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- publish research to demonstrate the depth and breadth of the intellectual interest of our students.
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- support students in gaining their first publication as publishing for the first time can seem daunting.

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UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR WHEN CHOOSING SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION

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Paper Abstract

In the last 20 years, the self-catering accommodation sector has witnessed substantial growth (Sharpley, 2000). Consumer choice and self-determination are forecast to become ever-more important in the demand for services to seek a proper holiday experience. The purpose of this study is to better understand decision-making (DM) in consumer behaviour when choosing self-catering accommodation. The points that will be discussed in the research are:

- To explore the pull factors that drive consumers to book self-catering accommodation as a tourism accommodation product
- To analyse the major variables in DM when planning self-catering accommodation, including socio-psychological and personal variables
- To identify the most important DM criteria when customers book their self-catering accommodation
- To determine which are the most popular self-catering accommodation for consumers in the tourism industry.

In order to achieve these objectives a quantitative approach to data collection was taken. This involved the development of a questionnaire where specific questions were asked in order to gather relevant information to address the key points of the study.

Keywords: Self-catering accommodation / consumer behaviour / decision-making / holiday experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Self-catered accommodation's growth has been influenced by changes in the economy, advances in technology, but also due to demographic, economic and lifestyle changes. In fact, this type of accommodation is widely used for activity holidays and courses for outward-bound or country pursuits and its predominant segments are older and middle-aged customers aged between 50 and 70, along with young couples without children aged between 18 and 25 and who desire to experience conventional activity holidays (Leslie, 2002).

People who are seeking to have exclusive holiday experiences in unique locations where a variety of attractions are provided, and also consumers whose needs and wants are to get more independence, choice (for example around eating and timing of trips) and informality, decide to book self-catering accommodation (Mintel, 1995).

The subject of consumer behaviour in tourism is the key to the foundation of all marketing activities and, because tourism is a human activity, people spend lot of time thinking, planning, and experiencing their holiday (Decrop, 2006). The study of consumer's behaviour identifies how the DM process is a complex one and how there are many tourism market segmentations which drive consumers to purchase specific holiday experiences instead of others (Johns and Lynch, 2007).

The needs and habits of the consumers, consumer preferences and requirements and motivational factors such as cultural, personal, emotional, status, personal development, and physical are the push and pull factors that impact the DM process (Blaga, 2013).

This study will identify and explore the DM factors which determine the reasons why consumers prefer choosing self-catering accommodation instead of hotel or other traditional accommodation. In recent years, the lifestyle, needs and habits of consumers have changed, and people desire to experience different holidays. Therefore, understanding the consumer behavior when choosing a holiday is crucial for the owner of self-catering accommodation to fulfil all the tourists' needs and wants.

This research will be extremely important for self-catered accommodation's competitors, such as hoteliers, to bring back their customers by providing a new valuable holiday product and experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Bilbao-Terol et al (2017), the self-catering accommodation sector has witnessed substantial growth for over 20 years due to a range of factors, including increases in second home and holiday home ownership and property investment. Since the 1980s, driven by changes in the economy, people have purchased new properties which they have turned into businesses by providing self-contained facilities such as a kitchen, bathroom and bedrooms (Lynch and MacWhannell, 2000).

Additionally, Johns and Lynch in 2007, argued that technological development has contributed to the self-catered accommodation market growth; the internet made it possible to advertise more widely and cheaply than ever before, while computers have made transfer and management profoundly less labour-intensive. These factors made it possible for small businesses and private individuals to reach an international market, including agencies and

consumers, and for the self-catering sector to become very competitive in the hospitality industry (Leslie, 2007).

The demand for self-catered accommodation has risen steadily since the 1970s and this has tended to raise both standards and the volume available (Goymour, 1986; Clemens, 1997). According to Johns and Lynch (2007), the growth in demand will continue, as individuals become more diverse in their interests and lifestyles and lead increasingly self-contained lives.

Consumer choice and self-determination are forecast to become ever more important in the demand for services, as are informality and convenience. All of these factors apply to the self-catering market, and especially to short lettings of holiday homes, which are often accessible through the internet and offer an alternative to the service standardisation that is frequently prevalent in larger organisations (Hjalager.2001).

The growth of short break holidays and a growing interest in country pursuits and activity holidays favour the self-catering sector. In fact, these accommodation types, by offering greater levels of individual disposable wealth, mobile pursuit of leisure activities, more and shorter holidays (Johns and Lynch, 2007), increase the tourism demand of those seeking seasonal holidays, such as staycations, to escape in summer or winter climates (Irvine and Cunningham, 1990; Williams et al., 2000).

MARKET PENETRATION

A market report by VisitScotland (2014) suggests that the market segmentation of self-catering accommodation is variable, as there are many accommodation types offered within the sector and there are many consumers who book these holiday homes.

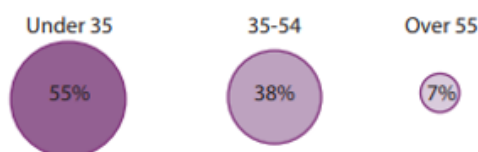
ADVENTURE SEEKERS

“Adventure Seekers want an active holiday where they can enjoy both outdoor and cultural activities. They will venture off the beaten track and will be engaged by trying new things and pushing their limits and experiences. Holidays will really energise them.” (VisitScotland, 2014)

1) Personality: Adventure seekers are energetic, sociable, career-minded individuals with an urban outlook. They have a real sense of ‘get up and go’. Not only are they active in their leisure time, but they also have an adventurous outlook and some are real thrill seekers.

2) Profile:

- people with affluent income
- typically, a younger profile age than other segments and the main percentage age are:

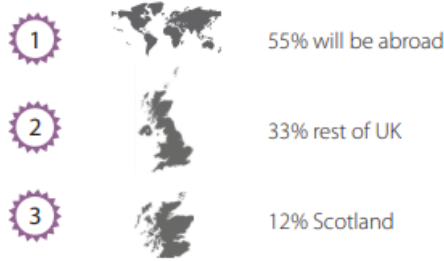


- the main segments are people with children **32%**, people who work full-time: **68%** (above average), students: **8%** (above average) and retired: 2% (below average).

3) Holiday profile: Adventure Seekers are above average holidaymakers, with a combination of both trips abroad and domestic breaks. In terms of domestic breaks,

destinations in England are particularly accessible to them and their consideration list of domestic destinations is wide.

Total Annual Holiday Nights



4) Holiday activities: This segment likes to pack a lot into their holidays, and they like to participate in a range of activities, from sport and outdoor adventures to cultural activities.

5) Accommodation preferences: Adventure Seekers use a variety of accommodation types and quality to suit their holiday needs, which may include a mix of city, rural or coastal stays. They are more likely than other segments to go camping or to use hostels. And they are more likely to use a mix of different qualities in one trip or state that the quality of where they stay is not important to them. For some, the activity will be the most important aspect of their break, rather than their accommodation choice.

Usual Choice of Accommodation in UK	% Above or Below Average
Hotels	57% ↓
Self-catering	42% ↑
B&B	40% ↑
Camping	36% ↓
Staying with friends & relatives	27% ↑
Guest House	14% ↓
Caravan	13% ↑
Hostel	11% ↑



(VisitScotland, 2014)

CURIOS TRAVELLERS

“Curious Travellers like to live life to the full and enjoy traveling as a hobby. They have an overwhelming desire to explore new destinations and discover new things. A holiday will often broaden their minds, educate and revitalise them.” (Sharpley, 1994).

1) Personality: Curious Travellers have a great curiosity about the world and look to broaden their minds by trying new things. They are typically free spirits who enjoy living life to the full. And they are leaned towards more cultural hobbies and interests.

2) Profile:

- people with affluent income
- A real spread of ages, concentrating on the middle to upper age bands. **43%** fall into the 25-44 age group / **25%** within the 25-34 age group / and **31%** 55+ age group
- the main segments are adult only households and just the **25%** have children at home, people who work full time **53%** (average), students: **4%** (average) and retired **18%** (average)



3) Holiday profile: Curious Travellers are above average holidaymakers, spending more nights away than the average person and most of these nights are taken overseas. Their holiday consideration set operates from a global view on life, which accounts for their bias towards global destinations.

4) Holiday activities: A holiday or break for the Curious Traveller is packing a lot in, exploring the history and culture of destinations, enjoying scenery and landscapes, getting off the beaten track and trying new things, which all appeals to their natural curiosity.

Total Annual Holiday Nights



5) Accommodation Preferences: Curious Travellers use a variety of accommodation types and quality to suit their holiday needs, which may include a mix of rural, city and coastal stays. Hotels, B&Bs and self-catering are the most popular choices.

Usual Choice of Accommodation in UK	% Above or Below Average
Hotels	67% ↑
B&B	39% ↑
Self-catering	37% ↑
Staying with friends & relatives	28% ↑
Guest House	17% ↑
Camping	11% ↓
Caravan	8% ↓
Hostel	7% ↑



(VisitScotland, 2014)

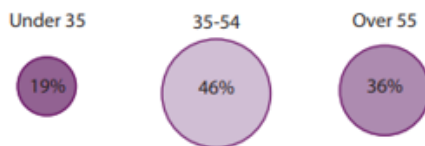
NATURAL ADVOCATES

“Natural Advocates are passionate about Scotland as it offers everything they want from a holiday; breath-taking scenery, a connection with nature and the chance to get away from it all. A holiday in Scotland will really help them to unwind, recharge and enjoy quiet time.” (Sharpley, 1994).

1) Personality: Natural Advocates are typically more introverted individuals who value peace and quiet. Confident in themselves and what they want out of life, Natural Advocates do not follow the crowds. They pay great attention to detail and can be wary of providing their personal details to organisations. Some Natural Advocates may have a dog and enjoy long walks in the country with their pet. Dog friendly holiday-homes, restaurants, pubs and cafés can appeal.

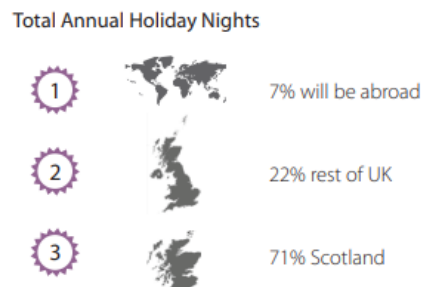
2) Profile:

- people with mid affluent income
- the majority fall into 35-54s and the main percentages are:



- the main segments are children living in their household **27%** (slightly below average), people who work full time **52%** (slightly below average) and retired **18%** (slightly above average)


3) Holiday profile: Whilst Natural Advocates take fewer holidays or short breaks each year, on average, when they do go away it tends to be to Scotland (71% of their nights away and 60% of their annual holiday spend). Therefore, Scotland is the main destination of choice for Natural Advocates. However, proximity is not the driving factor. Scotland offers exactly what they want from a holiday: scenery, nature, history, culture and getting away from it all.



4) Holiday activities: They really do feel Scotland is the best part of the UK for a holiday or short break. Natural Advocates enjoy being cut off from the world and getting away from it all. They see holidays as a time for reflection and quiet time. Holidays can often be a chance to spend time with close friends and family. With their desire to get away from it all, rural and more remote locations can appeal.

5) Accommodation Preferences: Flexible accommodation is important for Natural Advocates. Rural and more remote locations will appeal. Self-catering in particular is well used (**57%**), as well as hotels (**53%**) and B&BS (**36%**), **51%** will use accommodation of medium quality and **22%** will use 4–5-star accommodation.

Usual Choice of Accommodation in UK	% Above or Below Average
Self-catering	57% ↑
Hotels	53% ↓
B&B	36% ↔
Friends/relatives	23% ↓
Guest House	16% ↔
Caravan	15% ↔
Camping	14% ↔
Hostels	5% ↔



(VisitScotland, 2014)

DETERMINANT DECISION-MAKING

The subject of consumer behaviour in tourism is the key to the foundation of all marketing activities and, because tourism is a human activity, people spend lot of time thinking, planning, and experiencing their holiday (Decrop, 2006).

Mintel (1995) listed several aspects motivating the demand for self-catering holidays, including an increase in independent holiday-taking and a trend towards shorter holidays. The increasing number of older customers, many of whom are grandparents, means an increase in the number of children in many self-catering parties, for whom accommodation that also meets the needs of children is very attractive. This includes independence, choice (for example for eating and the timing of trips) and informality, as Wood (1994, p. 70) has previously suggested that guests expect to gain a sense of freedom and flexibility when booking self-catering accommodation.

Mintel (1995) noted that a self-catering holiday is more like being at home, costs less per person and allows more freedom than a hotel. Simpson (1978) added that this also means freedom from rules and social scrutiny and, like Mintel (1995) and Beioley (1990), noted self-catering's appeal to sophisticated customers with high disposable income.

In this respect, Hind et al. (1999, p. 2) noted that the market for self-catering in Cumbria, as a self-catering location example, is a professional, relatively affluent market segment, with family groups dominating in the school holiday periods and couples during the off-peak periods who want to experience a short or long-term duration holiday in high quality accommodation at cheaper prices.

Additionally, location and attractions are other relevant determinants for property's success. Hind et al. (1999, p. 2) found that self-catering customers had specific decision-making criteria when they book; in fact, they were looking for traditional, Lakeland cottages, fully modernised, comfortably furnished, equipped to a high standard, set in own grounds and not adjacent to the owner's or other property, and with local amenities and attractions nearby.

SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION PREFERENCES

As Ryan (1991) argued, travellers show a growing unwillingness to give up their domestic continuity while away from home. This is why self-catered accommodation owners have been responding to this subtle consumer pressure for some years, providing high quality accommodation with all the services needed from the guest (Lynch, 2007)

Table 1. Summary of UK self-catering accommodation, published by Lynch and MacWhannell (2000)

Type	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	England	Total
Cottages	1492	2983		50,000	54,475
Houses/bungalows	1295	2397		—	3692
Farmhouses	341	—		—	341
Flats/flatlets	3205	2309		14,800	20,314
Chalets	3913	1517		—	5430
Other	—	1618		—	1681
Total	10,246	10,887	432	64,800	86,365

The image above summarises the most popular self-catering accommodation in the UK. These are cottages, flats and chalets, followed by houses and bungalow farmhouses and other accommodation such as boats and caravans (Lynch and MacWhannell, 2000).

Lynch in 2007 noted that self-catered accommodation is widely used for activity holidays and courses for outward-bound or country pursuits and that the self-catering holiday market is highly seasonal (people book every 6-12 months), especially in rural and outlying areas.

METHODOLOGY

The study consists of a critical analysis of data collected through a quantitative and positivistic methodology approach. The researcher decided to create an electronic questionnaire to formulate trends and explain in detail the aim and objectives (Brunt, Horner, Semley, 2017).

Therefore, with the use of a questionnaire, the researcher collected information regarding facts and knowledge, actions, opinion and beliefs, attitudes, motives, past, and likely future, behaviour (Thomas 2016).

In total, 72 participants took part in the study. The sample chosen is a purposive sample based on convenient people who have already purchased self-catering accommodation. This approach is very low cost, easy to reach and contributes to extensive understanding (Denscombe, 2017).

Through social media platforms including WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, the researcher contacted the sample asking if they could complete the questionnaire and if they could also share it with other friends to gather a larger scale set of responses (Brunt, Horner, Semley, 2017).

Following the university ethics policy, the researcher did not collect the participants' names and email addresses and kept their identity anonymous. All the research information was provided in the introduction paragraph of the questionnaire, along with the researcher's email and the University ethics team contacts in case the participant had any curiosities or concerns regarding the study (SHU Ethical forms).

Socio and demographic details were not collected because the study is about reproducing trends and generic information (Thomas, 2016).

The questionnaire had 15 questions in total, with a mixture of open and closed question types, including checkboxes, multiple choice, short answer, linear scale and multiple-choice grid types and its maximum length was around 15 minutes for the participants to complete (Denscombe, 2017)

The researcher used different types of questions to collect a wide range of information; in fact, the researcher did not want to collect just YES or NO answers but aimed to develop a deductive and objective discussion through statements, agreements and disagreements, and multiple-choice grid answers (Mason, 2014).

The questionnaire was divided into different sections, and each section aimed to gather information regarding the research's objectives. For example, the second section was about to explore which and how people book their favourite self-catering accommodation, the third was exploring the motivations for booking self-catering accommodation rather than other types of accommodation, e.g., hotels and the last was about identifying the decision-making criteria when booking self-catering accommodation (Denscombe, 2017).

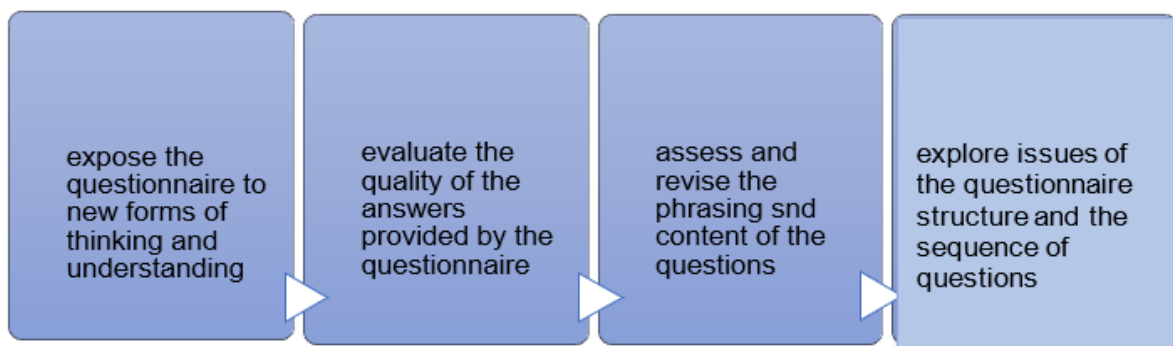
The researcher spent lot of time planning the questionnaire and used many sources to understand better how to write an efficient questionnaire. The picture below shows an example of an Introductory Statement from which the researcher took inspiration to write the research's introductory paragraph (Denscombe, 2017).

The questionnaire was designed using a formal and deductive style, including simple questions by considering the importance of creating a clear vision of what exactly the heart of the research was about (Mason, 2014).

While designing the methodology section, the researcher carefully considered the order of questions for two main reasons:

1. It can entice or deter the respondent from continuing with the exercise of providing answers.
2. Questions asked at an earlier point in the questionnaire can affect the answers supplied at later stage.

After having planned the questionnaire, the researcher made a pilot questionnaire to verify the validity and efficiency of its methodology and was able to understand specific points such as:



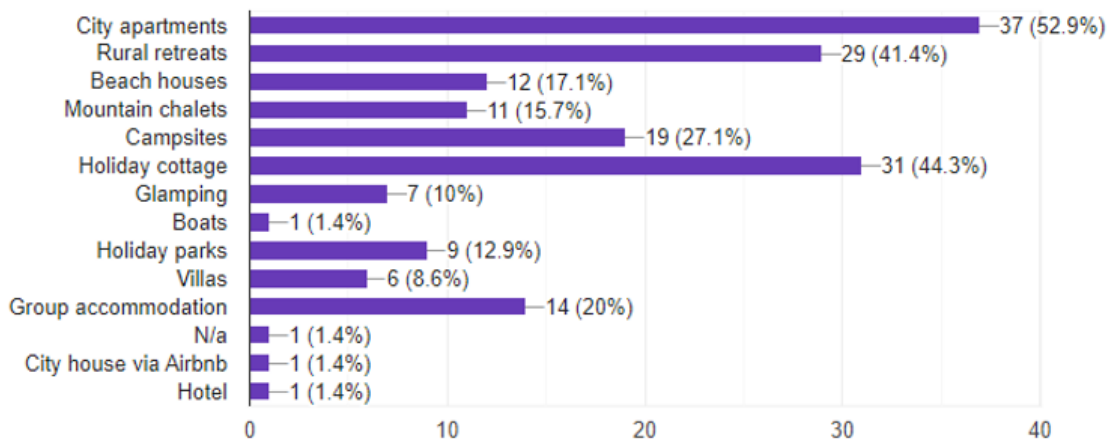
(Oppenheim, 2001)

After receiving feedback from the pilot questionnaire, the researcher could share it with the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Question 1

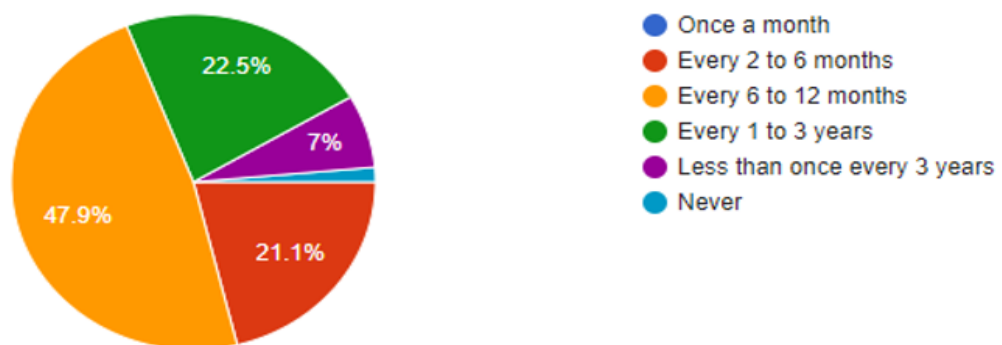
1) In the last three years, which of the following types of self-catering accommodation have you booked?



This graph shows that the most popular types of self-catering accommodation booked from the sample are city apartments with 52.9%, holiday cottages with 44.3% and rural retreats with 41.4%. The question provided a long list of self-catering accommodation types in the answer but from this survey's sample, it was revealed that these accommodation types are more popular than other accommodation such as beach houses, holiday parks or boats. These results supported the research that Lynch and MacWhannell (2000) carried out. In fact, their research summarised that the most popular self-catering accommodation in the UK was flats, cottages and chalets. However, in the recent years, chalets have become less popular because other types of self-catering accommodation have increased in demand, such as rural retreats, campsites, group accommodation and beach houses.

5.2 Question 2

1) How often do you book self-catering accommodation?



This chart illustrates that the largest section of people book self-catering accommodation every 6 to 12 months with 47.9%, every 1 to 3 years with 22.5% and every 2 to 6 months with 21.1%. Analysing this answer, in the last three years, people quite often booked self-catering accommodation, at least once or twice a year. These results supported the research carried out by Lynch in 2007 that affirmed that the self-catering holiday market was highly seasonal, especially in rural and outlying areas. From these results comes the point that tourism is an important human activity, and travel and holidays are a major recurrent entry in many households' budgets (De Croix, 2006).

5.3 Question

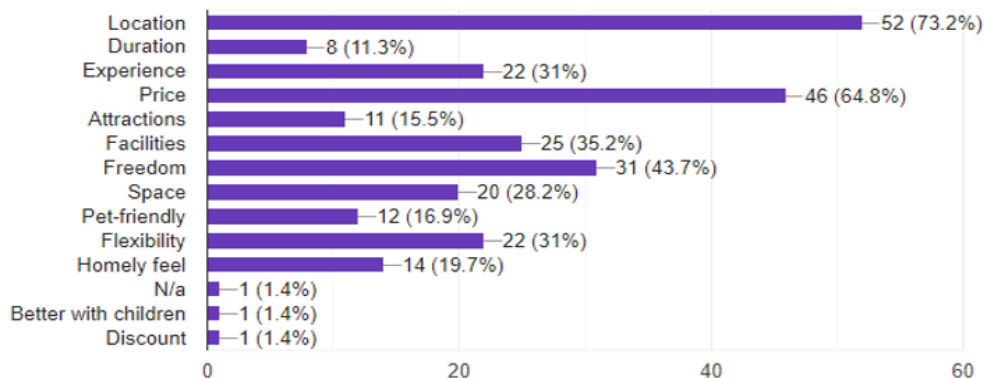
- 1) If you answered "Never" to the previous question, please give the reason why you haven't booked self-catering accommodation.

I like hotels. Feels more like a holiday

From question number 2 it was revealed that just 1% of people have never booked self-catering accommodation and the answer above justifies the reason given by that 1%. From this statement we can see that this person prefers hotels rather than self-catering accommodation because hotels feel more like a traditional holiday to them. Overall, this result justifies the popularity of self-catering accommodation that has been already explained in the previous section.

5.4 Question

- 1) If you have booked self-catering accommodation in the last 3 years, what were your main reasons for doing so?



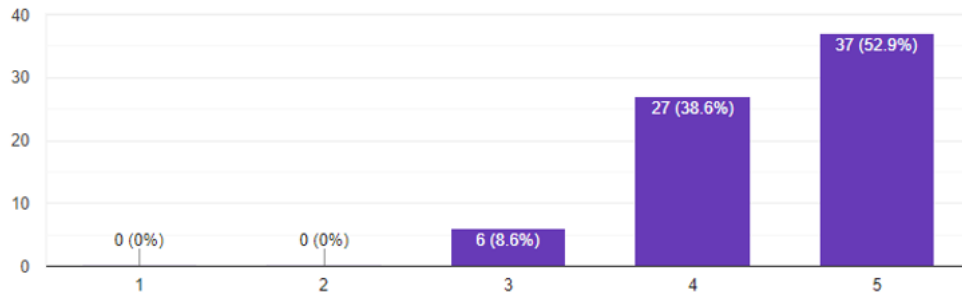
This graph shows that the main reasons for booking self-catering accommodation are location with 73.2%, price with 64.8%, freedom with 43.7% and facilities with 35.2%. The sample had a large variety of responses to choose from, but the most selected answers show that location and price are the two most important reasons for booking self-catering accommodation, followed by freedom, flexibility, facilities and experience. These results support the research carried out from Hind et al in 1999 which highlighted the importance of location and facilities for people when they book self-catering accommodation. In fact, Hind's study showed that people were looking for traditional, Lakeland cottages, fully modernised, comfortably furnished, equipped to a high standard, set in their own grounds

and not adjacent to the owners or other property and with local amenities and attractions nearby.

5.5 Question

5) How satisfied were you with the last self-catering accommodation that you stayed at?

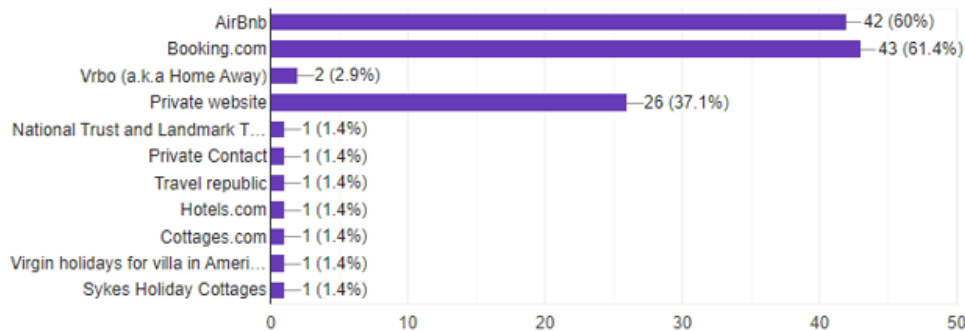
1 dissatisfied – 5 very satisfied



This graph illustrates that over half of people who booked self-catering accommodation were very satisfied; From 1 to 5, with 5 being the most satisfied, 52.9% scored 5, 38.6% scored 4 and 8.6% scored 3. This shows that people really enjoyed the self-catering accommodation booked in the last three years and these results confirmed the result previously shown by Lynch in 2007. As already mentioned in section 5.2, self-catering accommodation is one of the most recurrent purchases for people, which they book once or twice a year because they really enjoy these holiday experiences.

5.6 Question

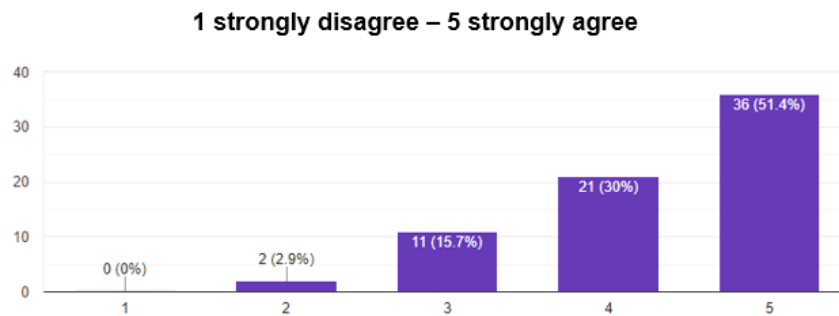
6) If you have booked self-catering accommodation in the last 3 years, which of the following booking websites have you used?



This graph illustrates that the most popular websites used to book self-catering accommodation are Booking.com with 61.4%, followed by Airbnb with 60% and private website with 37.1%. These results show that people prefer booking their accommodation through very popular online platforms such as Booking.com and Airbnb in the last three years. This is supported by past recent research carried out from Mutch in 1995 who stated that the development of the internet helped to increase demand in self-catered accommodation.

5.7 Question

7) "I book self-catering accommodation to gain a sense of freedom and flexibility." Do you agree or disagree with the previous statement?

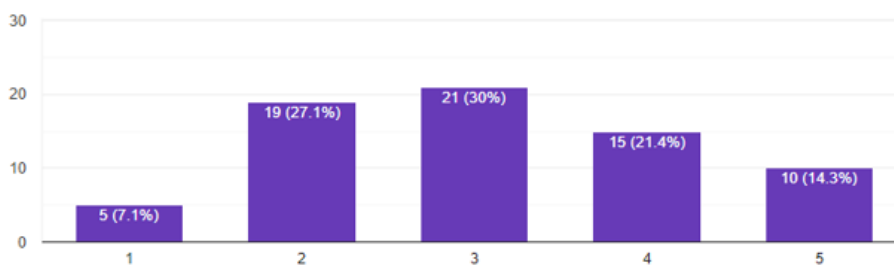


This graph shows that the largest proportion of people who booked self-catering accommodation gained a sense of freedom and flexibility. From 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agree, 51.4% scored 5, 30% scored 4, 15.7% scored 3 and 2.9% scored 2. These results show that people are influenced by socio-psychological variables, such as their perception of holiday, while they book self-catering accommodation. This supports previous research carried out from Wood in 1994 which suggested that guests expect to gain a sense of freedom and flexibility when booking self-catering accommodation. This statement identified the feel of independence of choice (for example for eating and the timing of trips) and informality that people gain by booking self-catering accommodation instead of hotels.

5.8 Question

8) "I book specific self-catering accommodation to recreate my own lifestyle." Do you agree or disagree with the previous statement?

1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

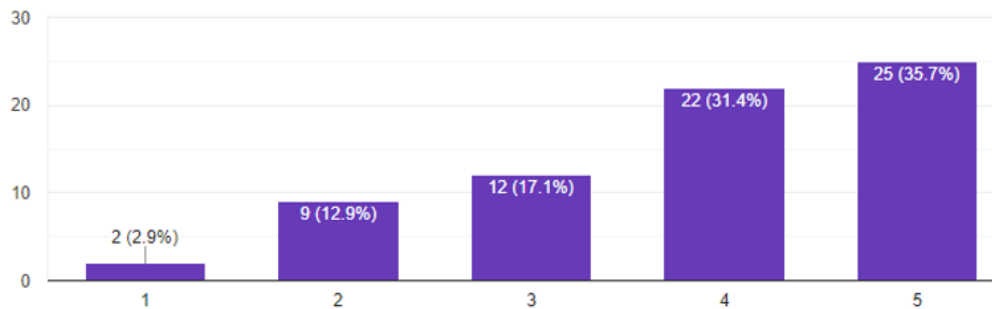


This graph illustrates that many people who booked self-catering accommodation are not particularly interested in recreating their own lifestyle. From 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agree, 14,3% scored 5, 24.1% scored 4, 30% scored 3, 27.1% scored 2 and 7.1 scored 1. These results show that people are not strongly pushed by personal variables, such as their lifestyle. These results do not agree with previous research carried out by Bainbridge in 1998. He established that self-catering accommodation demand was continuing to grow as individuals were becoming more and more diverse in their interests and lifestyle.

5.9 Question

9) "I book self-catering accommodation because I want to relax and spend good quality time with my family." Do you agree or disagree with the previous statement?

1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

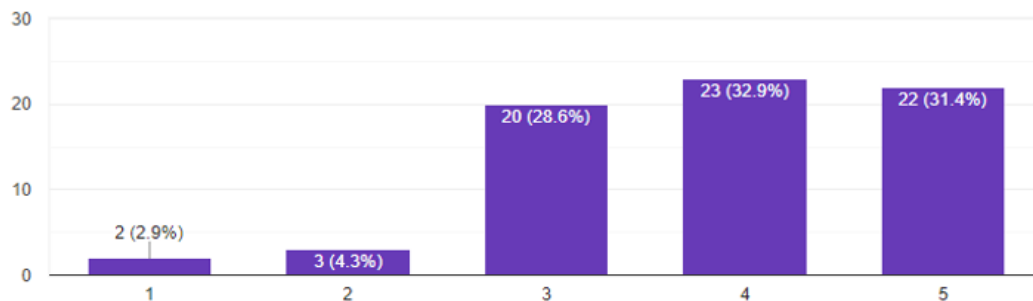


This graph shows that the largest proportion of people who booked self-catering did so to spend good quality time with their family. From 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agree, 35.7% scored 5, 31.4% scored 4, 17.1% scored 3, 12.9% scored 2 and 2.9% scored 1. These results show that people are strongly influenced by environmental variables, such as households, to book self-catering accommodation. This supports the research carried out from a Mintel Report in 1995. The report established that with the increasing number of older customers, many of whom are grandparents, an increasing number of children are in many self-catering parties, for whom accommodation that also meets the needs of children is very attractive.

5.10 Question

10) "I book self-catering accommodation because I can find a higher quality level of accommodation at a cheaper price." Do you agree or disagree with the previous statement?

1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

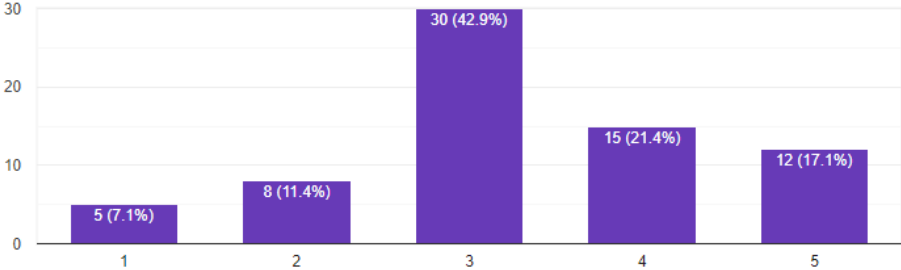


This graphic illustrates that most people who booked self-catering accommodation agreed

that it is a good way to find higher quality accommodation at cheaper prices. From 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agree, 31.4% scored 5, 32.9% scored 4, 28.6% scored 3, 4.3% scored 2 and 2.9% scored 1. These results show that environmental variables, such as prices, can influence people to book self-catering accommodation. However, while the research sample shows a pattern that people are motivated to book self-catering accommodation to get higher quality accommodation, the VisitScotland Market Report (2014) interestingly shows that self-catering accommodation is becoming popular for affluent customers.

5.11 Question

11)"I book self-catering accommodation because it gives me more flexibility to book longer stays." Do you agree or disagree with the previous statement?

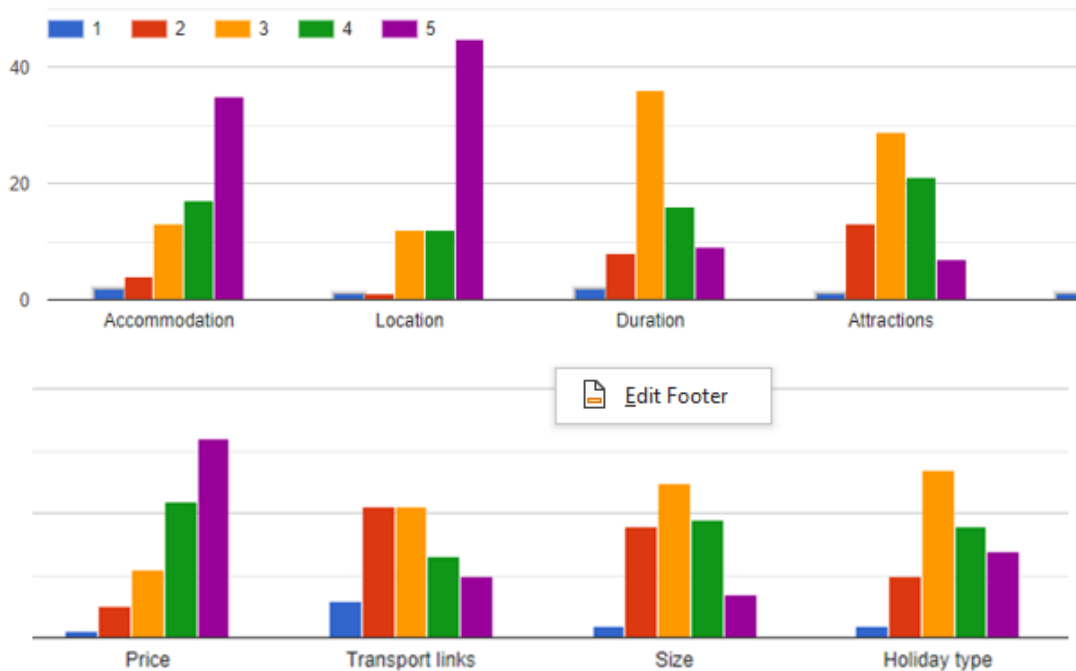


1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree

This graphic shows that the largest proportion of people who booked self-catering accommodation neither agree nor disagree that booking self-catering accommodation gives them more flexibility to book longer stays. From 1 to 5, with 5 being strongly agree, 17.1% scored 5, 21.4% scored 4, 42.9% scored 3, 11.4% scored 2 and 7.1% scored 1. These answers show that the sample is not massively pushed by the duration variables when booking self-catering accommodation. These results do not agree with previous results which came from research carried out in 1994 by Wood who noted that people who booked self-catering accommodation were affected by the flexibility of time of trips.

5.12 Question

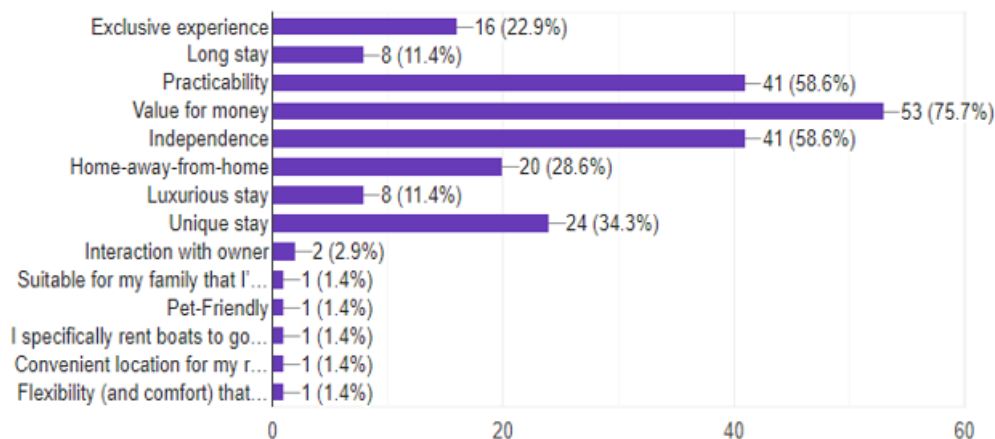
12) From 1 to 5, how important are the following decision-making criteria to you?
(1 being least important, 5 being most important)



This graphic illustrates that **accommodation**, **location** and **price** are considered the most important decision-making criteria for the sample. Accommodation was mostly ranked 4 and 5, location mainly ranked 5, the duration was considered as a neutral factor and was mainly ranked 3, attraction was considered as a neutral criteria and was ranked between 3 and 4, price was mostly ranked 5 and 4, transport links were not considered important and were equal ranked 2 and 3, size was considered as another neutral criteria and was ranked 3 with the same ranking for the holiday type criteria. These results show that there are many different decision-making criteria, but the most relevant for the research sample are accommodation, location and price. This supports previous research already explained in section 5.4

5.13 Question

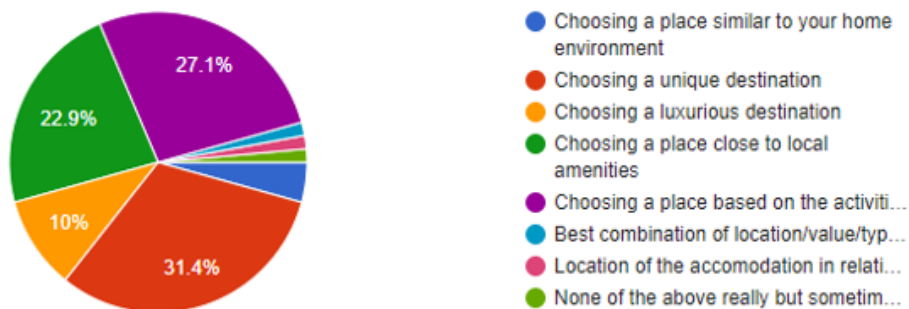
13) What are you looking for when booking self-catering accommodation?



This graphic shows that people, when they book self-catering accommodation, mainly look for value for money with 75.7%, practicability with 58.6%, independence with 58.6%, unique stay with 34.3%, home-away-from-home with 28.6% and exclusive experience with 22.9%. These results show the research sample is motivated to book self-catering accommodation from value for money but also from the practicability, flexibility and independence that they can gain from this holiday type and also because self-catering accommodation can be located in unique destinations and provide an exclusive experience. These results agree with the results found in the VisitScotland Market Report (2014), where self-catered customers seek good value for money, flexibility and independence.

5.14 Questions

14) Which of the following decision-making criteria are most important to you when choosing a destination?

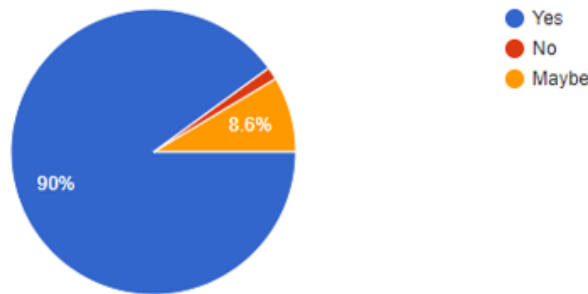


This chart illustrates that the most popular decision-making criteria that influences the choice of a holiday destination is choosing a **unique destination** with 31.4%, choosing a place based on the **activities** available with 27.1% and choosing a place close to **local amenities** with 22.9%. These results show that the research sample preferred to choose options related to uniqueness of a destination, close to activities and amenities, rather than considering the luxury aspect, home environment or other. These results agree with previous research carried

out by **Simpson (1978)** who recommended that properties should be marketed using category names that imply the location where an accommodation is based. He suggested that the market should be segmented by age, life cycle, and special interests or activities, rather than by socio-economic group because people are motivated to choose an accommodation instead of another from the attractions, activities and facilities nearby.

5. 15 Question

15) Would you recommend self-catering accommodation to a friend or colleague?



Finally, the research sample was asked if they recommend self-catering accommodation. From the result shown on the chart above, **90%** of the sample would recommend self-catering accommodation, **8.6%** are not sure and just **1.4%** would not recommend it to any friends or colleagues. From these results we can see that the vast majority of the research sample really enjoyed their self-catering accommodation experiences and for this reason they would strongly recommend it to others.

CONCLUSIONS

With the help of the questionnaire, the research explored the DM factors which determine consumer behavior when choosing self-catering accommodation and explained the objective of the research project.

1. To explore the pull factors that drive consumers to book self-catering accommodation as a tourism accommodation product:
 - The main pull factors of encouraging consumers to book self-catering accommodation were found in the report to be: value for money, practicability, independence and unique stay.
2. To analyse the major variables in DM when planning self-catering accommodation:
 - The most important DM aspect while people planning this style of holiday, which come from this research, are: gaining a sense of freedom and relax, spend good quality time with family and getting higher quality level of accommodation at cheaper prices.
3. To identify the most important DM criteria when costumers book their self-catering accommodation:

- The most important DM criteria why people book these holiday experiences are: prices, location and accommodation type.
4. To determine the most popular self-catering accommodation for consumers in the tourism industry:
- The most popular accommodation purchased from the sample of this study are city apartments, holiday cottages and rural retreats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the research project developed an interesting discussion regarding understanding DM in consumer behaviour when planning self-catering accommodation, this study has limitations.

The sample considered in this research was a convenient type and this factor brings some limitation to the research. In fact, the patterns and trend which came from the questionnaire are related to a small number of people who the researcher knew in advance.

It would be better and more efficient for future research to consider a bigger sample, such as 2,000 people, and the results in this case would be a more accurate reflection of reality.

However, this research study will be extremely important for self-catered accommodation's owners to understand which are the popular features that consumers are looking for when they book their holiday, but also will help their competitors, such as hoteliers, to bring back their customers by providing a new valuable holiday product and experience as identifies in the paragraph above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my tutor Karen Soulby for her help and support while I was working on my research project. As an international student, sometimes I found it hard to understand what the report required and my tutor provided me with key guidelines.

I also want to thank my family, my partner and my friends, who motivated and inspired me while I was writing my dissertation. They helped me to gather many responses with my questionnaire and I was able to discuss with them any problems which arose during the research project.

I am very pleased with the finished study and I want to thank myself for never giving up on this project, but with motivation and a hardworking approach, I was able to create a piece of work around one of my favourite passions: travelling.

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