factor analysis itself.

The final number of useable responses to the questionnaire was 220. This figure is high enough to be acceptable for principal components analysis (PCA) using the criteria set down by Comrey (1988) who suggested at least 200 cases, and is acceptable for PCA using the subject-to-variable ratio set down by Bryant & Yarnold (1995) who suggested a minimum ratio of 5 subjects per variable. The scale has 29 items, and therefore by this criteria, a sample of only 145 subjects would be required. The 220 subjects in the questionnaire exceed this figure comfortably. Field (2000) suggested that with communalities in the 0.5 and above range, 100 to 200 may be a big enough sample. Only one communality less than 0.5 was found, and so again, 220 cases exceeds the requirements for PCA.

These are of course not the only considerations. Further assumptions must be met before PCA is considered to be appropriate. Checks for singularity and multicollinearity were carried out, and showed no singularity, but a very high correlation coefficient between two variables COSTACC and COSTRAN, at 0.842. Field's (2000) guidelines suggest that only correlations of over 0.9 are likely to be indicative of multicollinearity and so although high, this correlation is not high enough to cause concern. In addition, the variables are closely related, as they both refer to cost and as such it is not entirely surprising that they should correlate highly. However, although closely related, they are not likely to be measuring exactly the same thing and so it was decided to retain both variables in the analysis

Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at the $p<0.05$ level and the KMO statistic was 0.882. This is considered "meritorious" by Tabachnick & Fidell (1996).

Table 5.26 Assumptions for suitability of data to factor analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.882
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	2762.981
	df	406
	Sig.	.000
Determinant Statistic		6.857E-08

Another assumption that has to be taken into account was obtained from the anti-image matrix produced by SPSS. For PCA to be appropriate, the diagonal elements should all be greater than 0.5. The smallest diagonal element was associated with the variable MEDFAC and was 0.710. This is safely above the 0.5 level.

In order to check the reliability of the scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.9201, as discussed in Chapter Four. It is important to check whether the alpha value of the scale could be improved by removing any variables that are keeping the alpha value down. In this research, as can be seen from Table 5.27 there are no variables that need to be removed in order to improve the alpha value of the scale. In conjunction with the other conclusions above, this indicates that it is appropriate to proceed using PCA.

Therefore, the following assumptions have been met:

1 the sample size is adequate

2 no communalities below 0.3 were found

3 no correlations above 0.9 were found

4 KMO was acceptable at 0.882

5 Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at the $P<0.05$ level

6 all the diagonal elements of the anti-image matrix were > 0.5

7 the reliability of the scale items has been assessed

Table 5.27 Calculating Reliability for Scale Items

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
COSTCON	130.7313	567.6416	.5476	.9170
COSTACC	130.9104	560.8190	.5357	.9171
COSTRAN	130.9478	560.3657	.5667	.9166
ACCLOC	130.1493	574.0076	.4292	.9187
ATTLOC	130.9701	574.3901	.4671	.9181
CONDATE	130.3955	574.5266	.4222	.9188
HOLDATE	130.1194	569.7601	.4128	.9191
HEALTH	130.6269	557.5590	.5458	.9170
MEDFAC	131.9851	568.7216	.4518	.9184
TIMEOFF	130.4030	553.5958	.5361	.9173
JOBDEC	130.3284	570.9290	.4295	.9188
EMPFIN	130.0149	563.3231	.4792	.9181
TOPIC	129.2612	574.4049	.4823	.9180
SAFEDEST	130.4179	558.7864	.5925	.9162
VISIT	131.8806	571.2338	.4260	.9188
PROFCON	130.5075	555.1842	.6598	.9152
PROFAD	129.9851	564.7366	.5707	.9167
NEWBUS	131.8955	573.5228	.4063	.9191
NEWFR	131.2910	560.6741	.5929	.9163
OLDFR	130.7985	574.7786	.4753	.9181
INVOLVE	130.8284	567.0906	.5389	.9171
GLOBAL	130.8134	557.9724	.6387	.9156
NEWSUB	129.7388	577.0816	.4584	.9183
RESEARCII	129.8284	572.9252	.4838	.9179
PEERREP	131.2612	561.5779	.5851	.9164
OFFICE	131.4552	570.7461	.4452	.9185
VFR	132.3209	576.3399	.3479	.9200
LIKEMIND	130.5746	558.9380	.6471	.9156
MEETPROF	130.6343	551.4818	.7140	.9144

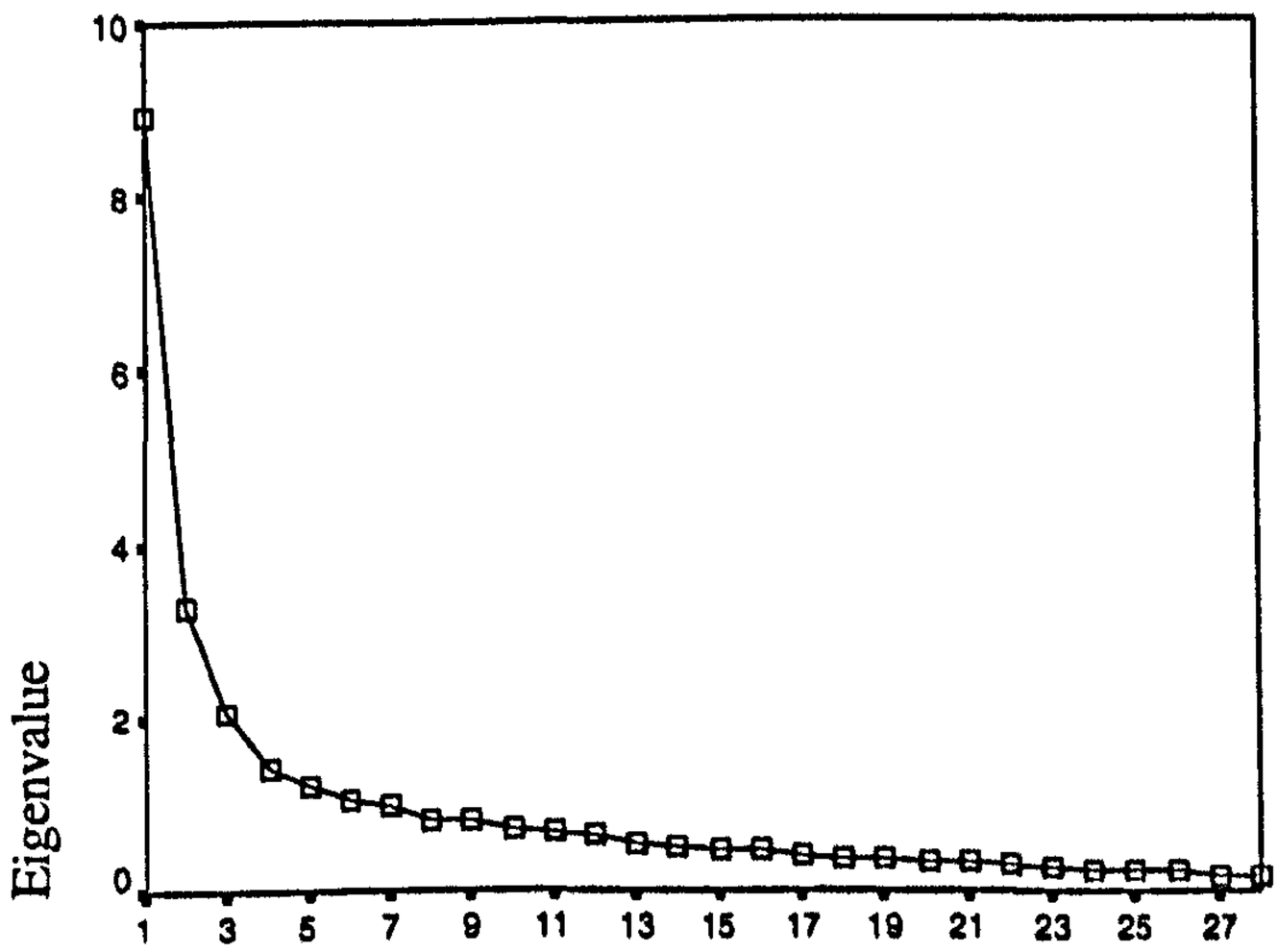
5.5.3 Principal Components Analysis

The decision was taken to carry out PCA on the data set. This is in line with the advice of Tabachnick & Fidell (1996) that "if you want an empirical summary of the data set, PCA is the better choice". Additionally, as previously discussed, the variables in the scale did not display normal distribution and where this is the case, PCA is the most suitable method of factor analysis.

Given that the data includes a large number of missing cases, it was decided to adopt a sample means approach for replacing these. This does have the disadvantage of reducing the overall variability of the sample, but a listwise deletion resulted in an unacceptable loss of cases (87). Even with pairwise deletion, the number of cases was still just below 200.

A PCA was carried out which resulted in 6 components with eigenvalues greater than one, and which explained 64.357% of the total variance. Going by Kaiser's eigenvalue greater than one rule it is appropriate to retain all 6 components for further interpretation. However, Kaiser's guidelines are not the only way to judge how many extracted components to retain. SPSS also produced the following Cattell's scree plot as part of the PCA:

Figure 5.14 Cattell's Scree Plot indicating number of factors to retain



As can be seen from the above scree plot, the decision as to how many components to retain cannot be made clearly using this measure alone. This scree plot does not have one obvious "elbow" or point of inflexion and arguments could be advanced for retaining 4, 5, 6 or 7 components. It follows that as investigation of this plot does not provide a conclusive answer, the decision as to how many components to retain

must become somewhat subjective. In fact, extracting and interpreting components has been described as "art" by De Vellis (1991).

It was decided to retain and interpret 6 components. This decision was based on the proposed model of the conference attendance decision-making process put forward earlier in this research. This involved 6 hypothetical components and as the PCA is being used as confirmatory factor analysis, it was decided to seek a 6 component solution. Additionally, the eigenvalue greater than one rule also suggested retention of 6 components. The communalities are shown in Table 5.28 and these indicate a high level of shared variance between the variables.

Table 5.28 Communalities

	Extraction
Cost of Conference	.781
Cost of Accommodation	.843
Cost of Transport	.820
Accessible Location	.615
Attractive Location	.558
No Conference Date Clash	.638
No Holiday Date Clash	.638
Healthy Enough to Travel	.705
Available Medical Facilities	.572
Time Off Work	.663
Job Description	.595
Financed by Employer	.544
Interesting Topic	.686
Safe Destination	.628
Visiting the Surrounding Area	.600
Professional Contacts	.705
Professional Advancement	.634
New Business	.482
New Friends	.716
Old Friends	.586
Involvement in the Association	.583
Global Community	.675
Learning About New Subjects	.643
Learning About New Research	.640
Peer Reputation	.584
Getting Out of the Office	.586
Visiting Friends and Relatives	.583
Meeting Like-Minded People	.664
Meeting New Professionals	.697

The component matrix (Table 5.29) was therefore created (loadings smaller than 0.3 are not reported). Both positive and negative loadings are present in the initial solution. An inspection of the component matrix reveals a not uncommon PCA initial solution, with all variables loading on the first factor, and fewer progressively loading on the each successive factor. As this is somewhat confusing and does not lend itself to the final goal of factor analysis as outlined by De Vellis (1991) (of defining the substantive content or meaning of the factors that account for the variation among a large set of items) a factor rotation was performed.

Table 5.29 Principal Components Analysis Components Matrix

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cost of Conference	.568	.361	.320	-.439		
Cost of Accommodation	.538	.344	.437	-.449		
Cost of Transport	.581	.385	.437	-.320		
Accessible Location	.459	.440		-.303		
Attractive Location	.506				.410	.307
No Conference Date Clash	.493	.336			.474	
No Holiday Date Clash	.328	.528			.442	
Healthy Enough to Travel	.532	.322				-.360
Available Medical Facilities	.471		.301	.371		
Time off Work	.509	.573				
Job Description	.463	.402			-.303	
Financed by Employer	.458	.387			-.327	
Interesting Topic	.464	.414	-.509			
Safe Destination	.589	.330				-.343
Visiting the Surrounding Area	.530		.363			
Professional Contacts	.715	-.370				
Professional Advancement	.622		-.387			
New Business	.475	-.415				
New Friends	.701	-.463				
Old Friends	.594	-.351				
Involvement in the Association	.546	-.362				
Global Community	.699	-.370				
Learning About New Subjects	.544		-.573			
Learning About New Research	.584		-.497			
Peer Reputation	.679					
Getting Out of the Office	.476			.462		
Visiting Friends/Relatives	.442		.443			.353
Meeting Like-Minded People	.722	-.306				
Meeting New Professionals	.771	-.301				

5.5.4 Factor Rotation

In cases where it is possible that the components could be correlated, an oblique rotational method should be used, in order to test for correlation. The rotation was performed using Direct Oblimin (see Table 5.30) on the 6 extracted components and although small correlations were found, particularly between Component 1 and Component 6 (0.341), the correlations were generally well below the 0.32 level proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) as the lower correlation coefficient limit for oblique rotation to be appropriate. This suggests that the correlations are weak, and that an orthogonal rotation method may be considered instead.

Table 5.30 Direct Oblimin Oblique Rotation of 6 Extracted Components

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	1.000	.101	-.230	6.368E-02	-.143	.341
2	.101	1.000	-.241	.108	-.263	.256
3	-.230	-.241	1.000	-.191	.272	-.128
4	6.368E-02	.108	-.191	1.000	-.214	
5	-.143	-.263	.272	-.214	1.000	-.246
6	.341	.256	-.128	4.022E-.02	-.246	1.000

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

A Varimax rotation was carried out, selecting a 6-component solution and replacing missing values with the mean. This of course explained the same amount of variance as the original PCA, but allows for a much clearer explanation of this variance. The total variance explained by this solution is 64.357%.

The rotated component matrix (see Appendix 4) shows which variables load most highly on which components, and from this matrix it is possible to begin to gauge the substantive content of each component and interpret its meaning.

Although this matrix does not achieve the simple solution (some variables still load on more than one component), it was decided to include variables only in the component on which they load most highly (except in the case of the variable "time off work" where it is clear that conceptually it belongs with the other items loading

on Component 2). This allows for a clearer picture of the content of each component, and ensures that each variable is only included in one component.

5.5.5 Interpreting and Labelling the Extracted Components

There are certain points to note when considering the labels to be given to the components that have been extracted, particularly that the label should represent the underlying dimension of the component, as suggested by the variables that load in it (De Vellis 1991). In this instance, the study has carried out confirmatory factor analysis, and therefore it is argued that the components that have been extracted should be similar to those originally proposed.

Tables 5.31 and 5.32 show the results of the PCA after Varimax rotation and show which variables loaded on each component and the name which has been allocated to each component.

Component 1 - The variables which loaded most highly on this component were all items relating to meeting people, both friends and professional contacts. Most loaded highly, from 0.791 to 0.599. This component has been named ***NETWORKING***

Component 2 - This component concerned those variables which were related to employment and careers, as well as learning about the subject matter. The interest in the conference topic was the variable that loaded most highly on this component. This component has been named ***PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

Component 3 - The interpretation of this component is quite straightforward: it refers to the outlay required to attend the conference. The variables that loaded on this component did so with particularly high loadings (0.880, 0.836 and 0.828), which is also evidence of the stability of this component. It has been named **COST**.

Table 5.31 Components 1, 2 & 3 Extracted after Varimax Rotation

	Component		
	1 NETWORKING	2 PERSONAL/ PROF DEVP.	3 COST
Professional Contacts	0.791		
Global Community	0.780		
Making New Friends	0.756		
Involvement in the Association	0.740		
Meeting New Professionals	0.702		
Meeting Old Friends	0.674		
Meeting Like-Minded People	0.654		
Peer Reputation	0.645		
Generating New Business	0.599		
Interesting Topic		0.660	
Fulfilling Job Description		0.655	
Learning about New Subjects		0.634	
Financed by Employer		0.611	
Learning about New Research		0.611	
Professional Advancement		0.597	
Available Time off Work		0.515	
Cost of Accommodation			0.880
Cost of Transport			0.836
Cost of Conference			0.828
Eigenvalue	*9.188*	*3.36*	*2.186*
Cronbach's á Coefficient	*0.9145*	*0.8215*	*0.9040*
Variance Explained	*19.779*	*10.927*	*10.181*

Component 4

A strongly locational element is evident in this component, whether it be the pull of a specific destination, or the push of a desire to escape to somewhere else. This component therefore has been named ***LOCATION***.

Component 5

These variables represent reasons why delegates may not be able to attend a given conference – if the date clashes with a family holiday, if the date clashes with

another conference, or if the location is not easily accessible. If none of these issues intervene, then the potential delegate is able to consider attending the conference. Therefore, this component is named ***TIME AND CONVENIENCE.***

Component 6

This component represents primarily issues of health and wellbeing, and personal safety and security. This component is ***IIEALTII & SECURITY.***

Table 5.32 Components 4, 5 & 6 Extracted after Varimax Rotation

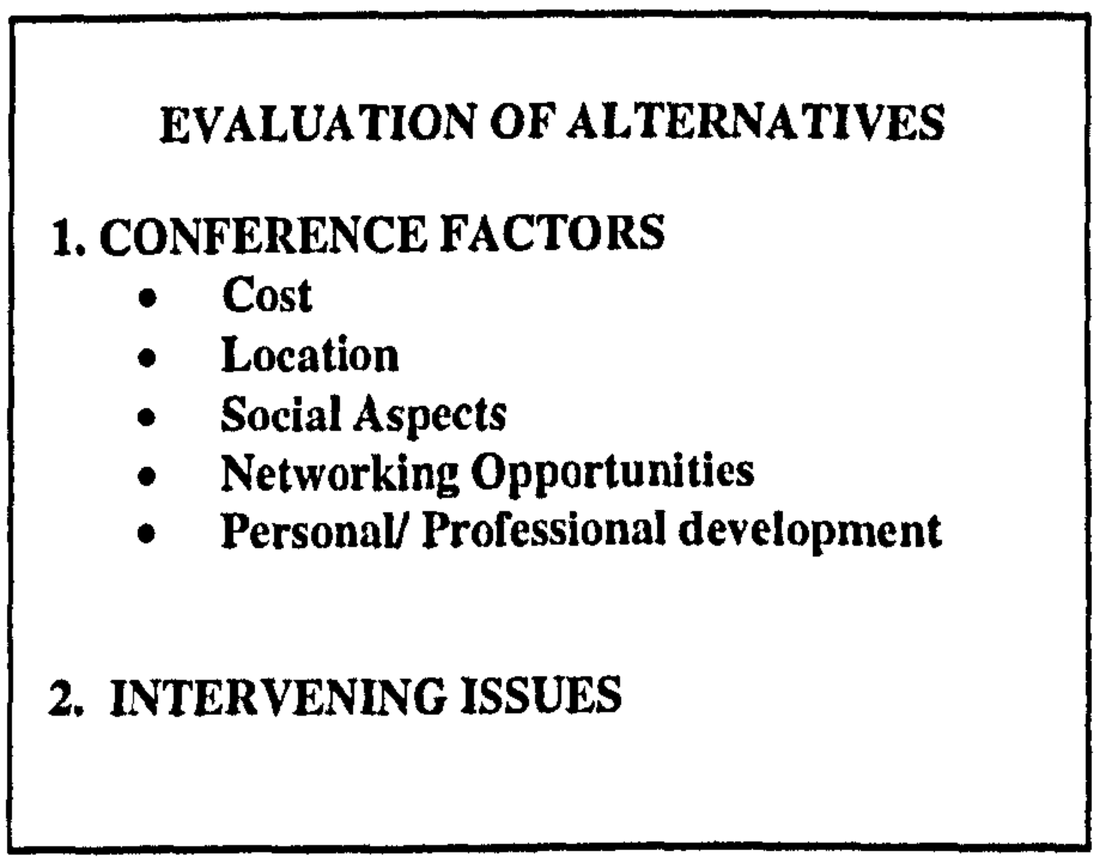
	Component		
	4 LOCATION	**5 TIME & CONVENIENCE**	**6 HEALTII AND SECURITY**
Visiting Friends & Relatives	0.703		
Getting out of the Office	0.677		
Visiting the Surrounding Area	0.612		
Attractive Location	0.515		
No Holiday Date Clash		0.707	
No Conference Date Clash		0.684	
Accessible Location		0.597	
Healthy enough to Travel			0.685
Available Medical Facilities			0.671
Safe Destination			0.606
Eigenvalue	***1.57***	***1.315***	***1.043***
Cronbach's á Coefficient	***0.7196***	***0.6963***	***0.7466***
Variance Explained	***8.088***	***7.898***	***7.486***

5.5.6 Comparison with Hypothesized Model

As discussed in section 5.4, the evaluation of alternatives stage of the proposed model of the UK association conference attendance decision was being tested. This

stage is shown again in Figure 5.15, for the purposes of comparison with the results of the PCA.

Figure 5.15 Original Hypothesised Evaluation of Alternatives Stage



This illustrates the original hypothesis that the decision to attend a conference is influenced by six components – five conference factors of cost, location, networking, social aspects, professional and personal development and a further intervening issues factor.

5.5.7 Confirmatory Factory Analysis

After the PCA was carried out, a six-component rotated solution emerged. Comparisons between the new components and the originally proposed components shown in Figure 5.15 will now be considered in order to emphasize the confirmatory nature of this research.

Component 1 Networking

In the proposed model, it was hypothesized that there would be two separate components, one for networking and one for social aspects. However, the PCA showed that in the main, items from both these suggested components actually all loaded on a single networking component. This is evidence of the importance of the

"meeting people" aspect of a conference, but is also highly suggestive of the notion that all contact with fellow delegates is useful and important, whether it be during the formal conference sessions, or less formally over drinks at the bar. The opportunity for networking is a very valuable selling point for conference organisers and a powerful draw for potential delegates. In fact over 30% of those respondents who gave reasons for attending the conference mentioned the networking aspects.

The networking component in the component solution also included other variables which had been expected to form part of another component, namely being involved in the association, meeting up-and-coming professionals, and establishing a reputation amongst one's peers. These had been proposed under the banner of personal and professional development, yet they are all clearly linked with meeting people, and so perhaps highlight a weakness in the proposed model. Nevertheless, the proposed networking component has emerged from the PCA, strengthening the case for acceptance of the hypothesized model.

Component 2 Personal/Professional Development

The proposed model put forward eight variables in the above category, but as explained above, the networking component emerged after analysis with a larger number of variables than expected. Some of the items that were expected to load on the personal/professional development component actually belong with networking. One additional item, being financed by one's employer, has also emerged as part of this component instead of the cost component that was proposed. Additionally, it had been suggested that available time off work would form part of the intervening issues component, whereas it actually loads on this component instead. However, the remainder have proven to be in the expected component – learning new subjects, an interesting topic, learning new research, professional advancement and fulfilling one's job description which supports the hypothesized component.

Component 3 Cost

The cost component in the proposed model comprised cost of conference, cost of accommodation, cost of transport and being financed by one's employer. This hypothesized component was proven accurate by the PCA, which resulted in a component with a very similar composition. Cost of conference, cost of accommodation and cost of transport did emerge as part of a cost component. The variable "being financed by one's employer" does not appear in this component as was proposed, but rather as part of the work-related component previously discussed. This suggests that the respondents considered this attribute to be more conceptually related to their employment than to the costs involved in attending a conference. The existence of a cost component similar to the proposed cost component in the original suggested model provides further support for acceptance of a six-component model.

Component 4 Location

The location component in the proposed model consisted of six different attributes. After PCA, a location-related component did emerge, but with fewer variables loading on it. Visiting friends and relatives, getting out of the office, visiting the surrounding area and an attractive location were all connected with the location of the conference both in the proposed model and in the component solution. However, the items "an easily accessible location" and "personal safety assured at the destination" did not feature among the variables loading on the location component after analysis.

The locational elements in this component seem linked both with the "push" of escaping for a while, not necessarily to any specific destination (getting out of the office, an attractive location), and also with the "pull" elements of a specific location (visiting the surrounding area, and visiting friends and relatives). The existence of the location component is yet more evidence pointing towards the acceptance of the proposed model.

Component 5 Time and Convenience

In the original proposed model, intervening issues were considered to be issues that could intervene to prevent the delegate from deciding to attend a conference – a date clash with a family holiday, a date clash with another conference, being fit and healthy enough to travel and being able to get time off work. The PCA results clearly acknowledge the existence of this component, although with a slightly different combination of variables attached to it. Conference and holiday date clash are indeed shown to be part of this component, and an additional item that loads on this component is the accessibility of the destination – presumably if the destination is not perceived to be easily accessible this perception could intervene and prevent the delegate from deciding to attend a conference. However, being fit and healthy enough to travel and getting time off work do not appear to load on this component, but rather on other components instead. This seems to suggest that the both Component 5 (Time and Convenience) and Component 6 (Health and Security) are separate components, but that both may relate to constraints to attending.

Although the items in the hypothesized model and those in the component solution differ, the emergence of components relating to intervening issues lends yet more credence to the six-component proposed model. However, this may suggest that all the factors should be considered equally as conference factors, as constraints are part of several, including cost, time and convenience and health and security.

Component 6 Health and Security

A six-component model was proposed and a six-component solution has emerged. However, as the two proposed categories of "networking" and "social aspects" have been merged into one new networking component, there remains therefore one new component to be interpreted.

It includes being fit and healthy enough to travel, having available medical facilities at the destination, and one's personal safety and security being assured at the

destination. These three items are clearly conceptually linked as they all relate to some aspect of health or safety. The existence of this component, although unexpected, is clearly conceptually viable. Given the fact that security is becoming more of an issue in these times of international terrorism, as discussed in Chapter Two, it is not surprising that a factor including some aspects of safety and security should emerge.

5.6 Hypothesis Testing

As outlined previously, one hypothesis is being tested in this part of the fieldwork:

Hypothesis 5.1

H_0 = Six factors do not underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate

$H_{5.1}$ = Six factors underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate

With reference to $\mathbf{H_{5.1}}$, the PCA has shown that six factors do underpin the UK association conference attendance decision process and therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and $\mathbf{H_{5.1}}$ can be accepted. Research Objective 5 has been addressed.

5.7 Decision Strategies

Research objective C involved giving consideration to the decision strategies and rules that may be in operation in the association conference attendance decision-making process. Although it is not possible to state with clarity which type of decision strategies are being used by potential association conference delegates, it seems likely that given the differences in the importance ratings of the different variables, a compensatory heuristic may be the most likely scenario. Clearly, the type of decision process that is adopted by delegates will influence the way in which the attributes are used in the decision. If delegates are able to rate the attributes according to their importance, it seems possible that these delegates will be rating

these attributes in their decision process, and that a high score on one attribute may be allowed to compensate for a lower score on another variable. Other important considerations are whether all delegates consider all the attributes, or whether only some are used. If only some are used to help make the decision, it is likely to be the ones with the highest importance ranking (e.g. "interesting topic"). It is also possible that certain key attributes of a conference may make the difference between the potential delegate deciding to attend and deciding not to attend. These issues cannot be conclusively addressed at this juncture, but they are nonetheless interesting points to raise and are areas for potential future research.

5.8 New Model

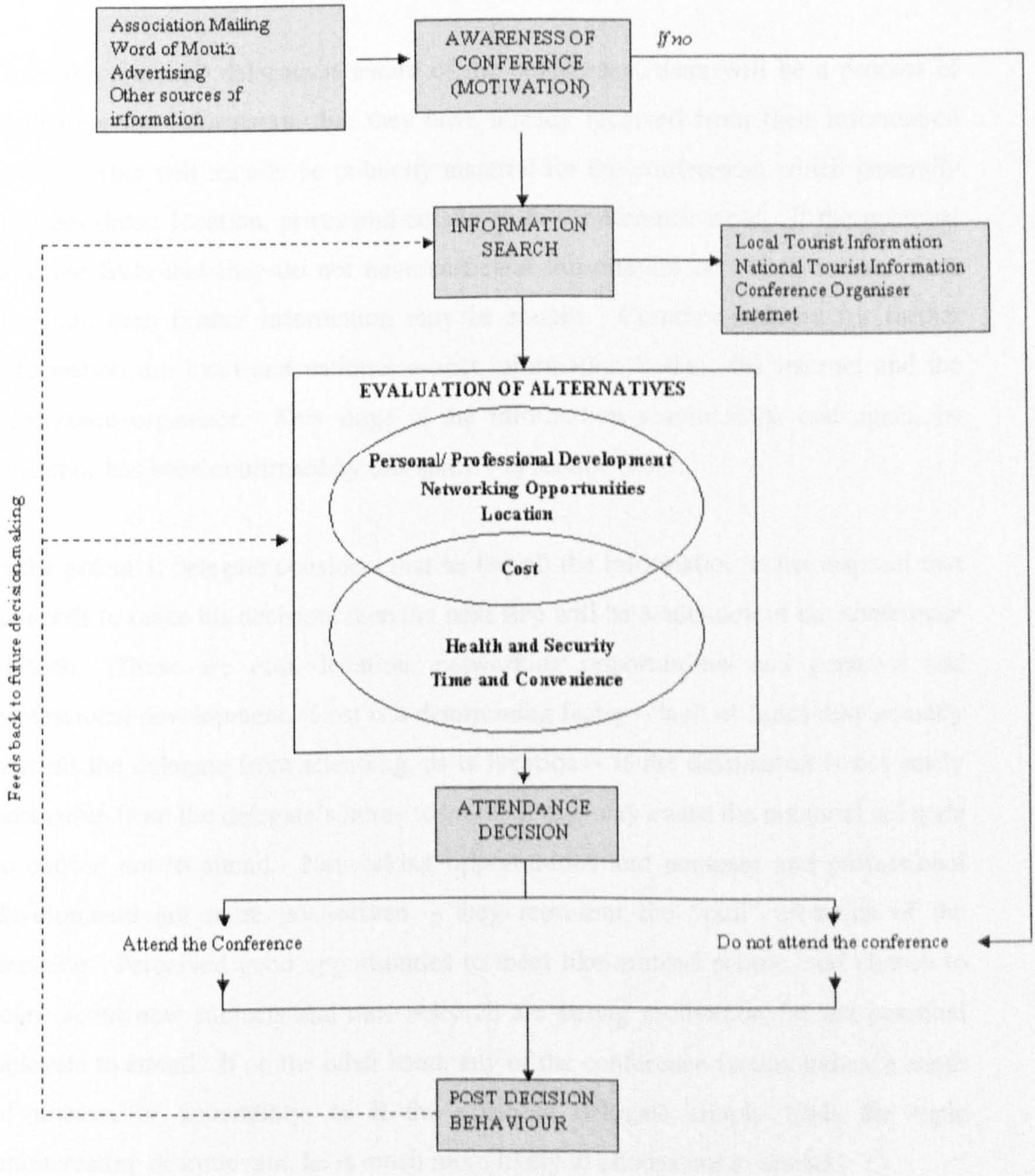
Research Objective D of this study was to incorporate the underlying dimensions or factors identified into a model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process.

Following interpretation of the PCA results, an amended model is now proposed as being representative of the decision to attend a professional association conference. This retains four of the six components from the proposed model, but incorporates two new components, Time and Convenience and Health and Security. Although the components of this amended model vary slightly from those originally proposed, the emergence of a stable six-component solution following the proposal of six components is evidence of factorial validity, and is confirmatory in the sense that what was discovered corresponds broadly with what was hypothesized.

In addition, following the discovery of not one intervening issue component, but rather two components (Time and Convenience and Health and Security), it was decided to consider all factors equally as conference factors, some representing "pull" factors (e.g. networking and personal/professional development) and others "constraints" (e.g. time and convenience). Cost may be considered to be both. This results in a slightly more complex model, which better describes the process of making the decision to attend a UK association conference.

This model, which follows the five-stage process identified during the literature review and confirmed at least in part during the fieldwork, is illustrated in Figure 5.16 can be described as follows:

Figure 5.16 Final Proposed Model of the UK Association Conference Attendance Decision-Making Process:



The potential delegate becomes aware of the conference, perhaps through association membership mailing, or conference advertising, or by word of mouth. Other sources

of information are also possible, including employers or workplaces. If the potential delegate does not receive this information and is unaware of the conference, then naturally they will not attend, as the decision will have been taken out of their hands. This represents the motivation stage and the existence of this stage was confirmed during the fieldwork as discussed under Demand and Trip Profile Characteristics (section 5.3.3).

Once the potential delegate is aware of the conference, there will be a process of evaluating the information that they have already received from their information source. This will usually be publicity material for the conference, which generally includes dates, location, prices and details on the conference topic. If the potential delegate feels that they do not have sufficient information on which to base their decision, then further information may be sought. Common sources for further information are local and national tourist information bodies, the internet and the conference organizer. This stage is the information search stage and again, its existence has been confirmed by this study – *cf* section 5.3.3.

If the potential delegate considers that he has all the information at his disposal that he needs to make his decision, then the next step will be evaluation of the conference factors. These are cost, location, networking opportunities and personal and professional development. Cost is a determining factor – lack of funds may actually prevent the delegate from attending, as is location – if the destination is not easily accessible from the delegate's home town, then this may cause the potential delegate to choose not to attend. Networking opportunities and personal and professional development are more goal-driven – they represent the "pull" elements of the decision. Perceived good opportunities to meet like-minded people, and chance to learn about new subjects and new research are strong motivation for the potential delegate to attend. If on the other hand, any of the conference factors induce a sense of unease, or uncertainty, or if the potential delegate simply finds the topic uninteresting or irrelevant, he is much more likely to choose not to attend.

Once the conference factors have been given due consideration, the possibility of constraints must be taken into account. These represent questions such as "Am I healthy enough to travel?" or "Is my personal safety assured at the destination?" as well as issues such as "Does the conference date clash with any other conferences I would like to attend, or any holidays that I have booked?"

The evaluation of conference factors and the consideration of constraints may take place concurrently or consecutively. If there are no constraints for the potential delegate, and if all the conference factors have been successfully evaluated, the potential delegate will then make his decision as to whether to attend, or not to attend, the conference. Six conference factors underpin the evaluation of alternatives stage, which is clearly part of the overall decision-making process.

Finally, once the decision to attend or not to attend has been made, this will inform future decision-making on the part of the potential delegate. A decision to attend means that the delegate will experience the conference and will then use this experience to help make the decision whether or not to attend the next conference that the association is holding, whilst a decision not to attend is more relevant to this particular conference since the circumstances which led to a refusal to attend this conference may change in future. Neither of these stages was directly tested during the fieldwork, but the results of other research outlined during the literature review would suggest that it is likely that both stages will form part of the decision-making process in the UK association conference context.

5.9 Comparing Findings With The Existing Literature

Research Objective E aimed to re-visit the literature on conference attendance in the light of the results of the data analysis in order to assess to what extent the conference factors identified are in line with any previous findings. With reference to the findings regarding the delegate characteristics discussed – membership and attendance, socio-demographic and demand and trip profile characteristics, there is little in the available literature to compare these findings with. The implications of

these findings therefore for practitioners in the conference industry are relatively substantial. Information that was not previously known has been presented, and associations and conference organisers may be able to use the knowledge of the characteristics of UK association conference delegates in different ways. For example, it has been demonstrated that membership of the association is an important factor in determining whether a potential delegate will decide to attend or not, with more association members attending the conferences than non-members. Additionally, the variables "being involved in the association" and "meeting old friends" were both seen to be rated significantly higher in importance by members than non-members. This suggests that if associations need to boost attendance at their conferences, they could try stressing these elements to their membership.

Other significant findings included the fact that both younger delegates and female delegates rated "being financed by employer" and "getting time off work" as important in the decision to attend. This suggests perhaps that the cost implications of attending a conference are of particular relevance to younger and to female delegates, and associations wanting to increase numbers at their conferences could consider implementing some kind of financial assistance scheme targeted at these groups.

Finally, it has been shown that the vast majority of delegates were travelling alone and were not adding on a short holiday to the conference. This has implications for conference organisers and associations regarding the programme that is set up for a conference. There are two possibilities – either trying to market add-on holidays to UK association conferences is a waste of scarce resources, or it may represent a gap in the market and a potential opportunity. In either case, it is useful and important information for practioners involved in the UK conference industry.

Moving on to the results of the PCA, it is interesting to compare the findings of this study with the somewhat limited research that has been carried out in this field. The main works that have been completed are those of Var *et al* (1985), Witt *et al* (1995), Oppermann (1995) and Oppermann & Chon (1997). In their study, Var *et al* (1985)

stressed the importance of the conference location, both its attractiveness and its accessibility. Both were found by this study to be important attributes of the decision process. Var *et al* also highlighted the utility of attending the meeting and interest in the programme on offer at the conference. "Interesting Topic" was the highest rated of the importance variables and so the findings of this study are in line with the results of their research. Witt *et al* (1995) accepted the accessibility and attractiveness of the destination as important in the decision to attend an association conference, but they also noted other conference-specific variables such as networking and learning about new subjects and developments in the field. This study also found these attributes to be important in the decision process. Finally, Witt *et al* (1995) stressed the importance of the cost aspect of attending a conference, both the cost of the conference itself and the cost of transport to get to the destination. Findings from this study are in line with and expand upon the conclusions of Witt *et al* (1995). However, it is important to point out that both Var *et al* (1985) and Witt *et al* (1995) considered the issue of attendance at international association conferences, and therefore there may be some considerable differences between the decisions to attend these international conferences, and the decision to attend a UK association conference, which was the focus of this study.

The most detailed work that had previously been carried out on the subject of the conference attendance decision was by Oppermann (1995) and Oppermann & Chon (1997). They proposed four factors as representing the decision to attend – personal and business factors, association and conference factors, location factors and intervening opportunities. The components of their four factors are in some ways similar to some of the factors in this study. For example, their association and conference factors included being involved in the association, creating a reputation amongst one's peers, meeting old friends and being part of the global community. This is very similar to the "networking" factor in this study. Additionally, their "intervening opportunities" factor is similar to the "time and convenience" factor that emerged from this study. This study has produced results which tie in well with these two factors.

However, their personal and business factor, which included being healthy enough to travel, being funded to attend, getting time off work, and professional advancement, was not replicated by this study, which showed loadings on two different factors for the above attributes – personal and professional development and health and security. It can be argued that two factors better represent the differing constructs involved.

Finally, their "location" factor included both attributes of the destination itself, such as the climate and destination image as well as the cost of accommodation and transport at the destination. The "location" factor which emerged from the PCA had loadings for attributes such as "visiting the surrounding area" and "attractive location" which are in essence linked to the destination image, but did not include any cost elements. Instead, a "cost" factor emerged from this study which included the cost of accommodation and cost of transport and also the cost of the conference itself.

In terms of the attributes in the importance scale, many were influenced by the work of Var *et al* (1985), Witt *et al* (1995), Oppermann (1995) and Oppermann & Chon (1997) and therefore it was reasonable to expect that these attributes would figure large in the findings of the study. Neither Var *et a*l (1985) nor Witt *et al* (1995) incorporated these attributes into any groupings, and so the results of the PCA carried out by this study cannot be compared in detail with their work. However, the work of Oppermann & Chon (1997) did present four factors that they consider make up the decision process of conference delegates. This study replicated two of their factors (association and conference factors and intervening opportunities), albeit with slightly different names – this study named them networking and time and convenience. Additionally, a similar location factor did emerge from this study, albeit with different attributes loading on it. This study did not however replicate the other factor identified by Oppermann & Chon (1997) as personal and business factors. Instead, this study proposed a further three factors – personal and professional development, health and security and cost.

This illustrates that the findings from this study, although not in complete agreement with the findings of previous research, do fit in with the broad themes and issues identified by previous authors in this field.

5.10 Conclusion

Once all the statistical tests have been carried out and the results have been noted, the final step in the process is to draw conclusions about the data. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the empirical research and data analysis has a two-fold dimension. In the first instance, it was an attempt to define the characteristics of delegates attending UK association conferences. This was done by analyzing the results of the questionnaire and subjecting them to a string of statistical tests. Non-parametric tests were chosen as the variables proved not to be normally-distributed and therefore the use of parametric tests such as t-tests and analysis of variance was not acceptable. Instead, relationships were tested using Mann-Whitney U tests, Chi square tests and Spearman's rank order correlations (*rho*). Characteristics were divided into three categories – membership and attendance, socio-demographic and demand and trip profile characteristics.

One of the research questions of this study required the gathering of facts and figures on association conference delegates such as their age range, their gender, and the geographical spread of delegates. Once these facts were established, further investigations were carried out to examine more details about delegates - whether most attendees were members of the association hosting the conference, whether they were travelling alone or accompanied and whether they were adding on any short holidays to the conference. The likelihood of delegates to attend the association conference again in the future was also considered.

With reference to membership and attendance characteristics, most delegates were members of the association holding the conference. Statistical tests on the data have also shown that the more times a delegate has attended the conference in the past, the

more importance is placed upon meeting old friends and remaining involved in the association. Additionally, there is a strong correlation between the number of times a delegate has attended the conference in the past and how long they have been members of the association. This would seem to suggest that those who have been members for a while continue to attend the association's conferences and attendance does not necessarily tail off when one has been a member for a while. It can be argued that membership of the association is an important, of not critical, part of deciding to attend the association conference, although these events are often open to non-members, who simply pay a higher conference fee to attend. Tests have shown that the more times a delegate has attended the conference in the past, the more importance is placed upon meeting old friends and remaining involved in the association.

Considering socio-demographic characteristics, it seems that women rank the cost implications of attending a conference more importantly than men, and in part at least, younger delegates rank the cost implications of attending a conference more importantly than older delegates. Significant differences were found between men and women in terms of whether they were paying for their own attendance at the conference or not. These findings are of interest, as they throw up important issues. With regard to age differences, significant differences were found in who was paying for attendance between the younger delegates and the older delegates. Employers were paying for many more of the younger delegates, whilst more of the older delegates were financing themselves. It was concluded that this may be in part accounted for by those delegates who had retired and therefore had no employers to pay for them, but may also reflect differing pay scales, with those younger delegates not being able to pay for their own attendance, and attending only because the employer was financing them.

However, caution is being urged with regard to conclusions being drawn about relationships between variables based on gender and age, as the high percentage of females at the nursing conference may have unintentionally introduced gender bias

into the results and also because not all of the hypotheses testing for significant between-groups differences were sustained.

Finally, the demand and trip profile characteristics of UK association conference delegates were examined, with the conclusion that very few delegates were adding on a short holiday, and in particular, those delegates who were travelling alone were least likely to add on a short holiday to the conference. This is of interest to associations and destination marketing bodies, since it suggests that marketing add-on holidays to association conferences may not be the best use of scarce resources. Additionally, it seems that the likelihood of a delegate attending the conference again in the future is influenced by how important they consider the contact with people aspects of a conference to be when they are making their decision to attend the conference.

The conclusions above have addressed the research question regarding defining the characteristics of UK association conference delegates.

The second part of this research concerned the proposal of a possible model of the conference attendance decision-making process. The scale items on the questionnaire were developed with this aim in mind. Principal components analysis was carried out for the reasons given (particularly because the data was not normally distributed) and an initial component matrix was created. As the initial solution was not clear, a Varimax rotation was performed with the intention of creating a simple solution. A six-component solution emerged which was not only a stable solution, but was also conceptually simple.

The emergence of a six-factor solution was in a sense confirmation of the six-factor hypothesis, as shown in the proposed model. Many aspects of the hypothesized model proved to be accurate, including the actual number of components in the model as well as many of the variables that load on these components. It is true that a number of variables emerged as part of components other than those that they were proposed to be part of and it is also true that two of the proposed components merged

into one, and two new components were created, but the principal of the six component model has been proven to be sound. The results of the principal components analysis allowed for the rejection of the null hypothesis and the subsequent acceptance of $\mathbf{H_{5.1}}$ and, by extension, the proposed model.

Further research objectives were addressed by examining the decision strategies that may play a part in the conference attendance decision, and by considering how well the results of this study tie in with the results of previous research. The conclusion is that although there is very little in the way of previous research to compare this study with, nonetheless, the broad themes and issues highlighted in this study seem to be in line with the existing literature.

An amended model was created (Figure 5.16) taking into account the changes required following the PCA and it is concluded that this model is representative of the conference attendance decision-making process at a UK association conference.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This aim of this thesis was to develop our knowledge of business tourism and particularly of the conference industry, by examining the decision-making process of UK association conference delegates. Four research questions were identified in Chapter One which led to the development of a set of research objectives and this chapter will outline the findings with regard to each of these objectives and will form the conclusion to the thesis. In the first instance, there will be a brief re-stating of the results of the literature review carried out in Chapters Two and Three. This will be followed by a summary of the research findings reported in Chapter Five, in respect of the hypotheses. There will then be a discussion on how these findings relate to the research questions set out in the Introduction.

Once the conclusions of these findings have been drawn, this chapter will move on to consider to what degree these findings can be generalised to the association conference sector. The reliability and validity of this research will also be discussed.

Limitations of this study will also be discussed, along with any areas where with hindsight, the research could have progressed differently, and this section will also make suggestions for future research projects which could address issues not covered in this study, or perhaps could expand upon certain aspects of this study.

The chapter will conclude with some remarks on the implications of the findings of this research, both in an academic context and also for practitioners in the conference industry and on the contribution that this research has made.

6.1 Summary of Research Findings

Chapter One introduced the main aims of this research, by outlining four main research questions that would form the backbone of the thesis. These questions were

identified as "to what extent can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context?", "how can the characteristics of UK association conference delegates best be defined?", "can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend?" and "can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making?

From these research questions, a series of research objectives was devised (those research objectives that involved a literature review or qualitative research have been labelled with letters, whilst those that can be measured statistically have been labelled with numbers).

Research Objective A

To examine those delegate characteristics about which little is currently known and that may be of interest to practitioners in the conference industry and to structure these characteristics into meaningful groupings in order to create a classification system that can be used as a basis for any future research.

Research Objective B

To analyse the available literature on consumer behaviour, decision strategies and leisure tourism decision-making models and assess their applicability in the conference context

Research Objective C

To give consideration to the decision strategies and rules that may be in operation in the association conference attendance decision-making process.

Research Objective D

To propose a model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process taking into account any changes occasioned by the results of the data analysis.

Research Objective E

To re-visit the literature on conference attendance in the light of the results of the data analysis in order to assess to what extent the conference factors identified are in line with any previous findings

Research Objective 1

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the membership and attendance characteristics and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 2

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the age characteristics of the delegates and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 3

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the gender characteristics of the delegates and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 4

To assess where there are similarities and differences on the variables based on the demand and trip profile characteristics of the delegates and test for these hypothesised similarities and differences.

Research Objective 5

To identify the number and characteristics of the factors underpinning the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate

Chapters Two and Three constituted the literature review part of this thesis and addressed in part the initial research question (regarding the extent to which existing models of the leisure tourism decision process can be applied in the conference

context). With reference to the second research question, defining the characteristics of UK association conference delegates, the literature review did not provide much information except by highlighting that very little work had been carried out from the perspective of individual conference delegates.

Chapter Two provided the context for the research, by examining the nature and scope of the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) segment of the tourist industry. The conclusions from Chapter Two were that of all the different types of conferences, association conferences would constitute an interesting case study of conference decision-making. The reasons for this were outlined as being primarily two-fold. In the first place, by and large, association members have to pay to be members and have to pay to attend events organised by the association. This means that associations really have to lure their members to attend events such as the annual conference. The location has to be attractive, the cost within reason and the social programme and accompanying persons programmes must be worth paying for. This indicates that potential delegates in the association conference sector may well display a complex decision-making process

Additionally, and within the context of this research, perhaps the most important aspect of the association market is the fact that, for the most part, attendance is discretionary on the part of the attendee. This contrasts markedly with the corporate sector, where attendance is often compulsory. It is this discretionary element, described by Oppermann and Chon (1997, p 179) as "freedom of choice" on the part of the association conference attendee, which makes it possible to consider the decision-making process undertaken by conference delegates when they choose to attend an association conference. Given the issues of discretionary attendance and freedom of choice, it was suggested that the consumer behaviour displayed by delegates attending an association conference would be as complex as the consumer behaviour displayed by leisure tourists when deciding to take a holiday and that as a result models of leisure tourist decision-making may be adapted in order to reflect accurately the decision to attend an association conference. This chapter concluded by stating that this research would concentrate on association conferences in the UK.

Chapter Three was divided into two sections. Section One analysed the literature in order to assess to what extent existing models of leisure tourism decision-making can be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context. Existing models of decision-making, both generally and specific to leisure tourism were examined, along with some consideration of decision heuristics and the preponderance of five stages within the models was observed. This suggested that any model of decision-making in the association conference context was likely to reflect these five stages. These stages were identified as motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, decision and post-decision behaviour. In order to assess the suitability of these stages for the association conference decision-making process, each stage was discussed in detail and the specific features of the association conference decision that were pertinent to each stage were also identified. Section One concluded that, although the composition of three of the stages (motivation, information search and evaluation of alternatives) would be different in the association conference decision-making context, the potential delegate would still pass through each of these stages, and therefore it would be justified to include these three stages in any proposed model of the association conference decision-making process. It was further accepted that the decision and post-decision behaviour stages would also be relevant, and therefore a five stage process of association conference attendance decision-making was proposed.

Section Two of Chapter Three moved on to consider the component parts of one of these stages. It was decided that the evaluation of alternatives stage of the process was the most complex and the least understood, and therefore the various factors that might form part of this stage were identified in order to create a complete theoretical framework that could be examined during the fieldwork stage of the research. A gap in the literature was identified regarding the factors that any potential delegate might consider when making their decision whether or not to attend an association conference and therefore, the literature on conferences in general was examined in order to ascertain which factors might belong in the evaluation of alternative stage of the decision-making process.

The work of Oppermann & Chon (1997) was acknowledged as being the main source of possible factors, but other aspects of the literature were also examined and six factors were finally proposed as being representative of the conceptual framework for the evaluation of alternatives stage of the association conference attendance decision-making process. These were cost, location, social aspects, networking opportunities, personal/professional development and intervening issues.

In this way, Chapters Two and Three had suggested that existing models of leisure tourism decision-making could potentially be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context and correspondingly a model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process was proposed.

The results of the literature review informed the requirements of the fieldwork. It was decided that the fieldwork would address two main issues – defining the characteristics of association conference delegates, and testing the proposed model – and therefore decisions had to be made about operationalising the concepts involved. This was the subject of Chapter Four, which also declared the epistemological standpoint that would underpin the research. It was argued that the research would be grounded in the principles of critical realism. Proponents of critical realism argue that since measurement is fallible, multiple measures and observations are vital (Trochim 2004). This research was designed in such a way as to attempt to minimise the fallibility of the measures used by introducing a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. These included qualitative interviews and a quantitative questionnaire.

Initially, short interviews were held with conference professionals. These were not intended to form a major part of the data collection process, but rather they were intended to throw up contributions to the questionnaire development, and in particular to the attribute scales designed to measure the accuracy of the hypothesised model, and in this they were highly successful. They were a form of triangulation and validation of the factors that had already arisen from the literature

review. The content of the interviews endorsed the conceptual model which had been identified and further supported the use of this conceptual framework in the questionnaire design.

The design of the questionnaire was also discussed in Chapter Four. The questionnaire included demographic questions, questions aimed at generating further information about delegates at UK association conferences and scales intended to generate data on why delegates chose to attend the conferences.

Following disappointing pilot study results, major changes were made to the scales in the questionnaire and as a result two attribute scales were developed which were intended to reflect the conceptual framework that had been created.

The final questionnaire was distributed to approximately 1400 association conference delegates at six conferences held in different locations throughout the UK (four in Glasgow, one in Liverpool and one in Edinburgh). 220 useable responses were returned and analysed. The sample was a convenience sample, and the issues surrounding the use of this sampling technique were acknowledged.

The data proved to be reliable, following tests for internal reliability of the scale items, and the research claims validity on grounds of face validity, construct validity and factorial validity. Once the issues of sampling, reliability and validity had been addressed, the research moved on to the data analysis stage.

Chapter Five concerned itself with the findings of the fieldwork stage. The discussion of the findings was divided into two main sections. Initially, the characteristics of UK association conference delegates were examined, and thereafter, the proposed model was tested.

The delegate characteristics were divided into three main types – marketing & attendance characteristics, socio-demographic characteristics and demand and trip profile characteristics. The hypotheses were designed in line with the gaps in the

literature identified in Chapter Two. The initial results showed a pattern of non-normal distribution and therefore the use of non-parametric statistical testing was accepted. The results of the hypothesis testing will be summarised here.

With regard to membership & attendance characteristics, it was suggested that members of the association would have attended the conference many more times in the past than non-members of the association and further that non-members were unlikely to have attended the conference before in the past. Therefore Hypothesis 1.1 was proposed:

Hypothesis 1.1

H_0 = There will be no significant difference in number of times attended based on whether the delegate is a member of the association holding the conference or not.

$H_{1.1}$ = There will be a significant difference in number of times attended based on whether the delegate is a member of the association holding the conference or not.

The results showed that members of the association had attended the conference more times in the past than non-members, and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected and $H_{1.1}$ was confirmed.

It was also suggested that whether or not a delegate was a member of the association holding the conference would inform their responses to the questionnaire and that the importance variables meeting old friends and being involved in the association would be ranked differently by association members compared with non-members.

Hypothesis 1.2

II_0 = Association members do not rate "meeting old friends" significantly higher in importance' than non-members

$II_{1.2}$ = Association members rate "meeting old friends" significantly higher in importance than non-members

Hypothesis 1.3

H_0 = Association members do not rate "being involved in the association" significantly higher in importance' than non-members

$H_{1.3}$ = Association members rate "being involved in the association" significantly higher in importance than non-members

It was argued that since tests showed that association members did rank meeting old friends and involvement with the association more highly than non-members, both the null hypotheses could be rejected and $H_{1.2}$ and $H_{1.3}$ were accepted.

The next type of characteristics to be examined was socio-demographic characteristics. It was suggested that the age of delegates attending the association conferences would provide further information on the characteristics of UK association conference delegates and that financially-related variables would be a good starting point to check for between-groups differences with age as a grouping variable. Five hypotheses were put forward to test this suggestion:

Hypothesis 2.1

II_0 = The younger age group (25 – 44) do not rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

$H_{2.1}$ = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

Hypothesis 2.2

II_0 = The younger age group (25 – 44) do not rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

$II_{2.2}$= The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

Hypothesis 2.3

II_0 = The younger age group (25 – 44) do not rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

$H_{2.3}$ = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups

Hypothesis 2.4

H_0 = The younger age group (25 – 44) do not rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

$H_{2.4}$ = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups

Hypothesis 2.5

H_0 = The younger age group (25 – 44) do not rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups.

$H_{2.5}$ = The younger age group (25 – 44) rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than the other age groups

These hypotheses were only partially supported as differences were found with relation to only two financially-related importance variable (being financed by one's employer and getting time off work). However, the other financially-related variables showed no between-groups differences with age as a grouping variable. Therefore, the null hypotheses could not be rejected for $H_{2.1}$, $H_{2.2}$, and $H_{2.3}$. Only $H_{2.4}$ and $H_{2.5}$ were confirmed.

It was also suggested that the gender of delegates would be one of the main characteristics of delegates that would assist in fulfilling the aims of this research and that again financially-related variables would be a reasonable differentiator between men and women. Again, five hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 3.1

H_0 = Women do not rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men

$H_{3.1}$ = Women rate the importance variable "cost of conference" significantly higher in importance than men.

Hypothesis 3.2

H_0 *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.2}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "cost of accommodation" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.3

H_0 *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.3}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "cost of transport" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.4

H_0 *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.4}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "being financed by employer" significantly higher in importance than men.*

Hypothesis 3.5

H_0 *= Women **do not** rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men*

$H_{3.5}$ *= Women rate the importance variable "getting time off work" significantly higher in importance than men.*

The findings highlighted some significant differences between men and women when it came to the cost element of the decision-making process. Women placed more importance on the cost of accommodation and cost of transport than men. Women ranked being financed by their employer and getting time off work more importantly than men in the overall decision-making process. Only for the variable "cost of conference" were there no significant differences between men and women

in the importance ratings ($H_{3.1}$ was rejected). In conclusion, the null hypotheses for four of these hypotheses can be rejected and $H_{3.2}$, $H_{3.3}$, $H_{3.4}$ and $H_{3.5}$ can be accepted

The final type of characteristics that were examined was considered to be demand and trip profile characteristics. This covered issues such as whether the delegate was travelling alone, or would be adding on a short holiday to the conference, and what was their likelihood of future attendance.

It was proposed that those delegates travelling alone would much less likely to want to add on a short holiday before or after the conference.

Hypothesis 4.1

H_0 = *Delegates travelling alone are not significantly less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference than delegates travelling accompanied.*

$H_{4.1}$ = *Delegates travelling alone are significantly less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference than delegates travelling accompanied.*

A Chi-Square test for independence was carried out in order to test this hypothesis, but the assumptions for this test (that ideally no cells should have an expected count of less than 5) was not met, and therefore other methods of analysis were used to test this hypothesis.

A conclusive 89.1% of delegates were not adding on any holidays to the conference, therefore it seems that in general delegates were unlikely to be adding on a short holiday, regardless of who they were travelling with. With reference to the hypothesis, 91.3% of delegates travelling alone were not adding on a short holiday to the conference and so it seems reasonable to conclude that delegates travelling alone are less likely to add on a short holiday to the conference. However, it was not possible to test this conclusively using statistical analysis and so the null hypothesis must be accepted, and $H_{4.1}$ rejected.

The collation of these statistics and the results of the hypothesis testing so far had addressed one specific research question that was outlined in the Introduction, regarding defining the characteristics of association conference delegates. There remained one final hypothesis to be tested, concerning the number of factors that underpin the association conference decision process. The literature review suggested that the evaluation of alternatives stage consisted of those factors and suggested that there were six factors – cost, location, social aspects, networking opportunities, personal/professional development and intervening opportunities. This was hypothesised as follows:

Hypothesis 5.1

H_0 *= Six factors* ***do not*** *underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate*

$H_{5.1}$ *= Six factors underpin the attendance decision process of a UK association conference delegate*

It was decided to test these factors using factor analysis. The best form of factor analysis available was Principal Components Analysis (PCA). An initial component matrix was created but as the initial solution was not clear, a Varimax rotation was performed with the intention of creating a simple solution. A six-component solution emerged which was not only a stable solution, but was also conceptually simple and emphasised the confirmatory nature of the factor analysis.

The emergence of a six-factor solution was confirmation of the six-factor hypothesis. Many aspects of the hypothesized model proved to be accurate, including the actual number of components in the model as well as many of the variables that load on these components. A certain number of variables emerged as part of components other than those that they were proposed to be part of and additionally two of the proposed components merged into one, allowing for the creation of a new component, but the principal of the six component model has been proven to be sound. The results of the principal components analysis allowed for the rejection of the null hypothesis and therefore $H_{5.1}$ can be confirmed.

6.2 Conclusions Pertaining to the Research Questions

Following analysis of the research findings, the research questions can now be addressed as follows.

Research Question 1: To what extent can existing models of leisure tourism decision-making be adapted to represent the decision-making process in the UK association conference attendance context?

It is argued that the five-stage model which has emerged from the detailed analysis of decision-making in a leisure tourism context may potentially be representative of the decision-making process in an association conference context. The individual components of the first three stages (motivation, information search and evaluation of alternatives) may differ dependent on the context of the purchase/decision to attend, but the final two stages (decision and post purchase behaviour) will remain relatively constant regardless of the actual purchase made. Therefore, research question one has been answered satisfactorily.

Research Question 2: How can the characteristics of UK association conference delegates best be defined?

There was a gap in the literature regarding the characteristics of association conference delegates and therefore this research set out to define these characteristics. It was decided that an acceptable way to define them was on the basis of three types of characteristics, described as membership & attendance, socio-demographic and demand and trip profile characteristics. The findings were as detailed in Chapter Five and summarised above. This research question was also addressed.

Research Question 3: Can underlying dimensions be identified among the attributes influencing the potential UK association conference delegate's decision whether or not to attend?

The literature review identified six factors or underlying dimensions that underpin the decision process when deciding whether or not to attend a UK association conference. These were tested during the fieldwork, and following the findings of the data analysis, they can be identified as Networking, Personal and Professional Development, Cost, Location, Time & Convenience and Health & Security. This research question was satisfactorily answered.

Research Question 4: Can any such dimensions usefully be incorporated into a potential model of conference attendance decision making?

Once the five-stage process of motivation, information search, evaluation of alternatives, decision and post-decision behaviour had been identified, and the underlying dimensions of the evaluation of alternative stage had been tested, it became possible to propose a synthesis of these two concepts, and to propose a model of UK association conference attendance decision-making process, as illustrated in Figure 5.16. The possible decision strategies used by potential UK association conference delegates were also considered, with the suggestion that although the decision-making process is unique to each individual, there is a reasonable likelihood of a compensatory decision strategy being used. This would allow potential attendees to weigh up the pros and cons of attending, and would allow positive attributes associated with attending to outweigh any negative aspects of the conference. This is in line with the suggestion that a complex decision-making process is at work in this situation. Therefore, it can be argued that incorporating the six conference factors discovered into the proposed model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process is indeed a useful step, with the proviso that each decision is unique to each individual and any model of the decision process should include all the factors that underpin the decision process, without requiring each delegate to consider each factor every time. Thus, the final research question was also answered.

6.3 Generalisability

In order to assess generalisability, it is important to address the twin issues of reliability and validity, since research which is neither reliable nor valid certainly cannot claim to be generalisable.

These points were raised in Chapter Four, and were discussed separately. Reliability refers to consistency and replicability of results, whilst validity refers to the extent to which the research accurately reflects the phenomenon under study.

With reference to reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the two scales in the questionnaire – one measuring determinants of behaviour, the other measuring goal-driven behaviour. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for all the scale items in total. According to De Vaus (2002), alpha should be at least 0.7 before the scale can be said to be reliable. The reliability of the total scale items sits at over 0.9 in this research which according to the 0.7 benchmark indicates a high degree of reliability. It can therefore be argued that this research instrument is reliable.

Validity is claimed for this research on three main grounds. The study can reasonably claim face validity, since it can be reasonably said, at face value, to look like a study of decision-making. However, this is clearly not enough. This research also claims construct validity, by identifying variables which exhibit convergent validity and those which exhibit discriminant validity (for more details, refer back to Chapter Four). Finally, the study claims factorial validity, where the results of factor analysis are consistent which what was expected.

Therefore, the study claims to be both reliable and valid, and the discussion can move forward to look at the representativeness of the sample.

The study used a convenience sample, and acknowledges its limitations. Unfortunately, for several reasons, other forms of non-probability sampling proved

impossible for this research. First and foremost, there is to the researcher's knowledge, no sampling framework that would be relevant to this research. This makes identifying the population extremely difficult and as a result it would be highly unlikely that any sample of the population could be identified with certainty.

Additionally, there were problems in getting permission to conduct the survey at some conferences and this limited the number of delegates that could be approached. This point was discussed in the section on time, location and method of questionnaire completion in Chapter Four. Finally, there are the perennial questions of time and money in a study of this nature – a lack of both curtailed the options open to the researcher.

Attempts were made to minimise the limitations of the convenience sample, and conferences in different UK locations were surveyed. Had all the conferences surveyed been in the one location, this would have meant that the results were only applicable to that one location, so the use of different conference destinations has mitigated this issue.

In line with the view expressed by Arber (2001 p. 61): "where the researcher's aim is to generate theory [...] the representativeness of the sample is less important", the results cannot be claimed to be generalisable to the conference industry as a whole, but they do contribute to knowledge about UK association conferences and the characteristics of their delegates and they do provide support for the emerging model of the association conference attendance decision-making process.

Finally, it is worth stressing again that models of consumer behaviour can be representative of the nature of decision-making, but because each decision is made by one individual, a behavioural model can never predict the behaviour of every person making a decision. In that sense, this model is argued to be representative of the broad nature of the UK association conference decision-making process without claiming to be applicable in every individual case. The six conference factors in the

evaluation of alternatives stage underpin the decision process, but their relative influence is currently unclear.

In summary, although generalisability is the aim of much research carried out, in the specific case of behavioural models it is difficult to achieve. This model is reliable and claims validity on several levels and therefore is proposed to be representative of the nature of decision-making in the UK association conference context, but it would not necessarily be advisable to generalise these findings to all UK association conferences.

6.4 Limitations of this research

This research has contributed to knowledge as described above, but there are always limitations on what can be achieved with any single piece of work. Additionally, hindsight can often suggest that an alternative strategy or research method may have brought about improved results. For example, one of the chosen research methods of this study was a questionnaire. Self-completion questionnaires like this one do have attendant disadvantages, including the fact that the respondent cannot seek clarification from the researcher if he or she is not present, and the fact that they are traditionally associated with low response rates. Nonetheless, it was decided to proceed with this method and attempts were made to mitigate these potential disadvantages.

In this particular case, as is often the case with research, financial and temporal constraints meant that the sample was not as large as had been hoped. There were difficulties in getting associations to permit the distribution of the questionnaire, which limited the pool of available conferences and at certain conferences, the response rates were particularly disappointing. The total number of useable responses was 220 (15.6% response rate) and although this is a respectable response rate, the total number of cases was of particular importance in the decision to use factor analysis. Although the use of factor analysis was justified, it could be argued that a greater number of cases would have provided a more reliable solution.

However, without further research, it cannot be stated that a greater number of cases would have provided any different findings. It may be the case that a larger sample would have provided similar results.

The same financial and temporal constraints and the lack of assistance from certain associations also meant that the potential gender bias occasioned by the inclusion of the Royal College of Nursing Conference (96% female delegates) could not be balanced by including other conferences in the fieldwork. It was also not clear in advance of the fieldwork, to what extent including this particular conference would create a significant gender bias in the sample. In the final analysis, it is argued that the results of the statistical tests carried out were not adversely affected by the large number of female delegates, but nonetheless the inclusion of a different conference instead would have removed this potential problem.

Additionally, there were several areas where this study did not provide as much information as was hoped. In the first instance, it had been hoped that three stages of the proposed model could be tested. However, with reference to the motivation and information search stages, a lack of responses and the resulting low numbers of responses meant that statistical tests could not be carried out with accuracy. This means that this research can suggest that the potential delegate does appear to pass through the motivation and information search stages in their decision-making process, but cannot state conclusively what the components of these stages are in the association conference context.

The post-decision behaviour of the UK association conference delegate was not examined in this research. It was suggested that the decision and post-decision behaviour stages of the decision-making process would be similar regardless of context, and therefore that the post-decision behaviour of conference delegates would be similar to the post-purchase behaviour of leisure tourists. However, this can only be suggested at this time, and cannot claim to be an accurate reflection of the situation in reality. Further research would be required to clarify this matter.

6.5 Future research

The main suggestions for future research arising from this study concern the stages of the proposed model that were not directly examined in this research. These include motivation, information search and post-decision behaviour.

With regard to the motivation element of the proposed model, the results for this show support for the suggested items being the main ways that potential delegates hear about association conferences in the first place (association mailing, word of mouth, advertisements and others), but further research could be carried out into the effect on motivation to attend a conference that each of these sources of information have on potential delegates.

The results of this study show that it can be surmised that the number of delegates who require further information once they have heard about the conference is fairly low, but further research is required in order to clarify this. Therefore, although it has already been argued that the association conference attendance decision-making process does include an information search stage, further definitive statements about the contents of this stage cannot be made on the basis of the results of this study.

In addition, further research could clarify the nature of post-decision behaviour in the association conference context, with particular reference to whether satisfaction with this conference will lead to attendance again next time. The creation of a construct to measure overall satisfaction with a conference would be of practical use to associations trying to increase attendance levels at their events, as it may be possible to identify and address any issues of dissatisfaction at events before they cause the delegate to consider not attending again in the future

Finally, it would be of interest to carry out further research into how the six factors that underpin the attendance decision are used, with particular reference to the decision strategies in use during the decision process.

The characteristics of UK association conference delegates have been defined to a certain extent by this study, but it would be interesting and useful for practical purposes if further research could be carried out into the nature of these characteristics, and also into whether they are specific to the UK association context, or could be applied to domestic association conferences in other countries.

6.6 Contributions of Research

In terms of the practical applications of this research, certain aspects are of particular relevance to conference organisers and other practitioners in the conference industry. Findings such as the high numbers of delegates travelling alone, and the correspondingly low numbers of delegates adding on a short holiday to the conference may be food for thought for destination marketing bodies, and conference organisers, since it could be argued that spending large sums of money trying to market add-on holidays to delegates at UK association conference delegates would not be the best use of valuable and scarce resources. On the other hand, this may represent a gap in the market and a potential opportunity.

Further points of interest to the conference industry include the findings regarding the characteristics of UK association conference delegates as defined in this study. For example, it has been shown that women rank cost variables more importantly than men, and the younger age group (25-44 years) rank certain cost variables more importantly than the older age groups (44-65 and 65 and over). Therefore, there may be value in targeting certain groups with financial assistance to attend – encouraging sponsorship by employers perhaps, or organising conferences at a more affordable level in order to increase attendance. These may be points of interest to associations when considering their next conference.

Finally, for associations themselves, it will be of interest to note that their members consistently rated involvement with the association importantly in their decision to attend. Additionally, supporting the association was a commonly-cited reason for attendance by association members. Associations will also be pleased to see that the

overwhelming majority of delegates (83.2%) said that they were quite likely, or extremely likely to attend the conference again in the future. This may be indicative that the conferences surveyed were perceived to be fairly successful events, but may also reflect loyalty to the professional association.

The creation of a model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process is also of practical value to associations and conference organisers. Amongst other things, models allow the creation of a clearly illustrated conceptual framework for the decision-making process which can be used to help marketers target their audience during the right phases of the process in order for their messages to be heard most clearly. This may help in increasing attendance at association conferences, and may help in the design of conference programmes to suit the needs and wants of delegates as identified during this research.

With reference to the academic contributions of this study, it has been stressed throughout this study that very little currently exists in the literature concerning the decision-making process undertaken by a potential association conference delegate when deciding to attend an association conference. This study has contributed towards a deeper understanding of this decision-making process. Additionally, the previous research that has been carried out in this area had focussed on international association conferences, and USA domestic association conferences. This study took the situation in the UK as its focus and contributed to knowledge on association conferences in this specific geographic area. Comparison with the findings from the other studies into delegate conference attendance show that the results of this study, although not in complete agreement with the findings of previous research, do fit in with the broad themes and issues identified by previous authors in this field. Where the results differ, this may be in part attributable to cultural and spatial differences between the UK (the focus of this study) and the US (the focus of the work of Oppermann & Chon 1997).

This research has contributed to knowledge in two areas – consumer behaviour in tourism and MICE tourism

In terms of consumer behaviour in tourism this study has taken established theory in the leisure tourism context and applied it successfully to the association conference context. This demonstrates the wider application of consumer behaviour theory and in a sense contributes towards further validation of the theories of leisure tourism decision-making.

In the MICE tourism context, it appeared that there was no widely accepted typology of the UK association delegate, and this research has helped to define the membership & attendance, socio-demographic and demand and trip profile characteristics of UK association conference delegates that can be taken forward and used in further research. This represents an original contribution to knowledge.

Additionally, and finally, this research has also contributed to knowledge by designing a conceptual framework for the UK association conference attendance decision-making process, and by testing this conceptual framework and as a result proposing a behavioural model of the UK association conference attendance decision-making process.

APPENDIX ONE

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: What is your job title and role within the organisation?

Interviewee: I am the Senior Associations Executive, and my job is to work towards attracting association conferences to Glasgow.

Interviewer: What are the main areas of responsibility of your organisation?

Interviewee: To bring economic benefit to the Glasgow area through creating customers for the destination

Interviewer: In your opinion, what makes people decide to attend an association conference?

Interviewee: Well, it depends a bit on the conference – perhaps the scientific or academic content of the conference, or maybe the attractiveness of the destination,
or the ease of access to the destination. The last two would be the same for any association probably.

Interviewer: I'm now going to ask you about several areas that people might consider when they are deciding to attend an association conference. Firstly, in your opinion, is cost an important factor?

Interviewee: Yes, but probably only if it is very expensive.

Interviewer: What about the conference location?

Interviewee: Definitely, both in terms of the accessibility of the destination and its attractiveness

Interviewer: Do you think that the social aspects of the conference are an important factor in deciding whether or not to attend a conference?

Interviewee: Yes. In fact, many association delegates become good friends and make a point of meeting up at conferences

Interviewer: In your opinion, are the networking opportunities available at an association conference important to the delegate when he or she is deciding to attend?

Interviewee: Yes, especially in terms of career building.

Interviewer: And finally, what about the possibilities for personal or professional
development at an association conference – are they important in the delegate's decision?

Interviewee: Yes, again I think that this is about career building.

Interviewer: What are the main reasons that you can think of that would actually prevent someone from attending an association conference?

Interviewee: Well, there are a few. Safety worries perhaps, if they felt that their safety would not be assured at the destination. Also, if the destination was not easy to get to from where they lived. Perhaps it might be too expensive, or ...? Actually if the scientific content wasn't up to scratch, that might put them off.

Interviewer: That brings me on to another question. What are the main reasons that you can think of that would put someone off attending an association conference?

Interviewee: Lack of scientific content, as I just said, but also perhaps if the delegate is away from home too much already, they might decide not to attend. Also, conflicting events within the field that are too similar – they can't attend everything!

Interviewer: Finally, do you have any comments to make on your ideas of the process undertaken by potential delegates when deciding whether or not to attend an association conference?

Interviewee: Association delegates are usually very loyal and would enjoy attending – they are good attendees. This might have a bearing on their decision.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Note: All other transcripts are available from the researcher on request.

APPENDIX TWO

QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN PILOT STUDY

I am a PhD student at the University of Strathclyde. The following is a short questionnaire on the subject of conference attendance. The results will be used to create a model of the conference participation decision-making process. Please tick the boxes that apply.

1 **Are you male or female?** Male ☐ Female ☐

2 **What is your age?**
Less than 30 years ☐
30 – 50 years ☐
More than 50 years ☐

3 **How far have you travelled to attend this conference?**
Less than 20 miles ☐
20 – 100 miles ☐
More than 100 miles ☐

4 **How many association conferences do you usually attend per year?**
This is my first conference ☐
On average, less than one per year ☐
1 per year ☐
2 – 5 per year ☐
More than 5 per year ☐

5a. **Are you a member of this association?**
Yes ☐
No ☐

5b. **If yes, how long have you been a member of this association?**
Less than 1 year ☐
2 – 10 years ☐
More than 10 years ☐

6 **How many times have you attended this conference in the past?**

_____

7 **Who is financing your attendance at this conference?**
Employer ☐
Association ☐
Self ☐
Other ☐
Rather not reply ☐

8 **Approximately how much would you estimate that this conference is costing you personally? (Inclusive of accommodation, travel and conference fees)**

£_____

9 **How did you originally hear about this conference?**

Association Membership Mailing ☐
Word of Mouth ☐
Advertising ☐
Other (please detail) _____ ☐

_____

10 **Did you seek any further information on the conference destination before you decided to attend?**

Yes (please detail) _____ ☐

_____

No ☐

11 **Are you adding on a short holiday to the conference?**

Yes, before the conference starts ☐
Yes, after the conference has finished ☐
No ☐

12 **Are you travelling alone, or with a partner or family?**

Alone ☐
With partner ☐
With partner and family ☐

13 **What do you consider to be your reasons for attending this conference?**

_____

_____

14 **If you were not attending this conference, what else might you spend the time doing?**

_____

_____

15 **Did you consider any of the following when you decided to attend this conference? If yes, please rank them from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important). If no, please leave blank.**

☐ Cost of the conference
☐ Location of the conference
☐ Networking opportunities at the conference
☐ The social programme
☐ The conference programme/list of contributors
☐ Other (please detail) _____

I would now like to ask you for some of your opinions regarding attending this conference. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16	I always attend this association conference regardless of the cost involved					
17	I would opt out of this conference if I thought that it did not represent value for money					
18	I always attend this association conference regardless of where it is held					
19	A good social programme is my top priority when deciding to attend a conference					
20	Meeting like-minded people is the prime reason for attending an association conference					
21	I would never miss an opportunity to listen to the speakers and attend the seminars					
22	All members of this association have a duty to attend this conference					
23	Attending this conference means sacrificing time with my family					
24	Delegates who are dissatisfied with any aspect of this conference will probably not come back next time					

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Please deposit completed questionnaires in the box provided at the registration desk.

APPENDIX THREE

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

For Office Use

ID

CC

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire has been designed to gather information on the decision-making process behind attending an association conference. The information you provide will contribute to the creation of a model of this decision-making process. All the information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and collated in such a way that it will not be possible to identify an individual response. **For any more information on this survey, please contact Judith Mair at The Scottish Hotel School, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK (judith.mair@strath.ac.uk).**

Please read the following questions carefully and tick the responses that apply.

1 Where have you travelled from to attend this conference (nearest town/city)?

_____

2a. Are you a member of this association?

Yes ☐
No ☐

2b. If yes, how long have you been a member of this association?

_____ Years

3 How many times have you attended this conference in the past?

_____

4 Who is financing your attendance at this conference?

Employer ☐
Association ☐
Self ☐
Other ☐
Rather not reply ☐

5 Apart from the association membership fee, have you personally incurred any financial cost in attending this conference?

Yes ☐
No ☐
Don't Know ☐

6 How did you originally hear about this conference?

Association Membership Mailing ☐
Word of Mouth ☐
Advertising ☐
Other (please detail) _____ ☐

_____

7a Did you seek any additional information on the conference destination before you decided to attend?

Yes ☐
No ☐

7b **If yes, which of the following sources of information did you find most useful?**
(Please indicate by circling the appropriate number on each scale)

	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful	Didn't Use
The Internet	1	2	3	0
The local Tourist Information Office	1	2	3	0
VisitScotland	1	2	3	0
The Conference Organiser	1	2	3	0
Other (please detail below) _____	1	2	3	0

8 **Are you adding on a short holiday to the conference?**
Yes, before the conference starts ☐
Yes, after the conference has finished ☐
No ☐

9 **Are you travelling alone, with colleagues or with a partner or family?**
Alone ☐
With colleague/s ☐
With partner ☐
With partner and family ☐

10 **Please state below your two main reasons for attending this conference**

_____

_____

11 ***I would now like to ask you for some of your opinions regarding attending this conference. Please indicate (by circling the appropriate number on each scale), how important the following determinant attributes were in your decision to attend this conference:***

		Extremely Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Fairly Unimportant	Neither Unimportant nor Important	Fairly Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	No Opinion
1.	Cost of conference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
2.	Cost of accommodation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
3.	Cost of transport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
4.	Accessible location	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
5.	Attractive location	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
6.	No date clash with other conferences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
7.	No date clash with holidays already booked	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
8.	Healthy enough to travel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
9.	Available medical facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
10.	Available time off work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
11.	Fulfilling my job description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
12.	Attendance financed by employer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
13.	Interesting conference topic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
14.	Safe destination	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

12 ***Please indicate (by circling the appropriate number on each scale), how important the following motivational attributes were in your decision to attend this conference***

		Extremely Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Fairly Unimportant	Neither Unimportant nor Important	Fairly Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	No Opinion
1.	Visiting the surrounding area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
2.	Making professional contacts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
3.	Professional advancement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
4.	Generating new business	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
5.	Making new friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
6.	Meeting old friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
7.	Being involved in the association	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
8.	Mixing with the "global community"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
9.	Learning about a new subject	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
10.	Hearing new research in my field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
11.	Establishing a reputation amongst my peers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
12.	Getting out of the office	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
13.	Combining the conference with a visit to friends and relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
14.	Spending time with like-minded people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
15.	Meeting up-and coming professionals in my field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

13 **How likely are you to attend this association conference in the future?**

- Extremely likely ☐
- Quite Likely ☐
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely ☐
- Quite Unlikely ☐
- Extremely Unlikely ☐

14 **Are you male or female?** Male ☐ Female ☐

15 **What is your age?**

- 15-24 years ☐
- 25-44 years ☐
- 45-64 years ☐
- 65 years and over ☐

16 **What is your occupation?** _____

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Please deposit completed questionnaires in the box provided at the registration desk.

APPENDIX FOUR

ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cost of Conference	.183	.157	.828	4.414E-02	.146	.120
Cost of Accommodation	.163	6.183E-02	.880	6.427E-02	9.198E-02	.158
Cost of Transport	.122	.139	.836	.170	.112	.212
Accessible Location	7.079E-02	.155	.472	7.926E-02	.597	-1.45E-02
Attractive Location	.264	1.003E-02	7.635E-02	.515	.466	2.715E-02
No Conference Date Clash	.241	.117	.160	-9.79E-02	.684	.253
No Holiday Date Clash	-.108	.270	3.015E-02	8.658E-02	.707	.214
Healthy Enough to Travel	.157	2.223E-02	.185	.131	.399	.685
Available Medical Facilities	.133	8.509E-02	.181	.253	1.820E-02	.671
Time off Work	-9.91E-02	.515	.304	.193	.263	.435
Job Description	-2.70E-04	.655	.132	9.178E-02	5.332E-02	.370
Financed by Employer	-3.70E-02	.611	.305	.233	4.771E-02	.141
Interesting Topic	.114	.660	8.387E-02	-8.87E-02	.472	-2.22E-02
Safe Destination	.221	.366	.187	-2.41E-02	.206	.606
Visiting the surrounding area	.382	3.809E-02	.160	.612	-.156	.165
Professional Contacts	.791	.156	.206	.104	1.260E-02	3.559E-02
Professional Advancement	.504	.597	8.904E-04	4.932E-02	-4.84E-02	.136
New Business	.599	-6.07E-02	-3.51E-02	.168	-.101	.281
New Friends	.756	4.700E-02	6.939E-02	.341	-7.68E-03	.147
Old Friends	.674	-3.78E-02	.134	.218	.240	-8.68E-02
Involvement in the Association	.740	3.639E-02	6.563E-02	-7.08E-02	.155	-2.74E-02
Global Community	.780	.133	3.384E-02	.110	9.242E-02	.167
Learning About New Subjects	.427	.634	-6.69E-02	-5.22E-02	.218	-5.65E-02
Learning About New Research	.474	.611	9.180E-02	-9.55E-02	.140	-6.65E-02
Peer Reputation	.645	.196	5.927E-02	.197	-1.36E-02	.295
Getting Out of the Office	.206	.136	-6.94E-02	.677	8.326E-02	.235
Visiting Friends/Relatives	.221	-4.06E-02	.191	.703	1.819E-02	4.611E-02
Meeting Like-Minded People	.654	.227	.204	.368	7.007E-02	-5.62E-02
Meeting New Professionals	.702	.268	.169	.311	4.834E-02	6.713E-02

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

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